



Draft Meeting Summary
DMG Desert Tortoise Recovery Action Planning Work Group
March 28, 2005
CDFG Office, 3602 Inland Empire Blvd, Suit C-200
Ontario, California.

Purpose:

1. Agree on the charter of the work group including the work group's mission, responsibilities, members, chair/vice chair, and staff support.
2. Agree on the scope and content of the DT Recovery Action Plans.
3. Review the assessment of recovery actions included in various agency land management plans that has been prepared by the University of Redlands.
4. Review/agree upon method for using threats to help prioritize recovery actions.
5. Discuss process, steps and assignments for developing Recovery Action Plans.
6. Review/agree upon how stakeholder input will be addressed.
7. Review/agree upon the role of the DT Science Advisory Committee.

Participants

Larry LaPre (BLM)
Mark Massar (BLM)
Becky Jones (CDFG)
Ray Bransfield (FWS)
Shannon Collis (EAFB)
Neil Lynn (NTC)
Sandy Marquez (FWS)
Mary Martin (NPS)
Glenn Black (CDFG)

Bob Williams (FWS)
Don Maben (Kern County)
Bob Wood (EAFB)
Roy Averill-Murray (FWS)
John Hamill (DOI)
Clarence Everly (DOD)
Thomas Lueteritz (UR)
Paul Burgess (UR)

Meeting Summary/Conclusions:

1. Work Group

- a. **Charter:** Recommended changes to the Draft Work Group Charter are attached.
- b. **Biologists/Resource Specialists:** Larry LaPre (BLM), Mark Massar (BLM), Becky Jones (CDFG), Ray Bransfield (FWS), Debra Hughson (NPS-MOJA), Shannon Collis (EAFB)
- c. **Manager Representatives:** Mary Martin, Glenn Black, Bob Williams, Bruce Shaffer, Don Maben, Bob Wood
- d. **GS Science representatives:** Karen Phillips, Kristin Berry

- e. **Coordinators and Staff support:** Roy Averill-Murray (FWS), Amy Salveter (FWS DTRO Coordinator-Ventura), Sandy Marquez (FWS DTRO Coordinator-Carlsbad), John Hamill (DOI), Clarence Everly (DOD), Paul Burgess and Thomas Leuteritz (University of Redlands)
- f. **Chair and Vice chair** John Hamill and Clarence Everly will serve as interim co-chairs; Becky Jones and Ray Bransfield will serve as co-vice chairs

2. **Recovery Action Plans**

- a. Guidance from FWS/Steve Thompson and the DMG related to the scope and elements of a Recovery Action Plan were discussed (attached). The Group agreed to the following:
 - A recovery action plan (RAP) will be developed for each Recovery Unit in California. Each Desert Wildlife Management Area and/or National Park unit will be evaluated separately and then grouped, as needed or appropriate. The Work Group was free to define new recovery areas, but FWS indicated it was unlikely that new critical habitat boundaries or DPS' would be formally designated.
 - FWS will draft a proposal to define RAP area boundaries and clarify or standardize the terminology for DT recovery areas (i.e., DWMAs, critical habitat, recovery units). The University of Redlands will assist FWS in developing a map of Recovery Action Planning Areas.
 - The components/elements of the RAP shall include:
 - Discussion and priority ranking of threats in each DWMA/recovery unit.
 - 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. The evaluation will also identify where collaboration and cooperation among various land managers is necessary/possible.
 - An implementation schedule, budget, and responsible or lead agency for 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.
 - The goal is to identify actions that can/will be implemented in the next 5 years. Broad support of an action, while desirable, is not a requirement for inclusion in the RAP.

- 3. **Recovery Action Assessment:** Paul Burgess summarized the assessment of recovery actions included in various agency land management plans that was prepared by the University of Redlands (refer to the power point presentation and draft spreadsheet that summarizes recovery/research actions included in various agency land management plans). Redlands will meet with each agency to (a) complete and validate the spreadsheets and (b) identify planned, ongoing, and/or priority DT recovery and research activities for each agency/office. Hamill and Everly will work with Redlands to coordinate the meetings.

4. **Threats Analysis:** Roy Averill-Murray presented a proposal to use a process developed by the Nature Conservancy for evaluating threats to desert tortoise (refer to power point presentation). The work group agreed to pilot the process in the North East Mojave Recovery Unit. A subgroup was formed to develop a plan for the NEMO threats workshop. Subgroup members include: Roy Averill Murray (lead), Sandy Marquez, Becky Jones, Ray Bransfield, Paul Burgess, and John Hamill. The Subgroup will identify:
 - Workshop participants
 - Information/data that needs to be compiled for the workshop
 - Date/location for the workshop
 - Agenda with desired outcomes
 - Meeting facilitator

5. **Science Advisory Committee:** FWS announced that members of the Science Advisory Committee would include:
 - Kristin Berry, USGS
 - Earl McCoy, University of South Florida
 - Katherine Ralls, Smithsonian Institution
 - Dick Tracy, University of Nevada, Reno
 - Michael Reed, Tufts University
 - Bob Steidl, University of Arizona

The initial committee meeting will be held on May 16-17 in Reno to identify the goals and activities of the Committee. The DMG will be invited to attend. The relationship of the Science Committee and the Work Group was not discussed and would be addressed at the next work group meeting.

6. **Stakeholder Review and Input:** Deferred to next work group meeting

7. **DMG Meeting Report:** Hamill and Everly will provide the Work Group Report at the DMG meeting on April 27-28, 2005

8. **Next Meeting:** May 12, 2005 from 10 am to 3:30 pm NPS office, 2701 Bartow Rd., Barstow, CA.

Attachment 1
DRAFT Charter
Desert Tortoise Recovery Action Planning Work Group

Background/Introduction:

The Mojave population of the desert tortoise (*Gopherus agassizii*) was listed as a threatened species under the Endangered Species Act in 1990. In 1994, the Fish and Wildlife Service (FWS) designated critical habitat covering 6.4 million acres of the desert tortoises range. Approximately, 4.8 million acres or 75 percent of the critical habitat occurs in California, primarily on lands administered by the Bureau of Land Management, National Park Service, the Department of Defense, and the State of California. In addition to Federal protection, the desert tortoise is the California State reptile and is listed as a threatened species under the State's Endangered Species Act.

Recovery of the desert tortoise is guided by the Desert Tortoise Recovery Plan (FWS, 1994), which outlines the actions needed to recover the desert tortoise throughout its range. In California, the primary means of achieving the objectives of the Recovery Plan will be through implementation of approved agency land and resource management plans. These plans provide for implementation of a variety of recovery actions identified in the Recovery Plan consistent with each agencies mission and statutory authority. In 2004, the FWS completed a comprehensive scientific review of the Recovery Plan and expects to complete a revision of the 1994 Desert Tortoise Recovery Plan in 2006.

Because of the many political jurisdictions involved with desert tortoise recovery, effective implementation of recovery actions will require unprecedented cooperation and coordination. A cooperative/coordinated effort among land managers will:

1. Accomplish recovery goals that would be unattainable on a local scale;
2. Reduce duplication of effort and increase the efficient use of resources and expertise; and
3. Increase support of the recovery effort by providing consistent information on the status of the tortoise and recovery implementation throughout the California desert;

The Desert Managers Group established the Desert Tortoise Recovery Action Planning Work Group (Work Group) to promote and facilitate a collaborative recovery effort for the desert tortoise among land and resource managers, scientists and partners across jurisdictional boundaries. An initial assignment of the Work Group will be to develop Recovery Action Plans for each recovery unit in California for inclusion in the revised DT Recovery Plan. The Recovery Action Plans (RAP) will identify desert tortoise recovery actions that can/will be carried out in the next 5 years based upon:

1. the best available scientific information,
2. an assessment of threats and population status in each of the recovery units, and
3. a review of the desert tortoise recovery actions included in various agency land management plans.

The RAPs will also address critical information gaps associated with each action, the research needed to fill those gaps, and how the effectiveness of the recovery action will be monitored and evaluated. The work group will utilize the knowledge and expertise of agency resource management specialists and scientists with direct experience in studying and managing the desert tortoise in the California deserts. Over the long term, the Work Group will provide the forum for land and resource management agencies to coordinate implementation of the Recovery Action Plans and to review progress towards recovery and assess the effectiveness of recovery actions. The Work Group will rely on FWS' DT Science Advisory Committee, data management program and range-wide monitoring effort to ensure recovery actions are based on sound science and implemented using an adaptive management approach.

Mission: Identify, plan, and coordinate implementation of desert tortoise recovery, monitoring and research actions in the California deserts among managers and scientists across jurisdictional boundaries.

Duties and Responsibilities:

1. Review various agency land management plans and develop Recovery Action Plans for each recovery unit in California for approval by the DMG. The Recovery Action Plans will be included in the revised Desert Tortoise Recovery Plan by FWS.
2. Plan and coordinate implementation of recovery actions, assess progress related to implementation of approved Recovery Action Plans, and evaluate the effectiveness of recovery actions.
3. Report findings, provide updates, and develop recommendations for consideration by the DMG.

Work Group Participants

- Biologists: DMG agency senior level biologists/resource specialists
- DT Scientists: USGS Science Advisory Committee representative
- Managers: One or two managers to provide management guidance to the work group and provide liaison with the DMG

Staff support

- FWS-DTRO Coordinator
- DOD and DOI DMG Coordinators
- University of Redlands Desert Tortoise Project

Attachment 2
Recovery Action Plan Guidance

FWS (Steve Thompson) Letter (Nov 3, 2004):

- prioritized recovery activities that are immediately implementable and have broad support
- recovery action plans will be short documents (5-10 pages) that list and prioritize desert tortoise recovery actions within a specific portion of the range to be carried out in the next 5 years. They will also identify research and monitoring needed for each action to achieve the GAO goal of linking recovery with management actions

DMG DT Ad hoc work Group (11-08-04) (approved by DMG in Jan 05)

- The University of Redlands will conduct a side by side comparison of the desert tortoise recovery, monitoring, and research actions identified in DOD, NPS, and BLM land management plans, the DT Recovery Plan (1994) and the DT Recovery Plan Assessment Report. The results of the Evaluation will be used to identify high priority actions to implement in the next 5 years and to develop the step down implementation plan for inclusion in the revised DT Recovery Plan. The evaluation will also identify where collaboration and cooperation among various land managers is necessary/possible.