



Desert Manager Group Meeting  
March 4 and 5, 2009  
Barstow, CA  
Meeting Notes

Action Items

- *The out-year OHV grant pre-application for the Desert Tortoise Information and Education program has been submitted. Joshua Tree will issue a press release requesting public review and comment. Managers are asked to issue the press release to their local media outlets.*
- *The next CLAWG meeting was scheduled for March 24 but will need to be rescheduled to April 23.*
- *Managers are asked to work with the weed management areas and educate them about a potential buffelgrass invasion. Russell can make copies of the video available to anyone who needs it.*
- *RETI asked managers that they provide specific comments, concerns, or information about CREZs in writing via Roger Johnson at:  
California Energy Commission  
Roger Johnson, Siting Office Manger  
1516 9th Street, MS15  
Sacramento, CA, 95814-5504.*
- *Employees should register for the Development of a Biological Assessment Training no later than April 15.*

**Wednesday, March 4**

- **Overview of San Bernardino County-** San Bernardino County Supervisor Brad Mitzelfelt welcomed the group to Barstow and provided an informative presentation on some of the issues facing the County and in particular, the First District (attached).
- **Desert Tortoise Recovery Office Update**
  - DTRO is still working on comments to the recovery plan revision and hopes to finalize the plan by late spring.
  - The FY09 line distance monitoring effort is underway.
  - The FY08 line distance sampling *draft* report is due out this summer. The FY 07 line distance sampling *final* report is due out late spring.
  - DTRO is revising the 1992 FWS desert tortoise pre-project survey protocols. The intent is to utilize the new, best available information and to achieve statistically valid results. There are no major changes to the field methods (10-m belt transects). Changes to the protocol include:
    - No longer survey for the “project area + zone of influence” but rather now the “action area” (as per ESA regulations)

- Density estimates will now use data from range-wide monitoring to include non-detectable animals
  - Option of sampling, rather than 100% coverage surveys, when the action area is above provided threshold sizes
  - Time frame when surveys take place has been expanded to include April/May, as well as Sept/Oct
  - The protocols are currently receiving internal and peer review.
- **Desert Tortoise Information and Education**
  - Mojave Max emerged from her burrow at The Living Desert in Palm Desert on February 24. Contest winners are being identified.
  - The television public service announcements are complete and ready for distribution. Please contact Anne for a copy.
  - *The out-year OHV grant pre-application has been submitted. Joshua Tree will issue a press release requesting public review and comment. Managers are asked to issue the press release to their local media outlets. The pre-application can be viewed at [http://134.186.25.134/designer/viewPDF.aspx?ShowPDF=Y&ExtUser=Y&TempID=1&Filename=Application\\_1\\_S.PDF&cat=GCA&appid=352&fyr=2008](http://134.186.25.134/designer/viewPDF.aspx?ShowPDF=Y&ExtUser=Y&TempID=1&Filename=Application_1_S.PDF&cat=GCA&appid=352&fyr=2008) Positive citizen and agency comments will improve the probability of grant funding. Agency comments encouraged and must be submitted by April 6.*
  - The Builders Guide is at press and will be available to agencies shortly.
  - Anne has been working on a desert tortoise coloring book, which is currently being reviewed. Funds to print the coloring book are being identified.
  - Anne is building a photo file and needs tortoise photographs that do not have a copywrite.
  - The current National Fish and Wildlife (NFWF) grant which provides the program's operational funding is under budget. This is because Anne was able to receive more donations and in-kind services than expected. Additional projects are being identified for consideration by NFWF for the balance of the grant's funding.
- **Conservation Acquisition Work Group**
  - Nancy Downard of Mojave Desert Land Trust has volunteered to edit the draft sections of the CLAWG White Paper into one document. This project, however, is behind schedule due to Nancy's normal workload.
  - The CLAWG map has been updated with resource and energy data from Nevada and energy data from California.
  - At the next meeting, the group will use the CLAWG map to identify priority acquisition areas (i.e. areas where an ongoing acquisition program such as REPI and areas of high resource value overlap). *The next CLAWG meeting was scheduled for March 24 but will need to be rescheduled to April 23.*
- **Buffelgrass Invasion**
  - The group was shown a short video developed by a citizen action group in Tucson about the highly invasive weed buffelgrass.
  - Buffelgrass is in California along the Colorado River near Blythe and Yuma. Scientists feel that all of the Low Desert is subject to invasion. They also believe that as the weed

adapts to cooler temperatures, the weed could spread through Joshua Tree into the Mojave at elevations below 5000 feet.

- Because buffelgrass is highly flammable and burns at high temperatures, an invasion would completely change desert fire regimes.
- *Mangers are asked to work with the weed management areas and educate them about a potential buffelgrass invasion. Russell can make copies of the video available to anyone who needs it.*

## **Thursday, March 5**

- **DMG Energy Coordination**

- The States Renewable Energy Transmission Initiative (RETI) is in Phase II, which will refine the Competitive Renewable Energy Zones (CREZ) base on local environmental issues. RETI leads met with DMG managers January 9. Managers provided specific information about certain desert CREZs and helped RETI develop criteria on which to further evaluate the CREZs. RETI asked that specific comments, concerns, or information about CREZs be transmitted in writing to the group via Roger Johnson at:  
California Energy Commission  
Roger Johnson, Siting Office Manger  
1516 9th Street, MS15  
Sacramento, CA, 95814-5504.
- Tannika Engelhard and Russell are leading a subgroup from the energy ad hoc work group to develop Best Management Practices and Guidelines of Solar Development. This handbook will be guidance that any agency can provide to potential solar developers. A final draft will be available for discussion and manager concurrence at the next DMG meeting.

- **The NCTC Development of a Biological Assessment Training** has been scheduled for May 4 through 6. More information and registration is online at <http://www.dmg.gov>. *Employees should register for the Development of a Biological Assessment Training no later than April 15.*

- **Abandoned Mine Lands**

- Bob Bryson discussed the status of the National Park Service and DMG abandoned mine lands (AML) program. The National Park Service, USFS, and BLM will be receiving significant, though as yet undetermined, funding under the American Recovery and Revitalization Act for AML work.
- Opportunities for collaboration include shared IDIQ contracts, bat gate installation seminars that will increase the number of contractors, and the development of generic statements of work and NEPA documents.

- **Raven Management**

- Ashleigh Blackford provided a power point update from the raven management work group (attached).
- The Raven work group is developing raven best management practices and a template raven management plan for projects.

- The raven nest database is up and running. It can be accessed at <http://www.dmg.gov/raven/ravenreport.php>
  - A budget is being developed to implement the Raven EA. Wildlife Services will be funded by Fort Irwin to conduct raven removal this year. A signed agreement is necessary for Wildlife Services to conduct activities on federal land. An alternative form is available for private property.
- **California Desert Fund**
    - Clare Thorp introduced Liz Epstein who will be the California Desert Fund (CDF) manager once it is established. Liz works out of NFWF's San Francisco office.
    - Russell asked the managers for feedback on the latest draft CDF MOU. Issues raised were:
      - Clarify in the agency obligations paragraph that agencies are not bound to deposit all contributed funds in CDF and can deposit contributed funds elsewhere if it makes sense. This is the intent of CDF but it is not clearly stated.
      - The document will need legal review. Russell will make the requested clarification and send the MOU to managers to start the review process. While it does not constitute official solicitor review, the MOU is based on a template approved by the FWS solicitor and Russell talked to a NPS solicitor who saw no problems with it.
      - California desert funding may be deposited in NFWF at any time regardless to the status of the MOU. When the MOU is finalized, NFWF will move all California desert funding into CDF.
- **Readiness and Environmental Protection Initiative (REPI)**
    - Sam Cox provided a power point presentation (attached) on a joint REPI program that would involve all four branches of military service and would utilize DMG as a "decision board". The group supported the concept and Russell will place the item on the next CLAWG agenda flesh out a proposal.
- **Omnibus Public Lands Bill**
    - In the desert, the Omnibus Public Lands Bill (S22) would designate wilderness in Riverside County (Bono-Mack Bill), designate Amargosa Wild and Scenic River, and codify the BLM's National Landscape Conservation System (NLCS). It is still unclear how NLCS designation would affect the California Desert District.
    - Occurrences since the DMG meeting:
      - S22 failed to pass the House with the required 60% vote.
      - The Senate amended HR146 to include most of the language from S22.
      - HR146 contains all the California Desert language from S22
      - The House passed HR146 with amendments March 25 and the President signed it March 30 to become Public Law 111-11.
      - The Act is available at [http://frwebgate.access.gpo.gov/cgi-bin/getdoc.cgi?dbname=111\\_cong\\_bills&docid=f:h146enr.txt.pdf](http://frwebgate.access.gpo.gov/cgi-bin/getdoc.cgi?dbname=111_cong_bills&docid=f:h146enr.txt.pdf)
- **Next Meetings**
    - The next meeting will be hosted by Fort Irwin at Fort Irwin on June 10 and 11.
    - The Following meeting will be hosted by USGS in San Diego on August 26 and 27.