



**Summary  
DMG Meeting  
12 – 13 January, 2005  
Borrego Springs, CA**

1. The meeting agenda and list of attendees are attached (attachment 1 and 2, respectively). The first day of the meeting was open to stakeholder attendance. *Major conclusions and action items are italicized.*
2. **Day 1 – 12 January, 2005**
  - 2.1. **Introduction and Administration** – Jim Dice, on behalf of Matt Fuzie and Anza Barrego State Park, welcomed all to the meeting. He provided a brief administrative/logistical overview of support available to participants during the course of the meeting.
  - 2.2. **Colorado Desert State Parks Overview** – Jim Dice provided an overview outlining the mission of the Colorado Desert State Parks. He focused specifically on the Anza Borrego Institute, an education, interpretation, and research non-profit partner with the park and the UC Davis wildlife health center.
  - 2.3. **Habitat Restoration**
    - 2.3.1. **San Felipe Creek/Carrizo Creek/San Sebastian Marsh coordinated restoration project** (Jim Dice) – The goal of this 700,000 acre project involving two counties is to control exotic vegetation (primarily tamarisk), remove grazing, consolidate land ownership, and protect habitat for sensitive species. *A Memorandum of Understanding (MOU) among several DMG partners (State Parks, BLM, CDFG, GS, FWS) and others outlining agreed upon actions is currently being circulated and needs two remaining signatures. The MOU is expected to be completely signed by the end of January 2005.*
    - 2.3.2. **Riparian Challenge Strategy** (Russell Scofield) – A table outlining priority watersheds to be restored, prioritization criteria, and the estimated cost for restoration was distributed to Managers. Meetings with several potential funding entities were very positive. *Prospective funding sources*

*agreed with the watershed planning approach and recommended the DMG develop a more detailed funding proposal with a monitoring plan to track the results/effects of actions taken. Russell is to send complete copies of all Riparian Challenge documents to MDEP for posting on the DMG website.*

- 2.3.3. **Amargosa River Project** (John Hamill) – BLM, FWS and TNC are working with private land owners to develop tamarisk management plans for their lands. Additionally, the group is assisting private land owners in obtaining grant funding to implement these management plans on their properties.
- 2.4. **Low Desert Weed Management Area** (Russell Scofield) – *The Low Desert Resource Conservation District has volunteered to be the lead agency for establishing this weed management area. The California Food and Agriculture Department and the Resource Conservation District will meet before the end of January to start assembling participants for the group.*
- 2.5. **Wilderness Workshops** (John Hamill) – Handouts describing the agenda, dates and locations of workshops, and anticipated number of attendees at each site were distributed to Managers. The agenda was reviewed briefly. *The following updates on number of attendees were provided: Mojave National Preserve – 25 personnel; Ridgecrest BLM – 12 personnel; DOD in Barstow – 8 personnel. Managers were requested to provide the DMG Coordinators with any additional changes.*
- 2.6. **Wind Generation Threats to Mojave Desert State Parks** (Craig Mattson, Russ Dingman) – A presentation was provided Managers outlining the threat to the Mojave Poppy Reserve from a proposed wind generation project. Mojave Desert State Parks has just begun their review of the project. The project proposes building 130 wind generation units along the boundary of the Poppy Reserve. There are no NEPA documents available for the project at this time. Mojave Desert State Parks is working closely with military installations to determine if there are any impacts to airspace as a result of the project.
- 2.7. **Mojave Desert Science Symposium** - Deborah Hughson and Bob Webb provided an overview of the four themes of the symposium. Comments focused on major points/take home messages for Managers. The symposium organizing committee intends to publish a book containing the proceedings of the event. *The presenters recommended holding a Mojave Desert Science Symposium every 3 to 5 years. They further recommended it be added as a DMG goal. The committee has already started development of the next event. The Managers recommended focusing the next symposium on water issues in the desert. The committee solicited input on additional focus areas from the Managers. Several Managers stated water was such a large issue that perhaps it needed its own workshop. The workshop would include water policy as well as water*

*resources. State and local jurisdictions should be included in the workshop. Managers recommended the DMG explore the possibility of co-sponsoring such an event with other water decision making agencies.*

- 2.8. **FY05 Desert Tortoise Line Distance Sampling (LDS) Monitoring** (Bob Williams, Roy Averill-Murray, Bridgette Hagerty) – Funds are available to implement LDS monitoring at the same level as FY 04. Data collection changes will occur based on recommendations contained in the Desert Tortoise Recovery Plan Assessment Committee report. Additional information will be collected on invasive species, human impacts, roads, and predator observations (raven, canid). This additional data will provide better insight into the effects of these impacts on tortoise populations. FWS will seek permission to conduct blood sampling, using the toenail clipping method, on all federal and state lands. This procedure is approved by Veterinarians in Nevada and by the Univ. of Nevada, Reno Institutional Animal Care and Use Committee. Managers had numerous questions for FWS representatives concerning the toenail clipping method for drawing blood from desert tortoises. *The Managers requested a peer review of the toenail clipping method by veterinarians and biologists in California based on concerns voiced with this procedure during the FY04 field season. FWS stated all future permits for collecting blood from desert tortoise for genetics purposes will only be approved for toenail clipping. Methods, other than toenail clipping, used to extract blood from desert tortoises for other research purposes will be reviewed on a case by case basis.*

2.9. **Stakeholder Comments**

2.9.1. **Gerry Hillier (Quad State Coalition)**

- 2.9.1.1. Renewable energy is a tough issue. Needs to be approached with an open mind
- 2.9.1.2. Mojave Desert Science Symposium – interested in the question about the lack of manager attendance at the symposium. There were a lot of scientists talking to each other. Whatever is done in the future, as far as additional symposia, needs a commitment from management to attend and participate.
- 2.9.1.3. Science in the desert includes more than restoration. The broader array of desert issues needs to be looked at for comprehensive problem solving.
- 2.9.1.4. Mr. Hillier encouraged contact with CSUs to incorporate a broader array of scientists.
- 2.9.1.5. Mr. Hillier asked what the source of funding is for Dr. Tracy's lab. The response is that it is resourced through the Clark County Nevada HCP.
- 2.9.1.6. Asked what the scope of genetic work was. He was told it encompassed all states included in the range of the desert tortoise.
- 2.9.1.7. Asked if FWS is using blood for mycoplasma research and if they are researching for more than one mycoplasma. He was told they are using blood for mycoplasma research. They are aware of one

mycoplasma at the moment but are not sure whether sufficient blood was taken for research into other mycoplasma.

2.9.1.8. Stated he received a letter from USFWS indicating the DTRPAC looked at DPS's and recovery units. He stated Quad State Coalition believes the more important focus to be on disease research and not on population segmentation.

**2.9.2. John Stewart (CA 4 Wheel Drive Association)**

2.9.2.1. Asked whether the Mojave Desert Science Symposium presentations were available. He was told efforts are underway to make them accessible via the DMG website.

2.9.2.2. Asked if the date, time, and place for desert tortoise LDS training was set yet. He was told it will be in March but specific dates and locations had not yet been determined.

2.9.2.3. Stated he would like to see future science symposia include discussions on the historic aspects of human occupation of the desert over time, the impacts of past uses on the desert, and how we can keep past history intact.

2.9.2.4. Stated the withdrawal of additional lands to establish permanent study plots may be a concern to OHV user groups.

**2.9.3. Chris Spofera (San Diego Off Road Coalition)**

2.9.3.1. Stated he was encouraged by USFWS report on desert tortoise blood sampling. He noticed sampling was focused on larger tortoises. Stated he would like to see work done on smaller tortoises as well.

2.9.3.2. Stated he enjoyed the Mojave Desert Science Symposium. He is also interested in past human uses of the desert.

2.9.3.3. In regards to renewable energy issues, he stated land managers needed to help renewable energy contractors by letting them know areas they can build project in rather than only telling them where they can not. This could relieve future conflict in regards to these types of projects.

**2.10. County Government Participation in the DMG (Gerry Hillier)**

2.10.1. Mr. Hillier introduced this segment of the agenda by stating he has routinely attended DMG meetings on behalf of the Quad State Coalition, an organization of counties in different states. He reports back to them on information presented at DMG meetings. As a result, several counties have expressed an interest to become DMG members on their own. Mr. Hillier stated that Supervisor Leimgruber from Imperial County was present at the meeting earlier and wanted to speak to the Managers but was unfortunately called away on urgent business. Mr. Hillier introduced Supervisor McQuiston from Kern County.

2.10.2. Kern County Supervisor McQuiston – Stated he was looking for opportunities to create new partnerships and that he supported the mission of the DMG. He stated Counties are government agencies that have jurisdictional responsibilities and inherent governmental powers. Many DMG agencies, such as DOD and BLM, already actively work together with

local governments to address common issues such as encroachment. For these reasons and others, he feels counties would make good members of the DMG. He also believes that allowing the counties to join the DMG is consistent with DOD, DOI and State policy and directives. He indicated that, if approved, his county would appoint a County Supervisor to serve on the DMG. *The Managers thanked Supervisor McQuiston for his remarks and indicated they would consider the counties request during the business meeting on the following day.*

## 2.11. Desert Tortoise Recovery Actions

2.11.1. **Desert Tortoise Education and Outreach Plan** (Joe Zarki) – Joshua Tree National Park (JTNP) is in the process of hiring an Outreach Coordinator using funding provided by Cal Fish and Game and the Cal OHV Commission. A draft job description for the position is in review. It is time to start developing a workgroup to begin implementing the work plan for the program. The Coordinator will be based in JTNP and will work through the work group to implement the program. *Managers thanked John Hamill and Joe Zarki for their persistent efforts in getting this program off the ground. Managers concurred with the recommendations to recruit and fill the Outreach position and to establish the DT Outreach and Education Work Group (see attached).*

2.11.2. **Feral Dog Management Plan Update** (Glenn Black, CDFG) – The group has met on three occasions to date. The next meeting is scheduled for 25 January, 2005. Glenn discussed the feral dog incident letter and report form developed by the work group. He has received 9 reports to date and will continue to collect information through August 2005. Kern and Los Angeles counties have agreed to cooperate and will collect data for the project. *He requested that the form be converted to .pdf format by MDEP to allow people to fill complete it and respond digitally online. He further requested continued DMG agency and Manager support. The Managers recommended that the DMG issue news releases articulating the work of the group and the desire for information from the public. The work group will begin working on an outline for a feral dog strategy. Requested all DMG agencies provide any policies they have that may address this issue. This includes any actions agencies are or are not taking in regard to feral dog problems.*

2.11.3. **Raven Management Work Group** (Carl Benz, Judy Hohman) – The group met to discuss scoping comments received from the public. As a result of comments received, the group decided to add a West Nile virus section to the document. EA writing assignments have been distributed. A first draft is due early spring 2005.

## 2.12. Coordinated Natural Resource Monitoring (John Hamill)

2.12.1. The vital signs workshop was held with a number of “vital signs” selected. A copy of the workshop report is available via the DMG website. The next step in the process is to define a model of the key elements in the NPS vital

signs plan. The coordinated monitoring work group will review the model and identify those pieces that would be most useful to DMG agencies.

- 2.12.2. The Coordinated monitoring work group met in October 2004 (see attached report). The group had five recommendations for Managers which will be included in the DMG 5 Year Plan.

### 2.13. Stakeholder Comments

- 2.13.1. **Jim McGarvey (Off Road Business Association)** – The DMG may have received some input from the OHV community on feral dog issues. They would not have identified as OHV personnel because they submitted input as individual citizens. His group will distribute the feral dog incident forms at an upcoming OHV expo and solicit input.
- 2.13.2. **John Stewart (CA 4 Wheel Drive Association)** – Stated he was not aware of a feral dog issue. What he sees are issues with coyotes. OHV people in his group see a coyote problem not a dog problem. He stated it is nice to monitor the health of the environment. However, it would be better to monitor how many people visit the desert and what impacts they are having. He stated the DMG's Desert Tortoise Information and Education program is supported by his group. They are also trying to educate users and his group is willing to offer their services to help further educate users. John Hamill thanked John for his support of the DT Information and Education Project at the OHV Commission hearing.
- 2.13.3. **Chris Spofera (San Diego Off Road Coalition)** – In regard to feral dog incident report, he recommended BLM post copies of the form in their information kiosks or to report feral dog encounters to the nearest BLM office. He offered the DMG booth space at the upcoming OHV expo to provide information to OHV users on DMG initiatives.
- 2.13.4. **Gerry Hillier (Quad State Coalition)** – Stated he sent out the feral dog incident forms to his organizations and to county animal control agencies. In terms of public outreach, he recommended the DMG link to county websites as they are heavily used by citizens. He asked for the status of the FY 05 LDS effort and was told that it is moving forward and will be executed in full in Nevada. There is also some funding for implementation in California. FWS will assess the level of funding to determine if sufficient funds exist to conducting monitoring outside of established monitoring strata.

### 2.14. PACRAT Report (Bob Bryson)

- 2.14.1. Announced the Millennium Conference proceedings were back from the printer and available for distribution. Asked the Managers agree to provide DMG support to the upcoming Three Corners Cultural Resources conference. Stated there will be no DMG sponsored cultural resources training for FY 05. Asked Managers to support a low cost, two day workshop focused on methods, techniques, and recent events in the cultural resources field. *The Managers agreed to provide DMG support to the*

*Three Corners Conference and agreed to support their cultural resource specialists' attendance at a two day workshop.*

- 2.14.2. MDHRGIS (Eric Allison, CA SHPO) – The CA SHPO is committed to providing the DMG a useful tool. The SHPO is investigating the use of Optical Character Recognition and physical data entry for inputting key system required data. The system will also continue to use .pdf format documents to connect data. A meeting was held on 18 Jan. 2005 to review and discuss a scope of work for system development. Contract award for development of the database and user interface is anticipated for February 2005. *PACRAT members agreed to support the delivered system by augmenting and updating it with new information. PACRAT will develop an implementation plan to accomplish this task.*
  
  - 2.15. **Burro Management Update** (Hector Villalobos) - Reported on FY 04 accomplishments and plans for FY 05 (attached). The burro removal target for FY 05 is 500 burros. BLM, in cooperation with CA Fish and Game, will continue to radio track collared burros to determine movement patterns. BLM is also continuing to collect vegetation data to assess burro grazing impacts. The Needles BLM office is constructing water troughs in the desert in an attempt to keep burros away from the Colorado River. Congress passed an amendment to the Wild Horse and Burro Act that provides for the sale of some wild horses, 10 years old and older, that they have tried to adopt 3 times or more. This may facilitate speedy disposal of these animals from BLM corrals.
  
  - 2.16. **DMG Meeting Change** (John Hamill) – The next DMG meeting was scheduled for 6 and 7 April in Ridgecrest. Conflicts require the meeting to be moved. It was rescheduled for 27 and 28 April and is still in Ridgecrest. The DMG's summer meeting was scheduled for 20 and 21 July in Ventura.
3. **Day 2, 13 January 2005**
- 3.1. **Follow-up from Day 1 Discussions**
    - 3.1.1. **Tortoise Blood Sampling** (Glenn Black) - CDFG felt the desert tortoise blood sampling discussion was not conclusive – consensus was not achieved; some agency biologists still do not agree with the method. CDFG recommended FWS arrange a field trip, for agency biologists not comfortable with the toe nail clipping method for drawing blood, to demonstrate the process and allow them to ask questions. *No available date could be arranged for such a field trip prior to March 2005 which is too late for the 2005 LDS sampling season. USGS agreed to take the published protocols for this procedure to the Univ. of California, Davis Animal Care and Use Committee for their review and approval. CDFG will do the same with its state level veterinarians. MCAGCC requested to see the published results of the review by both California entities and asked if it would be possible for the amount of blood drawn to accommodate all blood testing requirements so that tortoises would have to*

*be sampled only once for this purpose. FWS agreed to provide CDFG and USGS with the amount of blood they are drawing and identify the specific purposes and tests the blood is used for. Any agencies with questions on this protocol are requested to send their questions/concerns to FWS, Reno ASAP.*

3.2. **Ad Hoc Desert Tortoise Work Group** (John Hamill)

- 3.2.1. FWS stated DTRO immediate priorities were to insure everything in is place for FY 05 LDS, produce a report for the last 4 years of LDS, and hire 1 biologist for the FWS Reno office; hire 1 biologist for the FWS Ventura office; hire 1 biologist for the FWS Las Vegas office. Additionally, the DTRO will assemble a Science Advisory Committee (SAC). Duties and responsibilities of the SAC will be per Steve Thompson's 23 December, 2004, re: Establishment of Desert Tortoise Recovery Office. Roy Averill-Murray will serve as the Science Committee Chair. The group will consist of approximately 6 scientists, in applicable fields, from government and academic institutions. The first topic of review for the group will be the recovery criteria stated in the recovery plan. Criteria will be reviewed in terms of precision of available techniques for determining species recovery.
- 3.2.2. FWS recommended approval/establishment of a DMG work group to start working with the DTRO to develop step down implementation plans for recovery actions in each California desert tortoise recovery unit. Manager discussion focused on whether the DMG should establish two groups – one for the West Mojave and one for the remainder of the Mojave in California. Questions were raised as to whether agencies could logistically support two separate work groups. Most agencies stated they would send the same personnel to both groups should the DMG decide to establish two group. ***DMG Managers agreed to establish one Desert Tortoise Recovery Implementation Planning Work Group. Work group meetings would be scheduled by recovery unit. Only those agencies affected in a given recovery unit need send representation to the meeting where their recovery unit is discussed.***
- 3.2.3. Responsibilities of the work group will include: establishment of Desert Tortoise recovery research and monitoring priorities; assess/review progress; evaluate effectiveness of recovery actions in concert with/within the priorities and focus established by the DTRO. ***Managers agreed that the Desert Tortoise Recovery Implementation Planning Work Group would be responsible for developing recovery action priorities. The DTRO will develop an interface with stakeholders to share priorities developed, obtain stakeholder comments, and develop appropriate plan revisions. FWS agreed to develop the stakeholder interface process, document it in writing, and distribute to managers for review and approval. Work group will designate its own chair. Each DMG member agency may send one person to participate in the work group. USGS will supply 1 desert tortoise scientist to the work group. DMG member agencies will forward their respective participants in the work group to the DMG coordinators NLT 14***

*Feb. 2004. Glenn Black (CDFG), Mary Martin (NPS), and an as yet unnamed BLM Manager will participate as Manager representatives to the work group.*

3.2.4. Role of the DMG in DT Recovery Planning and Implementation. *The managers agreed that the role of the DMG in planning and implementation of DT recovery actions in California was to:*

- *Work in concert with FWS to establish DT recovery, research, and monitoring priorities, assess/review progress, and evaluate effectiveness of recovery actions*
- *Coordinate implementation of multi -jurisdictional actions and/or actions that have a broad geographic scope*
- *Pursue funding opportunities/partnerships*
- *Coordinate agency budget requests and expenditures*

3.2.5 Land management Plan Evaluation: Thomas Leuteritz described the evaluation of agency land management plans that is being conducted by the University of Redlands to support the development of recovery action plans for the recovery units in California. *No concerns or issues were identified by the DMG*

3.3. **Recent USFWS court ruling on the definition of adverse modification to critical habitat update** (Judy Hohman, Carl Benz FWS) – FWS requested the judge refrain from setting the definition of adverse modification. The judge agreed with the FWS position. FWS further requested the judge not invalidate the entire biological opinion under consideration. The judge did not agree with FWS. The Center for Biodiversity also wanted the judge to vacate the take statement associated with the BO. The judge disagreed and stated the take statement was not part of the court's review. FWS is currently re-writing the BO in question. *At this time, as a result of the court's decisions, FWS plans on reviewing only those BOs as directed by the court. FWS is reviewing the development of a working definition for adverse modification. In the interim, FWS is using the statutory definition of adverse modification rather than the regulatory definition.*

3.4. **DMG Action reference County government requests for DMG membership** (John Hamill) – *Managers approved the participation of all California Desert counties as members in the DMG. The Managers further agreed that the representative from a participating county will be an elected supervisor. The Managers agreed to send invitation letters to those counties that have not yet expressed an interest in joining the DMG.*

3.5. **DMG 5 Year Plan review and update** (John Hamill)

3.5.1. FY 04 performance/accomplishments – *Following review of the FY04 accomplishments the Managers requested PACRAT accomplishments, Amargosa River Summit accomplishments, and rest area interpretive display accomplishments are added to the report. The Managers agreed to*

*submit additional comments to the DOD/DOI Coordinators NLT 14 February, 2005(refer to attached draft of FY 04 Accomplishments.*

- 3.5.2. Proposed goal revisions for FY 05 – Following review and discussion of the FY 04 goals, *Managers provided the following recommendations:*
  - 3.5.2.1. *Change date on Goal 1, Task 3 to FY06*
  - 3.5.2.2. *Defer Goal 1, Task 8. Managers recommended the actions in Task 8 be combined, to the extent possible, with Task 2 under Goal 1.*
  - 3.5.2.3. *The Managers voiced no support for Goal 8, Task 8.*
  - 3.5.2.4. *The Managers agreed not to send the draft 5 Year Plan for review by non DMG members. In future years the DMG will solicit stakeholder input for consideration in developing the draft 5 year plan. Managers further agreed to provide any additional comments to the DOD/DOI Coordinators NLT 14 February, 2005.*
  
- 3.6. **National Scenic Byways and Recreation Trails** (John Hamill) – Pat Flanagan from the 29 Palms Chamber of Commerce approached the DMG to determine level of interest in participating in a process to designate National Scenic Byways and Recreation Trails. This process affords some opportunities to fund advertisement and some minor construction associated with designation. Other efforts to designate Scenic Byways and Recreation Trails have been chaired by respective counties. *Managers agreed to assess the feasibility and value added of this process. The Managers also agreed to wait until the new county members were onboard and to check with Caltrans (a necessary participant) on their level of interest before determining whether it is appropriate for the DMG to participate in this process.*
  
- 3.7. **DMG Charter and MOU** (John Hamill) – The Managers briefly reviewed the DMG charter and MOU. *The managers did not identify any major issues or concerns with the current Charter and MOU; some minor changes were discussed/recommended. The Managers agreed to remove any reference to voting from the charter. and update the DMG members list. Those annexes no longer applicable (inactive work groups) will be removed from the document during the update process. The DOD/DOI Coordinators agreed to revise the charter and adjust it for currency then send it to the Managers for review. The Managers agreed to review the charter and MOU to determine if additional revisions are necessary to the existing language in the documents. Managers agreed to provide comments to the DOD/DOI Coordinators NLT 1 February, 2005.*
  
- 3.8. **DMG Executive Coordination Meeting** (John Hamill) – The last DMG Executive Coordination meeting was held in 2002. *The Managers agreed to hold a DMG Executive Coordination meeting in May, 2005. Subsequent coordination resulted in designation of 24 May, 2005 as the selected date for the meeting. The meeting will be held in Ontario, CA. The DOD/DOI Coordinators requested input from the Managers on who from their respective agencies will attend.*

- 3.9. *The next DMG meeting will be held in Ridgecrest CA. 27 – 28 April, 2005. BLM Ridgecrest and China Lake Naval Air Weapons Station will co-host the meeting.*
- 3.10. *The DMG summer meeting is currently scheduled for 20 – 21 July, 2005 in Ventura, CA. FWS will serve as host and Chair the meeting.*