

INTERNATIONAL DARK-SKY ASSOCIATION

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*TO PRESERVE AND PROTECT THE NIGHTTIME ENVIRONMENT AND OUR HERITAGE OF DARK
SKIES THROUGH ENVIRONMENTALLY RESPONSIBLE OUTDOOR LIGHTING*



**International Dark-Sky Association
Dark Sky Community Guidelines**

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DEFINITION OF AN IDA DARK SKY COMMUNITY

An IDA Dark Sky Community (DSC) is a town, city, or municipality that has shown exceptional dedication to the preservation of the night sky through the implementation and enforcement of quality lighting codes, dark sky education, and citizen support of dark skies.

GOALS FOR IDA DARK SKY COMMUNITY CREATION

- To identify communities with exceptional commitment to and success in pursuing dark sky preservation and restoration, and their promotion of quality outdoor lighting
- To promote ecotourism
- To promote protection of human health, nocturnal habitats, public enjoyment of the night sky and its heritage, and/or areas ideal for professional and amateur astronomy;
- To provide local, national, and international recognition for such communities
- To promote the ideals of International Dark-Sky Association (IDA) by encouraging communities to identify dark skies as a valuable community asset and goal

BENEFITS

Achieving this designation brings recognition of the efforts made by the Community council, the local government authorities (police department, planning and zoning, etc.), the citizens, and any other public and private organization to protect the night sky and the environment dependent on it. This designation will enhance awareness of dark sky matters to all residents and visitors of the Community.

Designation as an DSC entitles the Community to display the IDA Dark Sky Community logo in official publications, promotions, signs at the entrance or within the Community, and retain the use of this logo by other groups within the Community when identifying the area itself (i.e. a Community can say “Flagstaff, the world’s first IDA Dark Sky Community” or in other words to the same effect, for example, an organization within the Community can say “located in Star City, an IDA Dark Sky Community”). IDA will maintain a web page identifying and describing all DSCs available on www.darksky.org.

ELIGIBILITY

Community must have some type of legal organization that is officially recognized by outside groups. This can be in the form of a town, city, municipality, or other legally organized community (such as a urban neighborhoods and subdivisions).

MINIMUM REQUIREMENTS FOR ALL COMMUNITIES

- A) A quality comprehensive lighting code like the IDA/IES Model Lighting Ordinance (MLO) with the following minimum standards (more on developing a lighting code and guidelines may be found on our website <http://www.darksky.org/outdoorlighting/mlo>):
 - i) Fully-shielded or full-cutoff standard for all lighting fixtures over 3000 lumens initial lamp output (or equivalent wattages), AND;
 - ii) Restrictions on total amount of unshielded lighting, such as a limit on lumens per acre or total site lumens in unshielded fixtures (or equivalent wattages), AND;
 - iii) A policy to address over-lighting, such as energy density caps, lumens/acre caps, or maximum illuminance specifications, AND;
 - iv) A provision that clearly: (1) indicates where, when, and under what circumstances new public outdoor lighting (street lighting and lighting on other public property and rights-of-way) is warranted and will be permitted, and (2) requires that adaptive controls and curfews be employed in all future installations of public outdoor lighting.
- B) Community commitment to dark skies and quality lighting as shown by:
 - i) City owned lighting conforming with, or committed to conforming with, the lighting code (if the latter, a published plan with a timeline for completion in no more than 5 years), AND;
 - ii) Municipal support of dark skies and good lighting as indicated through city publications, flyers, public service announcements, funding of lighting upgrades, etc.
- C) Broad Support for dark skies from a wide range of community organizations such as:
 - i) Chamber of Commerce
 - ii) Local electrical utility
 - iii) Local IDA Chapter
 - iv) Lighting retailers
 - v) Home Owners Association
 - vi) Business Improvement Associations
 - vii) Others
- D) Community commitment to dark skies and education as shown by at least one of the following:
 - i) Planning and execution of at least two community dark sky awareness events per year. This may be organized through a local astronomy club, municipality, school, etc. AND/OR;

- ii) Inclusion of dark sky awareness documents (IDA brochures or Community-created brochures) with other Community informational documents for residents and visitors, AND/OR;
 - iii) Inclusion of dark sky education in Community schools and curriculum.
- E) Success in light pollution control. At least one of the following conditions must be demonstrated:
- i) Examples of a minimum of ten projects built under the lighting code, demonstrating effective application of the local lighting code, AND/OR;
 - ii) Alternative demonstration of success in light pollution control, to be discussed with IDA for compliance.
- F) A sky brightness measurement program must be maintained either by the Community or by another public or private organization (university, research center, IDA chapter, astronomy club, etc.) to follow the evolution of light pollution in the DSC.
- G) Designation is permanent, but is subject to regular review by IDA and possible revocation if minimum requirements are not maintained. More details may be found in the “Reassessment of DSC designation” section.
- H) Periodic checks, through the submission of the annual report due October 1st, will be preformed to ensure that minimum standards and objectives of the program are being upheld and adequate progress is being made. This report is a short 1 to 2-page synopsis of the Community’s activities and initiatives throughout the last year. The Borrego Springs, CA report is included on the website for reference www.darksky.org/communities.

PROVISIONAL STATUS

- In some cases, a Community interested in the program may lack all of the resources required to achieve a designation outright. If resource unavailability otherwise hinders the progress of a Community’s application, that Community may apply for and be granted Provisional status at the discretion of the IDA Board of Directors. Provisional status recognizes the Community’s ongoing work to become an IDA Dark Sky Community and is intended as a leverage point to successfully enable actions such as lighting upgrades/retrofits and policy changes.
- Provisional status expires after three (3) years. At any time before the end of this period, a Community may reapply for full status. Material submitted for the removal of provisional status may be an addendum to the initial application as long as the material includes a current assessment of the goals, outreach efforts, and lighting policy listed in the original application and clearly demonstrates that any program requirements left unmet at receipt of the Provisional status have been satisfied.
- To be considered for a provisional status, send a nomination package that includes the following information:
 - Documented intent to create and support an IDA Dark Sky Community;

- A description of the circumstances that currently prevent the Community from meeting the minimum Dark Sky Community requirements; and
- An action plan describing steps the aspiring Community will take to meet all program requirements in the specified Provisional status period

GUIDELINES ON THE DSC PROCESS

NOMINATION

The nomination may be initiated by an IDA qualified nominator who has personally reviewed a Community's outdoor lighting and commitment to night sky preservation. To become an IDA qualified nominator you must be an IDA member and be approved by the IDA Dark Sky Places manager. The nomination may be a joint effort between Community and the qualified nominator. Nominators are encouraged to correspond with IDA staff and the Community throughout this process—from first consideration of a DSC through the final submission package.

DSC APPLICATION PROCESS

STEPS FOR APPLICANT

- A) Initial contact with IDA by phone or email to discuss the process and receive recommendations followed by continued contact to update IDA staff on progress and receive continued recommendations;
- B) A formal point of contact (POC) person is designated and their phone, address and email information is forwarded to IDA staff. Before and after designation, any changes to this POC, or their information, must be communicated to IDA in order to ensure accurate communication at all times;
- C) Official supporting letter for the nomination from elected representatives of the Community, such as the mayor and/or council of a municipality. Any additional letters of support from organizations, clubs, groups, universities, etc.;
- D) Upon completion, the Community sends the application to IDA staff for review of the document. IDA staff confirms that the application is complete and ready for submission;
- E) Completed application packet in PDF and/or MS Word .doc format sent electronically to International Dark Sky Places committee (DSPC) by IDA staff for review.
- F) Submit in plenty of time for IDA staff to review and prepare your application to make the bi-monthly deadline that you prefer, find the deadlines at <http://www.darksky.org/idsp>. Requests to rush applications will NOT be accepted; meaning that planning ahead is essential if the Community is planning to meet a deadline.

TO BE INCLUDED IN DSC SUBMISSION

- A) Map of Community and factual information, i.e. population, number of schools, etc.
- B) Letter of nomination support by IDA qualified nominator and elected representatives of the Community such as the mayor and/or council.
- C) The Community's lighting code and guidelines must meet the minimum requirements as stated in the minimum requirements section.
- D) Documentation of examples of Community support and projects.
- E) Proposed alternative wording for a DSC (e.g. Dark Sky Village, Starry Sky City, etc.), if desired.
- F) An outline of a completed application is available and may be used upon request.

IDA REVIEW PROCESS

- A) Applications are sent to the committee on a bi-monthly basis.
- B) Before the Community's final application is submitted it is highly recommended that the Community be in regular conversation with IDA staff to perfect the application before the next application deadline. Applications not ready for submission by the deadline for committee consideration will be considered at the next committee meeting.
- C) IDA staff forwards application to Dark Sky Places Committee for review at the deadline.
- D) Approval of application by DSPC is by a 2/3-majority vote, or denial with reasons and recommendations. The DSPC committee may consider the applications for up to two months before a decision is released to the applicant. If approved the location will be notified and the program manager will organize a press release with the location during a 10-day waiting period during which the Board of Directors will have the formal right to veto should they perceive a problem with the application. The Community has the right to choose when the press release is made public but must organize the announcement to be made at the same time as the IDA press release unless otherwise discussed and agreed upon by both parties.
- E) If approved the Community is awarded the DSC designation and listed along with their application on the IDA website. By submitting the application the Community agrees to have the application posted to the website unless otherwise stated;
- F) If denied, a letter is sent to applicant outlining elements of the application that need improvement and specific recommendations for ways to remedy them. Applications can be resubmitted for future consideration after remediation is complete.
- G) IDA realizes that certain circumstances surrounding a DSC application may cause some potential authors of letters of support (or opposition) to feel uneasy about publicly declaring their opinions about the IDA designation. In the interest of providing the Dark Sky Places Committee with as full a picture of Community sentiment about applications as possible, it is possible for some letters to be suppressed from online publication if it is felt that making the letters publicly available will subject their authors to retaliation or harassment. A prospective DSC seeking this protection for letter writers must make a formal written request to that effect. The Program Manager must approve

suppression of publication of any part of an application. Note that suppression of online publication does not prevent either the Committee or the IDA Board of Directors from reading all submitted letters.

REASSESSMENT OF DSC DESIGNATIONS

To ensure that Communities continue to be exemplary in their protection and restoration of natural lightscapes, IDA will periodically reevaluate each site in the Dark Sky Places Program. This is done to confirm that the Community continues to meet the minimum requirements and is making adequate progress toward LMP compliance goals outlined in this document.

To this end, the Community will submit an annual report to IDA by October 1st detailing activities and progress towards meeting DSC requirements during the previous twelve months. The report should include dates and brief descriptions of any interpretive events, lighting retrofit projects, outreach efforts, etc. Samples of printed materials and press articles should also be included. The annual report should not require a lot of time to produce, as it should be a compilation of information generated during the year. Electronic submission of the report and supporting documentation is required in PDF or Microsoft Word format. If the annual report is not sent in a timely fashion, IDA may suspend the site's DSC status until the annual reporting requirement has been met (see the following section).

Investigation and Due Process

A DSC designation is intended to represent the beginning of an ongoing relationship between the Community and IDA to our mutual benefit. IDA will periodically review the nature of that relationship in the required annual reports as described in the previous section. From time to time, IDA also receives comments from visitors to Communities that raise concerns about the veracity and timeliness of information provided to IDA by site administrators. IDA may, at its discretion, investigate claims in which it is alleged that DSPs are not living up to commitments made to IDA and the public in their applications to the Program. This section details the IDA procedure for carrying out such investigations, and the rights of DSPs in such matters.

An allegation of impropriety concerning any of the elements of participation in the Program outlined in this document is subject to IDA investigation and potential remedial action including temporary suspension and/or permanent revocation of the DSP designation. IDA staff shall perform due diligence in gathering facts concerning such allegations it deems credible, and will prepare a report of its findings for consideration by the DSPC. The DSPC commits to weighing the evidence fairly and impartially, and to seek to resolve disputes whenever possible through dialog. A Community subject to an investigation shall be notified in a timely manner and solicited for evidence contrary to the specifics of the allegation at hand. The resolution manner of dialog shall be emphasized from the beginning, and the Community will be given an opportunity to correct any deficiencies with regard to the Program guidelines established by the IDA investigation within a reasonable time period to be prescribed by the DSPC.

Failure to achieve consensus through these means risks a DSPC recommendation for suspension or revocation of the DSC designation. If made, such a recommendation will be forwarded to the IDA Board of Directors for formal ratification before coming into force. The Board's decision on any disciplinary matters involving a DSP shall be considered definitive and binding.

Any DSP so investigated has the right to review the allegations against it and all factual information collected by IDA pertinent to the allegations.

Reinstatement Following Suspension

If the DSPC recommends a suspension of a Community's IDA designation and the Board ratifies the suspension, the Community administration shall be immediately notified. The status of a suspended DSC shall be changed to "Provisional" in all IDA communications until the designation is reinstated or revoked; however, the process of obtaining reinstatement of a designation is not the same as that outlined in the "Provisional Status" section of these guidelines.

To obtain reinstatement of a suspended designation, the DSC must provide evidence to the DSPC's satisfaction that the specific issues identified by the DSPC as grounds for the suspension have been corrected and that all Program guidelines are once again met. The DSPC will consider the evidence presented by the DSC and render a judgment to either

- Accept the reinstatement petition, OR
- Reject the petition and recommend revocation, OR
- Return the petition with further instructions and a defined deadline for a DSP response.

A suspension left unresolved after one (1) year from the date of the Board's assent to the suspension automatically becomes a permanent revocation. Revocation entails removal of the DSC from IDA's roll of approved Dark Sky Places, and from mention on the IDA website and in member and external communications. IDA reserves the right to take legal action against any former DSC whose designation is duly revoked but continues to use the IDA name/logo in advertising, communications, and/or signage.