

Briefing

Title: Coordinated Natural Resource Monitoring in the Mojave Desert

Date: September 27, 2004

Background:

1. Monitoring is a common element of all the DOI, DOD and State land management plans in the California deserts.
 - NPS is funded to develop and implement a comprehensive monitoring program for plants and animals on NPS units in the Mojave Desert.
 - BLM is currently working with Geological Survey to develop monitoring programs to address the impacts of off-highway vehicle use.
 - BLM also has programs to assess range-land health as part of its livestock and burro management programs and monitoring/adaptive management are elements of all the recent BLM Plan amendments.
 - All the Department of Defense installations in the desert have/are developing monitoring programs to assess the condition of their lands.
 - FWS has developed a desert tortoise monitoring program (populations, habitat and threats)
 - NPS has developed a program to characterize the biological and hydrological characteristics of springs and wetlands in the Mojave desert
 - Cal State Parks is in the early stages of developing monitoring programs for their lands.
 - USGS received \$500K of FY 04 funds to provide science support to DOI monitoring efforts in the desert. The specific focus is on: 1) the effect of climate fluctuations on plant productivity, invasives, soil health, and cost-effective monitoring methods, 2) soil texture and soil moisture modeling, and 3) developing critical indicators of high-quality habitat for desert tortoise.

2. The DMG hosted a Coordinated Natural Resource Monitoring Workshop in February 2002 (see: www.dmg.gov/documents/monitoring-workshop.html) The purpose of the workshop was to increase awareness among land and resource managers of the scope, objectives and status of existing/planned inventory/monitoring programs for the California desert. Major workshop findings and conclusion included:
 - Monitoring programs are in various stages of development depending on agency and location.
 - Almost all the monitoring efforts suffer from a lack of funding and long term support.
 - Monitoring programs, while sharing many common goals and objectives, are largely uncoordinated.

3. At its April 2002 meeting, the DMG discussed the results of the workshop and adopted the following principles to guide future collaborative efforts related to monitoring:
 - The goal of the DMG is to coordinate/integrate monitoring efforts by identifying

and developing compatible objectives, methodologies and data management systems.

- The primary purpose of monitoring is to accumulate useful information for making decisions and evaluating the effectiveness of management actions.
 - Cooperative monitoring efforts should start at a small scale (limited number of achievable goals or limited geography). The initial focus should be on continuing to support desert tortoise population monitoring and monitoring precipitation/ climate patterns in the desert.
 - A framework is needed to tie the multiple agency efforts together across desert ecosystem and jurisdictional boundaries.
 - Standardization in protocols is needed and should be tied to research results where available.
 - Land managers will cooperate where doing so will promote greater efficiency and effectiveness.
4. Several DMG agencies participated in the NPS vital signs workshop in the spring of 2004. The NPS Mojave Network Vital Signs Scoping Workshop Report is available at <http://hrcweb.lv-hrc.nevada.edu/mojn/workshop.htm>.
5. A meeting has been scheduled for Monday, October 25 from 10:00 am until 3:00 pm at the NPS office in Barstow. The purpose of the meeting will be to review various natural resource monitoring programs being conducted/planned by various agencies and identify where cooperation and collaboration makes sense. The scope of this initial meeting will focus primarily on identifying WHAT should be monitored on a desert wide/regional basis. Confirmed and possible (?) participants in the meeting include:
- **NPS:** Mary Martin, Debra Hughson, Kris Heister, Craig Palmer?
 - **BLM:** Larry Morgan, Jim Weigand, other BLM biologists?
 - **GS:** Todd Esque, Rob Fisher?
 - **FWS:** Bob Williams, Judy Hohman?
 - **UNR:** Dick Tracy
 - **CDFG:** Tom Lupo?
 - **DMG Coordinators:** John Hamill and Clarence Everly
- Findings and recommendations will be presented to the DMG in January 2005 .
Discussions of how to best integrate data collection/management efforts will occur at a subsequent meeting.

Recommended Next Step:

Confirm the scope and purpose of meeting and DMG participation.