



2020 – 2021 ANNUAL REPORT, BORREGO SPRINGS, CALIFORNIA

BORREGO SPRINGS DARK SKY COALITION



Members of the Borrego Springs Dark Sky Coalition set up at the weekly Farmers Market. Even during the Covid-19 pandemic, we don't want to give up promoting dark skies and spreading awareness about light pollution! An important quality for dark sky advocates: perseverance! (As well as 'adaptation' during the pandemic.)

Photo © by Tom Hogan

Working Together to Protect the Region's Dark Sky

This year brings the welcome news that the nearby mountain town of Julian, California, has attained the rank of IDA Dark Sky Community. Julian now joins Borrego Springs as California's only two IDA Dark Sky Communities. Both communities are located in the unincorporated, rural backcountry of eastern San Diego County.

Julian's designation was made possible in large part by a change in our County's lighting ordinance. On November 18, 2020, the San Diego County Board of Supervisors unanimously adopted new rural lighting standards that will help preserve night skies free from light pollution. This change allowed Julian to join Borrego Springs as an IDA-designated International Dark Sky Community.

The lighting code change was a multi-year effort by both the Borrego Springs Dark Sky Coalition and the Julian Dark Sky Network. Our groups worked with the County's Department of Land Use and Environmental Planning,

together with the strong support of County Supervisor Jim Desmond (for Borrego) and Supervisor Dianne Jacobs (for Julian).

The new standards create a “Zone C” overlay for dark sky areas with regulations that help preserve the night sky as future development occurs. These rural areas in Zone C will have stricter lighting regulations than those in the urban areas.

At a community meeting, the County Planning staff summarized the purpose of the project, “....to update the Light Pollution Chapter of the Regulatory Code to reflect current International Dark Sky Association (IDA) standards and for consistency with the state and federal laws. The County’s goal is to identify light pollution standards that meet or exceed IDA requirements that are both easy to adopt and implement for specific regions of the unincorporated County.”



Close to Borrego Springs and Julian are two large observatories, Palomar Observatory and Mount Laguna Observatory, both of which have codified, dark sky lighting limits. In addition, we are fortunate to have the 600,000-acre Anza-Borrego Desert State Park, which carries the IDA Dark Sky Park designation, surrounding Borrego Springs and nearly bordering Julian. From the earliest days of Julian’s quest to become a Dark Sky Community, there has been a close relationship between the Borrego Dark Sky Coalition and the Julian Dark Sky Network, and that mutual support will continue. By working together, all these organizations have increased exponentially the awareness and protection of our dark sky region in southern California.

Dark Sky Outreach, Education, and Programs - The weekly Farmer's Market is the Coalition’s main outreach to the community. For 14 weeks in the winter and spring, a display is set up from 8 a.m. until noon. The exhibit attracts visitors and local residents curious to learn more about good outdoor lighting, see samples of recommended fixtures, ask questions about their specific property, check on upcoming

stargazing events, and find out more about what it means to be a Dark Sky Community.



Many visitors come to Borrego Springs to stargaze and photograph. Borrego’s dark night sky and the IDA designation greatly benefit our tourist-based economy. While it was not possible to present in-person stargazing programs for most of 2020-2021 due to the pandemic, we provided handouts with recommended locations for good night sky viewing and night sky photography, with tips about supplies and safety. Borrego is known for its dark sky and Sky Art metal sculptures, popular with nighttime photographers, as shown here of the Serpent breathing the Milky Way, ©Kevin Key, www.kevinkeyphotography.com/

Dr. Randolph Baron, member of the Borrego Springs Dark Sky Coalition, writes a **bimonthly sky calendar column** published in the newsletter of the Anza-Borrego Desert Natural History Association. The column highlights upcoming celestial events. Through the Natural History Association, two webinar opportunities were offered during the pandemic. Our plan is to resume in-person astronomy programs later in fall of 2021.

Website www.BorregoDarkSkies.org – Coalition Member Dorothy Hogan regularly updates the website with events, new information, sky calendar, relevant articles, and links. *Light to Protect the Night*, from the IDA, is featured on the home page. Our website includes many publications, including the annual reports of our Borrego Springs Dark Sky Coalition.

Worldwide Network: One of the joys of being an IDA International Dark Sky Community is being part of a worldwide network of dark sky advocates. This past winter, we were contacted and interviewed by Carpe Noctem (*Seize the night!*), a dark sky group in Serbia. An interchange in both Serbian and English is posted on both websites. <https://carpenoctem.rs/en/borrego-springs-dark-sky-community/>.

LOCAL LIGHTING

Dollar Store – Last year we reported that our Coalition members wrote letters of objection to a proposed Dollar Store on the basis of the nighttime lighting needs for the parking lot. We are pleased to report that this project is not going forward in Borrego Springs.

Sky Quality Meter Readings – Borrego Springs Sky Darkness (SQM) readings are taken monthly during the new moon, between 10:00 p.m. and 11:30 p.m., by Coalition Member Sally Theriault, at her Borrego residence.

Date	Average SQM Reading
08/07/2021	21.16
07/08/2021	21.33
06/10/2021	21.42
05/11/2021	21.52
04/12/2021	21.55
03/13/2021	21.50
02/13/2021	21.32
01/13/2021	21.29
12/14/2020	21.16
10/18/2020	21.19
09/19/2020	21.22
09/11/2020	21.39
08/16/2020	21.21
07/19/2020	21.28
06/19/2020	21.54
05/21/2020	21.38
04/21/2020	21.41
03/27/2020	21.44
02/24/2020	21.38
01/25/2020	21.19
12/28/2019	21.08

About us - The Borrego Springs Dark Sky Coalition formed in 2007, two years before Borrego Springs was awarded the IDA designation as an International Dark Sky Community, the first such community in California and the second in the world, after Flagstaff, Arizona. Since then, we have met monthly or bi-monthly, until March 2020 when our meetings were suspended due to the Coronavirus. The group communicates via email, and some members meet weekly at the Farmers Market. Coalition Members include Betsy Knaak (chair), Grace Rickard (vice chair, community lighting chair), Randy Baron, Eli Hanks, Bill Hanks, Dorothy Hogan, Dennis Mammana, Michael McKeag, Jim Rickard, Dave Scheets, Kathy Scheets, Susan Switzer, Sally Theriault, Mary Watkins, and Sam Webb. Doug Sollosy from the Julian Dark Sky Network attends our meetings on a semi-regular basis. Representatives of Borrego Springs also attend the San Diego IDA Chapter meetings.