

Working together to conserve our desert lands



FY02 Accomplishments
& 5 Year Plan
10 April 2003



Desert Managers Group
FY 2002 Accomplishment Report
and
5-Year Plan
(FY 2003 - FY 2007)

March 4, 2003



DESERT
MANAGERS GROUP

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Copies of this report and additional information about the DMG are available at www.dmg.gov or by contacting:

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1.0 Background and Purpose

The California deserts (Figure 1) include some 100 communities, 2 national parks, 1 national preserve, 6 military bases, 8 counties, 10 state parks, 37 federally recognized Native American Indian tribes, and more than 11 million acres of public lands managed by the Bureau of Land Management. The 25 million-acre desert region is situated within a day's drive of 40 million people and is a well-known destination for hundreds of thousands of out-of-state visitors each year. The California deserts' abundant sunshine, wind, and geothermal resources also make it an important source of renewable energy in the western United States. In addition, the California deserts are critically important training and testing grounds for the U. S. military.

By 2020, the deserts' permanent population is expected to increase by over 1 million and the population of the surrounding area is expected to increase by about 10 million. The demands of increasing use by millions of visitors and permanent residents will create mounting pressure and new challenges for land management agencies in the deserts. A mechanism for addressing desert-wide issues was established in 1994 in the form of the Desert Managers Group (DMG), an interagency group that is coordinating and integrating desert conservation, visitor services, and public safety efforts in the California deserts. Under the multi-agency management umbrella provided by the DMG, interagency collaboration is occurring; duplication of effort is being eliminated; resources are being shared; data are being collected in a uniform manner; and complementary and more uniform management policies are being developed.

Partners involved with the DMG include the State of California (Fish and Game, Parks and Recreation, and Caltrans), the Department of Defense (Army, Navy, Air Force and Marine Corps), the Department of the Interior (Bureau of Land Management, National Park Service, Fish and Wildlife Service, and Geological Survey), and the U.S. Forest Service. More information on the DMG, including the Group's charter, organization, and current events is available at www.dmg.gov.

The purpose of this document is to 1) summarize the accomplishments of the DMG in fiscal year 2002 and 2) describe the goals and objectives established by the DMG for fiscal year 2003 through 2007. This document was approved by the DMG at its regular meeting on March 4, 2003. As with all crosscutting, multi-agency programs, performance is dependent on the availability of adequate funds and staff for each agency to carry out these efforts.

2.0 FY 02 Accomplishments

FY 02 accomplishments of the DMG are summarized in Appendix A according to the goals identified in the April 2002, DMG 5 year plan. Major FY 02 highlights include:

1. A total of 599 burros and 7 horses were removed from the California deserts and placed into adoption programs.
2. An interagency work plan for restoration on the San Felipe Creek-San Sebastian Marsh watershed was developed. Anza-Borrego State Park and BLM's El Centro Field Office initiated habitat restoration and acquisition actions.

3. A Memorandum of Understanding (MOU) to establish the Mojave Desert Weed Management Area (MWMA) was developed and finalized. Over 20 DMG members and local government agencies were signatories to the MOU.
4. Ten illegal dump-sites were cleaned up on public lands under a cost share program with the California Integrated Waste Management Board.
5. The DMG developed and approved the Desert Tortoise Recovery Action Proposal, which addresses implementation of a variety of actions aimed at recovering the desert tortoise in the California deserts.
6. The DMG, in cooperation with the University of Redlands, finalized reports that summarize completed and ongoing recovery, monitoring and research actions for the desert tortoise for each of the recovery units in the Mojave Desert.
7. The California Deserts web site (www.californiadesert.gov) was redesigned to provide easier access to information about recreation opportunities in the desert. The website generated over 6.4 million hits in FY 02 from over 66,000 unique users.
8. The DMG Overflight Work Group completed a brochure that outlines the history of military aviation training in the desert and emphasizes the continued importance of these training activities. The brochure was printed and made available to all DMG member agencies for distribution in their visitor centers.
9. Representatives of the Navy, Marine Corps, and Anza Borrego State Park met to discuss issues involving low-level overflight occurrences in the Anza Borrego State Park. As a result of these meetings, a hotline was established for park personnel and concerned citizens to call to report overflight activities they felt were not in accordance with prescribed parameters.
10. The DMG sponsored a multi agency workshop to increase awareness, among land and resource managers, of the scope, objectives and status of existing and planned natural resources inventory and monitoring programs for the California deserts. Approximately 80 people representing DMG agencies and other interested groups participated in the workshop.
11. DMG agencies supported implementation of rangewide desert tortoise monitoring to establish a population baseline and evaluate whether tortoise populations are increasing, remaining stable, or declining. In FY 02, the monitoring sampling protocols were adjusted and the area sampled was increased by 25% to provide more reliable estimates of tortoise density. However, due to drought conditions and other factors, the numbers of tortoises encountered (357) was still insufficient to establish a reliable baseline estimate for tortoise density.
12. DOD's Mojave Desert Ecosystem Program, in collaboration with USGS, the University of Redlands, and USFWS, developed a desert tortoise database to house all of the line distance sampling data collected during desert tortoise monitoring.

13. The FWS National Wetlands Inventory Program mapped wetlands and riparian habitats for an additional one hundred and twenty-nine 7.5-minute USGS quadrangles, mostly in the West Mojave Planning Area.
14. An evaluation of the operations and effectiveness of the DMG was completed. Based on this evaluation, the DMG inactivated several work groups, deferred work on several lower priority goals/activities in the DMG 5-Year Plan, and clarified the role of the managers and coordinators in the operation of the DMG. Figure 2 depicts currently active DMG Work Groups.

3.0 The 5-Year Plan

The 5-Year Plan is an operational plan that is updated and approved annually by the DMG. The 5-Year Plan is intended to facilitate internal and external communication about the goals and activities of the DMG and serve as a tool to allow the DMG and its Work Groups to track activities and projects.

The DMG maintains a list of lower priority goals/projects that are not being pursued due to a lack of staff, funds, and/or agency support (Appendix B). These goals/projects will be pursued by DMG agencies as time/resources permit.

The 5-Year Plan includes 13 goals in four general categories:

1. Resource Conservation and Management
2. Visitor Services
3. Science and Data Management
4. DMG Program Management

A brief description of the goals and activities to be completed in the FY 03 to FY 07 timeframe are provided below. The tasks, schedule and responsibilities are described in Table 3.0.

3.1 Resource Conservation and Management Goals

Goal 1. Restore selected upland and riparian habitats identified for restoration.

1. The work plan to acquire land and restore habitat in the San Felipe Creek-San Sebastian Marsh Watershed will continue to be implemented.
2. Pursuant to the MOU that established the Mojave Desert Weed Management Area, the DMG will assist with coordination of weed management activities in the Mojave Desert and the development of a long-range plan.
3. Discussions will continue with stakeholders and potential partners to conduct landscape-based restoration of the Mojave River and the Amargosa River watersheds.
4. The DMG will coordinate and sponsor the Arid Southwest Lands Habitat Restoration

Conference in Palm Springs, March 3-7, 2003.

5. The DMG will continue to provide guidance and recommendations to the USGS Recoverability and Vulnerability of Desert Ecosystems project, aimed at improving the management applicability of the research effort.
6. The DMG Habitat Restoration Coordinator will assist DMG partners in procuring funding for restoration projects.
7. A list and status report of ongoing restoration activities in the desert will be compiled and made available through the DMG website.

Goal 2. Cleanup and restore illegal dumps that pose a public health or environmental threat, and reduce the incidence of illegal dumping in the future.

1. The HAZMAT work group will continue to work with Keep California Beautiful and others to develop and implement a program to prevent illegal dumping. The prevention program will focus on a) educating the public about the problems associated with illegal dumping, b) enforcing laws related to illegal dumping, c) providing viable alternatives to illegal dumping, and d) protecting sites that have been restored.
2. The illegal dump database will be maintained and high priority sites will be selected for cleanup based on established criteria.
3. The following illegal dumps will be cleaned-up and restored:
 - ❖ Dillon Road Canyons illegal dumping sites (Long Canyon, East and West Wide Canyons, Fan Canyon, Berdoo Canyon, Indo Hills site, and Frago Canyon);
 - ❖ Walter's Camp illegal dumping site;
 - ❖ Mesquite/Sandy Valley illegal dumping sites; and
 - ❖ Two other yet to be identified sites.
4. Partnerships with the California Integrated Waste Management Board, counties and others will continue or be created. Funds will be leveraged to the maximum extent possible.
5. DMG agencies will sponsor or provide regional technical training for participating agencies to include:
 - ❖ Sponsor EPA air monitoring training in winter of 2003;
 - ❖ Sponsor the 8-hour annual hazardous waste operations and emergency response (HAZWOPER) refresher training in the spring of 2003;
 - ❖ Co-sponsor appropriate technical training such as the Environmental Crime Scene Investigations course in fall of 2003.
 - ❖ Conduct at least one other technical training opportunity.

Goal 3. Recover the desert tortoise in the California recovery units.

1. In coordination with the desert tortoise recovery plan assessment team, the DMG will facilitate a scientific evaluation, based on current information, of the effectiveness of past recovery actions related to vehicle management, cattle and sheep grazing, and construction of tortoise fences.
2. In cooperation with the University of Redlands, coordinate recovery actions in various agencies' land management plans with emphasis on the West Mojave recovery unit.
3. Develop/implement action plans for reducing the impacts of disease, raven predation, and feral dogs on desert tortoise populations.
4. Develop and implement a public education outreach program to educate the public about the effects of the release of captive tortoises on wild tortoises and to build public and stakeholder support for desert tortoise recovery.
5. Develop and implement an agreement between DOD, DOI, and California to cost share implementation of priority desert tortoise monitoring and recovery actions in California.
6. Update the reports of completed recovery actions for each recovery unit.

Goal 4. Reduce and maintain burro populations to appropriate management levels and in appropriate locations.

1. The continuing goal is to reduce burro populations on BLM, FWS, DOD and State lands to “appropriate management levels” and eliminate them entirely from Death Valley National Park and the Mojave National Preserve. An estimated 1,300 excess animals remain in and around BLM’s herd management areas in the California deserts. 700 additional animals remain in Death Valley National Park and the Mojave National Preserve that are not protected under the Wild Free Roaming Horse and Burro Act. The DMG goal for removal and adoption in FY 03 is 550 burros and 70 horses. Currently, there is a funding shortage in BLM and NPS for the capture of burros. A backlog also exists in the BLM adoption program. To address these issues, the DMG will explore opportunities for funding burro roundups and adoptions through private donors/foundations.
2. Management actions (e.g., fences) will be implemented, as practical, to prevent movement of burros to areas where they are not supposed to be (e.g., outside herd management areas or into National Parks/Preserves). Burro populations and rangeland health will be monitored subject to the availability of funds.

Goal 5. Protect cultural resources and enhance public awareness of the sensitivity and value of paleontological and cultural resources in the California deserts.

1. Proceedings of the Millennium Conference will be published and distributed in FY 03.
2. The Paleontological and Cultural Resources Action Team (PACRAT) will meet to monitor CHRIS GIS implementation, management, and maintenance, and identify new initiatives and activities.

Goal 6: Ensure the long-term sustainability of the military mission in the California deserts.

1. BLM, NPS and the State will continue to actively consider DOD mission requirements in their land and resource management and planning activities, and analyze/consider potential impacts of their proposed land management decisions/actions on DOD lands and airspace.
2. Incorporate the value of DOD ecosystem management contributions into agency outreach programs.
3. Continue the development and implementation of state and agency ecosystem based management plans (e.g., BLM regional planning efforts).
4. DOI, California State, and DOD agencies/services will continue to work collaboratively towards implementing monitoring and recovery actions leading to delisting of the Desert Tortoise.

3.2 Visitor Services and Public Safety Goals

Goal 7. Develop a coordinated interagency system for delivering useful, comprehensive, and consistent information about desert resources and recreation opportunities.

1. The California deserts web site (www.californiadesert.gov) will be maintained by the Mojave Desert Ecosystem Program (MDEP). Agency webmasters will input information on recreation opportunities and sites in the California desert on Caldesert.gov and update their information as needed. In addition, the desert news section will be used by agencies to disseminate news to desert visitors.
2. The interagency "gateway" visitor center at Lancaster CA. will continue to be maintained by Cal State Parks. DMG partners will work with State Parks to provide long term funding support for the visitor center.

3.3 Science and Data Management Goals

Goal 8. Coordinate scientific studies and monitoring programs needed for effective resource management.

1. The Mojave Desert Ecosystem Program (MDEP) will develop a web accessible Research Inventory Data Base. An inventory of existing resource, research and monitoring studies will be initiated to populate the database. Managers will implement protocols to encourage scientists to input data and or update the database.
2. DMG members will participate in the NPS workshop to develop a conceptual framework for monitoring in the California deserts (scheduling of this workshop is still uncertain). This workshop will provide the basis for the design of compatible monitoring programs by land and resource management agencies in the California deserts. Implementation of monitoring programs will be subject to the availability of funds.
3. Planning for the Mojave Desert Science Symposium will continue. The Symposium is scheduled for November 16 - 18, 2004 at the University of Redlands.

Goal 9. Monitor desert tortoise population status in relation to recovery goals for the California deserts recovery units.

1. Line Distance Sampling (LDS) will be implemented on BLM, NPS, DOD and State lands to assess the density of desert tortoise. Due to limited funds, sampling will focus on the West Mojave recovery unit and the Chuckawalla and Chemehuevi desert wildlife management areas.
2. In cooperation with the University of Redlands and the University of Nevada, Reno, LDS protocols will be modified and tested to reduce variance in the data and provide more reliable density estimates.
3. The interagency desert tortoise data management system, will be maintained by the DOD Mojave Desert Ecosystem Program (MDEP). Data will be collected and managed in a manner that facilitates a regional multi-state assessment of the status of desert tortoise populations.
4. An annual report will be produced by the FWS Desert Tortoise Coordinator no later than December of each year. The report will outline monitoring activities conducted during the year and provide results from the analysis of data collected. Issues and improvements to protocols implemented will also be provided. Delinquent reports for FY 01 and FY 02 monitoring will be completed.
5. The University of Redlands will host a monitoring workshop in the summer of 2003 to identify questions that need to be addressed through monitoring and develop recommendations for the best way to address those questions. The workshop will also

address the efficacy of existing monitoring programs.

Goal 10. Inventory, monitor and protect desert water resources.

1. The ultimate goal is to map springs, riparian and wetland habitats throughout the California deserts. For FY 03, draft wetland and riparian maps will undergo quality control by the National Wetlands Inventory (NWI) and eventually be posted on the NWI website. The first batch of 12 quads will be posted in February 2003 with new quads added each month thereafter.
2. NWI will map wetland and riparian habitats in the Mojave National Preserve in FY 03.
3. Level one protocols for characterizing the biological and hydrological characteristics of springs will be completed by the Desert Research Institute (DRI) in March 2003. Training and field testing will occur in the Mojave Desert Parks (e.g, DEVA, JOTR, MOJA, LAME). The DMG Water Group will review the draft protocols and be invited to participate in the field training and testing. The Mojave Desert Ecosystem Program (MDEP) will develop a web accessible database for data collected through this effort.
4. Level 2 protocols will be developed by DRI and submitted to the DMG Water Group for review and comment

Goal 11. Integrate and share data and database management systems needed for effective resource management and planning.

1. The Mojave Desert Ecosystem Program (MDEP) will maintain the Geographic Information System (GIS) of natural and cultural resources in the California deserts (see www.mojavedata.gov). To expand the database, each Manager will provide a minimum of five corporate data sets, adhering to the DMG established data standards.
2. MDEP will provide data management and analysis support to a variety of DMG initiatives (wetland/springs inventory, desert tortoise monitoring, illegal dump database, etc.) as the need arises.

3.4 DMG Program Management Goals

Goal 12. Ensure the orderly and efficient operation of the DMG and its work groups.

1. The DMG's 5-Year Plan will be updated. Annual work plans will be developed for specific initiatives.
2. The BLM Natural Resources Restoration Coordinator will coordinate implementation of dump clean up and habitat restoration efforts on behalf of the DMG.

3. The FWS Desert Tortoise Coordinator will coordinate tortoise recovery and monitoring activities.
4. MDEP will maintain the DMG website (www.dmg.gov) to allow for the efficient dissemination of information about DMG and work group activities.
5. Forest Service membership in the DMG will be formalized.

Goal 13. Garner support for the DMG, its mission, activities, and funding initiatives.

1. The DMG briefing packet and a report on DMG accomplishments will be produced and updated annually.
2. Federal and state agencies, Congressional representatives, and interested parties will be briefed about DMG activities and initiatives.
3. The DMG will continue to pursue establishment of a California Desert Fund in cooperation with the National Fish and Wildlife Foundation.

**Table 3.0 Desert Managers Group
5-year Plan (FY 2003 - 2007)
March 2003**

	ACTIVITY	WHO	STATUS	FY 03 10/01 - 9/03	FY 04 10/02 - 9/04	FY 05 10/03 - 9/05	FY 06 10/04 - 9/06	FY 07 10/05 - 9/07
<u>Resource Conservation and Management</u>								
1.0	Restore selected upland and riparian habitats identified as restoration priorities.							
1.1	Develop partnerships to acquire land and restore habitat in the San Felipe Creek-San Sebastian watershed.	A-B State Park/BLM	On track	X	X	X		
1.2	Develop partnerships among federal, state, local, tribal government entities and private organizations to secure funding, foster awareness and support for restoration efforts, and implement restoration efforts.	Restoration Coordinator	On going	X	X			
1.3	Sponsor and plan the Arid SW Lands Restoration Conference to foster an awareness of restoration projects and methods in the California deserts.	Restoration Coordinator/ Team	On track	X	X			
1.4	Assist with developing a long range plan for the Mojave Desert Weed Management Area and cooperate with local agencies to control invasive species.	Restoration Coordinator/ Managers	On track	X	X	X	X	X
1.5	Explore opportunities for developing a Mojave River and Amargosa River watershed restoration initiative	Restoration Coordinator	On track	X	X			
1.6	Provide guidance and recommendations to the USGS RVDE project aimed at improving the management applicability of the research effort.	Restoration Coordinator	On going	X	X	X	X	X
1.7	Inventory/summarize ongoing restoration projects and made available on the DMG website	Restoration Coordinator	On going	X	X	X	X	X
2.0	Clean up and restore illegal dumpsites that pose a public health, safety, or environmental threat and reduce future illegal dumping.							
2.1	Input data and maintain illegal dumpsite database and determine priority sites for clean up.	Hazmat Team /Restoration Coordinator	On track	X	X	X	X	X
2.2	Clean up and monitor up to 20 illegal dump sites per year (5 sites will be cleaned up and monitored in FY 03).	Hazmat Team /Restoration Coordinator	On track	X	X	X	X	X
2.3	Foster federal, state and local partnerships and develop a desert wide constituency to support illegal dumpsite clean up and prevention.	Hazmat Team /Restoration Coordinator	Ongoing	X	X	X	X	X
2.4	Develop and implement a program to reduce/prevent the incidence of illegal dumping in cooperation with Keep California Beautiful and others.	Hazmat Team/ Restoration Coordinator	On track	X	X	X	X	X

	ACTIVITY	WHO	STATUS	FY 03 10/01 - 9/03	FY 04 10/02 - 9/04	FY 05 10/03 - 9/05	FY 06 10/04 - 9/06	FY 07 10/05 - 9/07
2.5	Sponsor Regional technical training re: hazard and solid waste	BLM/Team	Ongoing	X	X	X	X	X
3.0	Recover the desert tortoise in the California desert recovery units.							
3.1	Facilitate a scientific evaluation of the effectiveness of past recovery actions, related to vehicle management, cattle and sheep grazing, and construction of tortoise fences.	Kenna/GS	On track	X				
3.2	Coordinate recovery actions in various agency land management plans with emphasis on the West Mojave recovery unit.	Redlands/ Managers	On track	X	X	X	X	X
3.3	Develop/implement action plan for reducing the impacts of ravens on desert tortoise populations.	FWS	On track	X	X	X	X	X
3.4	Develop/implement action plan for reducing the impacts of feral dogs on desert tortoise populations.	DFG	On track	X	X	X	X	X
3.5	Develop/implement action plan for reducing the impacts of disease on desert tortoise populations.	DFG	On track	X	X	X	X	X
3.6	Develop and implement a public education outreach program to educate the public about the effects of the release of captive tortoises on wild tortoises and to build public and stakeholder support for desert tortoise recovery.	DIRT	On track	X	X	X	X	X
3.7	Develop and implement an agreement among DOD, DOI, and California to cost share implementation of priority desert tortoise recovery actions in California.	DOI/DOD Coordinators	On track	X	X			
3.8	Update the reports of completed recovery actions for each recovery unit.	DT Coordinator	On track	X	X	X	X	X
4.0	Reduce and maintain burro populations to appropriate management levels and in appropriate locations							
4.1	Identify and implement management actions to control populations and movement.	Sjaastad (BLM), NPS, DOD, and State	On track	X	X	X	X	X
4.2	Define Appropriate Management Levels through BLM land management planning process.	BLM	Complete					
4.3	Remove burros and place in adoption programs; FY 03 - 535.	Sjaastad, (BLM), NPS, DOD and State	On track	X	X	X	X	X
4.4	Standardize population monitoring techniques and monitor population status.	Sjaastad, (BLM), NPS, DOD and State	On track	X	X	X	X	X
4.5	Monitor rangeland health.	Sjaastad, (BLM)	On track	X	X	X	X	X
4.6	Adjust AML, as needed, based on results of 4.4 and 4.5	Sjaastad, BLM	On track	X	X	X	X	X
4.7	Explore opportunities for private funding for gathers/adoption.	DOI Coordinator/ BLM/NPS	On track	X				

	ACTIVITY	WHO	STATUS	FY 03 10/01 - 9/03	FY 04 10/02 - 9/04	FY 05 10/03 - 9/05	FY 06 10/04 - 9/06	FY 07 10/05 - 9/07
5.0	Protect cultural resources and enhance public awareness of the sensitivity and value of paleontological and cultural resources in the California deserts.							
5.1	Publish Millennium conference proceedings.	PACRAT	On track	X				
5.2	Monitor implementation of the California Historic Resource Information System GIS for the California deserts.	SHPO	On track	X	X	X	X	X
5.3	Sponsor/attend ARPA training.	PACRAT/ BLM	On track		X			
6.0	Ensure the long-term sustainability of the military mission in the California deserts.							
6.1	Consider the DOD mission requirements in BLM, NPS and State land management planning.	DOI and State Agencies	On going	X	X	X	X	X
6.2	Analyze potential impacts of proposed land management decision/actions on DOD lands and airspace.	DOI and State Agencies	On going	X	X	X	X	X

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<u>Visitor Services</u>								
7.0	Develop a coordinated interagency system for delivering useful, comprehensive, and consistent information about desert resources and recreation opportunities.							
7.1	Update and maintain the California Deserts website.	Managers/ DIRT	Ongoing	X	X	X	X	X
7.2	Redesign the California Deserts website.	MDEP	Done	X				
7.3	Maintain the Lancaster Visitor Center/secure long term funding	State Parks	Ongoing	X	X	X	X	X

**Table 3.0 Desert Managers Group
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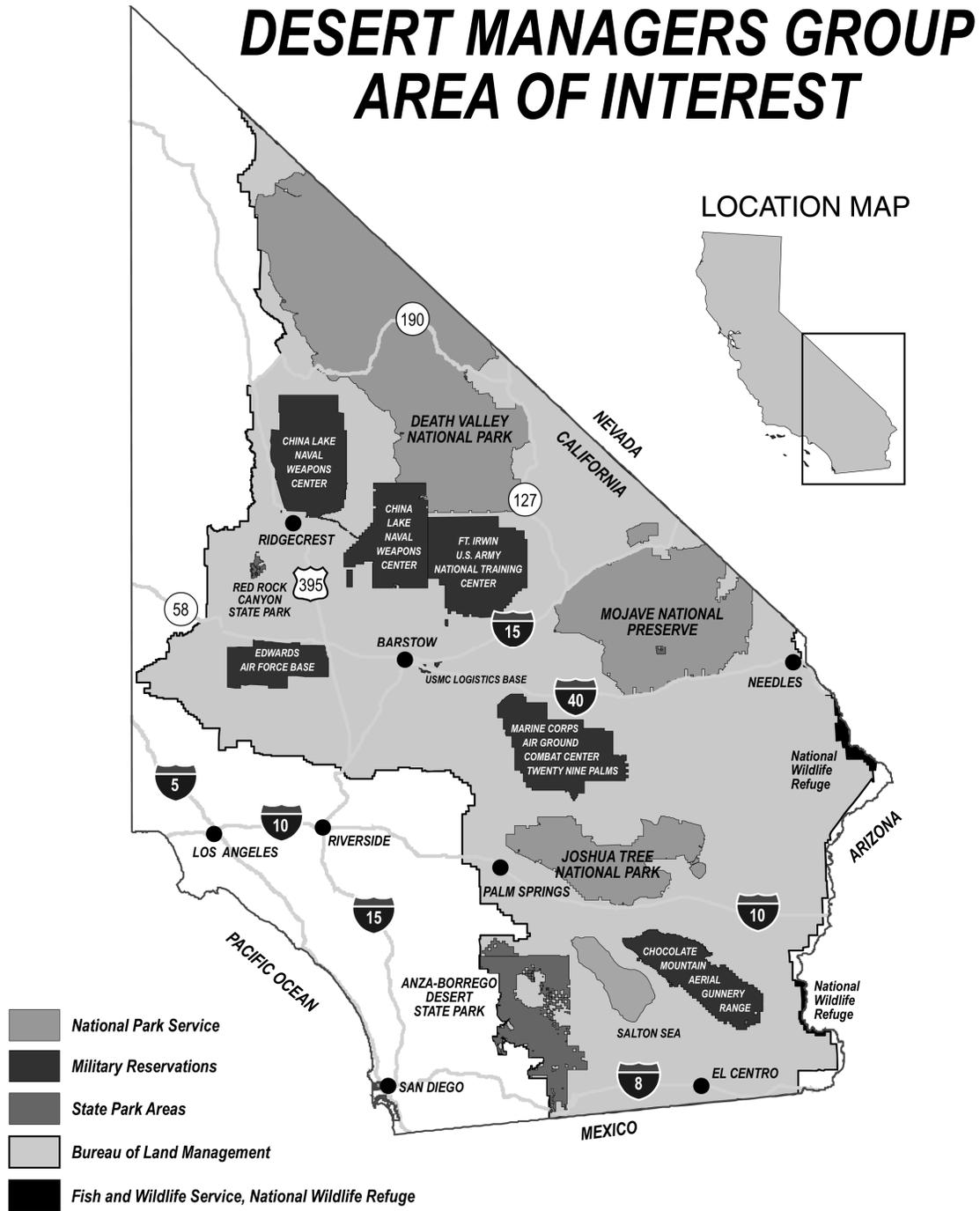
	ACTIVITY	WHO	STATUS	FY 03 10/01 - 9/03	FY 04 10/02 - 9/04	FY 05 10/03 - 9/05	FY 06 10/04 - 9/06	FY 07 10/05 - 9/07
Science and Data Management								
8.0	Coordinate and conduct scientific studies and monitoring programs needed for effective resource management and planning.							
8.1	Develop a web accessible Research Inventory Data Base.	MDEP/ Redlands	On track	X				
8.2	Initiate an inventory of existing resource inventory, research and monitoring studies to populate the database.	Managers	On going	X	X	X	X	X
8.3	Implement protocols to encourage scientist to input data and or update the database.	Managers	Ongoing	X	X	X	X	X
8.4	Sponsor and plan the Mojave Desert Science Symposium. (November 16 - 18, 2004, at the University of Redlands.)	Hughson (NPS)	On track	X	X	X		
8.5	Conduct workshop for DMG agencies to develop monitoring framework for the California deserts.	NPS	On track		X			
9.0	Monitor Desert Tortoise population status in relation to recovery goals in the California recovery units.							
9.1	Test and refine line distance sampling monitoring procedures.	FWS/ UNR and UR	On Track	X				
9.2	Implement line distance sampling in California desert recovery units.	Tortoise Coordinator	On Track	X	X	X	X	X
9.3	Analyze data collected and produce annual report with recommendation for the next year's monitoring (including the annual reports for FY 01 and FY 02).	Tortoise Coordinator	Behind schedule	X	X	X	X	X
9.4	Update and maintain data management system.	MDEP	Ongoing	X	X	X	X	X
9.5	Host a monitoring workshop in the summer of 2003 to identify questions that need to be addressed through monitoring and develop recommendations for the best way to address those questions.	Tortoise Coordinator/ Redlands	On track	X				
10.0	Monitor and protect desert water resources.							
10.1	Develop protocols and assess the hydro and bio resources of priority wetland areas according to established protocols.	NPS, DRI, Water Group		X	X	X		
10.2	Map and digitize wetland and riparian areas.	FWS	On track	X	X	X		
10.3	Develop user-friendly graphic interface to allow access to hydro and bio database.	DOD	On track	X				

11.0	Integrate/coordinate and share data and Data Base Management Systems needed for effective resource management and planning							
11.1	Identify, acquire/develop new datasets from DMG agencies	MDEP and DMG Agencies	Ongoing	X	X	X	X	X
11.2	Provide data management and analysis support to DMG initiatives.	MDEP	Ongoing	X	X	X	X	X

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5-year Plan (FY 2003 - 2007)
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	ACTIVITY	WHO	STATUS	FY 03 10/01 - 9/03	FY 04 10/02 - 9/04	FY 05 10/03 - 9/05	FY 06 10/04 - 9/06	FY 07 10/05 - 9/07
<u>DMG Program Management</u>								
12.0	Ensure orderly and efficient operation of the DMG and its work groups.							
12.1	Develop and update/maintain the DMG's 5 year plan.	DOI/DOD Coordinators	Ongoing	X	X	X	X	X
12.2	Ensure adequate staffing to administer the DMG and provide for effective coordination and implementation of desert wide initiatives.							
12.3	Fund FWS Desert Tortoise Coordinator	FWS	Ongoing	X	X	X	X	X
12.4	Fund BLM Restoration/Dump Coordinator.	BLM	Ongoing	X	X	X	X	X
12.5	Formalize FS membership in the DMG	FS/DOI Coordinator	On track	X				
12.6	Update and maintain DMG website.	DOD Coordinator	Ongoing	X	X	X	X	X
13.0	Garner Support for the DMG, its mission, activities and funding initiatives							
13.1	Update the DMG briefing packet.	DOI Coordinator	Ongoing	X	X		X	X
13.2	Produce annual accomplishment report.	DOI/DOD Coordinators	Ongoing	X	X	X	X	X
13.3	Inform stakeholders and policy makers about the DMG activities and funding initiatives.	All	Ongoing	X	X	X	X	X
13.4	Explore opportunities to establish a California deserts fund within the National Fish and Wildlife Foundation.	DOI ,DOD Coordinators	On track	X	X			

Figure 1. DMG Area of Interest



FEBRUARY 2000

Appendix A

FY 02 Accomplishments of the DMG

Goal 1. Restore selected upland and riparian habitats identified for restoration.

1. A work plan for landscape-based restoration in the San Felipe Creek-San Sebastian Marsh watershed of Anza-Borrego State Park and El Centro Field Office was developed. Several large tamarisk control projects and land acquisitions were initiated.
2. The Restoration Work Group email list was reestablished to facilitate communication among workgroup members.
3. Planning for the Arid Southwest Lands Habitat Restoration Conference was initiated. The conference will be held in Palm Springs, CA on March 3-7, 2003. (<http://www.dmg.gov/conference.html>). Sessions will focus on the USGS Recoverability and Vulnerability of Desert Ecosystems (RVDE), local field trips, and practical information about restoration and restoration techniques.
4. A Memorandum of Understanding (MOU) to establish the Mojave Desert Weed Management Area (MWMA) was developed and finalized. Over 20 DMG members and local government agencies were signatories to the MOU.
5. Partnerships with federal, state, and local agencies and private groups to restore the Mojave River watershed were explored.
6. An ad hoc DMG workgroup was established to provide management guidance to the USGS RVDE project

Goal 2. Clean up and restore illegal dumps that pose a public health or environmental threat and reduce the incidence of illegal dumping in the future.

1. The Hazardous Materials Work Group remained active in FY 02; the Group met four times during the year; representatives reported on work group activities at all regular and special DMG meetings.
2. The Work Group sponsored, co-sponsored or provided regional technical training for participating agencies, including an 8-hour annual hazardous waste operations and emergency response (HAZWOPER) refresher training in Riverside in June 2002; a 3-day EPA hazardous materials sampling training course in Riverside in May 2002; a 2-day environmental crime scene investigations training course in Riverside in September 2002; and an illegal dumping workshop in Bakersfield in October 2002.
3. The illegal dumpsite database was populated by BLM's national technical service contractor, Dynamac; 118 sites were identified and visited in the field. The database will be used to produce a list of priority sites for clean-up.
4. Six large, illegal dumps sites were cleaned-up, including Nipton, 3 Route 66 sites (Amboy, Chambless, and Essex), Crevasse/Hi Vista, and Vidal. The clean-ups were funded under a cost share program with the California Integrated Waste Management Board.

Appendix A

FY 02 Accomplishments of the DMG (continued)

5. Four dumps in San Bernardino County near Landers were cleaned-up with funding provided through the State's Farm and Ranch Grant program.
6. The Work Group met with a representative of the Keep California Beautiful program in June 2002 to develop new partnerships focusing on the prevention of illegal dumping.

Goal 3. Recover the desert tortoise in the California recovery units.

1. The DMG developed and approved the Desert Tortoise Recovery Action Proposal, September 11, 2002. The Proposal includes a variety of actions aimed at evaluating the effectiveness of recovery actions implemented since the desert tortoise was listed; monitoring and adaptive management; addressing causes of mortality with emphasis on disease and predation; public education and outreach; and implementation and funding strategies.
2. The University of Redlands, at the request of the DMG, produced a series of reports that summarize completed and ongoing recovery, monitoring and research actions for the desert tortoise for each of the recovery units in the Mojave Desert (<http://www.dmg.gov/dtactions.html>). Information in the reports was based on a comprehensive survey of land and resource management agencies and entities responsible for desert tortoise recovery and management. The information in the report will be used by the DMG to manage and plan an effective recovery effort for the desert tortoise. The reports will be updated annually.

Goal 4. Reduce and maintain burro populations to appropriate management levels and in appropriate locations.

In January 1999, BLM and NPS signed the California Desert Strategic Plan for the Management of Wild Burros (<http://www.dmg.gov/documents/StrtgcPlanBurros.PDF>). The Plan is based on the recognition that overpopulation of wild burros is adversely impacting many desert resources. A key element of the strategy is to "aggressively remove existing excess burros to reach appropriate management levels (AML) and to maximize efficiency and reduce operational costs through innovative shared use of staff and resources."

Since the wild burro strategy was signed, BLM, NPS and various other agencies (Fish and Wildlife Service; California Fish and Game; BLM Field Offices in Yuma and Havasu; military reservations including China Lake, Chocolate Mountain Gunnery Range, and Ft. Irwin; Bureau of Reclamation, Metropolitan Water District, and the Chemehuevi Indian tribe) have worked collaboratively to accomplish the goals and objectives of the plan. Approximately 3,450 animals, or 986 animals/year, have been removed from the California deserts and placed in adoption programs -- significantly more than the historical annual average of 200 to 400 animals/year.

These removals have benefited special status animal and plant species, riparian habitat, other wildlife, and cultural resources. For example, more than 1,000 animals were removed from desert tortoise habitat; 493 animals were removed from lands in and adjacent to Inyo California Towhee habitat; and 595 animals were removed from lands along the lower Colorado River including portions of the Chemehuevi Indian Reservation.

Appendix A

FY 02 Accomplishments of the DMG (continued)

A total of 599 burros and 7 horses were removed from the Mojave Desert in FY 02. (BLM removed 3 horses and 416 burros; Death Valley NP removed 123 burros and 4 horses; Mojave NP removed 60 burros). These removals include:

- ❖ 75 burros removed from Butte Valley and the Panamint Mountains and the Owlshead Mountains
- ❖ 38 burros and 4 horses from Saline Valley, Hunter Mountain and Lee Flat.
- ❖ 313 burros from the Chemehuevi HMA
- ❖ 92 burros from the Clark mountain HMA
- ❖ 3 horses from the Chicago Valley HMA
- ❖ 13 burros from Park Moab, California

The California BLM placed more than 1,200 animals through its adoption program.

In addition, BLM completed a population census on the Chemehuevi and Chicago HMAs. BLM also completed monitoring on Chemehuevi, Centennial, Clark Mountain, Picacho, Chocolate-Mule Mountain, and Chicago Valley. BLM established vegetative monitoring studies within the Picacho Herd Area Complex, Chemehuevi HMA, Clark Mountain HMA, Panamint HMA, and Centennial HMA. A reduction in the level of use along the lower Colorado River has been observed as a result of removals in this area. BLM and California Fish and Game are two years into a five-year study to monitor the seasonal movements of both burros and deer within the Picacho Herd Area complex.

Goal 5. Protect cultural resources and enhance public awareness of the sensitivity and value of paleontological and cultural resources in the California deserts.

1. The BLM Training Center sponsored a three-day ARPA class in July, 2002 in Ridgecrest, California that was attended by a variety DMG archaeologists and rangers.
2. Final editing was completed on over 60 technical papers that were presented at the May 2001 "Millennium Conference: the Human Journey and Ancient Life in the California Deserts."

Goal 6: Ensure the long-term sustainability of the military mission in the California deserts.

1. All military installations in the BLM West Mojave planning area actively participated in the planning effort. BLM planners actively sought input from the installations regarding species and land management prescriptions. As a result, provisions of the various Integrated Natural Resource Management Plans (INRMPs) were included in the West Mojave plan, which articulate the contributions the military installations make to the overall plan. Additionally, several installation personnel participated in key roles in the overall project.
2. Death Valley National Park and Edwards Air Force Base actively collaborated to develop a compatible location for an additional radar site in the Saline Valley. This radar site will significantly enhance safety for aviation in the area as well as improve the Air Force's ability to gain information on aircraft operating in the area.

Appendix A

FY 02 Accomplishments of the DMG (continued)

Goal 7. Develop a coordinated interagency system for delivering useful, comprehensive, and consistent information about desert resources and recreation opportunities.

The California deserts' web site (www.californiadesert.gov) was redesigned to provide easier access to information about recreation opportunities in the desert. The website (www.californiadesert.gov) generated over 6.4 million hits in FY02 generated by over 66,000 unique users. Not included is the number of these unique users that visited the website more than once.

Goal 8. Resolve noise issues related to aircraft over flights for all participating agencies.

1. The DMG Overflight Work Group worked collaboratively to develop a brochure that outlines the history of military aviation training in the desert and emphasizes the continued importance of these training activities. The brochure was printed using contributions from the Marine Corps and is available to all DMG member agencies for distribution in their visitor centers.
2. Navy and Marine Corps representatives met with management from Anza Borrego State Park to discuss issues involving low-level overflight occurrences in the park. Discussions included articulation of park concerns, the legal parameters for overflights in the park, a review of existing flight routes and the importance of these routes to military training. As a result of these meetings, a hotline was established for park personnel and concerned citizens to call when overflights occurred that they felt were not in accordance with prescribed parameters. Points of contact were established for park and military personnel to contact when issues concerning overflights developed.

Goal 9. Coordinate and conduct scientific studies and monitoring programs needed for effective resource management.

1. The format for a research inventory database was created and procedures for DMG agencies to gather/enter data into the database were agreed to by the Managers. The purpose of the Research Inventory Database is to provide ready access to ongoing, inventory, research and monitoring projects in the California deserts.
2. The DMG approved a proposal for a Mojave Desert Science Symposium that will be held in late 2003 or early 2004. The purpose of the Symposium will be to inform managers of the best scientific information on physical and biologic resources, advise scientists of the most pressing research needs, and publish information on current research in the Mojave Desert.
3. The Mojave Desert Ecosystem Program (MDEP) in collaboration with USGS, the University of Redlands, and USFWS developed a desert tortoise database to house all of the line distance sampling data collected during desert tortoise monitoring. The database utilizes digital field forms for collection of field data, which has significantly reduced field worker error in capturing data and virtually eliminated data error caused by transcription of data from paper field forms to digital spreadsheets.

Appendix A

FY 02 Accomplishments of the DMG (continued)

Goal 10. Coordinate natural resource monitoring program.

Monitoring is a common element of all the DOI, DOD and State land management plans in the California deserts. The National Park Service (NPS) through its Natural Resource Challenge is developing and implementing a comprehensive monitoring program for plants and animals on NPS units in the Mojave Desert. BLM is currently working with Geological Survey to develop monitoring programs to address the impacts of off-highway vehicle use. BLM also has programs to assess rangeland health as part of its livestock and burro management programs. The Department of Defense installations in the desert will continue to conduct monitoring activities in accordance with their Integrated Natural Resource Management Plans (INRMPs). USGS and FWS have developed monitoring programs for wetland resources and the desert tortoise, respectively. Cal State Parks is also in the early stages of developing monitoring programs for their lands. The goal of the DMG is to coordinate/integrate these efforts by identifying and developing compatible objectives, methodologies and data management systems.

In January 2002, the DMG sponsored a multi agency Natural Resources Monitoring workshop to:

1. Increase awareness among land and resource managers of the scope, objectives and status of existing/planned inventory/monitoring programs for the California deserts.
2. Identify common goals/objectives and information needs.
3. Develop recommendations for coordinating/integrating inventory and monitoring programs.

Approximately 80 people representing DMG agencies and other interested groups participated in the workshop where about 20 papers were presented. A summary of the workshop and copies of many of the presentations are available at <http://www.dmg.gov/documents/monitoring-workshop.html>. Major conclusions reached as a result of the workshop were that DMG agencies would:

1. Continue to cooperate to fund and implement desert tortoise line distance sampling (LDS);
2. Participate in the NPS workshop to develop a conceptual framework for monitoring in the California deserts; and
3. Describe existing weather data in the California deserts and develop recommendations for how important data gaps could be addressed.

Goal 11. Monitor desert tortoise population status in relation to recovery goals for the California deserts' recovery units.

In 2001, a multi-year desert tortoise population study was initiated on 4.7 million acres of critical habitat in the California deserts. Over the next several years, the study will establish the population baseline from which we may evaluate whether tortoise populations are increasing, remaining stable, or declining. This monitoring effort will also assist managers in assessing the effectiveness of recovery efforts.

The Fish and Wildlife Service is coordinating the monitoring effort on behalf of DMG agencies. The tortoise monitoring data is being maintained in an interagency database established by the

Appendix A

FY 02 Accomplishments of the DMG (continued)

DOD sponsored Mojave Desert Ecosystem Program (MDEP). The number of tortoises that were encountered in 2001 (388) was relatively small and less than needed to establish statistically reliable baseline estimates of tortoise density. In FY 02, the sampling protocols were adjusted and the area sampled was increased by 25% to provide more reliable estimates of tortoise density. However, due to drought conditions and other factors, the numbers of tortoises encountered (357) was still insufficient to establish a reliable baseline estimate of tortoise density.

Goal 12. Monitor and protect desert water resources.

Springs, seeps, playa lakes, marshes, oases, and other wetland areas are very scarce in many parts of the California deserts. They support human settlement, are rich in bio-diversity, and support 35 endangered, threatened and sensitive plants and animals.

Under the auspices of the Desert Managers Group, NPS, GS, BLM, FWS, and several DOD facilities initiated an interagency study aimed at improving management and protection of water and biological resources in the California deserts. The DMG water study includes mapping the distribution of wetlands throughout the desert, assessing the hydrological and biological characteristics of priority wetlands and riparian sites, and implementing actions to restore their proper functioning condition.

In FY 2002, the FWS National Wetlands Inventory (NWI) Program delineated wetlands and riparian habitats for an additional one hundred and twenty-nine 7.5-minute USGS quadrangles, mostly in the West Mojave Planning Area. Completed NWI maps are accessible through the NWI website at: <http://www.nwi.fws.gov>.

Standard protocols for assessing the hydrological and biological characteristics of desert springs developed by the DMG in FY 01 were tested by NPS in the Mojave National Preserve. Generally many of the protocols did not work very well for many of the small springs in the Mojave. In response, the National Park Service and Desert Research Institute (DRI) have entered into a cooperative agreement to develop spring inventory protocols and associated databases that are applicable to all spring-fed water features in the Mojave Desert park network. Protocols and databases that are developed will build on existing information developed by the DMG.

Goal 13. Integrate and share data and database management systems needed for effective resource management and planning.

The Marine Corps Air Ground Task Force Training Center, Edwards Air Force Base, Death Valley National Park, and The Mojave National Preserve provided data sets for incorporation into the MDEP database. Data pages for each agency were developed, each containing its own interactive IMS session to allow immediate visualization of the data provided by the agencies to MDEP. The DMG Water Work Group and Desert Research Institute developed a common database structure to accommodate the common data collected via the standardized Level 1 spring surveys. The combined database will reside on the MDEP server to allow for the universal sharing of springs data throughout the desert.

Appendix A

FY 02 Accomplishments of the DMG (continued)

Goal 14. Ensure the orderly and efficient operation of the DMG and its work groups.

1. The DMG held four meetings and an Annual DMG Executive Coordination meeting.
2. The DMG 5-Year Plan was updated and approved in April 2002.
3. The DMG recognized four individuals who provided outstanding service to the DMG.
4. An evaluation of the operation and effectiveness of the DMG was completed. Based on the evaluation, the DMG deactivated several work groups, deferred work on several lower priority goals/activities in the DMG 5-Year Plan, and clarified the role of the managers and coordinators in the operation of the DMG.
5. Completed and distributed copies of the DMG FY 01 Annual Report
<http://dmg.mojavedata.gov/documents/dmgannual02.pdf>.
6. DMG members participated in a Collaborative Management Training Class/Workshop in June 2002, in Ventura. The workshop resulted in the DMG asserting a leadership role in desert tortoise recovery (see Proposed DMG Desert Tortoise Recovery Actions, September 11, 2002 at <http://www.dmg.gov/documents/DTDMGPlan1.doc>).
7. The DMG approved a request from the U.S. Forest Service to become a member of the DMG.
8. The DMG website (www.dmg.gov) was maintained, updated and used regularly to disseminate information about DMG activities and products

Goal 15. Garner support for the DMG, its mission, activities, and funding initiatives.

1. Worked with the National Fish and Wildlife Foundation (NFWF) to establish the California Desert Fund. Discussions held with Daimler Chrysler Corporation to establish the CDF have been promising—NFWF is currently waiting for a proposal.
2. Briefed key congressional staff and DOI staff on the DMG. Continued to work with the congressional delegation, the agencies, and department to maintain visibility of the DMG.

Appendix B

Lower Priority DMG Goals

The following goals or elements of goals included in the February 2001/02 DMG 5-Year Plan have been determined too ambitious to complete given the current level of staff, funding, and agency support. These goals/elements will be maintained as long-term goals that will be pursued as time/resources permit.

Goal: Reclaim priority abandoned mines in the California deserts. Abandoned mines will be inventoried, incorporated into a database, prioritized, and reclaimed by agencies on a priority basis. An interagency group will be established to evaluate and streamline processes for complying with environmental laws and regulations.

Goal: Reduce the incidence of wire burning in the desert. There is anecdotal evidence that the California deserts are being used increasingly to illegally burn wire to salvage the valuable metals (e.g., copper) contained in the wire. Neighboring states have passed laws outlawing the sale of salvaged wire. This action may have displaced illegal wire burning activities to the California deserts. An action plan will be developed for determining the extent of the problem and reducing the incidence of wire burning.

Goal: Reduce the incidence of roadside litter in the desert. Roadside litter is widespread throughout the California deserts. The Hazmat Team will review existing litter clean up and prevention efforts, evaluate opportunities for interagency cooperation, and develop an action plan.

Goal: Protect cultural resources and enhance public awareness of the sensitivity and value of paleontological and cultural resources in the California deserts. Funding will be pursued to develop a Regional Handbook of the History and Prehistory of Desert Cultures.

Goal: Develop a coordinated interagency system for delivering useful, comprehensive, and consistent information about desert resources and recreation opportunities. An inventory of existing and planned visitor centers will be completed and recommendations for establishing additional gateway visitor centers will be developed. The feasibility of establishing a centralized system that allows visitors to make reservations at all agencies' recreation facilities will be evaluated and implemented.

Goal: Educate the public about the value and importance of desert resources to promote a conservation ethic. Information and educational materials will be produced to provide consistent information to the public about California desert resources. This will include teacher packets, displays and a desert access guide. In addition, the DMG will develop and implement a desert-wide information and education strategy for the California deserts.

Goal: Coordinate and integrate efforts in the California deserts to provide for the safety of desert users and agency personnel and to protect natural and cultural resources. This goal will be achieved by a) providing interagency training of rangers and wardens and b) developing and implementing a plan to share law enforcement and emergency response personnel to deal more effectively with large events.

Goal: Assist managers/staff in the use/application of technological and scientific information and knowledge in day-to-day decision making processes. Based on results of the study of the feasibility of establishing a decision support system for the California deserts, a pilot application of a DSS will be implemented. The pilot will focus on information/decision making needs and processes common to all desert land/resource management agencies (e.g., NEPA assessments, evaluating alternative futures for the desert, tortoise habitat assessment, livestock grazing forage allocation, etc.).

Appendix B

Lower Priority DMG Goals (continued)

Goal: Ensure the orderly and efficient operation of the DMG and its work groups. Agencies will hire the staff needed to coordinate implementation of initiatives included in the DMG 5-Year Plan. Two positions remain to be funded and filled:

- Outreach and Education Coordinator
- Research and Monitoring Coordinator

Goal: Garner support for the DMG, its mission, activities, and funding initiatives. An annual newsletter on the DMG will be produced and broadly disseminated.

Goal: Ensure that Native American tribes, local governments, non-DMG State and Federal agencies, and stakeholders are appropriately represented on the DMG and/or informed of DMG activities. Native American tribes and local governments in the California deserts will be contacted to determine their interest in participating in the DMG and/or its work groups. Options for involving interested parties will be identified, assessed, and implemented as appropriate.

Goal: Resolve noise issues related to aircraft overflights for all participating agencies. The Overflight Work Group will meet to share and disseminate information concerning involving military flights in the California deserts.