



THE FIELD OF VIEW (F.O.V.)  
National Public Observatory Newsletter  
**“Where the Public Meets the Stars”**

Astronomy education, dark skies and quality experiences for ALL!!  
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STARS-N-PARKS PROGRAMS IN FIVE SOUTHERN NEW MEXICO STATE PARKS

Fall 2008

## Effort to amend City of Las Cruces Outdoor Lighting Ordinance

By Jessica Savage

LAS CRUCES – Night time may be getting less glare ridden for residents of the city of Las Cruces if efforts to amend the existing outdoor lighting ordinance are fruitful.

A group of citizens including National Public Observatory President John Gilkison and long-time lighting issues advocate Carol Rehder met with city councilors during their July work session to broach the subject of amending the CLC Outdoor Lighting Ordinance passed in August of 2000.

“In the eight years since the outdoor lighting ordinance was adopted there has been a sea of change in outdoor lighting in Las Cruces for the good,” Gilkison said. Both the city and Newman Signs who specialize in outdoor advertising have made progress in bringing city and sign lighting into compliance with the Full Cut Off (FCO) ordinance.

Gilkison served as chairman on the original outdoor lighting ordinance Ad Hoc committee, lead the way with passage of their proposed ordinance, making Las Cruces the first city in Southern New Mexico to control lighting levels and mandate Full Cut Off lighting fixtures.

Now Gilkison is providing the expertise in the effort to control intrusive lighting even more, especially in the residential sector which remains pretty much unregulated.

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Asked during the work session by Councilor Sharon Thomas to write a synopsis of the proposed changes, Gilkison said none of the councilors currently serving were around in 2000 when the original ordinance was voted into law. Neither were LED (light-emitting diodes) billboards.

Several of the internally-lit, animated billboards began appearing throughout the city in the last year. While the lighting ordinance and other laws deal with the regulation of billboards, LED billboards are currently unregulated.

“We think that unregulated LED billboards and digital signs in general can represent a danger to the traveling public,” Gilkison said. “Distractions lasting two or three seconds while driving have been proven to cause accidents.”

Gilkison and the informal lighting ordinance committee are calling for a moratorium on new LED and digital billboards. “If many months or years pass before regulations can be enacted it would prove nearly impossible to go back and insist that existing signage be altered or even taken down if they were proven to be in violation of new statutes,” Gilkison said.

The proposed regulations would require LED billboards to be dimmed to 5% of their daylight brightness 30 minutes before and after the rising and setting of the sun.

Residential lighting would also be controlled, and the issue of light trespass, which was not included in the original ordinance, would finally be addressed.

“The institution of a light trespass clause should help reduce neighbor to neighbor glare complaints,” Gilkison said.

Light trespass is caused by unshielded lights or flood lights that are aimed away from the building and

Continued on page two



**NPO President John Gilkison talks to the Las Cruces city council during a work session in August 2008 about the need to amend the CLC Outdoor Lighting Ordinance.**

## Effort to amend City of Las Cruces Outdoor Lighting Ordinance cont.

Continued from page one

property they are meant to illuminate. Aiming them down as far as specified by the ordinance for HID Floodlights and having them activated by motion detectors allows the light to be used only when actually needed.

The only permitted up-lighting is meant for flags and signs and the proposal seeks limits on brightness (to less than the proposed FCO cap of 1,100 lumens) and to limit the number of narrow spotlights used to illuminate flags at night.

“We would like to compliment the city of Las Cruces for having the wisdom to pass the Outdoor Lighting Ordinance in August of 2000,” Gilkison said.

“Nightsapes in the city have been greatly improved. The traveling public can see much better since the near elimination of unshielded lighting from many of our city streets and adjacent businesses. Even though the city has grown quite a bit since the adoption of the OLO, light pollution and sky glow has been significantly reduced. The changes we are proposing are minor and are more in the way of tweaking the ordinance and covering gaps that were inadvertently left in the original ordinance”.



**NPO President John Gilkison stands next to our new residential outdoor lighting display which is intended for use in light pollution talks.**

## NPO Attends New Mexico Space Grant Consortium Seminar at the Lodge in Cloudcroft, NM

By John Gilkison

Because the National Public Observatory was the recipient of a Space Grant for our fall programming we were invited to attend a NMSGC seminar held at the Lodge in Cloudcroft, NM on July 15th 2008.

Several talks were presented by various grant recipients on their programs and what they hoped to accomplish. At the end of the morning seminar NPO President John Gilkison got to make a presentation of several minutes on the history of the NPO and the history of our programming with the New Mexico State Parks system. Using mu camera and the projector we managed to show pictures of the observatory at City of Rocks SP and the imaging equipment.

I was then very pleased to tell the audience how our first grant from the NMSGC in 2004 resulted in not only expanded Stars-n-Parks programming in the parks but was material to our assisting the NM State Parks in the design and planning of the astronomical observatory at City of Rocks SP.

## Southern New Mexico Star Party set for September 24-28th, 2008

By John Gilkison

The Southern New Mexico Star Party is scheduled to start on Wednesday September 24th, ending on Sunday September 28th, at noon. Please use the form on our website or included with this mailed copy of the newsletter to register for the event.

Camping is a separate fee paid to City of Rocks State Park for the nights you intend to stay. If you are staying elsewhere you will still need to pay the parks day use fee of \$5.00 a day. Regular camping is \$10.00 a day and electric camp sites run \$14.00 a day.

We will be holding the event in the Orion Group Area which is on the east side of the park just north of the Electric Camp sites. This gives us use of the pavilion to store equipment in case it rains and use of the observatory with a 14 inch Meade go/to telescope.

**National Public Observatory Stars-N-Parks New Mexico Space Grant Consortium program schedule for the Fall of 2008 through November 2008**

**SP = State Park SS = Sunset, PS = Program Start, PE = Program End**

**Stars-n-Parks Programming ends in June, resumes in August 2008**

**N.M. Space Grant Consortium Programs**

4: Saturday September 20, 2008 Leasburg Dam SP, SS 7:00 PM, PS 8:10 PM, PE 9:40 PM, Venus Mars and Mercury conjunction still low in the west, Jupiter in the south, the summer Milky Way still available, Jeff Jenkins presenting.

5: Saturday September 20, 2008 Caballo Lake SP, SS 7:00 PM, PS 7:40 PM, PE 9:40 PM, Jupiter still in the south, losing the summer Milky Way, John Gilkison presenting.

**Southern New Mexico Star Party starts Wednesday September 24, 2008, ends at noon Sunday on September 28, 2008**

6: Wednesday September 24, 2008 City of Rocks SP, SS 6:55 PM, PS 8:05 PM, PE 9:35 PM, Jupiter still in the south, losing the summer Milky Way, Matt Wilson presenting.

7: Saturday September 27, 2008 City of Rocks SP, SS 6:50 PM, PS 8:00 PM, PE 9:30 PM, Jupiter still in the south, losing the summer Milky Way, John Gilkison presenting.

8: Saturday September 27, 2008 Rock Hound SP, SS 6:55 PM, PS 8:06 PM, PE 9:35 PM, Venus Mars and Mercury conjunction still low in the west, Jupiter in the south, the summer Milky Way still available, Sally Allen presenting.

9: Saturday October 18, 2008 Leasburg Dam SP,

SS 6:25 PM, PS 7:35 PM, PE 9:05 PM, Jupiter, Neptune, Uranus available, Venus low in the west. The Fall Sky is predominant. Jeff Jenkins presenting.

10: Saturday October 18, 2008 Pancho Villa SP, SS 6:25 PM, PS 7:35 PM, PE 9:05 PM, Jupiter, Neptune, Uranus available, Venus low in the west. The Fall Sky is predominant. Sally Allen presenting.

11: Saturday October 25, 2008 City of Rocks SP, SS 6:25 PM, PS 7:35 PM, PE 9:05 PM, Jupiter, Neptune, Uranus available, Venus low in the west. The Fall Sky is predominant. Matt Wilson presenting.

12: Saturday October 25, 2008 Caballo Lake SP, SS 6:20 PM, PS 7:00 PM, PE 9:00 PM, Jupiter in the South, the Fall Sky predominant, Bobby Franzoy presenting.

13: Saturday November 1, 2008 Leasburg Dam SP, SS 6:10 PM, PS 7:20 PM, PE 8:50 PM, Jupiter in the South, the Fall Sky predominant, Jeff Jenkins presenting.

14: Saturday November 1, 2008 Rock Hound SP, SS 6:10 PM, PS 7:20 PM, PE 8:50 PM, Jupiter in the South, the Fall Sky predominant, Sally Allen presenting.

Daylight Savings Time ends November 2, 2008 at 2:00 AM

15: Saturday November 22, 2008 City of Rocks SP, SS 5:00 PM, PS 6:10 PM, PE 7:40 PM, Jupiter in the SW, The winter sky is rising before programs end, Matt Wilson presenting.

16: Saturday November 22, 2008 Pancho Villa SP, SS 5:00 PM, PS 6:10 PM, PE 7:40 PM, Jupiter in the SW, the winter sky is rising before programs end, Sally Allen presenting.

**Annual Membership Application or Renewal:**  
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Libraries \$50	n/a	n/a	n/a	n/a
Corporate & Government \$100	\$200	\$400	\$1,500	\$2,500

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**ABOUT THE NATIONAL PUBLIC  
OBSERVATORY PROJECT**

*Tens of thousands of people visit major U.S. research astronomical observatories every year. These research facilities do not advertise, and quite altruistically, set aside monies and time from their limited budgets to accommodate the public. Many people travel great distances for the opportunity to observe through a world-class telescope but due to the high cost of telescope time, this generally is not feasible. Where observatories have been able to set aside a night for public observing, it is often booked up well in advance.*

*While some upscale observatory/lodge facilities have been developed, none have been established to reach families or individuals looking for an intimate public park/camping experience with the proper telescopes, facilities, and knowledgeable tour guides.*

*The National Public Observatory, Inc. has been established to provide this kind of facility and we need your help.*

*Please join the National Public Observatory or make your tax-deductible contribution today!*