



**Draft
Meeting Summary
2 – 3 May, 2007
Twenty-nine Palms, CA.**

Wednesday, 2 May, 2007

1. Introduction to Joshua Tree National Park.

- a. Curt Sauer, Superintendent, Joshua Tree National Park, welcomed all to the meeting and to Twenty-nine Palms.
- b. Joe Zarki, Chief of Interpretation at the park, provided an excellent overview of the mission, activities/operations, history, and issues within Joshua Tree National Park. He articulated major issues facing the park include air quality/global climate change and its effects on the ecology of the park, exotic plants and their affects on fire ecology in the park, endangered species and their management, and urbanization resulting in boundary encroachment and its impacts on night sky, endangered species and visual esthetics.

2. Desert Tortoise Recovery Office Update.

- a. Roy Averill-Murray provided Managers with an update on the desert tortoise recovery planning effort.
 1. The California recovery planning workshop will be held 22 and 23 May at the University of Redlands.
 2. Agency staff are to complete the desert tortoise recovery planning worksheet prior to attending the first day of the workshop. The worksheet is located on the desert tortoise recovery planning website <http://www2.institute.redlands.edu/DTRO>.
 3. Mr. Hillier, representing the Quad State County Coalition asked if technical support would be available for users of the website. Roy stated worksheet help contact information will be posted on the website. Mr. Hillier also asked if individuals completing worksheets can comment on issues not within their pervierw/jurisdiction. Roy stated individuals completing worksheets should focus only on their agency. Integration of the worksheet effort will occur at the workshop meeting.
- b. Linda Allison, Monitoring Coordinator for the DTRO, provided Managers with an update on the desert tortoise Line Distance Sampling program.

1. Funding for the desired number of transects across the range was not obtained.
 2. Transects were proportionally reduced throughout the California portion of the range as a result of insufficient funding.
3. **Mohave Ground Squirrel Work Group update.**
- a. Becky Jones, California Fish and Game provided Managers with an update on the Mohave Ground Squirrel conservation program document.
 1. The work group recently met via conference call to discuss ground squirrel monitoring strategies and protocols.
 2. The group continues researching avenues for funding a ground squirrel monitoring symposium in the fall of 2007.
 3. Becky stated comments on the draft conservation strategy documents are still needed from San Bernardino County.
 4. All references to the West Mojave Habitat Conservation Plan have been removed from the conservation strategy document.
 5. The group is also look at ways to provide incentives for private land owners to participate in the conservation strategy.
 6. A revised “draft” conservation strategy will be available for review by the end of May 2007.
 - b. Judy Hohman, USFWS Ventura, provided Managers with an update on the Mohave Ground Squirrel listing petition.
 1. Personnel within the Ventura FWS office are currently working on the 90 day finding.
 2. They have requested readily available data from some agencies.
 3. They estimate publication of the 90 day finding sometime in early FY 2008.
4. **Raven Environmental Assessment Work Group update.**
- a. Judy Hohman, USFWS Ventura, provided Managers with an update on the Raven Management Environmental Assessment (EA).
 1. The document was made available to the public in early April.
 2. California desert Congressional representatives were made aware of the EA.
 3. News releases were distributed as appropriate.
 4. Links were established from DMG websites to the USFWS website containing the announcement and a copy of the EA
 5. CDs containing the EA were sent to libraries in the California desert area.
 6. The comment period for the EA is 6 April – 7 May.
 7. Following the close of the public comment period USFWS review and assess comments received and make appropriate modifications to the EA as necessary.
 8. No time line has been established for a final decision on the EA.
 - b. Carl Benz, USFWS Ventura, asked Managers what actions can be taken now that can contribute towards reducing the raven threat to tortoises that do not require NEPA.
 - c. Carl stated he will send out an email to Managers asking for their thoughts and input on current or potential efforts that can minimize raven populations.

- d. Carl also requested Agency points of contact work with Robert McMorran of his office to move these efforts forward.

5. Desert Tortoise Education and Outreach Work Group update.

- a. Joe Zarki, Joshua Tree National Park, provided an overview of the results of the Colorado State University desert tortoise public opinion/public knowledge survey.
 - 1. Joe distributed a draft of the raw data survey results.
 - 2. Joe asked Managers if they would like Dr. Vaske, the survey proponent to come present results of the survey along with a more detailed analysis at the next DMG meeting. Managers responded yes.
- b. Desert Tortoise Education and Outreach Program funding.
 - 1. Joe Zarki advised Managers the program still needs \$25- \$30k in funding for completion of the FY 07/08 program
- c. Anne Staley, Desert Tortoise Education and Outreach Coordinator, provided Managers an update on the Mojave Max Program in the California deserts.
 - 1. Mojave Max emerged on March 26th.
 - 2. We had 500 participants in the program this year.
 - 3. Anne is currently developing press packets announcing this years winners.
- d. Anne Staley mentioned two desert tortoise outreach news articles have been developed and release with a third article currently in development. She continues to work on development of a desert tortoise brochure for distribution to developers and one for pet (dog) owners.
- e. Lorna Lang-Daggs, Johsua Tree National Park, provided Managers with an update on the desert tortoise education trunks.
 - 1. Following discussions with teachers Lorna found they wanted materials in the education trunks to be appropriate for multiple grade levels.
 - 2. Materials currently in the education trunks are appropriate for grade levels 3 through 6.
 - a. Materials in the trunks for grades 3 and 4 focus on what tortoise need to survive.
 - b. Materials in the trunks for grades 5 and 6 focus on the ecology of the tortoise and the cause and effects of tortoise's demise.
 - 3. Teachers will be able to schedule the trunks and get to keep it for two weeks.
 - 4. Teacher training sessions on use of the trunks has been conducted.
- f. Members of the Joshua Tree National Park Association demonstrated multiple items that can be sold to help spread the Desert Tortoise outreach message. A brochure will be developed depicting the many available items and will be distributed to agency personnel that deal with merchandising to place orders.

6. Southern Nevada Airport Update.

- a. Larry Whalon, Mojave National Preserve, provided Managers an update on development of the Southern Nevada airport at Primm, Nevada.
 - 1. Arrival and departure corridors submitted to EIS Team.
 - 2. Draft Preliminary Airspace Report submitted.
 - 3. Preliminary radar and NAVAID sites identified.
 - 4. Draft Preliminary Radar and NAVAID Report submitted.

5. Next step includes finalizing Preliminary Airspace and Preliminary Radar and NAVAID reports and submitting them to the EIS Team.
7. **Camp Pendleton Encroachment Partnering Overview.**
 - a. The Camp Pendleton encroachment partnering program focuses on mission encroachment.
 - b. The program currently has multiple partners. All partners have the same goals.
 - c. They all realize no one entity has sufficient resources to accomplish these goals independently.
 - d. The most effective approach to achieving desired goals is to partner/cooperate with one another.
 - e. Off installation conservation locations developed through the program are not used by the military for training or other military uses. They exist solely for conservation purposes.
8. **Stakeholder input.**
 - a. John Stewart, California Association of 4 Wheel Drive Clubs
 1. Continued increasing population numbers in southern California mean increased interest in recreation
 2. As agencies continue planning activities they must make sure they continue to factor recreation into plans
 3. If planning efforts account for recreation needs people will generally recreate in designated areas set aside for those purposes.
 4. Off road recreation groups are concerned with the exploding number of energy projects. These projects require land for development which may ultimately impact recreation interests.
 - b. Pat Flanagan – The Mojave Desert Land Trust
 1. The effects of climate change, global warming and greenhouse gas emissions in the desert region are well understood.
 2. Requested the DMG sponsor and organize a conference on the subject of global warming and its possible short and long term effects on the California desert region.
 3. Presenters at the conference would discuss the potential impacts of climate change on the future evolution of the desert.
 4. Recommended the conference be held in the desert with published proceedings of the conference.
 - c. Wendy McIntyre – Redlands University
 1. Requested funding support to continue her raven census work on behalf of the DMG.

Thursday, 3 May, 2007

1. **Developing land Uses in the Desert and their impacts on federal lands and habitat.**
 - a. Joshua Tree National Park Open Spaces Program.

1. The group's focus is on maintaining/developing open space buffers around cities, the park and the Marine base.
2. It involves business as well as government and non profit organization efforts.
3. Open space efforts focus on enhancing wildlife connectivity through traditional corridors
4. Issues for the group include:
 - a. Management of open space lands once designated
 - b. Differing rules by differing NGOs for mitigation lands
- b. Nature Conservancy Programs.
 1. TNC is focused on conservation and preservation of wildlife and plants.
 2. They are constantly reviewing priorities for their limited resources.
 3. They evaluate the level of participation and value added of initiatives when prioritizing their effort.
 4. Questions asked include:
 - a. how will lands be managed once acquired
 - b. how will resources be protected
 - c. what funding sources are available to accomplish the effort
 - d. where can TNC be most helpful
- c. California Joint Land Use (JLUS) Program.
 1. Seeks to ensure compatibility between military operations and civilian land uses.
 2. Seeks to accommodate growth and economic development and protect public health and safety.
 3. Have conducted initial development of potential strategies.
 4. Strategies are non-binding recommendations.
 5. Next step is to develop a draft Joint Land Use document.
 6. This program is available to all federal and state agencies.
 7. Federal funds available to resource JLUS efforts.
 8. State office administers program.
- d. California Department of Fish and Game (CDFG) habitat acquisition and management programs.
 1. The state Wildlife Conservation Board conducts land purchases for the state turns the land over to the appropriate state agency.
 2. The program deals only with willing sellers.
 3. Wildlife Conservation Board acquisitions are not mitigation lands.
 4. CDFG Lands Committee prioritizes purchase requests before they go to the Wildlife Conservation Board for action.
 5. CDFG mitigation land purchases.
 - a. Usually associated with take permits for an endangered species.
 - b. Incidental take permit is written requiring the purchase and turn over of land in mitigation for the specified action.
 - c. The applicant is responsible for finding mitigation lands then submitting them to CDFG for approval.
 - d. Mitigation lands require a management endowment for the acquired lands.
 - e. Mitigation lands require an enhancement fee that immediately enhances the land for use by specific species.

- f. Third party entities can use enhancement fees but they can not hold title to mitigation lands.
 - 6. Mitigation banking.
 - a. Mitigation land banks are run by third party entities.
 - b. Developers purchase credits in a land bank containing already purchased, set aside good habitat.
 - c. Credit purchase costs include enhancement and endowment fees.
- e. Army Compatible Use Buffer (ACUB) Program.
 - 1. Focuses on:
 - a. Limiting development of lands, adjacent to Army installations, for uses not compatible with the installation's mission
 - b. Preserving habitat on lands adjacent to Army installations to relieve environmental restrictions that would restrict, impede or interfere with the installation's current or anticipated military training, testing and research operations.
 - 2. Army purchases lands and turns over title, ownership and management to private entity.
 - 3. Lands are used for conservation, not military uses.
 - 4. Cooperative partnering achieves common objectives with military installation neighbors.
- f. Edwards Air Force Base Readiness and Environmental Protection Initiative (REPI).
 - 1. Focus is on addressing encroachment on military installations through buffer land acquisition via DOD and conservation entity partnerships.
 - 2. Goal of the program is to sustain DOD missions and support land conservation.
 - 3. DOD purchases lands then turns ownership over to conservation entity.
 - 4. Edwards AFB currently has three areas being considered under this program.
 - 5. Currently working several partnerships for these areas.
 - 6. Currently working on a service level Cooperative Agreement that would facilitate easier use of this process.

2. Follow-up items from Day 1.

- a. Desert Tortoise monitoring.
 - 1. Lack of funding for the Line Distance Sampling monitoring program in California continues to be a major issue for the program.
 - 2. Without monitoring recovery of the species will never be achieved.
 - 3. The current approach of requesting for voluntary funding each year is not sustainable
 - 4. The 2002 General Accounting Office (GAO) report identified a requirement for coordinated funding of an overarching monitoring program.
 - 5. In previous years part of problem was a lack of an overarching, clearly defined monitoring program.
 - 6. Several Managers identified the need to develop a strategic approach to sustain the program and recommended a work group be established to work on the monitoring program each year.

7. The DTRO must provide Managers with feedback on the overall value of funding a coordinated monitoring program.
 8. Discussion occurred as to whether the DMG was the appropriate level to discuss resourcing a rangewide monitoring program or should this be a Desert Tortoise MOG issue for agency funding commitments.
 9. The DTRO committed to developing a more defined desert tortoise monitoring plan by the August DMG meeting at which time a determination can be made whether to establish a work group to address desert tortoise monitoring issues.
- b. Global Climate Change Conference.
1. Discussion occurred on whether to pursue hosting a global climate change conference.
 2. Questions concerning purpose and target audience of the conference were discussed.
 3. The Superintendent of the Mojave National Preserve along with the USGS volunteered to develop a conference outline addressing these questions for discussion by Managers at the August DMG meeting.
3. **Coordination of habitat conservation.**
- a. BLM has acquired over 500k acres of land and received no funding to manage them.
 - b. A misunderstanding appears to exist over the purpose of these lands creating barriers to cooperation in managing them.
 - c. 3.5 mil acres of BLM lands are designated desert wildlife management areas (DWMA). These lands are limited to a 1% new disturbance cap.
 - d. Applications for solar development on lands within DWMA's have been turned down.
 - e. BLM recommends establishment of a working group to address coordination issues in the acquisition and management of mitigation lands.
 - f. As identified in the "Developing land Uses in the Desert and their impacts on federal lands and habitat" session multiple agencies have aggressive programs to acquire mitigation/buffer lands.
 - g. The purpose of the work group would be to involve BLM offices early on in the encroachment/mitigation/buffer land identification and purchase process.
 - h. Managers asked BLM how they envision this process working.
 1. First technical staff personnel work together on meshing programs.
 2. Potential barriers are identified during this process.
 3. Solutions to barriers are presented to Managers.
 4. BLM agreed to host a meeting in the next 30 days, with key agency representatives, to discuss and clarify the charge to the work group.
 5. A GIS component is needed in this process to create the visual tools needed for focused discussions.

4. **Next meetings.**

- a. The next DMG meeting will be hosted by Edwards Air Force Base, Kern County and California State Parks, Tehachapi District. Meeting dates are 15 – 16 August 2007.

- b. The DMG fall meeting will be hosted by the Naval Air Weapons Station, China Lake and the BLM Ridgecrest Field Office, 28 – 29 November, 2007 in Ridgecrest California.