



## **BORREGO SPRINGS DARK SKY COALITION 2019 ANNUAL REPORT to the International Dark-Sky Association**

*Borrego Springs, California, received the IDA Dark Sky Community designation on July 31, 2009. Ten years later, Borrego Springs remains California's only such community. As our peak season here in the low desert gets underway, our Borrego Dark Sky Coalition is planning a day-long celebration of our 10<sup>th</sup> anniversary with a series of free programs for the public on **Saturday, November 23, 2019.***



### **LIGHTING SUCCESSES & CHALLENGES**

**Wells Fargo Bank** – During late 2018, we initiated a petition signed by over 60 residents requesting a change in the ATM lighting. As a result, three outward-facing flood lights were replaced with downward-facing fixtures. Amber bulbs replaced white bulbs in the three carriage lights located on the front lawn. *See the before and after photos at the end of this report.*

**El Borrego Restaurant** – The owner enclosed a street-facing porch, completely obscuring the offending lighting.

**Mirage Gas Station and Food Mart** – Eight light fixtures under the canopy were reduced to four by the owner.

**Downtown Street Lights** – San Diego County reduced all street lighting to 3000K level to bring them into Dark Sky conformity.

**The Center** – The highly motivated owner made lighting and fixture changes to the parking lot to bring the lights into Dark Sky conformity.

**Neighborhood Lighting Inventory** – While the above successes focus on the downtown business hub, we also undertook a Neighborhood Lighting Inventory with photos in 2019. Plans for 2020 include assessing the inventory and contacting the property owners.

**Lighting Challenges for 2020** – Adjacent to the downtown business hub is a newly built San Diego County public library, park, Sheriff office, and parking lots with a number of light challenges. This coming year, we plan to undertake a lighting survey of the new complex and present our findings and recommendations to the county.

In addition, the local theater is going forward with Borrego's first LED marquee. Management, after back and forth correspondence with our Coalition, has decided to reduce the size of the sign from the original plans. They have solicited our input and are supportive of the dark skies, having assured us that the sign will be dimmable, programmable, and timed to turn off. The local jury is still out.

### **COMMUNITY OUTREACH, EDUCATION, PUBLIC PROGRAMS**

#### **Season-long Events:**

- **Farmer's Market:** Information booth and a new banner, three hours weekly, November through March.
- **Anza-Borrego Desert Natural History Association** – Member astronomers provide indoor programs and telescope viewing on a regular basis.
- **Our website, [BorregoDarkSkies.org](http://BorregoDarkSkies.org):** Kept up to date with County lighting ordinance, publicity reprints, information map with nearby stargazing locations, and season stargazing programs. The website, programs, and fact that we are a Dark Sky Community continue to draw people to Borrego Springs.
- **Dark Sky Coalition Meetings:** Bimonthly meetings of approximately two hours using Skype for up to five members.

- **Private Star Parties:** Occasional requests are accepted as a source of donated funds.

**Annual Events:** Coalition members participated in several events.

- **Nightfall (Riverside Astronomy Club):** October annual event in Borrego Springs, visitors welcome.
- **Julian Wonderfest:** Participated in August with a short talk about Borrego's 10<sup>th</sup> Anniversary and gave an interview to a local newspaper.
- **Hot Nights & Heavenly Bodies:** Ocotillo Wells State Vehicular Recreation Area participation, January.

- **Library Star Party:** Staffed table in February along with the San Diego Astronomy Club.
- **Borrego Springs Film Festival:** Telescopes set up two nights for a "New View of the Moon," February.
- **IDA General Meeting:** Members present at both the 2018 and 2019 meetings; presenting in 2018 and 2019.

**Special Events:**

- **Lunar Eclipse Program:** Viewing in the Borrego Springs County Park
- **Borrego Days Parade:** Theme of "Eyes to the Skies!" float with moon owl on the moon.
- **Community Sponsor Group:** Presentation for five county staff of the Zoning Compliance Division.
- **IDA 2019 Calendar:** Borrego Springs featured on the April page, photo by Coalition member Dennis Mammana
- **10<sup>th</sup> Anniversary Celebration:** Evening program by astronomer, afternoon of talks, films showing the effects of too much light, stargazing, and sun viewing, a new 6x9" postcard mailed out about good lighting, publicity, Nov. 22-23.



**DARK SKY REGION – in Southern California**

**The nearby town of Julian, CA,** is preparing to apply for Dark Sky status. Leaders of the Julian Dark Sky Network regularly attend our Coalition meetings in Borrego. Together with Julian and the Anza-Borrego Desert State Park (designed a Dark

Sky Park, 01/19/2018), we might one day be part of a new Dark Sky Region, working to preserve the dark night sky and providing more stargazing opportunities for visitors region- and world-wide.

**Interaction with San Diego County –** The county-sponsored revitalization committee in Borrego has identified the need for the lighting code to be updated. For this purpose, our Dark Sky Coalition has formed a subcommittee, which includes a representative from the neighboring town of Julian, to begin considering updates needed and to become familiar with the code. We have been assigned a county liaison who has offered to meet with us in the coming months. The county sees the code update as part of the County's General Plan update in the next two to three years.

**PUBLICITY –**

In celebration of our 10<sup>th</sup> Anniversary the Coalition pitched a story to the *San Diego Union-Tribune* newspaper that resulted in a major article and photograph in July 2019. The article was picked up by the Associated Press and appeared in the *Los Angeles Times* and the online *New York Times*: "Desert Town Shines in the Dark, Borrego Springs one of just twenty-two places in the world designated a Dark Sky Community, a point of pride among residents." We were then contacted by a reporter for the *Sacramento Bee*, who wrote a new article that appeared in the *Bee*.



**COALITION DETAILS** – The Coalition currently has 14 members. We hold six meetings yearly. When not in Borrego, members attend by Skype. Within our Coalition is a designated committee chair for community lighting standards.

Submitted by Betsy Knaak, Chairperson, P.O. Box 310, Borrego Springs, California 92004-0310, [www.BorregoDarkSkies.org](http://www.BorregoDarkSkies.org), on behalf of the Borrego Springs Dark Sky Coalition Members: Randy Baron, Eli Hanks, William Hanks, Dorothy Hogan, Dennis Mammana, Mike McKeag, Dr. Jim Rickard, Grace Rickard (Committee Chair, Community Lighting Standards), Dave Scheets, Kathy Scheets, Sally Theriault, and Sam Webb. Advisory: Maris Brancheau, Clark Volmar.

**WELLS FARGO BANK, BORREGO SPRINGS BRANCH, LIGHT FIXTURES CORRECTION**  
 Before (top); After (bottom)



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