



**Draft
Meeting Summary
April 19– 20, 2006
Barstow, CA.**

Summary of Action Items

1. *Provide the USFWS Desert Tortoise Recovery Office comments on the draft Range Wide Monitoring of Desert Tortoise: 2001 – 2005 draft report. Comments due no later than 30 May.*
 2. *Managers were requested to review and identify potential sources for covering the FY 07 program Desert Tortoise Information and Education Work Group project funding shortfall.*
 3. *The Hazmat Work Group requested Managers provide them with the following abandoned mine lands (AML) information:*
 - a. *Estimate of the number of AML sites in their jurisdiction*
 - b. *A listing of current and past AML projects*
 - c. *Funding sources used to address the AML issue within their jurisdiction*
 - d. *Lessons learned from past AML projects*
 - e. *AML success stories/problems encountered*
- Information should be sent to Ted Weasma at Mojave National Preserve (ted_weasma@nps.gov).
4. *Managers were asked to consider possible funding sources and their ability to support the Mojave Desert Science Symposium focused on desert water issues.*

April 19, 2006 – open to stakeholders

1. The DMG welcomed two new Managers. Mike Wells is the new Superintendent for the California State Parks Colorado Desert District. Mike Haynie is the new California Department of Fish and Game representative to the DMG replacing Glenn Black.
2. **Introduction to Fort Irwin and the National Training Center.** Mickey Quillman provided an excellent overview of the mission, activities/operations and issues at Fort Irwin.
3. **Desert Tortoise Recovery Office Update.** Roy Averill-Murray presented an overview of the Desert Tortoise Monitoring Committee (DTMC) Range Wide Monitoring of the Desert Tortoise: 2001 – 2005 Summary Report. Discussion included presentation of the number of

kilometers sampled each year, the QAQC process used to quality check collected data, and the resulting QAQC products available. Roy also discussed the results of some initial analyses and concluded with next steps for the group, which include finalizing the report/current databases, reviewing and clarifying objectives for the desert tortoise monitoring program, identifying and conducting needed analyses of existing and future data, and improving overall program administration and implementation. ***Managers were requested to review the report and provide comments to the DTRO no later than 30 May 2006.*** The question was asked if the DTRO is looking at whether line distance sampling is the appropriate methodology for monitoring desert tortoise. Roy stated the method is appropriate, but a key question is that of scale – are we sampling at the right scale? Do we need to focus on another scale and use the monitoring methodology most appropriate for that scale (e.g., occupancy estimation at the range-wide scale and distance sampling at smaller scales)? The DTMC will be evaluating these issues during 2006. Roy also noted that the DTRO has selected a new Monitoring Coordinator who will begin work on June 19. Finally, funding for the monitoring program is still a priority for 2006, even though field sampling will not be conducted. Funds are needed to expedite data analyses and to broaden the financial support of the monitoring coordinator position. Monitoring budgets for 2007 and beyond also need to be secured to effectively plan for the next field season and to ensure adequate implementation of the program (as recommended by the 2002 GAO audit). (Presentation attached)

Amy Salveeter from the DTRO provided an update on the desert tortoise recovery plan assessment process. She reiterated the focus of the assessment effort is to determine whether a collaborative recovery plan revision process is feasible, as well as how to carry out such a process. The DTRO and the U.S. Institute for Environmental Conflict Resolution (and its contractor, the Center for Collaborative Policy) are focusing on involving as many federal and non-federal stakeholders as possible. Their current timeline culminates with an assessment report by the end of June. Results will likely be distributed online and via a series of public meetings.

- 4. Desert Tortoise Education and Outreach Work Group Update.** Anne Staley and Joe Zarki briefed the DMG on the current efforts of the work group. Anne played two Mojave Max public service announcements (PSAs) for the group and stated they were disseminated to local media outlets for air play. Mojave Max emerged on 3 April. Winners of the DMG's Mojave Max emergence contest have been identified and coordination is ongoing for award of prizes. The traveling desert tortoise education trunks and activities have been completed and are available for test use. There is a tremendous demand for the desert tortoise brochure produced by the work group. The brochure is currently being reprinted for additional distribution. The work group is looking at developing additional brochures targeted at specific audiences such as builders. The Colorado State University desert tortoise knowledge and public attitudes survey contract was awarded. Work will begin immediately. A detailed description of Outreach Coordinator and work group activities was provided Managers as a handout (attached). A funding shortfall for the Outreach Coordinator and program implementation exists for FY 07. This shortfall may affect use of out year NFWF funds awarded the program. If non-federal matching funds or in-kind services are not available at a 2:1 ration, the NFWF funds can not be used. Managers were provided a funding fact sheet

for review (attached). *Managers were requested to review and identify potential sources for covering the FY 07 program funding shortfall.*

5. **Stakeholder input** – None.
6. **Raven Environmental Assessment Update.** Judy Hohman provided the DMG with the current status of the environmental assessment (EA). She is temporarily replacing Robert McMorran as the new FWS lead for the project. Robert will return after completion of the special project he is currently working. At its February meeting the work group developed a schedule for completion of the EA.
 - a. Early May – provide draft of EA to work group members and FWS (MBO and NEPA) for review.
 - b. Late May – receive comments from work group and incorporate as appropriate.
 - c. Early June – send revised document to the Office of the Solicitor for review.
 - d. July (or as soon as possible) – incorporate Solicitors comments and distribute draft EA to the public.

During an assessment of the process, Judy/Robert found letters requesting DMG members to become Coordinating Agencies were never sent. Judy is working to correct this. Judy is conducting outreach efforts with the utility companies in an attempt to determine how the utility companies can assist in abating the raven issue. She is meeting with them to discuss their perspective on raven issues, determine where affected utility facilities exist and to identify what steps they can take to assist in abating raven subsidies/overpopulation.

7. **Mohave Ground Squirrel Work Group Update.** Becky Jones reviewed the goals and objectives of the Mohave ground squirrel conservation strategy. She highlighted those areas changed based on feedback from the Mohave Ground Squirrel Technical Advisory Group. She also provided an overview of the major paragraph headings contained within the proposed conservation strategy. The question was asked whether desert cities were involved in development and writing of the strategy. Becky stated that at this point none had shown an interest of being involved. The recommendation was made to conduct an outreach effort to involve desert cities that could potentially impact or be impacted by the Mohave ground squirrel conservation strategy process. Becky agreed to undertake this effort. Becky provided a status update of the proposed Mohave Ground Squirrel workshop. A potential funding source has been identified and the work group is in the process of putting together a workshop planning team. The question was asked if there is a raven predation problem with Mohave ground squirrels. No one could answer the question. A recommendation was made to investigate the question further and, if a problem existed, to potentially include this issue in the Raven EA project. **UPDATE: Further investigation revealed several occurrences where ravens have taken Mohave ground squirrels. However, insufficient information exists on whether this is a real problem for Mohave Ground Squirrels.** FWS was asked to articulate the current status of the Defenders of Wildlife (DOW) petition to list the Mohave ground squirrel (MGS) as threatened or endangered. Judy Hohman stated she would track down the status of the DOW petition and report back to the DMG. **UPDATE: The USFWS California-Nevada Operations Office responded to the DOW petition request**

on 28 March 2006. The response articulated USFWS has looked at the immediacy of possible threats to the species and determined the petition does not indicate an emergency situation exists. The response further stated current workload prevents USFWS from making an initial finding in FY 06 but anticipates making an initial finding in FY 07 as to whether the DOW petition contains substantial information indicating that the listing action may be warranted.

8. **Stakeholder Input.** Jim McGarvie, Off-Road Business Association, asked when the DMG anticipated implementing on the ground raven actions if the EA schedule holds to the current timeline. Judy Hohman responded she anticipates actions being implemented in spring 2007. She further articulated outreach efforts targeted at reducing raven subsidies are currently ongoing and will reach full swing this summer.

Thursday, 20 April 2006 – Closed to stakeholders

1. Mickey Quillman asked the Managers if there were any issues from the previous day's agenda requiring additional discussion or decision.
 - a. **Desert Tortoise Information, Education and Outreach Work Group report -** Dennis Schramm, Superintendent, Mojave National Preserve, committed to providing \$5K in FY 07 to support the Outreach Coordinator position and work group efforts. He stated this effort continues to be a very high priority low cost high payoff program. Ventura FWS identified funding that should make up the FY 07 shortfall for Outreach Coordinator expenses. **Update: Ventura and JOTR are developing an IA to transfer the money. Since these funds are appropriated, they do not count toward the NFWF match. Russell and Joe will work with the project's partners to ensure an adequate match is available for the NFWF grant. *Out year funding is still an issue so managers are requested to examine their FY 08 budgets to see if they can contribute***
 - b. **Mohave Ground Squirrel** – Diane Noda, FWS Ventura, stated the FWS CA/NV Operations Office has officially responded to the Defenders of Wildlife petition to list the Mohave Ground Squirrel as threatened or endangered. The response acknowledged receipt of the petition. Diane could not elaborate further on additional information included in the response (see paragraph 7 above).
2. **Hazmat Work Group Update.** Russell Scofield briefed managers on the success of the Kern County Illegal Dumping Prevention Workshop held in March. Over 100 people attended from federal, state and local government organizations across California and Nevada. As a result of their efforts, Kern County has been invited to participate in developing statewide policy on the illegal dumping issue. Russell and Dave Burdette, Mojave National Preserve, provided managers with an update on the reinvigorated abandoned mine lands (AML) effort by the work group. Abandoned mine lands have become a huge safety issue for recreation of all types. ***The work group requested Managers provide them with the following abandoned mine lands (AML) information:***
 - a. ***Estimate of the number of AML sites in their jurisdiction***

- b. A listing of current and past AML projects*
- c. Funding sources used to address the AML issue within their jurisdiction*
- d. Lessons learned from past AML projects*
- e. AML success stories/problems encountered*

The information should be provided to Mr. Ted Weasma (ted_weasma@nps.gov; 760-252-6106). The work group was cautioned to insure they consider natural and cultural resource issues as they work with abandoned mine sites. The issue of long-term maintenance associated with AML remediation efforts also surfaced as a concern. The question was asked whether OHV groups could be enlisted to assist in locating AML sites. This question was further expanded to include using volunteers to remediate smaller, less dangerous AML sites. A discussion ensued concerning maximizing/leveraging limited available funding for the greatest amount of benefit. USFS has a prioritization process that bears investigation as well as an effort to educate the public on these hazards. The work group will investigate these issues further and report back to the Managers at the next DMG meeting.

3. **PACRAT Work Group Update** – Bob Bryson informed the Managers Meg McDonald was selected as Co-Chair of the work group. Bob further informed Managers the work group has gone to a twice a year meeting format with one meeting scheduled mid summer and the second in mid winter corresponding to the DMG summer and winter meeting dates. This venue provides long term stability in scheduling and meeting attendance for members of the work group. The work group has added the West Wide Energy Corridor project to their DMG goals for FY 07. The group felt the project was sufficiently significant in size and scope that it needs to be monitored to insure that cultural resource protection and treatment is considered in the effort. Looting of cultural resources is also a hot topic for the work group. Edwards AFB is initiating a survey of how this issue is affecting agencies and how they are dealing with it. The goal is to determine if there is a common collaborative approach that can be implemented to insure all agencies are protected to the same degree and that there is, as much as possible, commonality in how this issue is treated among the various agencies. The PACRAT work group desires to continue with coordinated ARPA training. There is a need for Section 106 training. The work group will report back to the Managers at a future meeting with a proposal. Bob stated the MDHRGIS system development continues moving forward. BLM has completed an internal system which should integrate easily with the California state system. The MDHRGIS should be functional this summer with full functionality available at the end of October.
4. **Habitat Restoration Update.** Russell Scofield briefed Managers the Low Desert Weed Management Area (WMA) final MOU was completed and has been signed by more than two-thirds of the WMA participants at this point. The group's next effort is to develop a strategic plan, which they have already begun. Completion of the strategic plan is anticipated within two to three months. Russell provided an update on the BLM Amargosa River tamarisk removal project. They are currently reviewing whether a prescribed burn will be the best treatment for certain dense monotypic stands of tamarisk. Russell mentioned the upcoming Tamarisk Research Conference 3 – 4 October in Denver Colorado. He asked Managers if the DMG wanted to sponsor a poster session along with abstracts of tamarisk removal efforts on California desert lands at the conference. Russell told Managers the

USGS Recoverability and Vulnerability of desert lands project website has been revised and contains much of the data generated to date from the project. He encouraged all Managers and their staffs to review the site and the data contained within. The RVDE webpage can be accessed from the DMG webpage. Any comments on the site or the data can be provided to Dr. Jane Belnap through Russell.

5. **Mojave Fringe Toed Lizard.** Russell Scofield informed Managers the Center for Biological Diversity has petitioned FWS to list the Amargosa River population of the Mojave Fringe Toed Lizard as threatened or endangered. The Amargosa River distinct population segment includes Mojave Fringe Toed lizards found in Dumont Dunes, Ibex Dunes and Coyote Holes. Russell proposed development of an ad hoc work group to gather existing information and data on this population and perhaps develop plans to gather additional information over the next 12 months. The Barstow BLM Field Office, the BLM CDD, USFWS, CDFG, Mojave National Preserve and Fort Irwin agreed to participate in the ad hoc work group. The question was asked whether a risk assessment was necessary prior to expenditure of funds on this effort. This will be a task for the work group to address. The question was asked whether genetic data needed to be collected. The response was to collect any data available for review.
6. **Range residue recycling, emission reduction credits banking and endangered species management on the Marine Corps Air Ground Combat Center (MCAGCC).** LtCol Jon Aytes provided Managers with an overview of these important programs. With over 20 major training events involving 1000's of aircraft and vehicle sorties and over 60,000 individual customers annually at this just under 1000 square mile training facility large amounts of expended metals, dust and traffic are generated. To insure minimal impact to wildlife and the ecosystem over 48,000 personnel were briefed on proper conduct in training areas with respect to the environment. Munitions residue is collected from the environment and processed/reclaimed. Funding generated from this process is used to offset the cost of implementing these efforts. Emission Credit Reduction is a policy within the Mojave Desert Air Quality district. This policy allows for agencies within the "airshed" to apply for emission 'credits' for particular pollutants; in MCAGCC's case, PM10 and NOx. The Combat Center amassed several tons of credits for later use by using best management practices with respect to emergency generators, paving, and dust abatement. In addition to training all personnel on proper endangered species processes, MCAGCC is developing a cutting edge desert tortoise research facility. Questions related to disease transmission and management in tortoise populations, tortoise genetics and juvenile survivability will be studied leveraging all information available to date.
7. **Department of Defense readiness and environmental protection initiative (REPI).** Mr. Larry Hagenauer provided Managers with an overview of the Edwards AFB implementation of the DOD program. The REPI program is designed to assist installations in addressing incompatible land development on existing private land that would impact the installations mission. The program is implemented through cooperative agreements with state government or private organizations with the specific purpose of land or natural resource conservation. These agreements limit use or development of the involved properties. The involved military service and cooperating partner may share costs. The Edwards AFB effort

involves a supersonic flight corridor, the PIRA buffer area and desert tortoise critical habitat. The net result of the effort will be the protection of critical mission resources for the installation and a consolidation and preservation of desert tortoise critical habitat.

8. **DMG Water Conference.** Deborah Hughson provided Managers with a concept presentation for conducting the next in the series of Mojave Desert Science Symposia. The next symposium will focus on water issues in the California deserts with sessions starting at the macro/regional level down to sessions focused on specific locations and their respective water issues. Initial coordination has been effected with Redlands University to serve as host of the event. Deborah proposed development of a planning committee to begin focusing on specific sessions, speakers and funding requirements. She also distributed a short questionnaire identifying potential topics for the symposium. Deborah requested Managers complete the questionnaire identifying which water issues were of most importance to them and if they would be able to support the symposium financially. The questionnaires were collected at the end of the DMG meeting. Managers supported the effort and approved development of a planning committee. Deborah will report back to the Managers at the next DMG meeting with planning committee membership and a general outline for the conference. *Managers were asked to consider possible funding sources and their ability to support the symposium.*
9. **DMG 5 Year Plan Approval.** Clarence Everly provided Managers with a review of changes and updates made to the 5 Year Plan based on input received from the Managers and work group Chairs. Managers approved the 5 Year Plan. Clarence and Russell will coordinate for printing and distribution of the FY 06 DMG 5 Year Plan.
10. The next DMG meeting will be hosted by the San Bernardino National Forest, 26 – 27 July 2006 in Big Bear, CA. The DMG fall meeting is scheduled for 18 – 19 October 2006 tentatively hosted by Death Valley National Park at Death Valley, CA.