



Goffsgram



Mojave Desert Heritage & Cultural Association
Goffs Schoolhouse

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ANNOUNCING UPDATES TO THE MDHCA BOARD OF DIRECTORS

Greetings Goffians,

As spring turns to summer, Sam Sumitani and I, currently serving as Vice President and President, wanted to share some news regarding our tenure on the Board of Directors. I was elected to the Board in February 2022, and Sam was elected in October 2023. I was elected President in October 2024, and Sam was elected Vice President in October 2025.

Among the changes Sam and I championed during our tenure were the modernization of our bylaws, including the adoption of staggered, three-year Board terms. We did so with the intent of creating a more resilient and sustainable structure that allows for orderly transitions, continuity of leadership, and a regular infusion of fresh ideas. In short, it was the incorporation of a change agent into the leadership structure at the MDHCA.

Because Sam and I are part of the same three-year Board class, our current terms will conclude on June 30, 2026. We have both decided not to seek re-election. We believe this is the right time to step aside and allow the system to work as intended, leading by our own example, and giving other qualified voices a chance to lead the MDHCA.

Looking back at the last few years, we are incredibly proud of what we have collectively accomplished to strengthen the organizational foundation of the MDHCA. We substantially revised and updated our bylaws to better align with California nonprofit corporation law and adopted other procedural changes to streamline how the Board and the MDHCA conduct their work. We also adopted and updated several important organizational policies to help ensure our continued recognition as a 501(c)(3) nonprofit organization and our compliance with applicable California law.

The MDHCA is built on the efforts of volunteers and paid staff alike. To better organize the many facets of our work, we established and implemented a committee structure under the direction of the Board. We now have an Archives Committee, Grounds Committee, Membership Committee, and Media and Publicity Committee. We are confident the Board and the MDHCA will welcome your ideas, energy, and time, and we strongly encourage you to participate in a committee whose work interests you.

Throughout this work, we focused on organizational resilience across different volunteers, staff, and generations of the Board. The website is another area where we applied this vision. We relaunched the site on an open platform with greater flexibility, making it easier for multiple contributors to update and add content with faster turnaround. This progress is due in large part to the skillful administration of our valued volunteer, Patty Gill. Although the website has not been without challenges, we believe it now rests on a stable foundation and will continue to grow into an invaluable resource for those interested in the East Mojave.

And speaking of information technology, thanks to the generous nonprofit grant we secured from Google, the MDHCA now has a Workspace infrastructure that supports our email, group communications, and file sharing. Our fellow Director and expert desert historian, Larry Vredenburg, has organized a deep collection of archival documents, photographs, and maps that we anticipate making available to researchers and the public. This work will further strengthen the MDHCA's role as an authority on East Mojave history.

This brings us to the achievement of which we are most proud: helping recruit and welcome a strong group of new Directors. In the past year, we elected Dave Taylor, a now-retired OSHA compliance expert; Greg Waggoner, a retired educator and coach with extensive nonprofit Board experience; Garret Baquet, millman, engineer, CEO, and all-around problem solver; Professor Daniel Parker, UC Irvine faculty member and epidemiologist; and now Dr. Austin Schoenkopf, an archaeologist and researcher whose work is already well known to many in our community.

Also, during our tenure, a little over two and a half years ago, we welcomed Dr. David Hess to the Board. Although retired from the practice of medicine, David remains as active as ever in sharing his love and enthusiasm for the backcountry through the East Mojave Trek and other exploration-oriented events hosted by the MDHCA. Of course, our veteran Directors Darelyn Casebier, Loris Mitchell, Jackie Ridge, and Larry Vredenburg continue to offer wise guidance through their years of experience and provide the historical perspective that is so important to preserving Dennis's legacy and our collective legacy as an organization.

We have the utmost respect and confidence in these Directors. We believe the MDHCA is in the right hands to strengthen the organization financially, grow the membership, and develop fresh ideas to carry forward our shared mission as stewards of the Mojave Desert.

We are also grateful to the members, volunteers, staff, donors, and Directors who have supported the MDHCA during our time on the Board. All of the progress that has been made over the last few years reflects the efforts of many people who care deeply about our mission.

Although we will no longer serve on the Board of Directors as of July 1, 2026, we will both continue to be members and make regular visits to Goffs. For Sean, this transition means returning to what first drew him to the MDHCA: exploring the mighty Mojave Desert. For Sam, it means continuing to support the organization's governance and institutional work from outside the Board, while remaining engaged as a member and volunteer member of the Governance Committee. If we do not see you at Goffs, perhaps we will see you on the Trail or on a Zoom call discussing the finer points of the bylaws.

See you down the trail,

Sincerely,

Sean Holman and Sam Sumitani



Visit MDHCA: [37198 Lanfair Rd., Goffs, California](#) (At the intersection of Lanfair and Goffs Roads)

[Google Map](#)

Get in touch: 760-733-4482 (voice and text) | info@themojaveroad.org

Mailing Address: [37198 Lanfair Rd. G-15, Essex, California 92332](#)

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