

SUMMARY
DESERT MANAGERS GROUP MEETING
Marine Corp Base, 29 Palms, CA
April 21-22, 2004

Note: Action items and major conclusions are italicized

Day 1, 21 April 2004

Overview of the Marine Corps Base at 29 Palms: Major Jon Aytes welcomed the group to the Base and provided an excellent overview of the mission, activities and resource issues at the Marine Corps base (attached).

Review DMG Vision and Mission. This portion of the meeting was facilitated by Paul Ideker. Curt Sauer and Jon Aytes explained the purpose of the session was to acquaint new members of the DMG with the history, charter, mission, activities, etc of the Group; discuss and develop a shared vision for how the group will work together in the future; and evaluate and come to agreement on stakeholder involvement in the DMG

1. DMG Background and Overview

- Clarence Everly provided an overview of the DMG including its history, Charter, implementing MOU, mission, 5 Year Plan, funding strategies (see attached power point presentation). *Clarence noted that the DMG 5 year plan and accomplish report (attached) has been circulated for review. Comments should be provided by April 26, 2004 at which time the document will be finalized, printed, and distributed.*
- John Hamill described the results of the agreements reached as a result of the DMG Evaluation that was conducted in FY 01/02 and the Collaborative Management Workshop that was held in June 2003 (see attached)

2. DMG member expectations about the role/value of the DMG to their work

- DMG members were generally on the same page with respect to the “official” goals and objectives contained in the group’s original charter and many of the agreements reached within the FY 01/02 DMG evaluation (attached), with the exception of agreements related to stakeholder participation.
- DMG members still see the primary value of the DMG as an opportunity to network and share information. They also enjoy having social time with colleagues and the ability to identify people who might be future project partners. Some members also found value in certain services the DMG could provide, including training opportunities. Using the DMG as a forum to coordinate or sponsor interagency collaborative projects is of secondary importance to many of the managers.
- There is no coordinated strategy for securing funding for DMG activities—to varying degrees each agency currently seeks funds independently through its own budget process. In general, the managers have very low expectations about the ability to actually acquire more/new federal funding for DMG projects. Believing that the DMG could be a source for new funds – when the probability of that actually being true is very low – leads to unmet expectations, frustrations and a loss of credibility for the Group.

- Using the DMG as a “Good Housekeeping” seal of approval on projects and proposals is a valued-added benefit that improves the advantage of projects that are competing for funds (federal and private).
3. **Stakeholder participation/input guidelines.** Hamill reviewed the history and current issues associated with stakeholder participation and DMG meetings (attached) and distributed a letter written by Jennifer Foster expressing concerns about DMG stakeholder participation guidelines. Some managers continued to express concern that stakeholder participation was stifling an open and candid dialogue at DMG meetings. One option that was discussed involved holding one or two special stakeholder meetings annually in lieu of inviting stakeholders to attend regular DMG meetings. The DMG discussed the pros and cons of various options, but did not reach consensus. Curt Sauer drafted some stakeholder participation guidelines for use during the second day of the DMG meeting that were adopted by the group (attached).
 4. **Conclusions and Next Steps:** *The DMG established an ad hoc group to develop recommendations regarding stakeholder involvement for consideration by the full DMG. Members of the ad hoc group include Mary Martin (NPS), John O’Gara (NAWS), Bob Wood (EAFB), Greg Thomsen (BLM), Glenn Black (CDFG), John Hamill (DOI) and Clarence Everly (DOD). The goal is to develop and reach consensus on stakeholder participation guidelines before the next DMG meeting on July 14-15, 2004.*

Desert Tortoise (DT)

1. **Recovery Plan Assessment Committee Report:** Bob Williams reported that few agency comments have been received to date and that the comment deadline has been extended. FWS is scoping out the details on the proposed FWS recovery office; *Williams committed to seek DMG input on the office’s role, responsibilities, location, etc.*
2. **Desert Tortoise Recovery Action Program and MOA:** John Hamill reported that few comments were received during the public review of the DTRAP. The DTRAP and MOA have been finalized and forwarded to the DOI regional executives. Proposed signatories to the MOA include: FWS, BLM, NPS, GS, CDFG, and State Parks. However, the MOA is currently on hold pending clarification of the relationship of the DTRAP/DMG, with the MOG, the DT Recovery Plan review, the proposed FWS Recovery Office, the West Mojave Plan, and the Fort Irwin Expansion mitigation fund.
3. **Data Management (DM) agreement:** Bob Williams reported that no progress was made on the proposed DT Data Management agreement. However, FWS still recognizes the need for better DM that is tied to the ESA/SESA permitting process. To that end a Desert Tortoise Monitoring Implementation Committee has been established to review all tortoise monitoring efforts. FWS is working on an agreement with the University of Redlands and MDEP re: Line Distance Sampling data and intends to work on a broader agreement later on.
4. **DT Monitoring:** Phil Medica reported that he has taken a new job with USGS in Henderson, NV but will continue to coordinate LDS activities until FWS finds a replacement. DT monitoring started in early April and will be conducted range-wide in all DWMA’s. So far, DT encounter rates have been relatively high. Sampling protocols

have been modified to allow for sampling larger areas with less funding. Blood samples will be collected from DT for genetics and disease studies.

5. **Raven Management**– Amy Fesnock reported that the Raven EA team has met and agreed upon an aggressive schedule to complete the EA by Jan 05 (attached). A scoping letter will be sent out in a few weeks inviting public comments on the Program. She has received some comments that the goal should be to reduce raven populations not just manage raven impacts.
6. **DT Information and Education Project** – John Hamill distributed a copy of the grant request that was submitted to the National Fish and Wildlife Foundation (NFWF) (attached). NFWF will consider the grant request at their June or August meeting. A matching grant request will be submitted to the California OHV Commission. *The DMG passed a resolution supporting the Project and encouraging the development of partnerships and grant opportunities to fund the Project (attached).*

Day 2, 22 April 2004

Joshua Tree National Park Overview: Lorna Lange-Daggs reported on the Park's education program. Class programs, curriculum guides for teachers, and support materials (DT kits, etc) have been developed. Education programs are developed to meet state education standards. Lorna also summarized the education program component of the DT Information and Education Project that was developed through the DMG (attached). To date over 125K students have gone through education programs sponsored by Joshua Tree NP.

Joe Zarki provided an excellent overview of the history and resources at Joshua Tree National Park (see attached power point presentation)

Report on previous day's discussion: Curt Sauer reviewed the stakeholder participation guidelines for the meeting (attached). Hamill provided an overview of the previous day's discussion related to the Desert Tortoise (see above). Howard Gross (NPCA) indicated that the stakeholder guidelines were reasonable and Chris Spofera (SDOHV) said he appreciated being invited to attend DMG meetings.

PACRAT Report

- **Native American Conference:** Paul Smith distributed a copy of a conference brochure, encouraged DMG attendance, and DMG agency sponsorship of native American tribes who could not afford to attend. The Conference will be held on May 21-22, 2004 in 29 Palms. Information on the conference has been posted on the DMG website
- **CHRIS Update:** Bob Bryson reported that the SHPO still had not provided the DMG with the Chris GIS database for the Mojave. *The DMG authorized Bob to draft a letter to send to the SHPO formally requesting the database and indicating the DOD was prepared to ask for a formal audit of the project if the database is not delivered or useable.*
- **ARPA Training Update** Hamill reported that the Basic ARPA training class for cultural resource and law enforcement rangers was scheduled for Nov 3-5, 2004 in 29 Palms. Max class size is 44. The class will be sponsored by Joshua Tree NP and the

BLM National Training Center. Details on the class will be posted on the DMG website. *MCAGCC agreed to look into hosting the training, if needed.*

Grant Writing Class: Curt Sauer reported that the DMG would be invited to a NPS sponsored grant writing class that is tentatively scheduled for sometime in October in 29 Palms or Palm Springs; details would be forthcoming.

Research database Update: The database is currently operational. Each agency needs to begin inputting data. *Dr. Debra Hughson reported that only 3 of 13 system administrators have responded to the request to set up an account for the research database. The managers agreed to follow up with their staff.*

Mojave Desert Science Symposium: Debra discussed the preliminary agenda for the Mojave Desert Science Symposium. The symposium will be held at the University of Redlands Nov 14-16, 2004. She reported that invoices had been provided to all the DMG members who agreed to contribute to the symposium. *Managers were requested to make payment as soon as possible.*

Habitat Restoration Report

- 1. Restoration meeting:** Russell Scofield reported that the restoration workshop/ meeting on February 28-March 1 was well attended and received positive reviews. He intends to sponsor these meetings annually.
- 2. Restoration database:** Russell reported that he is working with USGS to establish a restoration project database. So far, he has information on 25-30 projects to include in the database.
- 3. Riparian Habitat Restoration Initiative:** see Attached Brief. *Russell will prepare a DMG Strategy for Coordinated Riparian Exotic Management in the California Desert to support efforts to secure Federal and private funding.* He intends to meet with the California Wildlife Conservation Board and the National Fish and Wildlife Foundation to develop a coordinated grant request.
- 4.** Several managers asked if it would be possible to set up wilderness training for agency staff. The Carhart course was mentioned as a popular course. *John Hamill agreed to research the cost/feasibility of supporting such a course and report back to the managers .*
- 5. Roads Ecology Study:** see Attached Brief. Russell reported that USGS is preparing a publication related to the impacts of vehicular routes in the Mojave Desert. USGS has requested a one-half day meeting with key resource specialists to discuss agency needs. The Managers provided the following contacts for the meeting: Mike Ahrens, John Stark, Steve Smith, ECFO?, Route designation leads, Jim Foote, the WEMO Planning team biologists (LaRue, LaPre), and the NTC dirt guy.

Illegal Dumping/Hazmat Report

- 1. Results of Illegal Dumping Enforcement Workshop and next steps.** Russell reported that the IDEW was attended by about 120 people and that reviews of the workshop were very positive. Local government support was critical to the success of the workshop. He showed a video made by Riverside County to increase public awareness of the illegal

dumping issue. Robert McCarthy (SOL) expressed concern that tribes should have been more involved in the Workshop. Several managers suggested including illegal dumping as an element of the proposed DT education curriculum. *Russell intends to organize an IDEW for San Bernardino County later this year.*

2. **Illegal Dump Summit:** (See attached brief): Russell will prepare a prospectus for a Regional Illegal Dumping Summit and work with local governments and the California Integrated Waste Management Board to see if there is interest in sponsoring the event.
3. **Illegal Dumping database** (See Attached Brief). Russell reported that Joshua Tree NPS had input all its illegal dumps into the database (over 40 sites) and that he was working with a Eric Boerner (MDEP) to make the database more functional and user friendly. *The DMG approved establishment of an ad hoc work group to further refine the database and develop strategies for populating the database. Members of the work group will include: Clarence Everly, Eric Boerner, Josh Greenwood, Curt Toovey, Jeff Ohlfs, Bill Wiley and John Key.*

Coordinated Natural Resource Monitoring

1. **Update on selection of Mojave Desert research projects.** Wes Ward and Todd Esque reported that USGS will provide \$500K for three Mojave Desert research projects that address monitoring exotic plants in the Mojave Desert ecosystem, soils and geomorphology, and predicting DT habitat. Wes thanked the DMG for its input and comments on the proposal and indicated that DMG support was instrumental in the GS decision to commit fund the projects.
2. **NPS Vital Signs Workshop—DMG participation:** Debra Hughson reviewed the DMG's efforts related to coordinating monitoring projects in the Cal deserts and discussed the upcoming NPS Vital Signs Workshop (power point presentation is attached). *The DOD (China Lakes and Edwards) said they would try to send representatives to the workshop. The DMG also agreed to reconvene the ad hoc group from the Coordinated Natural Resource Monitoring Workshop to review the Vital Signs Workshop products and report on how these may contribute to integrating desert-wide monitoring. The mission of the ad hoc coordinated monitoring group will be to review the NPS approach and make recommendations (at the July meeting) to the DMG on how it could be applied to the wider desert region. Debra will coordinate this effort on behalf of the DMG.*

Outside Las Vegas -- Federal Managers Group: Bill Dickinson and Jennifer Haley provided an excellent overview of the Outside Las Vegas Federal Managers Group (attached). The major lessons they have learned are to establish lasting relationships and strongly commit to partnership, including dedicating time and staff. The major challenges have been to: institutionalize the partnership into normal agency operations and develop an understanding or appreciation in upper management of what partnership is about and finding staff to dedicate to the effort. They said they would benefit from legislation to allow money to be pooled and spent outside designated agency boundaries.

DMG event re: 10th Anniversary of Cal Desert Protection Act. Curt Sauer asked if the DMG was interested in sponsoring an event to commemorate the 10th Anniversary of the California Desert Protection Act. There was no interest in having a DMG sponsored event. Each of the National Parks will sponsor their own events in coordination with local communities and the National Parks Conservation Association.

Caltrans roadside exhibit update. James Woolsey reported that the interagency group from Caltrans, BLM, NPS, State Parks, the County, Edward Air Force Base, and MDEP was making excellent progress on developing interpretive exhibits at road side rest areas at Fenner, Valley Wells, and Boron. He reported there was high likelihood of receiving a \$1.5M grant from Caltrans to develop interpretive exhibits at the Valley Wells rest area. The group is working on a MOU regarding maintenance of the proposed exhibits at Valley Wells, which needs to be finalized before the effort can go forward. James also intends to hire a contractor to work with Caltrans to help design the exhibits. Funding for the proposed contract will come from contributions by NPS, BLM, the County and a possible grant from NFWF.

Next Meeting

- **Summer Meeting** – July 14-15, 2004, San Diego, CA Host: Wes Ward (USGS)
- **Fall Meeting** – October 6-7, Edwards Air Force Base, Lancaster, CA Host: Bob Wood

Stakeholder Comments. Mr. Chris Spofera requested a status update on the 1-800 reporting of dumps initiative. Russ Scofield articulated that contact has been made with San Bernardino County and some preliminary discussions have occurred. However, it appears at this time the best course of action would be to pursue this issue through the San Bernardino County Board of Supervisors and fold it into the illegal dumping enforcement workshop initiative for the county.

Roundtable Reports—Selected Highlights

1. Carl Benz (FWS) – Brian Croft a former BLM biologist has been hired; the 12 month finding for listing of the desert synompterus is about to be released; The Biological Opinion on the Ft Irwin expansion is done and available at www.fortirwinlandexpansion.com.
2. John O’Gara (NAWS)—China Lake is now reorganized under new command in San Diego. The EIS and ROD on the China Lakes land management plan is due May 14; A groundwater mgt plan will be sent out for review; NAWS is cooperating with BLM on wind energy systems to avoid air space issues.
3. Mary Martin (NPS-MOJA) – new NPS-MOJA office under construction in Barstow; livestock mgt plan is under development; The Fire Management Plan is almost complete.
4. Bob Wood (EAFB)—concerned about desert synompterus listing.
5. Hector Villalobos (BLM)- WEMO, NEMO plans and route designation are about done.
6. Becky Jones (CDFG)—DFG is ordering new DT Hands Off posters and looking for funds for the DT outreach program; DFG is broke and many supervisory positions are vacant.

7. Harold Johnson (BLM)—Roxy Trost is new BLM Field Manager for Barstow; Bill Haigh is going to Oregon as a BLM Field Manager; political support is developing for the Amargosa Wild and Scenic River proposal.
8. Bill Vereday (State Parks)—There are many vacant positions in the Mojave desert District; The general plan amendment for Red Rocks is stalled.
9. Danella George (BLM-Palm Spring FO)—Gail Acheson has been selected as the new Palm Springs Field Manager; The ROD of the San Jacinto/Santa Rosa Mountains National Monument's joint management plans is done.
10. Greg Thomsen (BLM-El Centro)—\$900K is being spent for plant monitoring in the Imperial Sand Dunes—this effort is being paid for by user fees.

Attachments

1. Attendance roster
2. MCACC Overview (Power Point)
3. DMG Overview (Power Point)
4. Draft DMG 5 Year Plan and Accomplish Report
5. Actions and Agreement related to the Operation and Priority Projects of the DMG (12/12/01)
6. Highlights of the DMG Collaborative Management Workshop (6/12-13/2003)
7. Briefing: Stakeholder involvement in the DMG
8. Stakeholder Guidelines
9. Proposed schedule for the Raven EA
10. DT Information and Education Project Grant Request
11. DMG Resolution in Support of the DT Information and Education Project
12. Brief: Riparian Restoration Initiative
13. Brief: USGS Study related to Vehicle Route Designation in the Mojave Desert
14. Brief: Illegal Dump Summit
15. Brief: Illegal Dump Data Base
16. Coordinated Natural Resource Monitoring (Power Point)
17. Outside Las Vegas Federal Manager Group (Power Point) Stakeholder Participation