

October 11, 2001

Memorandum

To: California Desert Managers Group
California Desert Managers Group Interagency Working Group Team Leaders

From: Executive Coordinator, California Desert Managers Group
DOD Coordinator, California Desert Managers Group

Subject: September 19 - 20, 2001 California Desert Managers Group Meeting Summary

Attached is a summary of the Desert Managers Group meeting conducted September 19 - 20, 2001 in Riverside, CA. Decisions, action items and assignments are underlined. All handouts referred to in the meeting summary can be found on the DMG website at [Twww.dmg.gov](http://www.dmg.gov). Please review these items and contact either John Hamill (760-255-8888) or Clarence Everly (760-255-8896), if you have any changes.

Please follow through on any assignments or action items for which you are responsible.

cc DMG Interested Parties

Attachment

Desert Mangers Group Meeting

September 19 - 20, 2001

Riverside, California

September 19, 2001

1. DMG Update.

- a. **DMG Dump/Restoration Coordinator position status.** Final interviews for the position are being completed. There were several good applicants and the position should be filled in a couple of months.
- b. **Update, BLM California Desert Lawsuit.** The judge ruled that the BLM decision to restrict seasonal grazing on desert tortoise critical habitat was sound, except that BLM needed to more fully coordinate and consult with the ranchers before implementing its decision. The BLM attempted this coordination, but several of the ranchers refused to meet. BLM went ahead with their decision to close areas effective September 7. Most but not all the ranchers have complied with the closure. Meanwhile, the BLM was sued over its decision to close portions of the Imperial Sand Dunes to OHV use. This case will be going to court soon.
- c. **Lancaster Visitor Center Map.** The map for the Lancaster Visitor Center was completed, shipped to Lancaster, and is now installed. This completes the display portion of the visitor center.
- d. **Data Management Standards/Corporate data sets.** Managers were reminded of their commitment to provide a minimum of five (5) data sets for inclusion in the MDEP spatial data clearinghouse. The commitment to provide data was made by all managers at the February 2001 DMG meeting. To date no organization has submitted data per the sited commitment.
- e. **University of Redlands Grant Update.** The University of Redlands was officially awarded a research grant of \$4 million from the Army Research Office for research on the Desert Tortoise. The DMG designated Phil Medica as its representative to the research project's Management Oversight Group. A meeting is currently scheduled for 30 October 2001 to review the research project's goals and objectives. An open house for the project is being planned for 11 December 2001.
- f. **Salton Sea Tour.** The Salton Sea Authority has offered to sponsor a tour of the Salton Sea for the DMG. About 12 managers/staff indicated they were interested in the tour. They requested the tour occur in November or January and that MWD be involved in providing briefings.
- g. **Millennium Conference Proceedings.** John Hamill distributed a letter to the DMG participants who had not provided their financial contributions to the conference. Those contributions were still needed to print the Conference proceedings. Hamill requested that payment be made directly to the printer (once the printer is identified). The proceedings will be printed sometime next winter or spring.

- h. **Riparian Habitat Poster.** Hamill distributed 12 copies of the USGS poster showing historical changes in riparian vegetation at various locations along the Mojave River. Anyone desiring a poster that did not receive one or anyone desiring additional posters should contact John Hamill 760-255-8888.
- i. **Monitoring Workshop.** Hamill distributed a draft agenda for a proposed workshop to increase awareness among land and resource managers of the scope, objectives and status of existing/planned natural resource inventory/monitoring programs for the California desert. The Managers supported the workshop and recommended it be held after the first of the year. Hamill indicated he would begin planning the event.
- j. **CHRIS/MDHRGIS Update.** The SHPO has agreed to fund maintenance and continuing work on the CHRIS/MDHRGIS system for the state fiscal year 2002. The state has put the continued maintenance and development of the CHRIS system out for bid. It is anticipated that the new contract will be in place by the end of October. Location of the HUB, currently in Redlands, will potentially change as a result of the contract re-solicitation. The original deliverables, minus Internet connectivity with the HUB, for the MDHRGIS project will be complete by the end of October. Products will be distributed to all partners during the first week of November. The DOD and DOI Coordinators, along with members of PACRAT, will continue to work with the State to develop a long-range plan for the operation and continued development of this system.

1. **FY 01 Project Review and FY 02 Work Plans.**

- a. **Desert Tortoise Monitoring and Recovery** – This year’s monitoring showed that the density of tortoises is very low in many areas and nearly twice as many transects will be needed in order to get adequate sample sizes during the next field season. The cost will nearly double to \$1.7M. Phil Medica will evaluate funding availability and present a final plan to the DMG in December.

Phil distributed a list of recovery actions that need to be prioritized. The Managers agreed to send their input to Phil prior to the MOGTAC meeting on October 2.

- b. **Illegal Dump Project Clean-up and Prevention** – A draft FY 02 work plan was presented to the DMG for discussion. NPS indicated they had no funding in FY 02 for clean up. BLM indicated their funds would be used to clean up dumps on public land. However, BLM will consider cost sharing with other agencies on a case-by-case basis. BLM will solicit nominations for clean-up and present a final work plan at the next DMG meeting.

BLM will sponsor the “Dumps of the Desert Tour III” in March 2002.

- c. **Draft FY 02 Burro Management Plan.** Dave Sjaastad reported that all the targets established for FY 01 were met or exceeded. Dave presented a draft FY02 work plan. Dave requested comment from the managers (no comments or concerns were identified at the meeting). Several of the managers indicated they felt there was a need to develop consistent burro census techniques among the various management agencies. Dave agreed to pursue this. BLM Yuma and BLM El Centro will be organizing an interagency meeting

this fall to discuss burro management along the Colorado River. BLM is doing proper functioning condition assessment for springs and riparian areas. Tim Salt committed to putting the data in the DMG Water Database.

- d. **DMG Water Study.** Greg Lines reported that no data had been collected and/or entered into the DMG water database since the training this past spring. There had been little progress on the study due to lack of funding or staff support. The FWS National Wetlands Inventory office recently hired a person to complete the mapping of wetlands and riparian habitat in the California desert. The priority for mapping would be the West Mojave and the Mojave National Preserve. Greg presented a proposal from the Water Group for the managers to provide funding support for a “Springs Conference” next year in Las Vegas that was being organized by the Desert Research Institute. The Managers had several questions that needed to be addressed before they would act on the request: (1) the relevance of the conference to the Cal Desert (vs the intermountain west), (2) whether the DMG could have input to the program, (3) how critical DMG funding would be to the success or conduct of the conference, and (4) who else (especially from BLM, FWS, NPS, GS) has already pledged or been approached to provide funds. Hamill will follow up with DRI on these questions and discuss his findings at the next DMG meeting.

The Managers endorsed a proposal from the NPS Water Rights Division to sponsor a California Desert water rights training class in January/February 2002.

- e. **Law Enforcement Work Group Report.**

- 3 **Response to the DMG White Paper.** The DMG White paper and the recommendations of the ad hoc group of managers who met to review the White Paper were discussed. The Managers agreed to the following:

- Phil Medica will coordinate a review of Bureau of Land Management (BLM), National Park Service (NPS), and Department of Defense land management plans to identify priority Desert Tortoise recovery actions where interagency cooperation makes sense. The Managers agreed to provide a contact person who would work with Phil on this task.
- Wherever possible and appropriate, DMG participants will align their existing desert tortoise recovery/research efforts to achieve those actions identified in (1) above.
- Managers agreed that continuation of the existing Section 7 Consultation process is most appropriate. Hamill will work with the Fish and Wildlife Service to evaluate if/how Section 7 of the ESA could be used to provide incentives for agencies and project proponents to implement priority recovery actions. The results of the discussions will be reported to the DMG.
- Phil Medica will establish an independent scientific review process for selected desert tortoise research and recovery activities.

- The DMG will coordinate budget requests for specific desert tortoise recovery actions to try to secure the resources needed for each agency to implement the recovery actions in a coordinated and timely manner.
- An inter-agency team will be established to evaluate the collective benefits of an interagency water study versus monitoring on an individual agency basis and evaluate options to fund the effort.
- An inter-agency team will be established to develop a white paper that evaluates how the various Federal and State natural resource monitoring efforts should be coordinated or integrated.
- Existing NPS and BLM Advisory Committees will be briefed periodically on DMG activities. In addition, the DMG will periodically host an open house on the DMG for advisory committee members and other interested parties.

September 20, 2001

1. **Future of the DMG.** Paul Ideker and Kay Dalton facilitated a discussion on how the DMG can become more effective and valuable to its members . A summary of the discussion and the recommendations of the facilitators are attached. The Managers agreed to prioritize the goals and activities in the 5-year Plan and continue the discussion at their next meeting in Death Valley. The prioritization of the goals and activities would also be discussed at the DMG Executive Coordination Meeting.
2. **Executive Coordination meeting agenda.** A draft agenda for the DMG Executive Coordination meeting was discussed. Several managers suggested that we should design the meeting to actively engage the executives in a discussion of the DMG's effectiveness and priorities. Dave VanCleve and Mary Martin offered to assist the Coordinators in redrafting the agenda to achieve that objective.
3. **Future DMG meetings.**
 - October 23, 2001 – DMG Executive Coordination meeting, Hilton Ontario Airport, Ontario California.
 - December 12-13, 2001 – DMG meeting, Death Valley National Park.
 - March 19-20, 2002 – DMG meeting, Anza Borrego State Park, theme to be determined.

Attachment
California Desert Managers Group
Building A More Effective Organization
Quarterly Meeting – Riverside, California
September 20, 2001

This document summarizes the highlights of the second day of the regular quarterly meeting of the California Desert Managers Group (DMG) on September 20, 2001 in Riverside, California. The focus of the meeting was on how to build a more effective DMG; an organization better prepared to meet the DMG's original vision and the goals set forth in its 5-Year plan.

Meeting Attendees

Larry Whalon, NPS Mojave
Major B.W. Soderberg, MAGTFTC
Hector A. Villalobos, BLM Ridgecrest
Richard A. Wood, Air Force Flight Test Ctr.
Mary Martin, NPS Mojave
Tim Salt, BLM Desert Region
John O'Gara, NAWS China Lake
Greg Thomsen, BLM
Molly Brady, BLM Needles
Phillip A. Medica, Fish & Wildlife Service
Patrick Christman, DOD MCAS Yuma

Tim Read, BLM Barstow
Ernie Quintana, NPS Joshua Tree
Art Gleason, MCLB Barstow
David Van Cleve, State Parks
Jim Collins, Naval Air El Centro
Danella George, BLM
Becky Jones, CA DFG
JT Reynolds, NPS Death Valley
Diane Noda, Fish & Wildlife Service
Kathleen Franklin, State Parks
Mickey Quillman, DOD Fort Irwin

John Hamill, Department of Interior, DMG Coordinator
Clarence Everly, Department of Defense, DMG Coordinator

Paul Ideker, TRIAD Communications, Meeting Facilitator
Kay Dalton, TRIAD Communications, Meeting Facilitator

Meeting Focus

The purpose of the meeting was to discuss how the DMG can become more effective and valuable to its members.

To help set a context for the discussion, the results of a written survey about effectiveness that was designed and administered by the DMG Coordinators were presented and discussed. This portion of the meeting also included a discussion of the results of a series of pre-meeting interviews with some of the DMG Managers and Working Group Members conducted by Paul Ideker.

The Written Survey

A total of 39 survey forms were mailed to DMG Managers and members of various Working Groups. A total of 21 completed surveys were returned. There were 16 questions on the survey dealing with group effectiveness. Of special interest:

- 30% of the respondents felt that DMG partner agencies were focused on collaboration rather than preserving their agency individuality; 70% of the respondents do not¹.
- 35% of the respondents felt that achieving DMG goals was equal to the priority given to achieving individual agency goals; 65% did not. A greater percentage of Managers disagreed with this point than Working Group Members.
- 44% of the respondents felt that DMG/Working Group recommendations are implemented in a timely manner within individual organizations; 56% did not agree. More Working Group Members disagreed with this statement than Managers.
- 69% of the respondents believe the DMG is successfully achieving its mission.
- 24% of the respondents said they consistently attended DMG meetings; 76% did not agree. A larger percentage of Working Group Members disagreed with this statement.

Personal Interviews

Paul Ideker completed a total of 15 telephone interviews prior to the meeting. Interviews were randomly conducted with both Managers and Working Group Members. All interviews focused on how the DMG could be more effective and valuable to the person (and their primary work) being interviewed. A representative sample of comments taken from the interviews is attached to this document as Appendix A.

Observations from the Facilitator

Mr. Ideker provided the following observations, based on the results from both the survey and the interviews.

There is a visible difference between the value placed on DMG participation between the different types of agencies represented within the group. Department of Defense (DOD) representatives have a clear reason for being members of the DMG. This is not the case with some of the other agencies who participate in the group.

The DOD representatives are also seen as having a more rigid decision-making/approval process than the other groups. DOD is very top-down. The other federal agencies seem to have more

¹ Fostering collaboration is a major element of the DMG Mission.

latitude to make decisions about issues from their management. State agencies are often delegated authority to make decisions on the spot. These differences can create conflict. There is some thought that there is not enough appreciation of these differences between organizations.

There appears to be two different classes of people within the DMG. The “Table People” are the Managers who physically sit at the meeting table. The “Wall People” are members of Working Groups who sit along the wall. The Managers are perceived to have all or most of the power in the DMG. The Working Groups are there to do work (projects) assigned by the Managers.

The Wall People feel that the Table People are not as honest as they could be about their commitment to the DMG and its work. That commitment softens once the Table People leave the room. This dissonance creates friction between the groups and a lack of trust.

The survey results reveal a disconnect between the DMG’s stated mission (to promote collaboration among agencies) and the value of the DMG according to respondents. There may be a need to revisit why people come to the DMG and what value it adds to their professional life.

There appears to be a need for an announced understanding among DMG members about the group’s legal authority (it has none). The group has no bank account and has no real power to make projects a priority within individual agencies. In reality there are no “DMG projects.” This ongoing misunderstanding creates a certain level of dysfunction within the “family” – with the Wall People suffering the most from this problem.

There is the perception that the DOI is the greatest beneficiary of DMG work. Sometimes the DMG is seen as a “Mojave Desert Group.” There is a lack of perceived common benefit among all members.

In order to promote successful land effective collaboration and partnering, five (5) things must be present in the group: Good Communication, A Common Vision/Goals, Shared Values, Honesty and Trust, and Willingness to Share Power.

These issues need to be examined by the group and the results of the survey and the interviews validated as part of the process to determine how the DMG can become more valuable to its members and more effective as an organization.

General Comments from the Group²

If it’s on my turf and there is a federal mandate, I will collaborate. If offered help, no thanks, I can take care of things myself. (Art Gleason, MCLB)

² This summary is not intended to be a set of minutes for the meeting. In cases where comments are attributed to an individual, they have – by necessity – been paraphrased. The material in this summary reflects the general sense of what was said.

I value collaboration a lot. Two things that were said especially resonate with me...the Wall People vs. the Table People. The Wall People are terribly frustrated, in large part due to the lack of follow-up by the Table People. (Molly Brady, BLM)

There are things that the DMG is doing well that are diminished because we are constantly looking for dollars (unsuccessfully). I think the DMG is a worthwhile forum. Communication is important. (Mary Martin, NPS)

While I may not have a specific problem on my turf (i.e. burros), by collaborating with others, the problem may not cross over into my area. On communication: There isn't a comfort level among the group about the role of the DMG. (Ernie Quintara, NPS)

The DMG has no authority to tell me to spend money on a project. The DMG is effective in defining common goals and issues among agencies. (Mickey Quillman, DOD)

The DMG is a good forum for understanding the mission of other agencies and how they related to my mission. I came in (to the DMG) with expectations about the DMG, but it's not what I expected. I'm trying to determine what my expectations should be at this point. (JT Reynolds, NPS)

The value of the DMG is that we have determined – in the case of the tortoise for example – that we should have a common agreed upon process and procedure (for certain management activities). Money should not be the primary (goal) or expectation of members of the DMG. (Ernie Quintara, NPS)

The informal communication that happens through the DMG is a great benefit to me. We should not just focus on the completion of goals in the 5-year plan as a measure of success. (Greg Thomson, BLM)

I have some discomfort with the group. I sometimes leave the meeting and it would be hard to make a valid commitment (to work on or actively support a project). I don't know how much sharing I can do. (Tim Read, BLM)

The list of priorities (projects) is long. I can't juggle that much on my plate. When I come here I try to focus on what I can do (based on funding and support). Sometimes I don't want to admit to the group that I can't do something (when I know I can't) because I don't want to pour cold water on a good idea. (Hector Villalobos, BLM).

There is no such thing as DMG work...DMG is a tool to accomplish the work we already have to do. We have also created an injustice as a goal for the DMG by making the ability to get funding as a measure of success. We place too much emphasis on what is happening in the managers' group as opposed to the success of the Working Groups. (Tim Salt, BLM)

There is a big divide between the Wall People and the Table People. If the Managers don't give the Wall People more (active) support and provide them with the leadership they need (and are asking for), fewer and fewer of them will stay around to work on DMG endorsed projects. (Ideker)

What was learned from this discussion?

It is discouraging to hear (that some Managers are not being totally honest). People need to speak up more if they can't fulfill their work (commitments), or do what they say they will do. I see my job as facilitating that discussion, not making decisions (about what the group should do or not do). (Clarence Everly, DOD Coordinator)

There doesn't seem to be disagreement within the group that things aren't all well with the DMG. Maybe the 5-year plan isn't aligned with what the group wants out of this process. Clarence and I are here to guide what the group wants, not to determine the goals of the group. (John Hamill, DOI Coordinator)

[When asked how many DMG members felt that John Hamill and Clarence Everly are the leaders of the group, only one member raised his hand.]

I see them as coordinators, not leaders. (Mary Martin)

The group discussed what aspects of DMG activities are most valuable to individual members. Eventually the group identified a list of twelve 12 different values. Group members were then asked to establish a priority list of values from most valuable to least valuable by voting. Each Manager and Working Group Member was given five (5) votes to cast.³

The final list of values in priority order (with number of votes received in (s)) was:

1. Networking (31)
2. Identifying issues which can best be addressed through collaboration (22)
3. Enhancing individual agency's ability to fulfill its mission (21)
4. Broadening the collective vision from an ecosystem perspective, regionally and globally (20)
5. Increase internal capacity of each agency by learning about and participating in such things as training, workshops, conferences and other shared resources (13)
6. Setting standardized methods of protocol (12)
7. Gathering intelligence (6)
- 7A. Raising the visibility of the desert and desert issues internally (within home agencies) and externally (6)
8. Understanding the cultures of the other agencies (i.e., issues, values, decision-making process, etc.)
 - 8A. Enhancing the quality of desert management (3)
9. Identifying critical issues (0)
- 9A. Enhancing public service (0)

The facilitators suggested that the appropriate list from the "What's Valuable To Me" exercise be combined with the criteria provided for evaluating current DMG projects in the written survey,⁴ so that the entire list could be revisited and culled.

³ Votes could be divided among the list or all five votes could go to a single "value."

⁴ The written survey given to Managers and Work Group Members prior to the meeting was in two parts. One part dealt with the group's effectiveness. The other part asked participants to rank the importance of the list of projects

A general discussion about the list followed.

Some people felt that many of the projects were put on the list because there was some belief that funds would be available to implement the project.

Some of the projects remain on the list, even though the work has been completed or abandoned.

Some Work Groups have not met for months.

There was a general feeling (especially from Working Group Members present at the meeting) that several of the efforts lacked involvement or support by the Managers.

[When the group was asked how many Managers actually attended Working Group sessions, there was a minimal response.]

At times the nature of the work promotes cooperation and collaboration at the Working Group level and involvement by Managers is not needed.

Other projects need leadership.

There was general agreement among those members present that Working Groups who have completed their work or are no longer relevant should be disbanded.

For Working Groups to succeed, they must have sustained leadership and a specific purpose. Goals need to be realistic and the need for funding as a condition of success should be critically reconsidered.

The facilitators suggested that the list of projects from the 5-year plan be revisited and reprioritized using the new combined list of criteria. Those projects that do not finish at the top of the list should be put in suspense, while those projects that meet the criteria should become the immediate focus of the DMG Managers and the appropriate Working Groups.

The DMG Coordinators will develop a method for setting project priorities and engage the Managers in that process.⁵

Facilitators' Observations, Comments & Recommendations

- 1. Group networking is by far the main reason Managers participate in the DMG. Meeting agendas should be developed in a way that promotes both "scheduled" and "unscheduled" networking during the course of a DMG meeting. To reinforce the value group members place on networking, the Coordinators may want to end each meeting by going around the*

taken from the DMG 5-year plan. The criteria used by the survey to rank the projects included: Relevance to (home) agency's mission; Project urgency; Opportunity for Collaboration; Whether the issue is already being addressed; Availability of funds; Increasing internal capacity; and If the project is a way to standardize protocols.

⁵ TRIAD has helped the Coordinators develop a new rating system and the process has been initiated with the Managers as of 10-01-01.

table and asking each person to share one thing they learned at this meeting that is valuable to him/her.

- 2. While collaboration among Managers is valued to some extent, many of the members do not seem to know how to develop effective collaborations and partnerships⁶. It might be useful to do some internal team building exercises periodically to reinforce the “how” as well as the “why” of collaboration. It might also be useful to ask members to share information about other collaborative experiences they are involved in at DMG meetings. This is a good way to measure both the individual’s interest in collaboration as well as the home agency’s commitment to partnering as a management tool.⁷*
- 3. The Coordinators may wish to take more of an active role in helping members build collaborative partnerships around specific projects. Once a project is identified, the Coordinators might meet with Managers and Working Group Members with an interest in the project to establish partnership ground rules, expectations and mileposts. In this way the Coordinators could also serve as mentors to the membership with a focus on how to build and sustain successful collaborations.*
- 4. In order to foster better communication, the Coordinators should consider how they could connect members between quarterly meetings. This could be an electronic newsletter for Managers, Working Group Members and other interested parties and/or an electronic DMG Bulletin Board where news, needs and important announcements could be posted on a regular basis.*
- 5. The Coordinators might provide an opportunity at every meeting for free-form questions between Managers and Working Group Members. The subject of questions should be wide-ranging and unlimited in scope. If it makes sense in terms of this group, the questions could be written down and asked anonymously by the Coordinators. It’s important to draw members of the Working Groups into the meetings. If they have no real purpose – or once that purpose has been served – they should not be required to sit along the wall and listen to the proceedings.*
- 6. The best way to create trust and promote honesty within a group like the DMG is to make it as safe as possible for people to say what’s on their mind without fear of criticism or reprisal. The Coordinators should watch body language during meetings to see who may be avoiding certain topics. If people aren’t willing to engage in a certain topic on their own, the Coordinators should draw that person into the discussion. People who are not engaged in discussions are either bored by the topic or unwilling to get too involved. That can lead to being dishonest about commitment.*
- 7. When work assignments are made, make them specific and include specific mechanisms for measuring progress and success. Provide for periodic check-ins to make sure everyone is*

⁶ The BLM provides an excellent training course dealing with how to create successful partnerships for natural resource management through the National Training Center in Phoenix, Arizona.

⁷ Individuals who are not part of a professional culture that values collaboration and partnerships are unlikely to be good collaborators.

keeping his or her agreements. When agreements are not kept, the individual needs to be asked why.

- 8. The DMG needs to be more realistic about the work its members can actually accomplish on the ground. Projects which do not meet the top level of criteria as defined by the Managers is unlikely to proceed successfully. Projects with a heavy reliance on new financial resources in order to succeed are likely to lie dormant or fail, unless those resources can be identified at the outset of the project. Projects should not be allowed to flounder if the necessary resources and resolve to complete the project do not materialize. Either the scope of the project should be changed to reflect reality, or work on the project should be discontinued.*
- 9. The Coordinators may want to include time at each quarterly meeting for the group to share and document success stories – both major and minor. Many Managers noted that through their involvement in the DMG they were often able to make the right connection to move a project to its next level; fine-tune or establish standardized methods of protocol; share resources; and, in short, do their jobs more effectively. Recognizing and praising success is one of the key ingredients to maintaining and building an effective organization.*

Prepared by Paul Ideker and Kay Dalton , TRIAD Communications, October 2, 2001