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Torrey Earns Utah's First International Dark Sky Community Designation

TORREY, Utah (January 12, 2018) – If an entire community could earn a gold star for good conduct, then the town of Torrey, Utah, has done just that. The International Dark Sky Association (IDA) awarded that star today by officially recognizing Torrey as Utah's first International Dark Sky Community. Only 18 communities in the world have achieved this distinction.

An IDA International Dark Sky Community is a town, city, municipality or other legally organized community that has shown exceptional dedication to the preservation of the night sky through the implementation and enforcement of a quality outdoor lighting ordinance, dark sky education and citizen support of dark skies. International Dark Sky Communities excel in their efforts to promote responsible lighting and dark sky stewardship, and set good examples for surrounding communities.

Torrey is situated adjacent to Capitol Reef National Park, which was designated an IDA International Dark Sky Park in 2015. It is the first such U.S. national park 'gateway community' to earn the International Dark Sky Community designation. Torrey's new status is therefore key to preserving abundant natural nighttime darkness in Capitol Reef.

"As Torrey joins the IDA family today, together we take a major step forward in achieving an important goal of the International Dark Sky Places Program to join parks and neighboring communities in dedication to preserving their shared night skies," said IDA Executive Director J. Scott Feierabend. "Torrey has proven its commitment to protecting this resource for the benefit of both its residents and national park visitors."

The stars began to align for Torrey when Capitol Reef was designated an International Dark Sky Park. This prompted Torrey residents, friends, and citizens from across Wayne County, Utah, to hitch their wagon to the International Dark Sky Park by working toward International Dark Sky Community status. In turn, the Torrey Town Council implemented an outdoor lighting ordinance, which requires street and building lighting to be shielded and directed toward the ground.

"While those who came before us left us our dark night skies to love, now we leave a legacy to generations of future residents of this special place we proudly call home," explained Torrey Mayor Scott Chestnut. "We've often been accused of being 'in the dark,' but now we're being honored for it!"

In a partnership with the Torrey-based Entrada Institute, engaged citizens raised money to replace the town's high-pressure sodium streetlights with dark sky-friendly, fully-shielded light-emitting diode (LED) lights. The success of this campaign, along with education events and publications, made it possible to bring darker skies and brighter dreams to Torrey.

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A unique group of leaders supported this effort: town council members, Torrey Town and Wayne County residents, local business owners and friends from across the country. Their enthusiasm and advocacy make it possible to preserve the stars for present and future generations.

“My 72-year-old heart skips a beat every time I see the glow of the Milky Way core rising from behind the silhouettes of hills where I know there is no nearby city to explain the intense brightness of this glowing,” said Torrey resident Bonnie Kaufman. “It is eerie, breathtaking and spiritual!”

To maintain its International Dark Sky Community status, Torrey must continue to preserve its night sky through education and awareness materials, dark sky events, exhibits, and programs. An official celebration will be held in Torrey during the Heritage Star Festival on October 5 and 6, 2018.

About the IDA Dark Sky Places Program

IDA established the International Dark Sky Places conservation program in 2001 to recognize excellent stewardship of the night sky. Designations are based on stringent outdoor lighting standards and innovative community outreach. Since the program began, 18 Communities, 57 Parks, 12 Reserves, three Sanctuaries and four Dark Sky Friendly Developments of Distinction have been recognized with International Dark Sky Places designations. For more information about the International Dark Sky Places Program, visit <http://darksky.org/idsp>.

About IDA

The International Dark Sky Association, a 501(c)(3) nonprofit organization based in Tucson, Arizona, advocates for the protection of the nighttime environment and dark night skies by educating policymakers and the public about night sky conservation and promoting environmentally responsible outdoor lighting. More information about IDA, its mission and work may be found at <http://www.darksky.org>.

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