

MBCA News
Monday, October 6, 2014

MBCA sponsored Candidates Virtual Forum is Online

MBCA invited candidates in upcoming local elections to respond to three questions relating to MBCA's Mission. Candidates for the California 42nd Assembly, Joshua Basin Water District, Hi-Desert Water District, Twentynine Palms City Council, Yucca Valley Town Council and the Morongo Unified School District had the opportunity to participate.

The [Virtual Forum](#) is now posted on the MBCA website. Make sure to check the candidates' responses prior to going to the polls November 4th!

Thanks to the MBCA Virtual Forum committee whose efforts made this valuable resource for voters possible.

MARK YOUR CALENDARS:

MUSD Board of Education Solar Initiative Workshop

Tuesday, October 7th, 5:00 pm

Location: Joshua Tree Elementary School, 4950 Sunburst Avenue, Joshua Tree

The Board of Education will receive an overview of the Solar Initiative project to add solar energy to MUSD schools. A Committee, that includes three members of the MBCA Board, has been working to facilitate issuance of Request for Proposals for the installation of solar on the area schools. Having now received proposals, the top three will make presentations to the Board for their consideration for entering into a Power Purchase Agreement that will run over the next 20 years. If completed, this will mark the largest municipal solar energy project to be constructed in the Morongo Basin! The public is invited to attend.

Supervisor James Ramos to address Joshua Tree MAC

Municipal Advisory Committee monthly meeting

Date: Monday, October 13th, 6:30 pm

Location: Joshua Tree Community Center, 6171 Sunburst Avenue

Supervisor Ramos will make a special address presenting his *Vision of the Morongo Basin*.

Joshua Basin Water District's (JBWD) Tank Art Project

Location: JBWD office campus, 61750 Chollita Road, Joshua Tree

The JBWD is collaborating with Chaparral Artists and the Yucca Valley High School Art Club to paint the tank behind the Water Wise Demonstration Garden. This weekend Chaparral Artists will assist the students in the process of prepping and painting the mural that will depict the "Desert Water Shed."

MBCA is pleased to be a sponsor of the mural project in support of JBWD's educational message conveyed in the imagery on the tank of Mojave Desert's flora and fauna: "Water is life...to every living thing!" and drive home the point that, "Water in the desert is what it is...precious and limited."

Desert Institute at Joshua Tree National Park: Black Rock Lecture Series

Symposium: "Challenges to Joshua Tree National Park"

Date: October 17, 2014, 7pm – 8:30 pm

Location: Bell Center, Copper Mountain College

Free, but pre-registration is required: www.joshuatree.org

The first of seven lectures in the 2014-2015 Black Rock Lecture Series:

Joshua Tree National Park – State of the Park

panelists: David Smith, Superintendent, Andrea Compton, Chief of Resources and Jennie Albrinck, Chief of Interpretation

CONSERVATION NEWS:

Desert Renewable Conservation Project (DRECP) Draft released

On Sept. 23rd Secretary of the Interior Sally Jewell announced the release of the 8,000-page draft of the DRECP Environmental Impact Report/Environmental Impact Statement (EIR/EIS). The DRECP will define where renewal energy projects are sited in California for years to come. In addition to Secretary Jewell's press conference at a Palm Springs wind energy facility, she made visits to Big Morongo Canyon Preserve and Whitewater Preserve and met with Preserves' staff. The stop locations were representative of the DRECP's task to balance environmental conservation with the development of renewal energy, as well as the importance of Morongo Basin and Coachella Valley in the scope of the plan.

The draft DRECP EIR/EIS is available for review and download at www.drecp.org, and at local libraries and agency offices. A DVD will be

provided upon request. To request a DVD, please send an email request to drecp.info@energy.ca.gov or call (866) 674-9996 and provide a mailing address. For a list of local area libraries and agency offices that have the document on file (most are on DVD), please visit www.drecp.org/draftdrecp.

Public meetings will be held throughout the DRECP planning area and surrounding population centers between Oct. 20 and Nov. 13. The meetings are designed to help the public understand the draft DRECP EIR/EIS and to facilitate public comments. Meetings will include a presentation, information stations and an opportunity to submit recorded verbal and written comments.

Public meetings will be held. Some of these meetings will also be broadcast by WebEx to allow for remote attendance. Visit www.drecp.org to confirm meeting details and WebEx availability. Meetings closest to the Morongo Basin are:

- 1.) Thursday, November 6, 6:30-9:00 p.m. Ontario Convention Center 2000 E. Convention Center Way Ontario, CA 91764
- 2.) Friday, November 7, 4:00-6:30 p.m. UC Riverside, Palm Desert Center Auditorium 75080 Frank Sinatra Dr. Palm Desert, CA 92211

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The DRECP draft 90-day public comment period ends on January 9, 2015. As Betty Munson of Johnson Valley and a member of the Lucerne Valley MAC has pointed out, "Because a comment is not a vote: we can't simply respond 'we don't want it.' Comments should point out fatal flaws, fallacies, and unintended consequences of the industrialization of the desert."

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MBCA and other conservation groups are now reviewing the massive DRECP draft. If you're not planning to tackle it yourself, synopsis and assessment with suggestions for "talking points" will be posted in a future E-Blast that you may consider to use in your personal comment.

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Palen Solar Electric Generating System: not happening!

Incredibly good news: the Palen Solar Project has been withdrawn by proposed developer, BrightSource. The project formerly slated for the eastern edge of Joshua Tree National Park would have had disastrous effects on the environment impacting 1,900 acres with a mega-tower, thousands of ground mounted mirrors. Birds, tortoise and humans are breathing a sigh of relief!

Chevron Solar project: not happening!

More good news: the 516-acre Chevron Solar project approved in 2010 for construction on BLM land has also been withdrawn. The Scenic 247 Committee of the Homestead Valley Community Council particularly applauds the withdrawal of this project. It lay within the scenic corridor of Highway 247, along Santa Fe Fire Trail Road, east of Lucerne Valley.

As previously reported....

Altamira Housing Project: comment period extended

Don't delay in sending your comments to ensure they are received by the date of the Public Hearing before the Planning Commission. While the cut-off date is yet to be verified, it is anticipated as early as November. See [MBCA's website](#) for project specific documents obtained from the County, assessments by MBCA, and information for submitting your comments.

Returning Eagle Mountain to Joshua Tree National Park

Kaiser is going all out in a final effort to retain Eagle Mountain mining rights. This is a crucial point in the fight for restoring the land in the Eagle Mountains back to JTNP! Background information can be found in news stories on Eagle Mountain published by [KCDZ radio](#) and the [Los Angeles Times](#).

The BLM conducted a public meeting ("Scoping Eagle Mountain Land Exchange SEIS in Riverside County") last week to take public input. Written comments will be accepted until October 16, 2014. Look in the next E-Blast for details with suggested "talking points" & where to send comments.

Thanks again for your continuing interest and support!

Sincerely,
Sarah Kennington, President

Your 2014 MBCA Board

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www.mbconservation.org

*MBCA advocates for a healthy desert environment
that nurtures our rural character, cultural wealth,
and economic well-being.*