

BORREGO SPRINGS DARK SKY COALITION

Report to the International Dark Sky Association

2011-2012

BACKGROUND

- July 31, 2009, the International Dark-Sky Association designates Borrego Springs, CA, USA, the second International Dark Sky Community (IDSC) in the world.
- Borrego Springs is recognized for its exceptional commitment to dark sky protection and restoration throughout the community.
- The successful community application was a two-year effort by the volunteers who make up the Borrego Spring Dark Sky Coalition.
- A formal presentation was held on October 24, 2009, when IDA representatives presented the community of Borrego Springs with the designation.

DARK SKY PROTECTION EFFORTS

Examples of our recent efforts to work with local business owners and managers to provide night-sky friendly lighting and reduce light pollution in Borrego Springs:

- Secured commitment from the Vice President of Solar Development for the **NRG Borrego Solar Project** to minimized permanent lighting on the project; to provide shading for fixtures; to point fixtures down; and to use a motion sensor at the facility's entrance.
- **Synergy Company** installing residential outdoor fixtures for San Diego Gas & Electric – changed to installing shielded outdoor fixtures at our request.
- **Wells Fargo Bank** – authorized a company representative to reduce lighting and add shades to the two bright wall-packs, while staying within required specifications for ATMs.
- A **Local Lodging** Establishment – lighting reduced on their entrance sign.

New Brochure for 2013….

The Borrego Dark Sky Coalition producing a brochure about Borrego Springs dark skies, the IDA designation, and night-sky friendly outdoor lighting for distribution throughout the community in 2013.







Example of Documentation

We documented the excessively bright lights and light trespass were documented at the **Borrego Medical Center**. We are currently working with the administrators to improve the lighting.

"*Thank you for your welcoming letter. NRG Energy is excited about becoming a member of the Borrego Springs Community and, as a new neighbor, is supportive of your coalition and the efforts you have made to protect the night sky. As a solar energy generation facility, most all of our operations will be during the daylight hours. But, we were aware of the unique requirements during the development of the Borrego Solar 1 project and have integrated "Dark Sky" into its design.*"

Vice President of Solar Development

NRG Borrego Solar Project

July 2012

DARK SKY: BORREGO SPREADING THE WORD

Borrego Dark Sky Coalition members hosted **South Korean documentary filmmakers** in July 2011. Director Young Soo Kim (on the right) made a stop in Borrego Springs to film "For Those Who Have Been Deprived of Night Sky" an hour-long film for the South Korean PBS TV. "The hope," Kim said, "is for South Korea to make laws that bring the dark skies back."





Borrego Sun

Article reprint, October 13, 2011 edition

Dark skies can add sparkle to local tourism, astronomer says

By Casey Jones

It sounds almost too good to be true. "The night sky is free, and you can sell it. People will come here and pay to stay and see your dark skies."

That came from Steve Owens, the 2010 International Dark Skies Astronomer of the Year, and he should know.

Owens has been visiting official dark sky parks and communities in North America, studying the growth of astronomy tourism. He met with area hoteliers and tourism officials Sept. 26, giving pointers on how to best capitalize on Borrego Springs's official designation as an International Dark Sky Community.

To attract stargazers and amateur astronomers, Owens said, you have to understand the breed and cater to their needs by providing 10 simple necessities.

"Dark skies" topped Owens "Ten Things You Need" for Astro-tourism list. Not a problem in Borrego.

Owens took a measurement with a light meter in Borrego Springs on Sept. 27. A reading of 22 is the darkest possible. Borrego, Owens said, scored a 21.3.

Which makes some other dark sky locations, Owens said Borrego is blessed with cloudless nights. "You've got really clear skies most of the time. It's the perfect combination."

Good lighting is also a must, Owens said. Stargazers like resorts where the lights point downward and owners respect dark skies.

The rest is simple:

Provide warm clothing for visitors who come unprepared for chilly desert nights. Offer hot drinks after a night of stargazing. Make sure guests have access to the building at all hours, because astronomers are night owls, and provide a dark place for viewing on the property.

Put astronomy books and resource materials in your lobby. Provide flashlights with red filters as guests can walk at night. Make binoculars available. And provide transportation to popular stargazing areas.

"You don't need to invest much time and money in gathering these things, and it will make your guests

See TOURISM, Page 7

Elementary students urged to appreciate Borrego's dark sky

By Casey Jones

Borrego Springs kids should thank their lucky stars, astronomer Steve Owens told third- through fifth-grade students at Borrego Springs Elementary School Sept. 27. The heavens are at their doorstep.

"How do you get to one of the darkest places on Earth? Just step outside your door," Owens told about 720 students and guests in the school multipurpose room.

The visiting astronomer from Glasgow, Scotland, traveled thousands of miles to see what Borrego's sky looked night.

Owens is traveling to all of North America's official dark sky parks and communities, and studying how locations capitalize on the designation to attract tourists.

But he took time to teach Borrego



STEVE Owens, acclaimed dark skies astronomer, answers questions about astronomy from Borrego Springs Elementary School students after a presentation Sept. 27

TOURISM: 'Huge' potential for businesses

Continued from Page 3

happy," Owens advised.

Area hotels and restaurants already reap the rewards of Borrego's dark skies, if not the town's more recent official dark skies designation.

Since 1993 the Riverside Astronomical Society's "Nightlife" star party has drawn 1,000 to 1,500 Oct. 27-30 at Palm Canyon Resort, has helped put heads on hotel beds.

And resort operators told Owens that occupancy rises during special astronomical events, like the Perseid meteor shower in August.

But there's the potential for attracting a steady stream of Southern Californios, as well as tourists visiting the region, whose own night skies are bathed in city lights, Owens said.

"In Los Angeles," laughed Shirley Grose of Palm Canyon Resort, "you can't even see the moon."

Owens predicted that Borrego's fledgling astro-tourism industry will continue to grow.

"There's certainly huge potential here. The dark sky movement is very recent and Borrego Springs is at the forefront of the effort," Owens said.

"If I come to Borrego Springs in 10 years, I think dark skies will be as big as wildflowers."

See STAR, Page 20

STAR: Astronomer traveling to dark sky communities, reserves

Continued from Page 7

Astronomer of the Year.

Parks ships between the school and Anza-Borrego Desert State Park, the Anza-Borrego Desert Natural History Association and other local organizations often result in unique, informative presentations and programs for students.

"We're a small, country school with big-city programs," Dutchler said.

Borrego Dark Sky Coalition members hosted **Steve Owens, visiting astronomer from Glasgow, Scotland,** the UK coordinator for the International Year of Astronomy in 2009. Steve was awarded the International Dark-Skies Astronomer of the Year 2010 award. He visited Borrego Springs as the Winston Churchill Travelling Fellow on tour of all North American Dark Sky Places.

While in Borrego Springs in September 2011, Steve met with the Dark Sky Coalition, presented a program to business owners about Dark Sky Astro-Tourism, and gave an excellent program at an all-school assembly at Borrego Springs Elementary about the universe and the dark night sky.

PROGRAMS & EVENTS

Special **school programs** in cooperation with NightFall

Participation in the **Julian Star Fest**

Borrego **Energy Day** programs

Talk by Scott Kardel on the history of **Palomar Observatory**

Participation in the **San Diego IDA** Chapter meetings and the October 2012 public program in San Diego

Interview on **KPBS** Public Radio

Articles in the *San Diego Union-Tribune* **Newspaper**: "Borrego Leads Dark-Sky Movement" and "Dimming the Lights at Night"



Star programs are offered throughout the year.



Borrego Days Parade….Proving that Borrego Springs is "Not Afraid of the Dark!"

