

MGS Working Group
Meeting Minutes:

November 12, 2009 Meeting
Mojave Preserve HQ, Barstow, CA

Attendees:

Russell Scofield, DOI / DMG
Fon Duke, DMG
D'Anne Albers, Defenders
Shannon Collis, Edwards AFB
Kat Linder, NAWS - CL
Manny Joia, MCLB, Barstow
Larry Powell, MDCP, NPS

Eric Weiss, CDFG
Liana Aker, DoD – Ft Irwin
Becky Jones, CDFG
Robert Wood, Edwards AFB
Dan Reinke, Edwards AFB – EM
Ted Donn, Tetra Tech

List of Acronyms:

MGS: Mojave Ground Squirrel
CEC: California Energy Commission
DRECP: The California Desert Renewable Energy Conservation Plan
CLAWG: Conservation Land Acquisition Work Group
RFP: Request for Proposal

10:10 – 10:30 Review of Agenda and Introductions

Old Business:

L. Aker requested clarification of a comment received from CDFG at last meeting concerning mitigation areas that are potentially slated for project development: CDFG clarified that there is some concern that identified MGS core areas and linkages may be slated for energy development in some cases.

L. Aker inquired about the semantics of calling the MGS Conservation document a “Plan” or a “Strategy”. Is the official determination that it be titled as a “Plan”?

R. Scofield: Regarding the need to approach CEC as a potential participant in the Working Group; Russ announced that the development of the DRECP will suffice as CEC’s input and that the document will include the Group’s MGS Conservation Plan/Strategy once finalized.

10:30 – 11:00 Discussion of comments on revising and updating current draft of the MGS Conservation Strategy (CS). The following is a summary of comments and suggestions from the group.

- Dan Reinke: Requested a discussion of proposed mitigation ratios for projects affecting MGS. CDFG will consider addressing the current ratios and establishing a 5:1 ratio or something in that neighborhood.

- Re: current federal listing status of the MGS; the USFWS 90-day finding is still in Washington DC and is not yet published.
- Discussed further ideas on organizing a workshop of subject matter experts to address MGS survey protocols and inventory methods. It was established that this event would not be a large ‘conference-style’ activity, rather an intimate workshop of a dozen or so invited key participants:
 - **TASK:** L. Aker – find out status of Legacy grant to fund workshop.
 - **TASK:** B. Jones – see if the original budget proposal for this event can be located.
- No written comments for revising the current draft conservation plan have yet been received. We need to start generating comments and get them to L. Aker so she can begin writing the new draft.
 - **TASK:** R. Scofield will speak to members of the DMG to set a deadline for comment among this group.
 - **TASK:** The MGS Working Group members’ **deadline for comment on the next draft is December 11, 2009.**
 - **TASK:** L. Powell will update the current email list and L. Aker will distribute the latest (2006) draft of the Plan that is supposed to be commented on. The draft is also posted on the DMG website under the Documents tab of the MGS Working Group page:
http://www.dmg.gov/documents/DFT_MGS_Consv_Strategy_DMG_101106.pdf

REMINDER for Reviewers:

- The following sections of the (October 2006) draft strategy were identified as needing obvious updating and revision:
 - Pg 2 (B); **Distribution:** (update as per new data)
 - Pg 3 (C); **Habitat Requirements:** (incorporate Dr. Leitner’s et al newest data)
 - Pg 6 (E); **Food Habits:** (update with any new information)
 - Pg 10 (I); **Interspecific interactions:** (include roundtail g.s. discussion)
 - Pg 14 (4); **Energy Production:** (Expand and update)
 - Pg 15 (C); Include discussion of energy project development in “**Habitat Degradation**” section.

- Pg 17 (3): Include discussion of habitat fragmentation (largely due to energy developments) proposed on current mitigation lands.
- Pg 18: (new #6): Include section addressing **Invasive Species**
- Pg 18: **Listing History**; update to include 90-day finding and pending 12-month review, any other developments or petitions??
- Pg 19: **Summary of Current Actions**: Update – many are no longer valid, viable measures.
- Pp 19 – 21: Respective agencies; update current management actions.
- Pp 21 – 28: Conservation Strategy section needs refining as above issues are addressed / resolved.

11:15 – 11:45 Introduction of the new MGS Sharepoint portal

- F. Duke and L. Powell introduced the new online portal where a variety of information about the MGS Working Group activities can be posted and viewed on an authorized basis once a primary Administrator for the site is established.
- The site will most likely establish 10 – 20 individuals (the working group members?) with administrator capabilities to allow posting and viewing of more sensitive information. Eventually, it may be productive to establish a public realm of the site to update and educate interested citizens about MGS-related activities and events.
 - **TASK**: F. Duke will approach Scott Osborn to serve as the primary Sharepoint Administrator.
- Serious consideration should be made in deciding how and what information remains ‘protected’ within the portal. Some data and reports must remain protected in order to encourage users to post items that will be helpful to the process, however; may be internally sensitive and not yet intended for public distribution.

11:45 – 12:00 Dan Reinke’s presentation of MGS range maps and identification of core areas

- MGS maps have been prepared in PDF format for easy viewing (does not require a GIS application) and are available on CD (from Dan?). Display data are linked to metadata, further linked to the associated literature.

- If anyone has collection data that does not appear on these layers, forward these data to the CLAWG for inclusion (esp: Ft Irwin?).

12:00 – 12:30 Dr. Ted Donn’s MGS habitat utilization project proposal

- Main objective of the proposed project is to synthesize current MGS data into a habitat suitability model by identifying inhabited areas across the MGS range (and outside current identified range) and to generate a predictive model for use by surveyors.
- Utilizes Ecological Niche Factor Analysis (ENFA) and includes quantitative survey data but does not include ‘absence’ data. The model assumes all probable habitats have been sampled.
- Group Discussion: While identifying suitable and potential MGS habitat through use of a model is fairly unbiased and can be very informative, some members are wary of supporting development of an inclusive model utilizing very limited, incomplete survey data. Concerns about mis-interpretation of results of such a model are valid.

Conversely, the need for a predictive model in light of surging plans for energy development, mitigation needs and other factors is a real consideration. The Group members discussed developing an RFP to further investigate proposals for such a project.

Agenda Item(s) for Next Meeting: Present comments and revised draft of the MGS Conservation Plan. **NOTE: Comments due to L. Aker by Dec. 11**

Next Meeting Date: Tuesday, Wed or Thursday in early January? (confirm with group)

Adjourn