DESERT
MANAGERS GROUP

Update
Desert Tortoise Recovery Planning and Implementation Work Group
July 2005

1. **Meeting**: The Work Group last met on May 12, 2005.

2. **Threats Assessment**: The initial step in the Recovery Planning process will be to update and prioritize threats to desert tortoise in the Cal deserts
   - BLM planning unit boundaries will be used as the basis for the threats assessment: West Mojave, East Mojave and the Colorado desert.
   - A separate threats workshop will be conducted for each planning unit over a several week period. The first workshop will focus on the East Mojave
   - The University of Redlands will review and summarize agency activities and land management plans for use at the workshops.
   - The methodology for assessing threats is still being developed by FWS in coordination with the Science Advisory Committee (SAC) and the Work Group.

3. **Role of DT Science Advisory Committee**: The SAC will also be asked to review, evaluate, and endorse the TNC threat assessment process and provide recommendations for a threat assessment methodology. The SAC will be asked to critically review threat assessment and Recovery Action Plans for missing elements, consistency among threat assessments, etc.

4. **Stakeholder Involvement**: The Work Group discussed a number of options for involving stakeholders in the DT Recovery planning/implementation process. Concerns/points raised during the discussion included:
   - FWS/DOI wants full and balanced stakeholder involvement in the process
   - Stakeholders are more likely to accept the results if they are involved. Involving stakeholders will reduce the likelihood of law suits.
   - Threats workshops should be technical exercises that rely primarily on the best available scientific information; participants should have some minimum technical credentials in order to participate.
   - Should involve stakeholders in development of the Recovery Action Plans who are willing to bring something to the table in terms of recovery implementation.
   - Need to keep the group to a manageable size in order to get something done (large groups are not effective).
   - Stakeholder representatives need to be capable of making commitments for their group(s).

- Land management agencies can not abrogate their responsibilities or commitments made in their land management plans, but they need to be flexible so that stakeholders feel like their voice counts.
- Everyone needs to recognize that full consensus may not be achieved, but the process (recovery planning/implementation) still needs to move forward.
- Plans should identify separate priorities for federal, state, and local agencies.
- Stakeholder involvement process/guidelines should distinguish between stakeholders and local governments (cities).
- Not all stakeholders can afford to actively participate; financial assistance would increase the likelihood of balanced stakeholder participation.

5. **Stakeholder Involvement Guidelines**: Draft guidelines were developed by the Work Group (attached). To ensure balanced stakeholder representation, the Work Group recommended that FWS consider providing financial assistance (travel and per diem) to stakeholders to participate in the process.

6. **Work Group Charter:** The Work Group approved the Charter with the understanding it will be amended later to address stakeholder involvement.

7. **Next Steps**:
   - DMG review and approval of updated Charter which includes Stakeholder Involvement Guidelines (July 28).
   - FWS letter to interested parties outlining the process for developing and implementing DT Recovery Action Plans and inviting stakeholders to participate in the process.
   - Work Group review and approval of SAC recommendations for threat assessment and recovery action plan development.
   - The Work Group meeting scheduled for August 2, 2005, will be rescheduled for later in August.
   - Threats workshops will be scheduled to begin in late August/early September.

Attachment 1

Proposed Stakeholder Involvement Guidelines

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 nominate an expert or scientist to participate in the workshops.
     - 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.
     - 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 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 there nominations as feasible.

- Stakeholders will be invited to submit scientific data, reports, and recommendations on high priority recovery actions
- 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