



International Dark-Sky Association

"... to preserve and protect the nighttime environment and our heritage of dark skies"

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FOR IMMEDIATE RELEASE:

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Sierra La Rana Recognized for Dedication to Dark Skies

Tucson, Arizona, July 30, 2009 – The International Dark-Sky Association is pleased to announce the designation of the Dark Sky Friendly Development of Distinction to Sierra La Rana, located in the Big Bend Region of Texas.

The Dark Sky Development of Distinction Award is a new award designated by IDA to promote subdivisions, master planned communities, and unincorporated townships whose planning actively promotes a more natural night sky but does not qualify for the International Dark Sky Community (IDSCCommunity) award. This award differs from the IDSCCommunity designation in that it is applicable to smaller, unincorporated areas and emphasizes planning and enforcement over initial sky quality (although great sky quality is a definite bonus). In order to qualify for the award, developments must have a comprehensive lighting scheme, exhibit developer and resident commitment to night sky protection, and achieve success in light pollution control.

Sierra La Rana boasts an Astronomy Village with astronomy-specific deed restrictions and light pollution controls to maintain "observational quality" of the Village. The Village itself consists of nine parcels, and a common viewing area with concrete telescope pads, electricity, and picnic tables. Boasting an outstanding naked-eye limiting magnitude to 7.0 that allows viewing of typically invisible stars, the development area and Big Bend region has been home to the Texas Star Party since 1976.

"Over the last decade, I have traveled out to the pristine skies of West Texas to observe some of the faintest and most visually difficult astronomical objects in the heavens. The skies around the University of Texas' McDonald Observatory are some of the darkest in the world, and due to the arduous work to protect these skies by the Sierra La Rana development of Alpine I'm proud to recommend them as deserving this award," states Benjamin Jones, Leader of the Texas Section of the IDA. Jones continues by stating, "the work and standards that Sierra La Rana have established in West Texas are a model for all master planned communities."

IDA Offices

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David L. Lambert, Director of McDonald Observatory, added his affirmation of the development: "The work and standards to which the owners, developers, and future residents of Sierra la Rana are committing themselves will not only help maintain McDonald Observatory's dark skies, they will provide a needed example to the rest of Alpine and the region."

Gil Bartee, Vice President of Development for Sierra la Rana, is proud to receive the designation. "As a recipient of this award we are further compelled toward our mission of preserving the dark skies for residents of Sierra la Rana, the McDonald Observatory, and the Big Bend Region today and for future generations. This area has some of the darkest skies in the U.S. – great for naked-eye, binocular, and telescope viewing. It's no wonder that stargazers travel hundreds, even thousands of miles to enjoy these skies."

Already, management of Sierra La Rana has taken steps in strengthening the Alpine Outdoor Lighting Ordinance and is establishing a fund to assist in the retrofit of Alpine's nonconforming fixtures. The Environmental Advisory Board will recommend that the City of Alpine apply for the International Dark Sky Community designation upon completion of these retrofits.

About International Dark-Sky Association:

The IDA is a 501 c3 not-for-profit organization dedicated to preserve and protect the nighttime environment and our heritage of dark skies. Headquartered in Tucson, AZ with a branch office in Washington, DC and satellite offices in Hever, Belgium and Turrumurra, Australia, IDA has membership in 70 countries. More information can be found at www.darksky.org or by calling +1 520 293 3198.

About Sierra La Rana:

Sierra La Rana is a 3,100 acre residential development with an Astronomy Village located 2 miles south of Alpine, Texas in the Big Bend region. Amenities include a mile-high elevation ideal for birding, hiking, and astronomy; over 10 miles of horse trails; views of the Davis Mountains; and close proximity to Big Bend National Park and the world renowned University of Texas at Austin McDonald Observatory. Sierra la Rana has is perfect for astronomy – 5,000' above sea level, dry desert air, mild winters, southern location, and perhaps most importantly dark skies. More information can be found at www.sierralarana.com.

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