

Charter

Conservation Land Acquisition Work Group

Purpose and Background

Many DMG agencies are currently undertaking conservation land acquisition programs. While each program is unique, all share the common goals of protecting habitat for sensitive species and open space. To meet these goals, acquisition programs across the desert must be coordinated in order to be strategic and maximize limited program funding. For instance, a coordinated approach will eliminate incidents of multiple agencies targeting a single landowner and thus artificially inflating property values. In addition, coordination will allow agencies to maximize the benefits to sensitive species by identifying critical habitats and locales where various programs overlap. Current programs include, but are not limited to:

- Acquisition of National Park, State Park, and wilderness in-holdings
- Acquisition of buffer lands to protect the military's ability to operate
- Acquisition of compensation lands for threatened or endangered species such as the Mohave ground squirrel or desert tortoise
- Protection of wildlife corridors and sensitive plant and wildlife habitat

In addition to the coordination of actual acquisitions, management of acquired lands must be addressed. Opportunities for cooperative management, management funding, and endowments must be explored. Actions that complement acquisition must also be considered for recovery of threatened and endangered species. Close coordination will be needed with wildlife agencies to prioritize all recovery actions, including acquisition. Coordination with the counties must occur to mitigate erosion of their tax bases through public or tax exempt NGO acquisition.

Mission

To provide the data and coordination necessary to maximize benefits to sensitive plant and wildlife species, wildlife corridors, habitats, and open spaces of ongoing agency conservation acquisition programs.

Duties and Responsibilities

- Share agency data related to acquisitions. Proprietary data will be shared only as needed with bona fide work group members.
- Meet regularly to coordinate programs and acquisitions to ensure that multiple work group members are not seeking the same parcel(s) and that each acquisition maximizes benefits to each program to the extent possible.
- Develop consistent strategies for management of acquired lands and for securing funding for such management.
- Coordinate monitoring of use of acquired lands, especially conservation easements and compensation lands.
- Serve as a forum for DMG agencies to resolve issues related to conservation acquisition and the management of acquired lands.

- Work with wildlife agencies to prioritize other recovery actions for threatened and endangered species that would complement land acquisition.
- Educate work group members to better understand each agency's policies and regulations regarding acquisitions.
- Explore ways to achieve conservation acquisition goals while not negatively affecting the counties through tax base erosion.
- Report findings, provide updates, and develop recommendations for consideration by the DMG.

Work Group Participants

The work group will consist of designated DMG agency staff and/or contractors who are involved in conservation acquisitions. Stakeholders who are currently working with DMG agencies will be invited to participate in the work group on either an ad hoc or a permanent basis depending on their current involvement with conservation acquisitions. The DMG coordinators will serve as staff to the group. Two DMG managers will be designated to provide management guidance to the work group and provide liaison with the DMG.