

MBCA BOARD MEETING **APPROVED** MINUTES
Thursday April 8, 2021 / 5:00 – 7:00 pm - Via Zoom

Black Bold Italics = Board vote *Blue Italics = action commitment*

Regular Meeting Call to Order: 5:12 pm

<u>_x_ Steve Bardwell</u>	<u>_x_ Brian Hammer</u>	<u>_x_ Arch McCulloch</u>
<u>_x_ David Fick</u>	<u>_x_ Janet Johnston</u>	<u>_x_ Ruth Rieman</u>
<u>_x_ Pat Flanagan</u>	<u>_x_ Sarah Kennington</u>	<u>_x_ Laraine Turk</u>
<u>_x_ Meg Foley</u>	<u>_x_ Mike Lipsitz</u>	<u>_x_ Cathy Zarakov</u>
<u>Social media consultants:</u> <u>_x_ Aimee Buyea</u> <u>_x_ Stacy Doolittle</u>		

Introduction of Guests and Board Directors

Agenda approval

Pat asked to add cannabis grows in the Conservation Issues agenda item. ***Steve moved to approve the topic of cannabis grows. Pat seconded, and all were in favor. (12-0)***

Minutes from March, 2021 BOD meeting

Steve moved to approve the March minutes. Pat seconded, all were in favor. (12-0)

Treasurer's Report

Cathy and Marina have another training meeting planned. There has been a small amount of recent activity: a \$50 donation, and 4 memberships totaling \$80. The balance in checking is \$55,564.61; the CD balance is \$22,763.46. The CD comes to maturity in May, so the Board needs to decide whether to roll it over or take other action. Last month we received the first Amazon Smile payment of \$5.71. More financials will be provided after Cathy & Marina's meeting.

Steve talked with US Bank about getting Cathy set up as signatory. They need minutes from December and January on letterhead to authorize the changeover. ***Steve moved to remove Marina West as signatory on the MBCA account at US Bank and add Cathy Zarakov. Sarah seconded, and all were in favor. (12-0)***

Capacity Building & Organizational Issues

2) *mbconservation.org* /

Social Media update– Stacy and Aimee

Stacy reported usage analytics from the website. The Native Plant Nurseries page was viewed 36 times last month, indicating we're on the right track for expanding that area on our website. There were 974 users in the last 30 days. Stacy noted there is a conservation organization on the Base and they started following us on Facebook. She will try to track down more information.

Aimee reported we're gaining followers. Laraine thanked her for several great FB posts in March.

Website – LT, CZ, ML, SB

There was a Web Team meeting Monday, and another planned in about 2 weeks. Laraine displayed a number of new or expanded pages being edited or developed by Stacy and Nora, with Team input. Most are focused on categories of Desert-Wise Living and MBCA Takes a

Stand (comment letters). Steve suggests sending out the Ten Tips for Desert-Wise Living page to everyone for suggestions of added content.

Comment letter history – LT, ML, SK

The Board is happy with the new “MBCA Takes a Stand” method of highlighting MBCA’s comment letters that will take the place of the list of comment letters currently on the site.

3) *Events Committee reports:*

2021 virtual landscape tour

Update on schedule of videography of sites

Contract with Half Circle G

Stacy reported that the schedule is set for videography of the 6 sites, the first one this coming Monday in 29 Palms at the Mendoza home. Steve will be there to bring a check for videographer Cole and copies of the agreements for signing. For subsequent sites, Stacy is open to having Board members attend if interested. Stacy will send the schedule to everyone and interested members should contact her.

Thank you to water agencies

Steve also suggests we make a presentation to each water agency to give them a thank you for their financial support, virtually or in person. We would show the video of the site/s from their agency. *Steve will work on scheduling those presentations. Pat will attend 29 Palms Water District, Arch for Golden State, Steve for MWA and JBWD, Cathy for HDWD, Ruth for BDVWA.* Pat asked that there be a background letter.

4) *Educational support*

Denison Scholarship – SB, LT, PF

Laraine reported that no applications have been received. We agreed that the COVID situation probably had some effect due to less personal contact with students. Janet and Meg are both communicating with others to try contacting potential students. *Laraine will resend the press release announcing a new deadline of May 1.*

MBCA support of field trips via Karin Messaros – JJ, LT, MF

Karin, former Park employee, has met with several Board members and offered to financially support educational programs through MBCA. She is open to both scholarships and school field trip support.

Janet described the hoped-for field trip scenario, focused on the 2 district middle schools. She noted that sixth graders at elementary have a weeklong science class, and ninth graders have a biology class, but there’s not much science in middle school. The County Parks and Rec department overseeing DVCA (Section 6) is interested.

We’d like to connect with MDLT and CMC. MDLT already works with CMC for interns. We would suggest the intern be the camp counselor for field trips. Janet has a friend T Walsh that runs a climbing school for school age kids who would like to help with this. Activities would be climbing, biking, and hiking. They envision maybe 2 groups of 8 for a one-day field trip including education (science and/or PE) and experience, with some independence but supervised. She will talk more with teachers. A goal for inaugurating the program is spring 2022.

Other content/education suggestions included Leave No Trace education, desert orientation, and later field trips to desert wise gardens, learning to read maps, and geolocating within the Basin especially in the DVCA. Thanks to Janet for her enthusiastic support and work on this.

Conservation Issues

1) ADDED: Cannabis grows in 29 Palms – Pat

Pat had two grows near her and has talked with Supervisor Rowe's rep Mark Lundquist to ask what can be done. Lucerne Valley is inundated with them. It was recently reported that 12 growers were taken down in the 29 Palms area. When Proposition 64 passed, growing was made a misdemeanor. It's legal to grow in Riverside but not in SB County. Sometimes it's difficult to find the landowner. It's extremely un-environmental, with poison chemicals, dust, excessive use of water and power, ordinance violations, etc., badly affecting nearby neighborhoods. It needs to become a felony. Some of her neighbors are keeping track using drones. Growers dig down behind walls to hide. Steve Reyes of the Morongo Basin Municipal Advisory Council Chair will put up a resolution at the May meeting.

Brian reported that near his residence in Lucerne Valley there are well over 100 grow sites that you can see on Google Earth, east of the lakebed and up towards the northern valley. From his property they can see 4 active sites. One site used rodenticide and 3 foxes died as a result. Pat noted we'll probably have to start dealing with Sacramento as well as the County. Brian added that it's now "catch and release," with only a \$500 fine. They're often using diesel generators and excessive lighting. Steve suggested we enlist Congressman Obernolte. Brian agreed, it's a federal issue, as product is sold across state lines. Brian added that there are some permits to grow limited amounts in certain conditions and there are a few legal growers doing the right thing, going through lots of hoops, but there are many more illegally.

2) JT listing as candidacy for threatened – SB, PF, LT

Nothing new. Local resident Marinna Wagner has become a certified arborist.

3) Air Quality Monitoring: Location of Purple Air units – SK, AM

Nothing new.

4) Light Trespass ordinance update –SB

Through Claire Cozad of Dawn Rowe's office, Steve got in touch with Jonathon Weldy, chair of the Planning Commission to talk about how to move forward. The PC asked for a workshop to help explain the need, enforcement and content of the proposed ordinance. The LUS planner Magda Gonzalez who presented did not have a lot of information or experience with this topic but is interested in working with us. Aimee is providing the recording of the PC meeting to inform how to go forward. Steve is involving all prior District Dark Sky Committee people plus some new people, e.g. MDLT/Suzy Boyd.

Partner with Sky's the Limit or SCDVA for virtual night viewing.

Nothing new yet. Possibly connect with Tom O'Key and/or Anne Congdon.

5) Carbon sequestration in the desert. – PF, BH

Brian has done an analysis of soil types of RE developments in SB County. During Steve's time with reported Mark Olalde on the AutoCamp interview, Mark offered Steve to bring up other issues of interest. This might be one to share with him. Brian explained that NRCS did the soils work, and Pat did the analysis of the soil types that would generate dust, and he brought them together which is so much more useful than separately. Thank you Brian!!

Stacy suggested that this partnership would be great news on social media. Pat has been working with MDLT and Sierra Club and Defenders of Wildlife on a paper summarizing issues of carbon sequestration in the desert to send to the State in support of the 30-30 plan. Their final version should be completed soon, with MBCA's name on it. She's glad to

have SC and Defenders in on this because they've usually been less critically supportive of all RE. They're also bringing in Robin Kobaly and her Desert Underground work and others to make the case more broadly.

Steve asked Brian to put together a synopsis about his project – in collaboration with Pat – and we'll look forward to publishing the paper Pat's working on.

6) Big Morongo Canyon Preserve – MF

Meg has developed a letter regarding AB 1190, relating to conveyance of nearby lands from the County to BLM, and she will circulate it for sign-on. The existing bill doesn't really show the impacts. Meg also announced that she will have to leave the area for a while and a replacement for her at BMCP was hired this morning, Jocelyn Silverlight, who was a camp host at JTNP last year and wants to get into conservation work. A lot of serendipity made it happen and it's a relief for Meg. There will be a BMCP work day on April 24, from 9-12.

7) Salton Sea update – LT

Laraine gave a brief overview of a webinar she attended on the Sea. While there has been very slow progress by the state, it appears to be picking up, and communities are getting more and more involved. Lithium mining is a newer topic and issue for the area. Sarah reminded us that past speaker Val Simon was involved in this and could perhaps be a contact if needed.

Outreach & Communications

1) MBCA press coverage – SB, LT, PF

Steve and Sarah talked about how, within the Desert News article on Autocamp, Steve asked about where the Autocamp workers are going to live, and did the same at the JBWD meeting. This housing availability issue is not specifically our mission, but relates to quality of life, so we should continue to raise it for more exposure, and hopefully more action.

Janet spoke about the new issue of teacher recruitment. MUSD has recruited teachers from across the country, especially at middle school level. The cost of living locally used to be low and therefore the jobs were attractive, but now new young teachers are disadvantaged by rising costs and no raises. Sarah asked, if we raise it as an issue, where do we point for action? Is that an issue MBCA wants to take on? It is tied into General Plan and EIRs and ordinances. We'll continue to discuss this.

2) MAC updates – SB, PF

Steve reported that the MAC is set to meet every other month now, which doesn't seem enough. It will continue to be the second Monday; the next one is May 10, 5:30 PM.

3) Countywide Plan, Housing Element update, CAGs, - SB, JJ, PF

Steve asked how we should raise the STR issue and resultant housing crisis to the state. Planning and land use are certainly within our mission statement. We should enlist support from state representatives, especially Chad Mayes, perhaps Shannon Grove. The housing element update should require reporting of STRs as part of the housing stock accounting.

3) Net Electric Metering 3.0 – SB

Steve participated in a conference by Save California Solar which is tracking AB 1139 and trying to get as many as possible to sign on to a petition to the Governor. *Steve will send a link to offer the opportunity to sign on.* Utilities are trying to cut back on owners' reimbursement for power sent back into the grid. The three biggest utilities are almost like a monopoly. This would cut back on encouraging rooftop and distributed solar. They blame

rooftop solar for raising utility costs, but we know their focus is transmission, not rooftop. They're looking for 100,000 signatures by August.

4) Request from Jen Kolm of JTNP for possible assistance – PF
Nothing new.

5) Support Friends of the Inyo re: Conglomerate Mesa
Steve expressed our support for Friends of the Inyo and they'll provide more information.

6) Climate change. Include topic our website. – All
We plan to put a webpage up about Climate Change.

Steve received email during this meeting: A judge has just issued a ruling on Tejon Ranch, blocking the Tejon Ranch Centennial project as a risk to wildlife. This is very good news. Sarah noted that CNPS had a lot to do with the Tejon Ranch victory and for their advocacy they were banned from the property!

Pat suggested we join Friends of the Inyo. **David moved we donate \$100 to Friends of the Inyo, becoming a member. Brian seconded and all were in favor. (12-0)**
Should we consider joining other organizations? Steve will add this as an agenda item next month.

Meeting adjourned at 7:04.

Arch reported that on April 17 CNPS will do some native planting at High Desert Nature Museum.

Letters signed onto:

Letter in support of AB 223 for protection of Dudleya.

Next Regular Meeting: Thursday, May 13, 2021 5:00 – 7:00 PM ZOOM stay tuned!
