

MBCA Advisors and Directors have been hard at work this summer meeting in daylong Retreats assessing past efforts and to plan for the future. As the challenges before us continue to mount, MBCA efforts remain strong and directed. Thanks to all who attended those meetings, as well as to our Members and Supporters for your interest and participation in pursuit of quality of life issues in the Morongo Basin.

After a hiatus since the last E-Blast, lots of news to report!

**MARK YOUR CALENDARS FOR THESE EVENTS:**

***Self-Guided Tour of Marine Corps "company objective areas" in Johnson Valley Off-Highway Vehicle's Shared Use Area***

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**Saturday, September 6, from 7:30 AM -11:00 AM**

The Marine Corps will conduct large-scale training activities twice a year in a Shared Use Area in Johnson Valley's OHV Open Riding Area for 30-day periods.

Residents and OHV community concerns remain about how the Marine Corps Combat Center (MCCC) will provide adequate advance notification to the public prior to their operations, how BLM will mark / sign the area to avoid accidental trespass into the area's tremendous perimeter, and what can be done about property damage, frightened animals and noise.

To learn more & comment about the proposed company objective areas, representatives from the Marine Corps and BLM will be at each of the proposed locations. An area will be marked to give a visual reference of the anticipated impact of a 22-acre company objective site. 4-WHEEL-DRIVE access required!

GPS co-ordinates of proposed company objective areas

Objective #1, Near Los Padres Mine: 116.504, 34.449402

Objective #2, North of Means Lake, near the entrance to Backdoor Trail:  
116.516, 34.425999

Objective #3, Further north: 116.441, 34.391399

If you have questions or comments, contact:

- Katrina Symons, Field Manager Barstow Field Office, BLM.  
760-252-6004 Email: [ksymons@blm.gov](mailto:ksymons@blm.gov); or
- Marine Corps Air Ground Combat Center Public Affairs Office,  
760-830-6213 [SMBPLMSWEBPAO@usmc.mil](mailto:SMBPLMSWEBPAO@usmc.mil)

\* Contact the BLM for maps of the objectives in the Shared Use Area, and the legislation relating to the Marine Base expansion.

Thanks to Betty Munson in Johnson Valley for keeping us informed!

***Municipal Advisory Committee (MAC) Regular Open-Session Meeting***

**Monday, September 8th, 6:30 PM, Joshua Tree Community Center, 6171 Sunburst Ave., JT, CA 92252** (see below: "Alta Mira Gated Housing Project")

***Film Premier: "Who Are My People?"***

**Saturday, September 13; Astronomy Arts Theatre, Joshua Tree**

Open air screening: doors open at 7:00 PM, program begins at 7:30 PM.

Donations welcome. Information: [jtaat@rocketmail.com](mailto:jtaat@rocketmail.com), <http://jtaat.com>

Filmmaker Robert Lundahl documents Native American culture in the Mojave and Colorado Deserts and the fight to protect sacred geoglyph sites along the Colorado River. The ancient Blythe Intaglios are giant Earth drawings of human forms, geometries, and pictorial representations that embody the world-view of tribal communities and cultures. Several geoglyphs located on BLM lands have been destroyed by solar energy development. Over twenty remaining ancient sites are endangered. Program includes music & food. Filmmaker & indigenous elders will be present.

**MBCA Board of Directors meeting**

**Thursday, September 11<sup>th</sup>, 5:00 –7:00 PM, Yucca Valley Community Center**

All interested are welcome to attend!

**State Mining and Geology Board hearing**

**Wednesday, October 1<sup>st</sup>, Palm Desert**

(details follow: "Eagle Mountain battle continue")

**CONSERVATION NEWS:**

**Alta Mira Gated Housing project re-surfaces**

"Alta Mira Gated Community" is proposed by developers to consist of 248 single family houses, 40 multi-family units and a clubhouse on 105 acres surrounded by a wall with one unguarded gate entrance card activated by the residents.

The location on Sunny Vista Rd. surrounds Friendly Hills Elementary School to the North and West, to the West of Sunny Vista Rd. and to the North of Alta Loma Rd.

Fierce community opposition was voiced when the project became public in February 2009 at the JT MAC meeting. The approximately 110 people in attendance voiced their strong opposition. After a 5-year hiatus, developers are now attempting a comeback.

The next opportunity for updated status will be the Municipal Advisory Committee (MAC) meeting, **September 8th, 6:30, Joshua Tree Community Center.**

MBCA will continue opposition to this inappropriate development that is out of keeping with JT Community Plan and the Basin's conservation values. As information becomes available, it will be provided via the MBCA E-Blast.

**SPARC completes second round of public workshops**

Approximately thirty-five citizens participated August 21<sup>st</sup> in the second SPARC (San Bernardino County Partnership for Renewable Energy & Conservation) workshop held in Yucca Valley.

SPARC objective: create a new Renewable and Conservation Element of San Bernardino County's General Plan. The goal: move the County's regulatory system into a new era of

strategic renewal energy and conservation productivity.

Residents reiterated their desires to keep industrial scale renewable energy development out of the Morongo Basin. The County was again encouraged to provide incentives for distributed generation (DG) rooftop alternatives. It's important for the Supervisors to hear us loud and clear as they prepare to draft the renewable energy component of the County General Plan.

We have to get this right & not enough voices have communicated to the County Board of Supervisors with the Basin's desire to preserve our rural residential character and ensure the pristine landscapes remain intact! If you did not attend a workshop, please go online to register your perspective and view results from the SPARC workshop presentations: [SPARCForum.org](http://SPARCForum.org)

### ***Eagle Mountain battle continue***

#### **State Mining and Geology Board hearing, October 1<sup>st</sup>, Palm Desert**

The Desert Protection Society (DPS) sends news of the ongoing battle to protect Eagle Mountain. After several years of wrangling with lobbyists and attorneys, the mine was again granted active status. DPS is challenging the ruling.

As reported in the [Los Angeles Times](#) (August 30, 2014) Thomas Ferrero, a senior engineering geologist in the California Department of Conservation's Office of Mine Reclamation is under investigation for alleged conflicts of interest. The Times article states: *The complaints also allege that Ferrero falsified a state mine inspection report in 2012 about the Kaiser Eagle Mountain Mine in Riverside County at the direction of Jason Marshall, chief deputy director of the conservation department. In that case, Ferrero's report omitted several violations documented in an earlier inspection by state geologists. Those violations would have prevented Kaiser from reactivating the mine, which had been closed since the early 1990s.*

DPS and members of the public requested the State Mining and Geology Board (SMGB) hold a public hearing to take testimony on the nefarious actions of Department of Conservation. The DPS request stated: *"The Eagle Mountain Mine has served the purpose intended by Congress when it conveyed to Kaiser Steel authorization to mine iron ore in Joshua Tree National Park. Having fulfilled its purpose, it is time to make Joshua Tree National Park whole again."*

Efforts were successful: SMGB scheduled a hearing for October 1<sup>st</sup> in Palm Desert. MBCA will broadcast details (location & agenda) in an E-Blast as they become available.

In addition to requesting public attendance and support at the October hearing, DPS asks for donations to cover legal costs. DPS attorneys have worked over fifteen years successfully prosecuting in defense of Eagle Mountain. While their fees are drastically below their standard rate due to "the public interest nature of this case," they are owed over \$90,000. for previous work in the dump litigation.

All contributions to DPS will go towards the battle for Eagle Mountain and are tax-

deductible to the fullest extent permitted by law. You may send a donation to:  
Desert Protection Society, PO BOX 321, Desert Center, CA 92239

This is hopeful news. MBCA will continue to work with DPS to ensure Eagle Mountain is returned to Joshua Tree National Park!

### **Desert Water for Coastal Lawns: Cadiz Water Harvesting update**

A recent judgment backed and expanded a previous finding that held it was appropriate for the Santa Margarita Water District to remain the lead agency overseeing the environmental impact study for Cadiz Inc.'s proposed Cadiz Valley Water Conservation, Recovery and Storage Project. The Cadiz Inc. plan envisions pumping water from the aquifer near the California border with Nevada, to Orange County. Cadiz Inc. calls this a sustainable water conservation project – saving the aquifer's water from evaporation. The conservation community counters it is a flawed hydrological assessment. It is an aggressive scheme to mine ground water from the Mojave Desert with dire consequences to the eco-system. Harvesting the water to service Orange County's swimming pools and grass lawns! Until this point in the wrangling, California environmental law / CEQA (California Environmental Quality Act) has overseen the process.

However, there is also good news to report: BLM has offered an "instructional memo" outlining the process by which the Cadiz Corporation must comply with railroad right-of-way requirements. If BLM determines that the Cadiz project does not further the railroad purpose, federal environmental law / NEPA (National Environmental Protection Act) will be mandated. This is gratifying to those working to deny this ill-advised water grab: BLM would be the lead agency during NEPA; the public will have the opportunity to comment; and will ensure that "good science" is used in decision-making.

Again, we'll keep you posted to let you know when it's time again to comment and object to this project moving forward!

### **Scenic Highway 247 status sought**

We told you last month that MBCA had endorsed Homestead Valley Community Council and Morongo Basin Historical Society's efforts to designate highway 247 a Scenic California Highway. The [Scenic Highway 247](#) committee's goal is to preserve the scenic beauty and remarkable history of this unique route, originally established by wagon wheels. Good news to report: both the Johnson Valley and the Morongo Basin MACs have joined the list of organizations endorsing Scenic Highway 247 and encouraging the County Board of Supervisors to work with Caltrans to create the long overdue designation.

The Scenic 247 Committee welcomes organizations and businesses to [join](#) the list of supporters.

### **MBCA sponsored Candidates Virtual Forum**

MBCA will be inviting candidates for the California 42<sup>nd</sup> Assembly, Joshua Basin Water District, Hi-Desert Water District, Twentynine Palms City Council and Yucca Valley Town Council to participate in a Virtual Forum online.

Each candidate will have the opportunity to respond to three questions that relate to MBCA's Mission. Candidates' responses will be posted on MBCA's website no later than mid-October, one month prior to the elections. We will alert you in an E-Blast when the Forum is online, along with the link to it.

Thanks for your continuing interest and support!

Sincerely,  
Sarah Kennington, President

Your 2014 MBCA Board

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Steve Bardwell, Treasurer  
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[www.mbconservation.org](http://www.mbconservation.org)

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