

Draft

**Proposed Stakeholder Involvement Guidelines
in the
Development and Implementation of Desert Tortoise Recovery Action Plans
for the California Deserts
May 23, 2005**

Background: The Fish and Wildlife Service Desert Tortoise Recovery Office (DTRO) is beginning the process of revising the 1994 Desert Tortoise Recovery Plan. Revision of the 1994 recovery plan will be based on regional recovery action plans developed by the Desert Managers Group (DMG) Desert Tortoise (DT) Recovery Planning and Implementation Work Group (DTRPIWG). Each recovery action plan will list and prioritize desert tortoise recovery actions, including research and monitoring needed to directly link recovery with management actions, within a specific portion of the tortoise's range. To insure success of recovery actions developed through this process, it is essential to solicit input from local stakeholders and encourage their assistance in implementation of high priority recovery actions. The following guidance was developed by the DTRPIWG on May 12, 2005.

Goal: Provide for constructive and active stakeholders involvement in the identification, development and implementation of high priority DT recovery actions in California

1. **Threats Workshops:** In coordination with the DMG, FWS will sponsor a series of 2-day technical (science based) workshops this summer to update and prioritize threats to desert tortoise in the East Mojave, West Mojave, and Colorado Desert Planning Units. Technical experts from DMG agencies will participate in the workshop.
 - **Stakeholder Involvement:**
 - Stakeholders will be invited to submit scientific data and scientific reports on the severity and scope of threats in each area prior to the workshops.
 - Stakeholders will be invited to nominate an expert or scientist to participate in the workshops.
 - Workshop results will be documented and distributed widely for review, including to the FWS DT Science Advisory Committee (SAC).
 - Disagreements over the priority of threats (if any) will be documented and reported to the DTRPIWG and the SAC.
 - FWS will work with stakeholders to develop a process to ensure representation while keeping numbers at manageable levels for workshop effectiveness. Interested parties are encouraged to coordinate/consolidate their nominations as feasible.
2. **Recovery Action Plan (RAP) Development.** The DMG DTRPIWG will develop Recovery Action Plans for the Desert Tortoise in California. The goal is to identify high priority recovery actions that can/will be implemented in the next 5-10 years. The components/elements of the RAP shall include:

- Discussion and priority ranking of threats (from the threats workshops).
- Recommended recovery actions needed to address the threats.
- An evaluation of the various agency land management plans and activities as related to the recommended recovery actions.
- Identification of where collaboration and cooperation among various land managers and partners is necessary and/or possible.
- An implementation schedule, budget, and lead entity to coordinate implementation of each of the recommended actions.
- Information needs/gaps that are relevant to the recommended action.
- Recommended research to address identified information needs/gaps.
- Recommended monitoring to evaluate the effectiveness of the recovery action contributing to the recovery of the DT.

Stakeholder involvement:

- Stakeholders will be invited to submit scientific data, reports, and recommendations on high priority recovery actions
- Stakeholders will be invited to nominate a representative to participate in the Work Group. Each group or person will be required to submit a letter or resolution that they or their group agrees to work cooperatively and in good faith to develop and implement recovery action plans for the DT.
- FWS will work with stakeholders to develop a process to ensure representation while keeping numbers at manageable levels for work group effectiveness. Interested parties are encouraged to coordinate/consolidate their nominations as feasible.
- The draft RAP(s) will be distributed widely for review, including to the FWS DT SAC.
- Disagreements over priority recovery actions will be documented and reported to the DMG and FWS for discussion and resolution
- Recovery action plans will be used by FWS to amend the DT Recovery Plan. Public review will be provided for as part of the Recovery Plan revision process.
- All recovery actions will be subject to appropriate NEPA/CEQA compliance and associated public review requirements

Next Steps

1. FWS will send a letter to all interested parties outlining the process for developing and implementing DT Recovery Action Plans, including how stakeholders will be invited to participate in the process.
2. To ensure balanced stakeholder representation, the DTRPIWG recommends that FWS considers providing financial assistance (travel and per diem) to stakeholders to participate in the process.
3. Similar processes will be developed and implemented to address desert tortoise recovery in Arizona, Nevada, and Utah.