



BORREGO SPRINGS DARK SKY COALITION 2017 ANNUAL REPORT to the International Dark-Sky Association

This year saw a definite increase in the awareness of the public about the dark sky and its importance. Several important businesses approached our Borrego Springs Dark Sky Coalition directly to request help in correcting their lighting. Many visitors tell us they come to Borrego Springs specifically because it is a Dark Sky Community, including photographers interested in night-time photography, who through their art bring attention to the beauty and value of this treasured resource. An excellent promotional piece for Borrego Springs features the dark sky. <http://www.visitcalifornia.com/dream365tv/stargazing-anza-borrego-desert-state-park>



LIGHTING SUCCESSES & CHALLENGES

LED Street Lighting – In our report last year, we wrote, “Thirteen street fixtures have been replaced with bright white LED lighting. San Diego County has taken no action at this point to reduce the wattage in spite of our complaint and their promise to do so. We continue to be in contact with the staff person in charge traffic safety and street lighting for San Diego County.” We are pleased to report this update that San Diego County traffic safety personnel demonstrated that new LED street lighting in eighteen fixtures have been reduced by half. The county plans to explore options to reduce the

streetlights even further during late nights using motion-sensor technology, and they would like to test the motion-sensor technology in Borrego Springs when it becomes available.

Local Hotel and RV Park – Replaced all of their objectionable white globe outdoor passage lighting with red/amber. This made a huge difference, since their location is at a primary entry point to the Borrego Valley. The manager also requested our Coalition’s input on new Bar & Grill signs planned for two sides of the building. They are back-lit in red and are dark-sky compliant.

The Mall and The Center – These are the two largest shopping areas in Borrego Springs, and are owned by the same person. Following the contact we initiated last year, the owner approached our Coalition for help in selecting new lighting for the parking lots of both shopping areas. We sourced a lighting engineer in San Diego, who is also a dark-sky lighting expert, who has offered his help with evaluation and recommendations.

Continuing problem with one restaurant – Following a lighting code complaint with San Diego County in 2016, the lighting was adjusted. However, during 2017, it was returned to an overly bright situation, which requires further action by the Coalition.

COMMUNITY OUTREACH

Farmer’s Market Table – A display staffed by Coalition members most weeks has been very successful. It is our main point of contact with both residents and visitors. There was a lot of interest in the stargazing handout and details of the total solar eclipse of Aug. 21, 2017. It was clear that most were already aware of Borrego’s Dark Sky Community Certification.

T-Shirts – Custom t-shirts with our logo were created for Coalition members by our graphics designer. They have been useful for those staffing the Farmer’s Market display and admired by the public.



Coalition members model custom t-shirts at the Borrego Springs Farmer’s Market.

Photo © Tom Hogan

“Borrego Springs, An International Dark Sky Community” Street Signs – Contact has been made with the San Diego County Department of Public Works Traffic Engineering regarding having signs placed at the four main roadway entry points into our town. While an effort was not successful in the past, our most recent request has been approved by the County, and we expect the new signs to be installed before the end of this year.

BUSINESS INTERACTION

Night Sky Friendly Business Recognition Program – Four more Borrego businesses were certified as Dark Sky Friendly in recognition of excellence in nighttime lighting: a motel, a real estate office, an RV resort, and a research center. Each business was recognized in our local newspaper, website, and awarded framed certificates for display.

Email to Borrego Businesses – We composed an email sent to 63 local businesses, which included examples of appropriate advertising signs, a reminder of our lighting standards, and information about the Night Sky Friendly Business Recognition Program. Additional mailings and personal contacts will be made next year.

WEBSITE -- Our website, BorregoDarkSkies.org, is updated by a Coalition member who is a professional graphic designer. The site includes publications developed by the Coalition, the San Diego County lighting ordinance, publicity about Borrego’s dark sky and the IDA certification, a calendar of programs and events, and listings of sky-related educational activities for residents and visitors. We had an extremely busy year due to a spectacular wildflower bloom, so the website received 7,500 unique visits for the year, twice as many as last year.

Our Facebook page, www.facebook.com/BorregoSpringsDarkSkyCoalition, with 331 Likes (up from 219 last report), is another source of up to date information about astronomy events and stargazing programs for the public.

DARK SKY REGION

Helping Other Communities – Whenever possible, Coalition members interact with others who request information on how to become certified as a Dark Sky Place. This can be at the Farmers Market, by email, or chance meeting. This year we made a presentation to a group in the nearby town of Julian, Calif., about becoming certified as a Dark Sky Community. We remain in contact with the leaders of the Julian group. We are in communication with the coordinator of the Colorado Plateau Dark Sky Cooperative in Salt Lake City about our business recognition program. *Helping other communities has been a very rewarding aspect of being an IDA Dark Sky Community.*

Anza-Borrego Desert State Park Application to the IDA – Since the nearby town of Julian and the surrounding Anza-Borrego Desert State Park are preparing to apply for Dark Sky status, it is hoped that we will be part of a new **Dark Sky Region**, and will work together to preserve the dark night sky and provide more stargazing opportunities for visitors region- and world-wide.

PUBLICITY

Architectural Record Magazine, New York – Senior Editor Linda Lentz features the dark sky lighting design of a custom home in Borrego Springs in her Aug. 2016 article with amazing photos of top international lighting designs.

AAA Oregon’s Via – The July-August 2017 *Via* article, “Star Treks,” featuring the best stargazing sites in the West, highlights Borrego Springs as one of “eight brilliant spots where the night sky is the best show around.”



EDUCATION, PUBLIC PROGRAMS

Members of our Coalition regularly present stargazing and astronomy programs in Borrego Springs for the public throughout the year.

COALITION DETAILS – The Coalition currently has thirteen members. We hold six meetings yearly. When not in Borrego, three members attend by Skype. Within

our Coalition is a designated committee chair for community lighting standards. Two members phone in to attend some meetings of the San Diego Chapter of the IDA.

Submitted by Betsy Knaak, Chair, P.O. Box 310, Borrego Springs, California 92004-0310, www.BorregoDarkSkies.org, on behalf of the Borrego Springs Dark Sky Coalition Members: Maris Brancheau, Eli Hanks, William Hanks, Dorothy Hogan, Dennis Mammana, Christopher O’Keefe, Dr. Jim Rickard, Grace Rickard (Committee Chair, Community Lighting Standards), Sally Theriault, Clark Volmar, Jean Volmar, and Sam Webb.