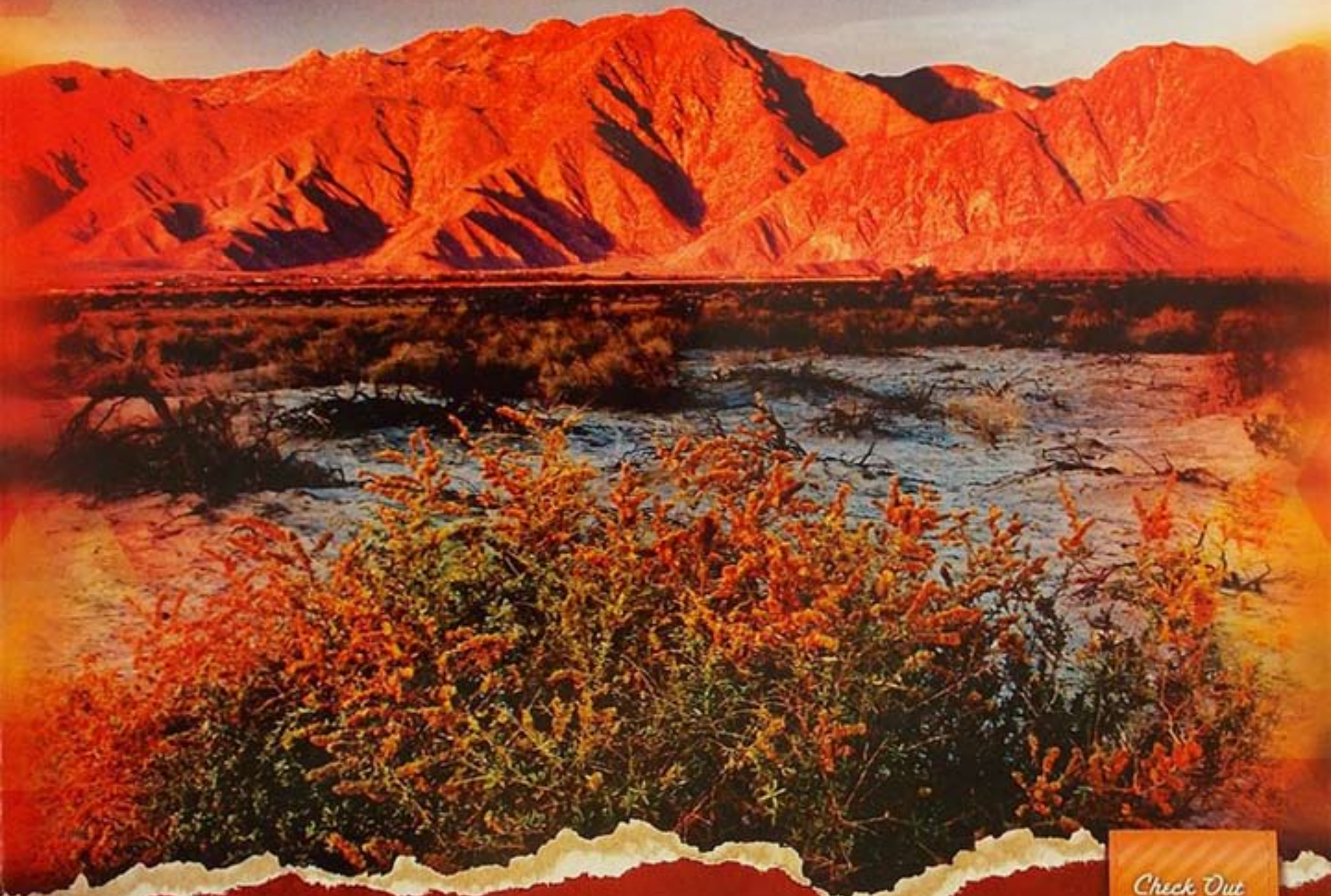


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Borrego Springs

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FEELING PROUD:

The Borrego Springs Dark Sky Coalition

So, who are the Borrego Springs Dark Sky Coalition and what are they attempting to accomplish? The Coalition is a group of Borrego residents and professionals dedicated to the protection, promotion and restoration of the dark skies of Borrego Springs. When I interviewed the coalition in November of 2013 the members of the coalition were Betsy Knaak, Dennis Mammana, Sam Webb, Grace and Jim Rickard, Sally Theriault, Wayne Lebel, Maris Brancheau, and Mike McElhatton.

On July 31, 2009, the International Dark-Sky Association designated Borrego Springs an International Dark Sky Community (IDSC), making it only the second community to be so designated in the entire world. Of course, this important designation did not just happen. As the members of the coalition explained, the designation was the result of a two-plus year effort to demonstrate to the international association that Borrego was in compliance with their requirements and, equally as important, was interested in remaining compliant with those standards.

On one hand, it does not seem so exceptional that a community like Borrego Springs would qualify for this kind of distinction but, when

“The sky is one half of what we see all the time, so it needs to be protected just as this beautiful desert landscape that surrounds us needs to be protected.

you realize that, as Dennis Mammana pointed out, “...there are more than 20 million people living within 2 hours of Borrego”, it establishes some perspective on the level of difficulty associated with this accomplishment.

So, what exactly, does it take to be a “dark sky community”? The coalition members answered that question in a number of ways.

There was agreement that the first thing

needed to accomplish this designation was a broad level of support from residents, businesses, politicians, civic organizations, etc. and a mutually-held belief that dark skies are a natural treasure worth promoting

and protecting. As one coalition member explained, “The sky is one half of what we see all the time, so it needs to be protected just as this beautiful desert landscape that surrounds us needs to be protected.”

Once the community has come together conceptually, the work of compliance begins. That work includes:

Incorporating the concept of the night sky as a community resource into the community's management documents

Creating and complying to a comprehensive outdoor lighting guideline that addresses night sky friendly fixtures and

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maximum illumination and warranting

Bringing a minimum of 67% of existing lights into conformance with the guideline and a commitment to ultimately reach a compliance level of 100%

*Creating an active educational program to share the night skies with residents and visitors
Taking a leadership role in light pollution prevention by conducting outreach initiatives*

The members of the Borrego Springs Dark Sky Coalition are proud of their work. They are proud to have achieved the IDSC's designation. They are proud of their work with local businesses, schools and organizations to ensure the community's compliance. And they are proud of their work with communities as diverse as South Korea, British Columbia and

Scotland to further the understanding of the importance of night sky protection. But what they seem most proud of is inviting folks like me to just look up. Look up and enjoy one of Borrego's most valuable natural resources... a resource they have played a part in making visible in all its glory!

To contact the coalition, write to Borrego Springs Dark Sky Coalition, PO Box 310, Borrego Springs, CA 92004-0310, call 760-767-3052 or email borregodarksky@aol.com

