



October 29, 2003

Memorandum

To: Desert Managers Group
DMG Interagency Working Group Team Leaders
DMG Coordinators and Interested Parties

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

Subject: October 7-8, 2003 Desert Managers Group Meeting Summary

Attached is the draft summary of the Desert Managers Group meeting conducted on October 7-8, 2003 in Death Valley, CA. Please review the action items and follow through on any assignments for which you are responsible. *Action items have been highlighted for easy review.* The Meeting Summary and all referenced documents are accessible on the DMG website at www.dmg.gov. Please contact either John Hamill (760-255-8888) or Clarence Everly (760-255-8896) if you have questions.

Attachment--DMG Meeting Summary

Referenced Documents (available at www.dmg.gov):

1. DMG Meeting Attendance Roster
2. Hazmat Report
3. Illegal Dump Clean-up FY 04 budget Request
4. DMG Research Inventory Project
5. FY 2004 DMG Budget Proposal for the Mojave Desert Science Symposium
6. Brief—San Sebastian Marsh-San Felipe Cree Watershed restoration
7. Draft Memorandum of Understanding Regarding the Conservation and Management of the San Felipe Creek, Fish Creek, and Carrizo Creek Watersheds, San Diego & Imperial Counties, California
8. Brief – Habitat Restoration Projects
9. Summary of DMG funding needs

DRAFT
Meeting Summary and Action Items
Desert Managers Group Meeting
October 7-8, 2003
Death Valley, CA

Death Valley NP overview. J.T. Reynolds provided an overview of the history and resources of Death Valley National Park.

HAZMAT report. John Key and Russ Scofield provided an update on the Hazmat work group, illegal dump clean-ups completed in FY 03, and the status of the illegal dump prevention program (attached). Due to limited funds the focus in FY 04 will be on community cleanup involving local partnerships. \$12K is needed to pay dump tipping fees associated with about a dozen community cleanups. John Key reported that Garry Brown will be stepping down as co-chair of the Hazmat work group and he is looking for a replacement. The group is also sponsoring an Illegal Dump Enforcement Workshop (IDEW) in the Coachella Valley to elevate the importance of illegal dumping among local law enforcement agencies. If successful the workshop would be repeated in other parts of the desert. The work group is also working with local code enforcement agencies to issue a nasty letter to people who are observed littering. There will be a full report on this effort and the enforcement workshop at the next meeting.

PACRAT Report.

- **Operation Indian Rock** Todd Swain (NPS) provided a report on Operation Indian Rock, an interagency law enforcement effort involving looting of archaeological sites throughout the west. Todd stressed the importance for resource staff to keep rangers informed of the important archaeological resources in their area (rangers can't protect what they do not know exists). He also noted the large amount of time needed to make and prosecute an ARPA case.
- **Proposed Paleontological Resources Legislation.** Kathy Springer, SB County Museum reported on new legislation that is expected to pass congress that provides guidelines for management of fossil resources on Federal land (e.g., inventory requirements, and public education and museum and curation guidelines). The law will also prohibit collection, and establish penalties and rewards for offenses. (*Question: Does the law apply to all lands or just DOI and DOA lands?*)
- **ARPA Training.** Russ Kaldenberg, China Lakes, announced that a 40 hour advanced ARPA class is scheduled for last week of Jan 04. The class, which is being sponsored by BLM and China Lake, is limited to 20 people. There is currently a waiting list for the class. Russ requested \$8000 to fund a second class, and \$4000 to repeat the basic ARPA training for rangers and cultural resource staff. Per diem/travel costs are separate.

- **Report/Recommendations on CHRIS.** Eric Allison, SHPO, reported that a complete Mojave Desert Historical resource dataset will be provided to all managers by Jan 04. The SHPO has entered into an agreement with NRCS to digitize maps. The State is also now hosting CHRIS on an in house server and developing a business plan to support the system by providing GIS services for a fee. The business plan should be done by spring/summer of 2004. Interim funding is available to support the system, but no long term funding source has been identified; \$100K/year is needed to update and maintain the Mojave data set (no funding is currently available).

Bob Wood indicated that ready access to all cultural/historical resource data surrounding an installation is important. *Bob recommended that the PACRAT evaluate the utility of the Mojave dataset the State is providing in Jan 04; review business plan; report back findings and recommendations to the DMG in about 1 year. The DMG endorsed the recommendation.* At that time the DMG will consider whether a further investment in the CHRIS is appropriate.

Bob Wood also recommended adding an item to the DMG 5 year plan aimed at protecting/taking care of existing resources thru education, training, etc.

The next PACRAT meeting will be on November 19, 2003 at the BLM office in Palm Springs. Managers were requested to get input on the agenda to Bob Bryson.

Public Comment: John Stewart: Cal 4-wheel Drive is active in cleaning up illegal dumps and trash in the desert. He identified the need for providing convenient, no-cost disposal sites for hazardous materials. He recommended having an outreach effort to let off-roaders know what activities are acceptable and to identify how they can help.

Chris Spofera - offered to help disseminate information to off-roaders about what the rules are for collecting paleo/cultural resources. Chris also would like to get the word out on law enforcement efforts like Operation Indian Rocks.

Brian Brown emphasized the need for a desert education program for visitors and residents, like the one at the Shoshone Museum.

Park and Public Lands Stewardship through the Arts-PASTA. Tim Terrell distributed a packet of information related to the Park and Public Lands Stewardship through the Arts program. The goal of PASTA is to make people more aware of public lands/resources through the arts and to promote and encourage artists and art institutions to explore the deserts natural and cultural resources. Information on PASTA is available at www.artmojave.org. PASTA currently has agreements with Joshua Tree and Death Valley national parks and the BLM – CDD. *Tim requested a letter from the DMG endorsing PASTA. The Managers decided to consider providing a letter of endorsement from the DMG after they see how the current agreements with JOTR, DEVA and BLM materialize.*

Californiadesert.gov. Clarence Everly provided an update on www.californiadesert.gov. There are currently 76 places of interest listed on the website. The recreational information on the website is still a little weak, but is getting better with the addition of more BLM areas. The website is currently receiving an average of 18 active users per half hour period during work hours. In the last full month of recorded web statistics, the website received 610,650 hits from 11,714 unique visitors. The website is the #1 listing for Google.com, the most used search engine, when searching for "California Deserts". This generates well over 25% of the hits generated for the website. The webmaster receives numerous e-mails daily from web visitors praising the information on the site and asking for additional information for areas not yet listed.

Elaine Downing has placed all of the BLM wilderness areas into the database and is now actively working on adding information on individual places. Elaine has contracted several interns to help populate BLM data.

All of the National Parks in the Cal Desert area are completed and up-to-date.

State Parks areas still need to be done. The DMG webmaster has been adding California State Park information into the database when possible. Contact with a State Park webmaster was made several months ago, but no information has been added from that agency.

Contact was made with the US Fish and Wildlife Service on Oct 1st. The DMG webmaster is working with them to get their information into the database.

A contact with the US Forest service was made several months ago and needs to be followed up again. No contacts have been made with the California Department of Fish and Game.

The DMG webmaster will host a teleconference with all agency web POCs to discuss what currently exists on the website, what still needs to be added to the website in the future, and discuss the future direction of the website. The teleconference will be held in November prior to Thanksgiving.

Mary Martin requested information from Clarence on the types of information the public is requesting.

Research database. Debra Hughson provided an update on the DMG research database (Attached). Per Debra's request, *the Managers provided a data base contact/administrator for each office who will be responsible for reviewing/approving entries into the database.* The Managers recommended that Debra disseminate information about the database to academic institutions and encourage them to enter information on their research projects into the database.

Mojave Desert Science Symposium. Debra Hughson provided an update on the status of the MDSS which will be held in Nov 2004 at the University of Redlands. *Debra*

presented a budget request for an additional \$25,000 from the DMG, including a recommended cost sharing arrangement (attached).

Habitat Restoration Report

- **San Sebastian –San Felipe Watershed** (attached): Russ Scofield summarized a proposed MOU related to conservation and management of the San Sebastian –San Felipe Watershed in the Colorado Desert (Attached). The purpose of the MOU is to formalize what is already being done by BLM and state parks, expand the partnership to include other agencies, increase the level of effort, and improve the competitiveness of the project in grant applications. The consensus was that the agreement should be signed at the local level, not elevated to Sacramento. CDFG supports the effort but has concerns about the financial implications of signing the agreement. *Hamill agree to contact FWS-Carlsbad to determine their interest in participating in the MOU. Ward will assess GS' interest signing on to the MOU. The general feeling was that GS and FWS should be included but that we should not hold up the agreement.*
- Coachella Valley WMA (attached). Scofield reported that a meeting was set for October 20 to scope out a possible Weed Management Area for the Coachella Valley. Several options are being considered including expanding the Riverside CO WMA to include the desert, expanding the Imperial County WMA, or starting a new WMA from scratch. *FWS-Carlsbad should be invited to the meeting.*
- Restoration Work Group meeting (attached): *The managers approved a proposal by Scofield to organize a two-day Restoration Work Group meeting this winter in Barstow.*

Coordinated Natural Resource Monitoring and Spring Survey Update. Kris Heister reported that NPS would be hosting a vital signs workshop in March 2004. Kris invited DMG members to participate and to help refine the participants list. Kris also reported that the level 1 spring survey protocols being developed by DRI had not been finalized yet and she was looking for input on important research questions related to springs in the desert.

Desert Tortoise Recovery Plan Assessment. Bob Williams reported that a Draft report from the Desert Tortoise Recovery Plan Assessment Committee will be completed in Jan 04. A new recovery team will then be assembled in March to revise the recovery plan—a process that is expected to take 10-12 months. Dr. Jill Heaton reported on the activities of the DTRPAC. Their next and final meeting will be Nov 6-7 in Las Vegas. Bob reported that the next Management Oversight Group meeting will be held on February 11-12 in Las Vegas. Bob requested help from the Managers to reach out to stakeholders to get involved in the MOG. Anyone who is interested in getting on FWS desert tortoise mailing list should contact DOI/DOD coordinator.

The Nature Conservancy Activities and Plans in the Mojave Desert. Bill Christian and Jim Moore reported on what activities the TNC is planning in the Mojave Desert. TNC completed a comprehensive assessment of unique resources and threats in the Mojave and identified 34 priority conservation areas. TNC has developed a more

specific action plan for the Amargosa River and is beginning to develop a similar plan for the Mojave River.

Public Comments:

- John Stuart expressed concern about the DMG endorsing a private venture such as PASTA.
- Gerry Hillier expressed concern that the research database will only be limited to unpublished/on going research. He would like to see published literature also included in the database.
- Jim McGarvie expressed concern about the lack of implementation of the DT Recovery plan

Burro Management

- Dave Sjaastad provided a status report on FY 03 burro management activities (attached). The goals for FY 03 were met. Dave also distributed the FY 04 work plan which calls for capturing 700 burros and 35 horses. The Mojave NP is short of funds for burro roundups in FY 04.
- Tom Pogacnik presented a MOU between BLM, NPS and several volunteer groups for placement of burros captured by NPS. Under the agreement NPS will capture the animals; BLM will prepare and transports the animals; and the volunteer organizations will care for or adopt out the animals. Tom believes the agreement engages the public in burro management in a positive manner and may eliminate the need for NPS to use lethal means to remove burros from national parks in the desert. *Tom recommended trying to parlay the agreement into additional funding from DOI.* The MOU's were signed by Linda Hansen, Mary Martin, and JT Reynolds

Desert Tortoise (DT) Recovery Action Program/MOA Hamill provided an overview of the proposed DT Recovery Action Program (attached) and Memorandum of Agreement to implement the Program (Attached). Dr. Jill Heaton reported on the DTRPAC's review of the Recovery Action Program. Jill reported that the Committee believes that the Program is consistent with current scientific information and supports implementation of the Program. Specific committee comments include:

- There should be separate effectiveness monitoring for education and science initiatives;
- There should be the capability to add new priorities/projects to the Program as time evolves.
- The Program needs to better address how to involve the public/stakeholders;
- The Committee strongly supports establishment of a science work group as a way of informing/guiding the Program;
- The DT monitoring program should address population, habitat, and threats and should not get too tied into specific methods.

Bob Williams suggested the focus of the Program should be on setting up the process/framework for DT recovery in California and getting resources together to make it happen.

The RAP/MOA will be revised to reflect comments provided by the DMG, the DT Recovery Plan Assessment Committee, and the DT Management Oversight Group and sent out for a 30 day review by the DMG agencies. Following Agency Review, the RAP will be revised and sent out for a 30 day public review. The goal will be to sign the MOA at the January 14-15, 2004 DMG meeting in Barstow, CA.

DT Education and Outreach Plan and Budget. Joe Zarki summarized the results of the DT Education and Outreach Work Group efforts (attachment). *NPS agreed to explore funding and staffing opportunities for the Education and Outreach Plan. Jim Shevock recommended contacting the CESU at the University of Arizona, Tucson regarding the public attitude survey about DT.*

Science and Data Management Support. Hamill summarized the proposal to establish a DT Science work group (SWG) and a centralized desert tortoise data repository. *The DMG established an ad hoc group to develop a charter for the SWG as well as identify potential members and staff support needs for the SWG. Members of the ad hoc group include Linda Hansen, Phil Medica, Bill Boarman, Jill Heaton, John Hamill and Clarence Everly. The Group will report its findings at the next DMG meeting*

FWS will develop a no cost MOU to establish a centralized data repository. Bob Williams will work with Clarence Everly, Jill Heaton, Phil Medica, Rob Fisher and a yet to be determined CDFG representative to develop the MOU. By the next DMG meeting, Bob will complete the MOU or report on any unsolved issues to the DMG.

Raven Management Plan and budget. Carl Benz and Amy Fesnok summarized the plan developed by the DMG Raven Management Work Group. The plan has three major components: reducing human subsidies for ravens, lethal control of ravens that are known predators of young desert tortoise, and effectiveness monitoring/adaptive management. The initial step in implementing these actions will be to complete appropriate NEPA compliance and secure the necessary permits required by the Migratory Bird Treaty Act.

The DMG agreed to go ahead for the Raven Management EA. FWS will be the lead agency for the EA. The DMG requested that the MOU that outlines DMG agency responsibilities in preparing the EA be finalized and circulated among the DMG for signature.

DT Monitoring Update/FY 04 Plans. Medica summarized the preliminary results of the FY 03 DT line distance sampling. FY 03 encounter rates were higher than in FY 01 and 02 presumably the result of the favorable spring rains. Phil was planning to repeat the effort in FY 04, however funding is uncertain at this time.

Effectiveness Monitoring Project. Dr. Bill Boarman reported that the funding for the effectiveness monitoring project had been or would soon be transferred from DOD, NPS, BLM and FWS to GS. A post doctorate student has been hired and is already working on the project.

Public Comment

Jim McGarvie indicated ORBA would be willing to lend political support to secure funding for the DT Recovery action Program. John Stuart would like to partner with the DMG to help implement the Recovery Action Program. Chris Spofera volunteered to help disseminate information to the off road community.

Funding and Staffing for DMG Projects. The DMG discussed FY 04 funding needs for various DMG initiatives/projects. A summary of the FY 04 funding needs and current funding that is planned or anticipated to be available to meet the need is attached. The summary will be refined and discussed at the next DMG meeting. *Managers were requested to review the funding needs and come to the next meeting prepared to discuss funding opportunities within their agency or office.*

Next DMG meetings

- January 14-15, 2004, Barstow, CA, Host: Barstow, BLM;
- April 21-22, 2004, 29 Palms, CA Host: Joshua Tree NP and MCAGCC