

CHIHUAHUAN DESERT RESEARCH INSTITUTE

# EXECUTIVE DIRECTOR'S REPORT

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OCTOBER, 2012 THROUGH JANUARY, 2012

P.O. BOX 905  
FORT DAVIS, TX 79734

# EDUCATION

**Goal: Provide exemplary science-based education programs focusing on the plants, animals, environment, and research in the Chihuahuan Desert region and their contributions to interdependent sustainability; develop interpretations that promote understanding of the connections between people and the environment.**

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## EDUCATION INITIATIVE I

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*Design and deliver highly effective early childhood, youth, teacher, and adult science education programs that are recognized for their innovation and best practices.*

### SCHOOL & YOUTH PROGRAMS

#### *Programs*

Programs were provided to the following youth groups:

1. Pack 346, Cub Scouts of San Antonio (October 3); 30 participants
2. St. Theresa School (October 9); 26 participants
3. St. Theresa School (October 10); 26 participants
4. Earth Rocks (October 17); 400 participants
5. Ranard School (October 18); 21 participants
6. Leveland Christian School (October 25); 14 participants
7. Applied Learning Academy (November 16); 90 participants
  - a. The Applied Learning Academy always helps with a service project when they visit. It's amazing what 90 teenagers can get done! This year they picked up and piled juniper slash in the grassland so that it wouldn't wash and block the culverts when we have a big rain event and chopped down juniper saplings to keep the grassland clear.

#### *The Earth Rocks!!!*

The Earth Rocks!!! was held on October 17 and attracted 400 participants from Fort Davis, Pecos, Alpine Elementary, Alpine Christian School, Marfa Elementary, Marfa International School, Wink-Loving ISD, and a regional homeschool group.

Stations included: Geology hikes, mining exhibit, pulleys & levers, panning for minerals, mineral ID, Active Accretion, fossil dig, creating soil, solar viewing, volcanoes, crystal formation, layers of the Earth, rock cycle and identification, forms of matter, erosion stream table, earthquake machine, and rock roulette wheel.

Over 50 volunteers participated in the event, helping with set-up and take-down and running each education station.

*The Earth Rocks!!!* is sponsored by grants from The Brown Foundation and the Permian Basin Area Foundation as well as donations from CDRI members.

### CONSERVATION ACROSS BOUNDARIES (TEACHER'S WORKSHOP)

In January, J. Glasscock met with all facilitators of the CAB program. Agendas, budgets, and advertising were all worked out. Promotion of the program is already in motion and \$19,000 in

grants have been contributed to lower the cost of the nine-day workshop to \$300 per teacher (this includes housing and food).

#### ADULT GROUPS

##### *Life Long Learning 2012*

- Insect Migration lecture given by C. Hoyt, November 15; 14 participants
- Field trip to Big Bend Ranch State Park, December 1; 4 participants, 2 staff, and 2 TPWD guides. The field trip was led by CDRI Board Member and TPWD Interpreter Blaine Hall.

##### *Life Long Learning 2013*

The fall is always a busy time putting together the Life Long Learning schedule for the next year. Potential speakers, field trip guides, and workshop leaders must be contacted; descriptions of programs written up; and dates set.

Once everything is set, the Life Long Learning brochure is designed, produced, and mailed to all CDRI members and the schedule is posted as a pdf to the website. These tasks were completed in mid-January.

#### COLLABORATIVE PROGRAMS

##### *The Desert At Night*

An evening of conservation was hosted by the Sul Ross State University Conservation Biology Club at the Chihuahuan Desert Nature Center on December 1<sup>st</sup>. Sul Ross students organized, promoted, and conducted the event which included twilight hikes, an outdoor screening of *Green Fire*, and a star party conducted by members of the Big Bend Astronomical Society.

#### PROMOTION OF PROGRAMS

##### *Life Long Learning Program*

The Life Long Learning Program was promoted through:

- 4<sup>th</sup> Quarter Life Long Learning Program designed, produced, and mailed to members.
- 2013 Life Long Learning Schedule designed, produced, and mailed to members.
- Press releases and radio advertising distributed to promote lectures and field trips.
- Upcoming events posted on FaceBook (approximately 890 “friends”).
- Upcoming events promoted through DesertNewsFlash (our enewsletter).

##### *School and Youth Programs*

J. Glasscock has put together a presentation that she will be taking to the regional schools to promote the educational programs at the CDRI. She is currently scheduling her school visits.

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## EDUCATION INITIATIVE II

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*Provide year-round programming so that the Nature Center is a four-season destination for learning and enjoyment.*

#### PROGRAMS

##### *NEW! Ranger Rick Geocaching*

Geocaching is a real-world, outdoor game using GPS-enabled devices that has become popular with a wide range of audiences. Participants navigate to a specific set of GPS coordinates and then attempt to find the geocache (container) hidden at that location. With the assistance of (and

donations from!) Patt Sims and D.J. Sanders a Ranger Rick Geocache was established in the botanical gardens at the Nature Center. The geocache trail is advertised on [www.geocache.com/rangerricktrails](http://www.geocache.com/rangerricktrails).

Participants download the coordinates for the 8 geocaches on our trail to their GPS device.

They then use the coordinates to locate the geocaches hidden along the trail. Each geocache contains a clue card and stamp. When they find the geocache, they answer the riddle on the clue card, and use the stamp to mark their passport with the correct answer. After completing the trail, they show their passport to the Visitors' Services staff and receive a special prize.

#### *Toddle on the Wild Side*

The very popular *Toddle on the Wild Side* for preschool children continued throughout November. The program includes a weekly toddle through the gardens, a story, and craft. The program will be started again with warmer weather in the spring.

#### TOURS & SITE VISITS

Tours and hikes were given to the following groups this year:

- M&M Tours (a bus tour that just showed up one day) (54 participants)
- Retired teachers organization (10 participants)

#### NATURE CENTER AS A DESTINATION

The Nature Center was a destination for people involved in two special events this fall:

- A workshop on "contemplative photography" put on by staff from the Austin Shambhala Mediation Center. This is the second time that they have used the Nature Center for their workshop.
- Thanksgiving Open House. An annual event that occurs each year the Friday and Saturday after Thanksgiving. Admission fees are waived and volunteers lead guided hikes into the canyon. Attendance and shop sales were significantly down this year due to a lack of promotion and advertising.

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### EDUCATION INITIATIVE III

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*Serve as a major resource for homeowners, architects, and builders on ways to create an inspiring and sustainable desert landscape and building program through energy-saving, environmentally sensitive design.*

#### GREEN MOUNTAIN ENERGY SUN CLUB GRANT

M. Foreman and C. Hoyt submitted a grant proposal to Green Mountain Energy to install solar energy at the Visitors' Center. According to Green Mountain Energy, 145 proposals were submitted and the CDRI was one of 7 that were chosen for funding. The contract for the project was signed in January. We are now working with Green Mountain Energy to finalize the plans for the installation of the solar system. The \$30,000 received from Green Mountain Energy will be used to pay for purchase of solar panels and installation of the system.

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## EDUCATION INITIATIVE IV

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*Advance public awareness of the diversity of the Chihuahuan Desert region and promote future research in the region through lectures, participation in outreach events, and publication of a variety of educational and scientific research materials.*

### LECTURES

C. Hoyt was invited to present lectures at two major meetings this fall:

- Annual Meeting of the Texas Association of Cactus and Succulent Societies. This meeting was held near Fort Worth on October 12<sup>th</sup>. C. Hoyt presented a program on the Rock House fire and the recovery of the cacti and succulents in the grassland.
- Annual Meeting of the Colorado Cactus & Succulent Society (Colorado Springs, October 27). C. Hoyt was the keynote speaker at the annual banquet and presented a program on the diversity of Chihuahuan Desert cacti.

### OUTREACH & COLLABORATIVE EVENTS

*Frontier Days at Fort Davis National Historic Site.*

Jessica Glasscock and Susan Penney served as hike leaders during the Fort Davis National Historic Site's annual Frontier Days. Over 200 people, mostly schoolchildren from Dirks-Anderson Elementary School in Fort Davis, the Alpine Montessori School, Alpine Christian School, and the Highland Homeschool participated in the event. Jessica and Susan gave three Nature Hikes to about 60 people.

*Big Bend Livestock Show Association (BBLSA)*

J. Glasscock served as a 4-H Food Judge at the Annual Big Bend Livestock Show at the request of Texas AgriLife Family & Consumer Sciences Agent Evans Kott. She judged 49 entries in 4 categories from 30 participants (ages 5-18) in the tri-county area.

*Sul Ross Strategic Planning Committee*

J. Glasscock was invited by the Sul Ross Alumni Coordinator to serve as one of 25 individuals to serve on the Sul Ross Strategic Planning Committee. She will serve as part of the Alumni and External Relations group and is already finding many opportunities to promote the CDRI and CDRI programs as part of her committee work.

*Texas Natural Resource/Environmental Literacy Summit of Leadership and Action*

J. Glasscock attended a Summit meeting held in San Antonio with 150 other informal and formal educators with a common goal of promoting environmental education. The intent of this summit was to create and move forward with a plan that will compliment the mission of providing a framework for ongoing statewide efforts that foster natural resource/environmental literacy as a cornerstone of education, recreation, and life-long learning.

# RESEARCH

**Goal: Expand the current research program focused on the Chihuahuan Desert region, disseminate research findings for diverse purposes, and serve as a resource for the science and conservation communities.**

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## RESEARCH INITIATIVE I

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*Strengthen CDRI's collections for scientific and academic research purposes; ensure that current and future collections are appropriately documented, and that access is provided both physically and virtually.*

### DOCUMENTATION OF PLANT COLLECTION

Leslie Spicer spent a considerable amount of time this fall working on the documentation of the cactus collection and plants in the botanical garden. As part of the process, she is updating faded or inconsistent plant accession numbers, replacing all labels so that they are readable and contain appropriate information, and compiling a database of names, synonyms, and care and accessioning information. Plants that are not accessioned are being documented so that they can be entered into the system.

### NAMES OF CACTI COLLECTION UPDATED

Jim Weedin, coauthor of *Cacti of the Trans-Pecos* spent a week in the greenhouse in January correcting scientific names of plants based on current taxonomic records. He will return later this year to confirm the identification of the plants.

### YANK & YAK VOLUNTEERS WORK ON SEED COLLECTION

Yank & Yak volunteers worked on cleaning and organizing the cacti seed collection from the greenhouse. Seeds are now properly cleaned, packaged, and labeled for exchange with other botanical gardens or for use in our greenhouse.

### DATABASE SOFTWARE FOR LIVING PLANT COLLECTION

L. Spicer is looking for database software that can manage the massive amounts of information that is being collected for the Living Plant Collection. She has been researching the internet and contacting botanical gardens around the U.S. Unfortunately, this type of commercially available software is very expensive (approximately \$15,000) and difficult to use or is custom-developed by individual gardens.

While Leslie can continue to use Excel to compile information, the collections information is rapidly outgrowing the capacity of a spreadsheet system such as Excel.

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## RESEARCH INITIATIVE II

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*Facilitate and support active research by developing strong relationships with academic institutions and organizations dealing with the Chihuahuan Desert Region.*

### CURRENT & COLLABORATIVE RESEARCH

#### *Butterfly Recovery in the Burned/Unburned Grasslands*

Weekly monitoring of butterfly populations in burned and unburned sections of the grassland continued through November. Analysis of data collected in 2011 and 2012 is underway. This project is funded by the James A. "Buddy" Davidson Foundation.

#### *Megastigmus and Conifers: The Biology of Invasion*

This project is being conducted by a collaboration of researchers in France and Canada. The goal of the project is to see if *Megastigmus*, a genus of wasp of which some species parasitize the seeds of conifers, is actively parasitizing Cupressaceae species in North America, as it is in other parts of the world. CDRI staff worked with researchers from the Canadian Forest Service to collect samples of the cones of Cupressaceae species that we have on the landsite and send them out for testing.

#### *Integrative Taxonomy and Biogeography of Criconematidae* NSF DEB-145440

The Nature Center served as a study site for University of Nebraska and University of Tennessee researchers describing and mapping the nematode biodiversity in North America. Due to their sensitivity to disturbance and associations with a range of plant species, some ecologists have suggested that ring nematodes could serve as a below-ground biological indicator of habitat quality. Before this application is possible, taxonomic boundaries need to be evaluated and a reference database needs to be established. The field work conducted at the Nature Center will add to the database being compiled.

#### *Comparative Phylogeography of Big Bluestem (*Andropogon gerardii*) and Indian Grass (*Sorghastrum nutans*)*

A doctorate student from the St. Louis University is examining the evolutionary history and population structure of Big Bluestem and Indian Grass through a comparative phylogeographic study. We are working with her to find sites where she can collect samples for her studies.

#### *Butterfly Monitoring at the Nature Center*

Butterflies along the 2.5 mile Pollard transect continue to be monitored on a weekly basis or as weather permits during the winter. Data for the monitoring project has been updated in the database and a summary of the 2012 data was submitted to the Texas Lepidoptera Survey.

#### *Vegetation Transects*

M. Foreman completed 14 vegetation transects this fall in the burned and unburned grasslands. These data will provide important information for Mark's thesis at Sul Ross State University, as well as numerous projects being conducted by CDRI staff and volunteers. Mark has received assistance with the identification of plants from NRCS staff Laurie Meadows and Michael Margo.

#### *Birding Transects*

Bird activity in the burned and unburned grasslands is being monitored weekly by Mark Foreman as part of his thesis project. He has been assisted by Mark Lockwood and Jonah Evans, both biologists with the Texas Parks and Wildlife Department. In January, Rich Koestecke, an ornithologist with the Nature Conservancy, also assisted with the monitoring effort and helping Mark to refine his project goals.

## VISITS BY RESEARCHERS, CLASSES, AND ORGANIZATIONS

The Nature Center was used as a field laboratory for two classes this fall:

- Dr. Chris Ritzzi's Environmental Biology class (October 3); 30 participants
- Ann Marie Hilscher's Herpetology class (October 6); 22 participants.

### *Visits with Potential Collaborators*

Michael Hoke (executive director of the Shangri La Botanical Gardens) and his staff and interns visited in November to tour the gardens and discuss program details with Jessica and Susan.

Rick LoBello of the El Paso Zoo visited to discuss possible collaborative projects with the CDRI.

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## RESEARCH INITIATIVE III

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*Develop a model for a Board of Scientists to help guide future research agendas and hosting of periodic symposia to highlight major research initiatives.*

John Karges, Blaine Hall, and C. Hoyt have begun preliminary work on creating a model for the Board of Scientists. Discussions involve:

- Creation of a BOS purpose statement
- Determining the size of the board and its composition
- Putting together selection criteria
- Determining term limits
- Creating a list of roles and responsibilities

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## RESEARCH INITIATIVE IV

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*Provide training for volunteer citizen scientists and encourage their participation in research projects at the Nature Center and throughout the Chihuahuan Desert region.*

### CITIZEN SCIENCE PROJECTS

Three citizen science projects were conducted this fall including:

- Fort Davis Fall Butterfly Count (October 5)
- Davis Mountains Christmas Bird Count (December 15)
- Balmorhea Christmas Bird Count (December 16)

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## RESEARCH INITIATIVE V

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*Increase the Dr. James Scudday Scholarship Fund to a minimum of \$10,000 in order to provide financial support for students conducting research in the Chihuahuan Desert region.*

### MAJOR CONTRIBUTION MADE TO SCHOLARSHIP FUND

Joe Orr, a CDRI Life Member and former student of Dr. Scudday's, made a \$5,000 contribution to the scholarship fund in response to an appeal for the Dixon Water Foundation challenge grant. This

amount, combined with the nearly \$3,000 currently in the fund, and the \$5,000 match from the Dixon Water Foundation will allow us to offer our first scholarship in 2014.

An additional \$4,000 in the fund would allow us to offer a \$1,000 scholarship. Shirley Powell spoke to Fern Scudday about making a contribution to the Scholarship Fund, but she declined “at this time.”

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#### RESEARCH INITIATIVE VI

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*Develop and communicate clear information about research findings and sustainability to diverse audiences through various types of media.*

#### DISCOVERY CHANNEL PROGRAM

M. Foreman spoke to a representative from a production company in Washington, D.C., that is developing a natural history documentary for the Discovery Channel on the Chihuahuan Desert Borderlands. The documentary will highlight conservation efforts on both sides of the border in the general area around Big Bend National Park and the Mexican parks of Cañon de Santa Elena and Maderas del Carmen. The program does not exclusively deal with the parks, however, and they are interested in research projects throughout the region. They may come to film some of our current research projects in 2013.

## VISITOR EXPERIENCE

**GOAL: Operate a Nature Center that is a major destination in the southwest United States, offering outstanding science-based nature experiences to visitors of all ages and abilities; continually develop educationally-appealing exhibits and programs, and provide excellent examples of sustainable development.**

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#### VISITOR EXPERIENCE INITIATIVE I

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*Develop a Master Site Plan to guide future use of the nature Center as well as the development of new buildings and exhibits to support visitor learning, enjoyment, comfort, and safety.*

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#### VISITOR EXPERIENCE INITIATIVE II

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*Design a multi-function research and education building (LEED-certified, ADA compliant) with state-of-the-art facilities. Enhance entrance, gate, and signage.*

#### BUILDING COMMITTEE MEETINGS

The Building Committee met twice this report period to go over the new designs that Alvidrez Architects had prepared. After the first meeting in October, Mark Foreman set up a video conference with the Alvidrez team to allow us to ask question about the plans. This was conducted in November.

Alvidrez Architects were asked to provide more information about butterfly roofs and some other design elements and to provide the committee an isometric plan of the structure. This has not been provided as of January 30, but should be sent to us soon.

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### VISITOR EXPERIENCE INITIATIVE III

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*Address needs for parking and transportation, accessibility and safety issues, pathways and lighting.*

#### INCIDENT RESPONSE PLAN DEVELOPED

Following a guest emergency on Modesta Canyon Trail, Leslie Spicer worked with local emergency response personnel to create an Incidence Response flow chart to assist staff in dealing with accidents. The plan includes the flow chart, and Incident Report Form, and an Incident Log Form to be used during and after the event. These documents will help staff know who to call and when and how to gather the information that emergency responders will need to handle the emergency.

#### STAFF TAKE FIRST AID COURSE

In order to better prepare staff for emergencies on the landsite, L. Spicer arranged for a CPR and First Aid and Training course to be given at the Nature Center. This half-day program was attended by 4 staff members.

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### VISITOR EXPERIENCE INITIATIVE IV

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*Plan and develop new exhibits, create new programs, garden areas, amenities, and services to continually improve the visitor experience.*

#### EXHIBITS

##### *Trail Interpretive Panels*

Two new interpretive panels and a revision of the trail-head signs were developed this fall. One panel (to be installed along the Clayton's Overlook Trail) will provide information about wildfires and the ecological consequences of the Rock House Fire. The second panel will be installed along the trail overlooking the Quarry area and will provide visitors with information about adaptations of plants and animals to the desert. Near this panel a fixed binocular overlooking the quarry will allow visitors to look for animals that inhabit the quarry area.

##### *Repairs on the Mining Exhibit*

Mark Foreman worked with Joe Mussey to create new labels and donor acknowledgements, and to replace the old, faded brown labels along the Ore Trail.

#### FACILITY IMPROVEMENTS

##### Leapin' Lizards Nature Shop Remodeled

Following the remodeling of the visitor services area last year, shop sales plummeted. Among several possible reasons for this decrease in sales was the layout of the shop. In January, M. Foreman along with assistance from the staff, designed new display units and completely remodeled the shop. Using materials that we already had (and about \$100 in additional supplies), bookshelves and display tables were created resulting in more display space and a more open feel. The remodel seems to be working:

- Sales per dollar of admissions for January, 2012 was \$2.02
- Sales per dollar of admissions for January, 2013 was \$3.37

#### LIBRARY MOVES OUT OF THE CLOSET

Thanks to the cabinetry skills of M. Foreman, the CDRI's library has moved out of boxes in the closet to bookshelves in the maintenance building. The largest office was converted to a library with shelves, cabinets, a file cabinet donated by Blaine Hall, a desk, and small, folding work table.

Volunteers are now sorting through the books, pulling books that are not related to the Chihuahuan Desert, scanning the title pages, and researching their value on line. We plan on having a used book sale during spring break to sell volumes that do not support our research mission.

#### TRAIL IMPROVEMENTS

M. Foreman continues to work on the trail system to improve the quality of the trail and prevent erosion. This fall, he installed several water bars and corrected some trail problems.

#### HORTICULTURE

##### *Pollinator Garden Expanded*

The large oak tree that is the center of the pollinator garden has grown so much in the past few years that it is shading out the pollinator garden beneath it. To give the salvias and penstemons a bit more light, L. Spicer expanded the central bed and will be planting and seeding it this spring.

##### *Chipper/Shredder in Action*

M. Foreman, L. Spicer, volunteer Jim Kinney, and the Yank and Yak crew have been hard at work chipping and shredding their way through huge piles of wood trimmings. Mark was able to repair the chipper/shredder so that it runs well, Yank and Yak have been trimming and sorting branches so that they can be easily run through the machine, and Mark, Leslie, and Jim have been chipping away. The chipped material is being used to mulch the trees in the botanical garden.

##### *Greenhouse Purchased*

The need for additional space in the greenhouse has grown critical, so a 10'x16' foot "hobby" greenhouse kit was purchased with funds donated by cactus and succulent societies and individual members. M. Foreman and Joe Mussey are working together to create a proper foundation for the greenhouse which will be located between the current greenhouse and the toolshed. The new greenhouse will be used to house seedlings and succulents.

# CAPITAL CAMPAIGN ORGANIZATIONAL SUSTAINABILITY

**GOAL:** Create and implement a plan for organization expansion, sustainability, and vitality including comprehensive capitalization, marketing and development, volunteer recruitment and workforce development/retention strategies.

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## ORGANIZATIONAL SUSTAINABILITY INITIATIVE I

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*Plan and conduct a multi-million dollar Capital Campaign for construction of the research and education building.*

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## ORGANIZATIONAL SUSTAINABILITY INITIATIVE II

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*Create a resource development team of staff and volunteers to identify and cultivate donors, ensure effective donor stewardship by adhering to the Donor Bill of Rights, and develop a full list of donor opportunities, including naming opportunities, in support of the Capital Campaign.*

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## ORGANIZATIONAL SUSTAINABILITY INITIATIVE III

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*Secure substantial funding for capital improvement, personnel, critical maintenance projects, and communication technology.*

### MEETINGS

- October 1. Finance Committee Meeting
- October 1. Endowment Committee Meeting
- October 2. Staff meeting to discuss 2012 budget deficits and ways to improve.
- January 7. Finance Committee Meeting
- January 7. Governance Committee Meeting.

### STATUS OF GRANTS

#### *James A. Buddy Davidson Foundation grant*

The fall report for this grant was submitted in September. There is still some funding left for the study of the butterfly populations in the burned and unburned grasslands.

#### *Dixon Water Foundation Challenge Grant*

As of January 30, \$22,300 of the \$25,000 needed for the Dixon Water Foundation Challenge Grant has been received.

- 10 individuals have contributed \$16,000
- 4 corporations have contributed \$6,300
- There is one outstanding pledge for \$1,000

- There are 15 requests outstanding
- Two requests have been declined

*Texas Parks and Wildlife Department Wildlife Diversity Grant Received (\$53,000)*

CDRI's proposal to study effective pollinators of rare plants was chosen for funding by TPWD. Contracts and permits are currently being negotiated and work on the project will begin in February. The research team consists of representatives from the CDRI, Sul Ross State University, the University of Rochester, NY, and St. Edwards University in Austin. Citizen science volunteers are being recruited to participate in the field portion of the project.

*TPWD Trail Grant*

With development of the panels and ordering of the fixed binocular, the TPWD Trail Grant is wrapping up. However, because of M. Foreman's budget-conscious spending, there is a significant amount of money left in the grant. Mark is working with TPWD personnel to see how the funds can be spent and stay within the original intent of the grant.

*Green Mountain Energy Sun Club Grant (\$30,000)*

The CDRI received a \$30,000 grant to install solar panels at the Visitors' Center (this grant is fully described under Education Initiative III).

FUNDRAISING

*Annual Appeal*

The Annual Appeal was sent out in December and raised \$5976. This is about average, but significantly less than the record-breaking \$17,000 response to last year's annual appeal. A number of factors may explain this discrepancy:

- Last year we were the recipients of a \$10,000 challenge contribution. The ability to respond to a challenge grant traditionally raises more money.
- Too many "asks" at once. Unfortunately, a large membership renewal notice was sent out within days of the annual appeal. Members were confused (and some very annoyed) about receiving so many "asks" at the same time. We will need to coordinate our mailings better in the future.

*Digital Appeal*

This year, for the first time ever, we sent out a digital appeal through our e-newsletter mailing list and through FaceBook. This was completely unsuccessful. The digital appeal through our e-newsletter list was sent to 778 unique addresses; 304 people opened the email; 32 followed the link to the contribution page; 0 people made a contribution.

We discovered that there was a glitch with the contribution forms section of the website at that time. Before sending out another digital appeal, we need to be sure that the workflow of the appeal is coordinated and all elements are working.

WEBSITE

C. Hoyt and Megan Wilde are converting our contribution pages from Formstack to Click and Pledge. This reduces a monthly fee to Formstack and gets us away from the PayPal system with which we've had numerous difficulties. Click and Pledge provides more attractive pages and will give us the ability to sell a limited number of items from the shop online.

FUNDRAISING SUPPORT MATERIALS

C. Hoyt wrote, designed, and produced a 28-page, full-color booklet on the Programs of the Chihuahuan Desert Research Institute to assist with fundraising for the Dixon Water Foundation

challenge grant. The booklet is available on website as a pdf file, was distributed to board members at the November board meeting, and was mailed directly to all board members.

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#### ORGANIZATIONAL SUSTAINABILITY INITIATIVE IV

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*Build an operating reserve equal to 10% of the annual budget.*

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#### ORGANIZATIONAL SUSTAINABILITY INITIATIVE V

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*Implement a planned giving program to increase the number of bequests.*

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#### ORGANIZATIONAL SUSTAINABILITY INITIATIVE VI

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*Increase memberships, admissions, and gift shop sales.*

#### MEMBERSHIP PROGRAM

##### *Gift Membership Drive*

In late November, J. Glasscock sent out an e-newsletter highlighting the benefits of giving a gift membership. The appeal went to 795 individuals, 348 opened the email, and 7 people visited the gift membership site, resulting in several gift memberships.

##### *4<sup>th</sup> Quarter Membership Renewals*

S. Penney sent out 189 membership renewal notices during the 4<sup>th</sup> quarter and received 112 renewals. The number of membership renewal notices sent out is expected to be higher than actual renewals because members receive three renewal notices (if needed) before they are removed from the mailing lists.

##### *Dues Increase in 2013*

The lowest level of membership, our Living Lightly category was increased from \$25 to \$35 starting in January, 2013. The other membership categories remained at the same level.

#### ADMISSION FEE CHANGES

For many years the admission fees to the Nature Center have been \$5.00 for adults; \$4.00 for senior citizens (above 65); and free to members and children under 12. In 2013, we restructured the admission fees to \$6.00 for all adults while members and children under 12 remain free.

#### GIFT SHOP SALES

A number of initiatives are in place to increase gift shop sales:

- Remodeling of the gift shop to display merchandise better and encourage visitation.
- A budget was created for purchasing inventory based on monthly cost-of-goods figures and the budget goal for 2013.
- All staff assisted with suggesting new merchandise. Efforts will be made to purchase inventory in relation to CDRI and community events and to offer higher-quality merchandise. New lines will include high-quality gardening tools, outdoor equipment, hard-to-find books, and new, branded merchandise.
- A monthly shop event will be held featuring discounts on select merchandise. The shop event schedule was published in the Life Long Learning brochure and will be advertised on the sign at the front gate each month.

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## ORGANIZATIONAL SUSTAINABILITY INITIATIVE V

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*Establish a comprehensive program to increase the number and impact of volunteers.*

### SANDY LYNCH THE 2012 VOLUNTEER OF THE YEAR

It was a tight race, but Sandy Lynch came out the winner when her 160 hours of volunteer service at the CDRI qualified her for the 2012 Volunteer of the Year. Sandy helps with just about everything. She's a regular member of the Yank and Yak crew, helped butcher a cow for BBQ, conducted educational programs during the Earth Rocks!!!, and has helped with Visitors' Services.

For her efforts, Sandy was given a gift basket with a CDRI shirt and nametag, a butterfly feeder, mug, and coffee (to keep her energized for all that volunteer work!). Thank you, Sandy. It's people like you that keep the CDRI going!

### STUDENTS FROM HIGH FRONTIERS HELP MOVE THE LIBRARY

When you need to move boxes and boxes of books from a back-breaking closet, down stairs, and into another building, who do you call? Those great, young, strong students from the High Frontier School across the highway. We are very grateful for their assistance in helping us move all the books into the new library. Several students became fascinated by the books and wanted to return just to read.

### YANK AND YAK

When Susan suggested scaling back on Yank and Yak for the winter, she was met with a resounding "NO!" from her volunteer team. Each Thursday morning, between 3 and 12 volunteers gather to help with garden work. This fall they've chipped and shredded, dug up agave plants for plant sale, collected salvia seed, cleaned and organized cactus seeds, helped pull up tumble weeds, cleaned up grass seed heads that accumulate in trees and shrubs, conducted a winter cleaning of beds and trails, and generally had a lot of fun. Susan says there's plenty of tools and work for even more Yank and Yakers, so don't hesitate to come out between 8:30 and 11:00 on Thursday mornings to help.

### ANNUAL VOLUNTEER STATISTICS

Over 3,000 hours of volunteer help, valued at over \$70,000 was contributed to the CDRI in 2012. Major volunteer contributions were given for:

- Gardening
- Plant Sales & Special Events
- Education Events
- Board Service (although these hours are probably severely underrepresented!)

### ANNUAL VOLUNTEER APPRECIATION POTLUCK

In December, we celebrated our volunteers with our annual volunteer potluck dinner. Sandy Lynch was acknowledged as the Volunteer of the Year, a great dinner was served, and a PowerPoint program was put together highlighting the accomplishments and volunteer contributions throughout the year.

In addition, one of the atrium display areas was converted to a volunteer board that features a plaque with the names of our volunteers-of-the-year and photographs of volunteers at work.

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#### ORGANIZATIONAL SUSTAINABILITY INITIATIVE VI

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*Implement a compensation policy so that CDRI is competitive with similar institutions and can attract and retain a high-quality workforce.*

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#### ORGANIZATIONAL SUSTAINABILITY INITIATIVE VII

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*Provide meaningful professional development opportunities for staff.*

#### FIRST AID COURSE OFFERED TO STAFF

Four staff members participated in a CDRI-funded CPR and First Aid Training and Certification course in December.

#### COOPERATION WITH SUL ROSS STATE UNIVERSITY

##### *Working with Patty Manning*

Patty Manning of Sul Ross State University's Native Plant Propagation program has been helping Leslie Spicer learn more about growing cacti, soil mixes, and greenhouse maintenance and climate control.

##### *Mark Foreman Continues to Pursue Masters Degree*

Mark Foreman is carrying a full course load, as well as working at the CDRI and conducting his thesis-project research, this semester. His studies in natural resource management continue to enhance his role as the land and site manager.

#### WORDPRESS WORKSHOP

The CDRI's website needs constant updating. In the past, C. Hoyt and, on occasion, Megan Wilde have been responsible for updating and adding new content. In January, CDRI staff were given two workshops on WordPress, one by Chris Ruggia and the other by C. Hoyt, so that they can maintain their departments section on the website.