

SUMMARY
DESERT MANAGERS GROUP MEETING
Holiday Inn Express, Barstow, CA
January 14-15, 2004

(Note: Action items and major conclusions are italicized)

1. Harold Johnson provided an overview of the resources and management activities administered by the **Barstow BLM office**.
2. HAZMAT report
 - a. John Key announced that an **Air Monitoring for Hazardous Material Training Course** will be offered on March 29-April 2 at the BLM office in Moreno Valley. Tuition is free and open to all DMG participants.
 - b. *The DMG presented a **plaque to John Key** in honor of his outstanding and sustained contributions to the DMG/Hazmat Work Group and collaboration in the California deserts. John has served as chair or co-chair of the work group since its inception.*
 - c. Russ Scofield indicated the **Illegal Dumping Enforcement Workshop** will occur in Palm Springs, on March 24. An agenda and outline of the workshop are attached. Several local governments and the Agua Caliente Tribe are actively involved in planning the workshop.
 - d. Russ Scofield reported that San Bernardino County is interested in working with the DMG to establish a process whereby the public can report littering via a **1-800-number**. Parties being reported would receive a nasty letter from code enforcement articulating the problems and potential fines associated with littering. *Russ will pursue the project following return of the key county staff person who has been temporarily assigned to a new position.*
 - e. Russ Scofield asked the DMG whether they wanted to update and maintain the **illegal dump data base**. In the past it has been very difficult to get the managers to input information into the database. Mary Martin indicated that she was hiring a new Hazmat specialist and that updating the dump database would be a priority assignment. *The DMG agreed to maintain and update the database.*
 - f. John Key announced that *Ted Weasma (NPS) is the **new co-chair** of the Hazmat Work Group. Mary Martin confirmed that she will continue to be the Management Representative to the Group.*
 - g. Russ noted that **CIWCB funds** are still available to assist in funding dump cleanups. However, a 50 percent match is required to receive the funds.
3. Habitat Restoration Report (Scofield)
 - a. Russ Scofield reported that the **San Felipe San Sebastian Wash MOA** is on hold pending action from State Parks. The primary purpose of the MOA is to solidify support for the work that is already being done and expand the effort to include other agencies. In the meantime, the cooperative effort is continuing w/o the MOA, however, the status of state parks funding (\$250K/yr) is uncertain.

- b. Russ provided an update on efforts to establish a **Coachella Valley/Southern Desert Weed Management Area** (see handout). While there is support for the WMA, there is no funding to hire a WMA coordinator. *Russ proposed that DMG agencies contribute \$5K/year for 2 years of seed money to hire a part time WMA coordinator. However, no funds were offered and the DMG recommended putting the WMA effort on hold until funding was identified.*
 - c. Russ announced a **Restoration Work Group Meeting** will be held on March 2-3, 2004 in Barstow (see attached). *Russ encouraged managers to send their staff to the meeting.*
 - d. **BLM Habitat Restoration Initiatives**
 - Jeff Aardahl reported that BLM is seeking funding for a cooperative Riparian Habitat Restoration Initiative for the entire CDCA through the State Wildlife Conservation Board (see attached). The idea would be to leverage funds from the State with Federal agency and NFWF funds. The current proposal is for 466K/year for 12 years (\$2.2K/acre). WCB does not have all the funds requested. *Jeff wants to meet with NPS, CDFG and others to identify potential partnerships and funding opportunities.*
 - Jim Weigand reported that BLM has received a large grant from the State Green Sticker Program for upland habitat restoration in several areas in the CDCA. (See handout).
 - Russ led a discussion on potential DMG interest/involvement in the habitat restoration initiatives (See attached). *Bob Wood indicated that NASA has lots of data and that he will see what's available. Specific restoration partnerships will be developed on a project-by-project basis.*
4. Debra Hughson reported that the **Research Database** will be available for data input as soon as testing and debugging are complete. Planning for the **Mojave Desert Science Symposium**, which will be held on Nov 14-16, 2004 was proceeding. A conference organizer had been hired and most of the identified speakers have agreed to participate. *Debra indicated that additional DMG contributions in the amount of \$7200 were needed. BLM agreed to provide \$5000 and Fort Irwin agreed to provide \$2500.*
 5. **Public Comment:** Eddie Phillips expressed concern about closing road/trails that limits access to FS land (near Cajon Pass) and that road closure will impact fire suppression. He indicated that boulders used to block roads keeps out emergency equipment but OHV's still can access. John Stewart expressed concern that habitat restoration may impact foot or horse access by eliminating trailheads. He recommended including recreation interests on the ad hoc restoration team to help identify routes for restoration and how to allow equestrian/ foot access to trails. Eddie Phillips expressed concern that work groups will be made up of people of "like minds" and the work group should be open to public input. One commenter expressed concern that the SSB/SFW MOA is being used to justify route closure (it was pointed out that the MOA did not address route designation or closure). Chris Spofera recommended that the agencies should do a better job of outreach to OHV

interests to make sure they know the rules and requirements for responsible use of the desert.

6. Todd Esque reported on the process that would be used by GS to allocate \$500K for research projects in the Mojave (attached). He also reported that Jane Belnap is the new coordinator of the **Recoverability and Vulnerability of Desert Ecosystem (RVDE) Project** and she will be the coordinator for the Biological Resource Division. Debra Hughson presented several recommendations to the DMG (attached). The managers agreed to:
 - a. *Send a letter to the Director of USGS expressing general support for USGS science efforts in the Mojave and the goals of the RVDE project in particular. The purpose of the letter is to raise awareness within USGS management of the importance of the Mojave Desert and DMG support for USGS/RVDE science efforts (final letter is attached)*
 - b. *Subject to GS approval, several representatives of the DMG would review the Mojave research proposals that are submitted for how well they address land and resource management needs and concerns. The DMG is prepared to provide consolidated comments and recommendations to USGS within the timeframes outlined in the December 23 memo (attached). DMG representatives identified to review the proposals include Debra Hughson (NPS), Russ Scofield (BLM), Jim Weigand (BLM), Bill Haigh (BLM), Robert Wood (Edwards Air Force Base), Bob Williams (FWS) and Rebecca Jones (Cal Dept. of Fish and Game). John Hamill will contact GS to determine if the DMG's proposal is acceptable*
 - c. *Have Russ Scofield and Debra Hughson be the principal liaisons between the DMG and the RVDE project. Russ and Debra will involve other DMG staff/managers as appropriate.*
7. PACRAT Report
 - a. Bob Bryson reported that PACRAT recommended that the top priority training course for FY 04 would be a basic **ARPA training** class for law enforcement and cultural resource staff. The cost for the course is \$6K. *Curt Sauer indicated he would fund the class as long as there was a commitment by the managers to send their staff. Several managers (Hector, Greg, Mary,) indicated they had several staff they would send to the class .*
 - b. Bob reported that the **Chris Database** had not been sent to the DMG, but that it should be provided soon (according to Eric Allison). *The PACRAT still intends to review and evaluate the utility and integrity of the database and the State's business plan once they are provided by the SHPO.*
 - c. Paul Smith requested DMG endorsement and sponsorship of the **Desert Indians Sacred Lands Conference** on May 21-22, 2004 in 29 Palms. The agenda includes sacred lands issues, archeology, and Native American history. The conference is being organized by the Native American Lands Conservancy in cooperation with BLM, JOTR and the University of Riverside. Bob Bryson and Bob Wood reported the PACRAT recommended DMG endorsement of the conference. *The DMG approved sponsorship of the conference. JT suggested each agency should consider providing financial support to allow tribes to attend.*

8. Ron Marlowe (UNR) provided an overview of the **Clark County multi species habitat conservation plan**.
9. Bill Haigh (BLM) and Randy Scott (San Bernardino County) provided an overview of the **West Mojave Plan and HCP** (see attached Power point presentation). The purpose of these plans is to facilitate conservation of the desert (especially the desert tortoise and Mojave ground squirrel) and streamline the compliance/permitting process. Bill proposed establishing a formal relationship between the Plan's proposed Joint Powers Authority (JPA) and the DMG to facilitate implementation and coordination of desert tortoise recovery actions.
10. **Caltrans Rest Area Exhibits.** James Woolsey, NPS, reported that an interagency group was actively working with Caltrans to develop interpretive exhibits at Caltrans rest stops throughout the desert (attached). The Valley Wells Rest Stop will be renovated next year and other rest stops are slated for restoration in the near future. *James request \$20k to hire a contractor to design the rest stop exhibits. MOJA committed \$3K; no other contributions were offered.* (In a subsequent meeting, NPS-MOJA, BLM and the County each committed \$3.3K and Caltrans agreed to seek the remaining \$10K).
11. **Mojave River Initiatives:** Larry La Pre summarized the role/importance of the Mojave River in the West Mojave Plan/HCP (attached). Val Page described the activities of the Mojave Weed Management Area to eradicate tamarisk and develop a comprehensive plan for tamarisk removal along the Mojave from its headwaters to Barstow (slide show is attached). Sue Wainscott presented The Nature Conservancy's preliminary assessment of issues and opportunities related to the Mojave (slide show is attached). TNC is still undecided as to what role they will play on the Mojave River.
12. Bob Williams reported that the **DT Recovery Plan Assessment Report** should be completed by March. The Desert Tortoise (DT) MOG would be meeting on March 24 in Las Vegas to discuss the report. All managers were encouraged to attend the MOG meeting.
13. John Hamill summarized comments received on the Agency review of **DT Recovery Action Program/MOA**
 - DOD is unwilling to sign the MOA.
 - Cal State Parks and BLM have indicated they will sign the MOA.
 - CDFG Regional staff support the DTRAP and MOA—the documents are now undergoing broader review within the Department.
 - No comment/position was provided by NPS.
 - GS (BRD) comments on the DTRAP were supportive, but they did not take a position on the MOA.
 - The DOI Solicitor recommended changing the MOA/DTRAP to clarify that the program will be (1) consistent with and does not abrogate the DT Recovery Plan

and approved agency land management plans, and (2) modified as needed to conform with the revised Recovery Plan.

- FWS supports the changes proposed by the Solicitor and expressed concerns about recommendations in the DTRAP related to headstarting, disease, and translocation (FWS is preparing specific comments/recommendations)

Hamill reported that the DOI regional managers agreed to move forward with the DT Recovery Action Program and MOA. They would still like to have CDFG and State Parks sign the MOA. If CDFG is unable to commit at this time, they would like to move ahead and add CDFG as a signatory at a later date. Hamill will revise the DTRAP and send it out for a 30-45 day public/stakeholder review during the week of Jan 19. During the review period, Hamill will meet with interested stakeholders to identify concerns. There was recognition that funding to implement the DTRAP is limited. The Regional Managers will participate in congressional/DOI outreach effort after the MOA is signed to build political and funding support for the effort. NPS noted that a proposal that would fund the Public Education and Outreach part of the Program is awaiting approval by the Office of the Secretary.

- 14. Proposed DT Science Work Group** - Bill Boarman reported the findings of the ad hoc group assigned to develop a charter for and identify the responsibilities of a proposed DT Science Work Group (attached). The ad hoc group recommended hiring a post doc student to provide staff support to the Work Group, which they felt would be critical to the effective operation of the Group. The estimated cost would be \$50-80K. Hamill indicated that Redlands was interested in participating in the Work Group and possibly providing GIS support. Bob Williams indicated that a standing Science Team may be organized to address range-wide issues. *No funding was identified to provide the recommended staff support. The DMG decided to defer forming the Work Group until reviewing the DT Recovery Plan Assessment Committee report.*
- 15. Data Management Agreement:** Bob Williams reported that FWS had established a DT Data Management Committee consisting of FWS, Redlands, UNR and MDEP. Their current focus is on developing a data management protocol for line distance sampling. *Bob agreed to develop a draft data management MOU to establish a DT data repository for consideration at the next DMG meeting.*
- 16. Raven Management Environmental Assessment (EA):** Carl Benz reported that Amy Fesnock (NPS) will be the lead for the EA, under direction from FWS. Details of her assignment still need to be worked out with NPS, but he intends to pull together the EA team in the next 30-45 days to begin the process. An important aspect will be determining how best to do outreach especially with animal rights groups. *All parties intend to sign the MOU to participate in development of the EA.*
- 17. DT Monitoring FY 04 Plans:** Bob Williams reported that line distance sampling in FY 04 will be subject to availability of funds; if funding is insufficient then monitoring will be deferred. *Phil Medica will finalize procedures/protocols by end of*

Jan; agency funding commitments are needed by end of January. FWS will provide the FY 01-03 annual reports by the next DMG meeting.

18. **Effectiveness Monitoring Project:** Bill Boarman reported that over 400 references were reviewed; 70 are useful. 11 documents relate to grazing; 19 to OHV use; 5 to fencing. *The draft report should be out by the end of February.*
19. **Public Comment:** Eddie Phillips commented that current scientific studies are self serving and not producing useable results; he objects to lands being closed while additional studies occur; there needs to be a priority on conducting studies that will yield results related to land closure. Eddie also asked if there are there estimates of illegal collection of DT along tortoise fences. John Stewart indicated that the recreation community would like to participate on the DT science work group and other aspects of the recovery effort. Bob Williams noted he is soliciting ideas on how to best engage stakeholder in recovery planning process. Chris Spofera reiterated his comment that the agencies should do a better job of outreach to OHV interests. One commenter recommended that Bill Boarman should review the testimony of Dr. Burkhart regarding grazing. There were also questions raised about the differences between raven and burro management. Eddie Phillip wanted to know why stakeholders did not have a seat at the table.
20. **Next DMG meetings:**
 - April 21-22, 2004, 29 Palms, CA Host: Joshua Tree NP and MCAGCC
 - July 21-22, 2004 Ventura, CA, Theme to be determined.
21. Executive Session
 - a. **Stakeholder participation.** Bob Wood expressed concern that stakeholder attendance at the meetings was stifling candid and open discussions among DMG members. While there were a variety of points of view expressed, the majority of the managers agreed with Bob's assessment. The DMG discussed options for providing stakeholders involvement/input in a way that did not stifle communication among the managers.
 - Invite stakeholders only to the first day of the meeting, where informational briefings would be presented.
 - Hold special stakeholder meetings periodically in lieu of inviting stakeholders to regular DMG meetings.
 - Invite stakeholders to a 2-3 hour session on the afternoon of the first day and to the DMG social event.
 - Have stakeholders identify issues before the meeting so the DMG would be better prepared to address the issues.
 - Develop "information/fact sheets" on various topics of interest to the stakeholders.
 - Ask the stakeholders for their ideas for how to best provide input.
 - Use the BLM/NPS advisory committee to allow for stakeholder input.
 - Set parameters or ground rules on stakeholder participation.

- No consensus was reached. The Managers left it up to Curt Sauer and Maj Aytes to determine the best way to provide for stakeholder participation at the next meeting.*
- b. **FY 03 Accomplishments.** Hamill reviewed the FY 03 accomplishments of the DMG (attached). *The Managers recommended adding several other accomplishments including, holding the DMG meeting that addressed cultural resources stakeholder participation/outreach, and the Coachella Valley Weed Management Area*
 - c. **FY 04 Work Plan.** *The DMG reviewed and approved the FY 04 Work Plan and budget (attached). Funding commitments are summarized on Table 1. Hamill agreed to print and distribute the Work Plan*

22. Roundtable reports

- a. Jones (CDFG) – the state has been petitioned to list the burrowing owl.
- b. Holman (FWS) – the BO for Ft Irwin Expansion should be completed by mid February. Tim Thomas is retiring –the Barstow office will be closed following his departure. FWS has been petitioned to list the desert synoptera.
- c. Martin (MOJA)—Larry Harris has been hired as the Deputy Superintendent for Mojave.
- d. Villalobos (BLM) – BLM is evaluating proposal for new wind farm near Techachapi
- e. Reynolds (DEVA) – NPS is working on water issues in the Amargosa and with BLM on the Surprise Canyon EIS. The Timbisha Shoshone tribal council is back in operation
- f. Wood (EAFB) – Funding for the environmental program has been restored. Working on BRAC review. His office is undergoing reorganization.
- g. Hansen (BLM) – Larry Foreman and Tim Read retired; Jim Kenna has taken a permanent job in Washington DC. Needles Field manager is still vacant. She hopes to fill all field manager positions by next DMG meeting.
- h. Scott Jackson (GS) – Todd Esque is the GS coordinator for DT and the BRD representative to RVDE; GS has hired a new amphibian biologist in San Diego and a large mammal biologist in Las Vegas.