



Draft
Meeting Summary
28 – 29 February, 2008
Borrego Springs, CA.

Summary of Action Items

1. Provide Conservation Land Acquisition Work Group charter comments to Russell Scofield no later than 15 March, 2008.
2. Early registration for the DMG co-sponsored Climate Change Workshop ends March 17. Please register at www.dmg.gov/climate

Thursday, 28 February, 2008

1. **Introduction to Colorado Desert District, California State Parks.** Mike Wells, Superintendent, Colorado Desert District, California State Parks welcomed all to the meeting and provided Managers with an overview of issues experienced in each of his districts regions (see presentation titled [Colorado Desert District State Parks 022808](#)). Discussion focused on the following sectors and issues:
 - a. Anza Borrego State Park
 1. trespass
 2. non-mission uses such as the Sunrise Powerlink project
 3. natural and cultural resource protection
 4. recreation management
 - b. Montane sector (Cuyamaca Rancho and Palomar Mountain State Parks)
 1. 2002 – 2007 wildfire impacts
 2. restoration strategy development
 3. post-fire discovery of previously unknown cultural and historic sites
 - c. Salton Sea region (Salton Sea and Picacho State Recreation Areas)
 1. cost and time span for recovery of the Salton Sea
 2. future configuration of the Salton Sea
 3. impacts to strategic habitat for pacific coast birds
 4. tamarisk impacts to water resources
 5. acquisition and restoration of Indio Palms
2. **Big Horn Sheep and Mountain Lion populations in the Colorado Desert.** Mark Jorgenson, Superintendent of Anza Borrego State Park, provided Managers an overview of the status of the Federally Endangered Peninsular Range Big Horn Sheep found in the park.
 - a. The park has monitored Big Horn Sheep populations for the past 37 years.

- b. The primary method used by the park for conducting a census of Big Horn Sheep populations is water monitoring. However, the park does radio collar and GPS collar Big Horns for specific studies.
 - c. The primary predator of Big Horn Sheep is the Mountain Lion.
 - d. Mountain Lion populations are growing thereby increasing the threat to Big Horn Sheep.
 - e. Additional threats to Big Horn in the park include:
 - 1. Feral cattle, horse and goat impacts to riparian resources. Domestic Sheep spread disease Big Horn Sheep have no immunity to. All feral animals have been removed from park lands.
 - 2. Loss of water sources due to invasive plant infestation – the park has removed over 150 miles of tamarisk growth along traditional water courses. The park has installed artificial water sources, a very controversial issue, to help recover Big Horn Sheep populations.
 - 3. Habitat fragmentation – with increasing urban expansion surrounding the park traditional movement corridors are severed potentially creating sub-populations cut-off from main Big Horn Sheep populations. Work with surrounding communities is helping to prevent this from occurring.
3. **Mojave National Preserve Wildlife Artificial Water Source Study.**
 Debra Hughson and Neal Darby from Mojave National Preserve presented an overview of their study to assess the impacts of artificial water sources on Mule Deer populations in the preserve (see presentation titled [Mojave NP guzzlers and mule deer study 022808](#)).
- a. The area of the Preserve previously contained 133 small game and 6 big game guzzlers.
 - b. There are 183 seeps and springs in the Preserve.
 - c. The study will radio collar and tag deer in several study areas.
 - d. Some study areas will contain maintained artificial water sources; other study areas will contain no artificial water sources.
 - e. A baseline health assessment of deer in the study areas was conducted.
 - f. Long term monitoring will occur to determine use of study areas with and without artificial water sources by deer populations as well as health of the resident populations.
4. **Colorado Desert Bioregional Plan.**
 Dave Van Cleve from The Nature Conservancy (TNC) and Esther Rubin from the Conservation Biology Institute provided Managers an overview of the TNC Sonoran Desert in California bioregional plan. The objective of the plan is to assess, define and prioritize conservation opportunities in the Sonoran Desert in California (see presentation titled [TNC Sonoran Desert Bioregional Plan 022808](#)). The general approach of the TNC effort is to:
- a. describe the conservation landscape
 - b. identify conservation needs
 - c. identify and prioritize conservation opportunities
- This will allow TNC to meet its goal in the region of promoting and maintaining the long-term ecological health of California's Sonoran Desert ecoregion. Dave and Esther requested that if managers in the study area have land use or land management GIS data that they are willing to share, please contact either dvancleve@tnc.org or esrubin@consbio.org.
5. **Desert Tortoise Update.**
- a. Roy Averill-Murray updated Managers on the status of the revised Desert Tortoise Recovery Plan. Roy stated he will submit the draft revised recovery plan document to the regional

FWS office by mid March 2008. Following review by the regional office Roy anticipates a federal register notice of availability for the plan to occur mid April 2008 with a final recovery plan document published by the end of June 2008. Roy hopes to start organizing the Regional Implementation Teams during the Recovery Plan's official public comment period.

- b. Linda Allison updated Managers on the status of the 2008 Desert Tortoise Line Distance Sampling (LDS) monitoring effort (see presentation titled [FWS DTRO monitoring update 022808](#)).
 1. 271 transects totaling 3252 kilometers were walked during 2007 LDS monitoring.
 2. 173 live tortoises encountered
 3. LDS Standard Operating Procedures document nearing completion
 4. Based on current funding it is anticipated only 200 transects will be walked in California in 2008 – a reduction of 71 transects from the last monitoring session

Friday, 29 February, 2008

1. Conservation Land Acquisition Ad Hoc Work Group report.

Russell Scofield, DOI DMG Coordinator, reviewed the draft work group charter. Following a short discussion Russell stated he would email the draft charter to all Managers for additional review. He requested Managers provide any additional comments to him no later than 15 March, 2008. Based on final input, Russell will create and distribute the final charter at the group's next meeting scheduled for 16 April, 2008 at the Mojave National Preserve.

2. Abandoned Mine Land Safety Initiatives.

Russell Scofield, DOI DMG Coordinator, updated Managers on efforts to streamline the compliance process for abandoned mine land site remediation, especially the efforts with the California State Historic Preservation Office to develop a template for Section 106 Consultation. Staff from participating DMG agencies conducted a conference call on 3 March to review the status of these initiatives. Russell scheduled a meeting for 1 April, 2008 for those involved/interested in these efforts. All attending participants are requested to come prepared to:

- a. discuss their agency current year AML projects
- b. discuss what AML work agencies can do internally and what needs to be contracted to vendors
- c. deconflict internal resource limitations.

Russell is discussing the feasibility of developing of an AML IDIQ contract with contracting office representatives. Joshua Tree National Park continues with their efforts to develop a regional strike team to address AML issues.

3. Mojave Ground Squirrel Update.

Judy Hohman, US Fish and Wildlife Service, informed Managers FWS recently went through litigation concerning its 90 day finding process. The court found FWS was not implementing the process properly. As a result FWS is currently reviewing all of its 90 day findings. The Mojave Ground Squirrel 90 day finding, previously at the DOI Regional Office of the Solicitor for review, was returned to the regional office for review in light of recent court rulings. This will delay publishing of the 90 day finding for the Mojave Ground Squirrel. It is unknown at this time how long this review process will take and if any changes to the current document will be necessary (see presentation titled [FWS MGS Petition Status 022808](#)).

4. **Raven Work Group Update.**

Judy Hohman, US Fish and Wildlife Service, provided Managers with an update on the status of the Raven Environmental Assessment. As a result of public comments FWS changed the preferred alternative to a phased approach of alternatives in the document. Review by the regional Solicitor's office recommended adding an alternative describing the phased approach. This was accomplished and the FONSI was sent to the FWS Region 8 office for signature. Signature of the document is anticipated to occur by 15 March, 2008. Once signed, documents will be posted to the Ventura Fish and Wildlife Service office website and copies of the documents will be sent to all commenters and all agencies (see [presentation titled FWS Raven EA Project 022808](#)).

5. **California Wilderness Legislation Update.**

Chris Roholt, Wilderness Coordinator for the BLM California Desert District, provided Managers with an overview of current wilderness legislation. Several wilderness bills have been introduced in Congress since 2003. The majority of these bills have been regional, county or congressional district in scope. Only one, the Thompson bill which affected northern California, has passed. There are several current/future initiatives (see [presentation titled Wilderness Legislation Update 022808](#)):

- a. S.493 and H.R. 460 (Sen. Boxer and Rep. Solis) are similar to bills presented in previous congresses. They are statewide in scope and would designate 63 FS, NPS and BLM wilderness areas/additions; adjust national park and Santa Rosa/San Jacinto Mtn. boundaries; designate 196 wild and scenic rivers. This legislation is currently in committee.
- b. Sen. Feinstein has not committed to submit wilderness legislation in the current congress; her staff is analyzing proposals as a possible follow-on to the California Desert Protection Act of 1994. These proposals could potentially affect DOI and DOD lands.
- c. H.R.3862 and S.2109 (Rep. Bono Mack and Sen. Boxer) is the only bill affecting the desert introduced since 2002 for which subcommittee hearings have been held. This legislation would create wilderness/additions to FS, BLM and NPS lands in Rep. Bono Mack's congressional district, in Riverside County.

6. **Global Climate Change Symposium.**

Russell Scofield, DOI DMG Coordinator, provided Managers with the status of the upcoming collaborative Global Climate Change workshop. To date 48 people have registered for the conference. Russell provided all Managers with a flyer with all pertinent workshop information. The workshop is scheduled for April 9 – 11, 2008 in Laughlin, NV. [Please register at http://www.dmg.gov/climate](http://www.dmg.gov/climate).

7. **Desert Tortoise Information and Education Work Group Update.**

Joe Zarki, Joshua Tree National Park, provided Managers with an update of ongoing DTIE Work Group projects.

- a. The work group received and signed a \$95,000 grant agreement with the OHV Commission. The grant will provide funds to continue established outreach projects in FY09 such as the *Tortoise Times* newsletter, Mojave Max Emergence Contest, exhibit and brochure development, and radio PSA's. The grant will also resource additional activities such as attending OHV events to foster desert tortoise awareness and distribute information.
- b. The Tortoise Outreach project has a current \$28,216 shortfall in our FY08 budget. We received \$64,784 from the CA OHV Commission Grant out of a request for \$93,000. These are funds needed to support the Tortoise Outreach Coordinator position and cover salary,

travel, vehicle lease, and basic supplies. Fort Irwin stated they will look into the potential for resourcing this funding shortfall.

- c. The work group is planning the design of a desert tortoise information panel that can be used by a variety of government agencies. The work group is asking for a representative from each agency to act as an information and design consultant on the project.
 - d. Clark County provided the work group with a Mojave Max DVD PSA. With their permission the work group edited the DVD for Southern California audiences. The DVD was sent to movie theaters in the Palmdale, Apple Valley, Victorville, Lancaster and El Centro target areas. The DVD was also sent to military installations (Ft. Irwin, Edwards AFB, Camp Pendleton, 29 Palms Marines Base) and local public television stations.
 - e. Six radio PSAs are in production and will be ready Friday February 29. Two radio news stories have also been developed (Headstarting and Mojave Max).
 - f. The Mojave Max Emergence Contest is ongoing. To date we have 236 entries.
 - g. The Third volume of the *Tortoise Times* newsletter has been published and copies are available. The work group is in the process of distributing the newsletter via .pdf file.
 - h. The work group is working on developing desert tortoise programs for this year's California Desert Nature Festival to meet our NFWF grant obligations. The California Desert Nature Festival will be held at The Living Desert in Palm Desert April 11-13. In conjunction with the California Desert Nature Festival the Living Desert will also be hosting an Earth Day event "Party for the Planet." The work group will conduct work shops on Saturday, 12 April - one will address the concerns and legalities surrounding desert tortoises and the other will be a Pet Vet question and answer session. During the event the work group will also host activities such as button making, puppet shows, coloring, and tortoise trunks in the Children's Discovery room. The work group is also working with the Low Desert California Turtle and Tortoise Club to assist with volunteers for the Festival.
8. **Stakeholder Input.**
Chris Spofera, San Diego Off-Road Coalition – Chris asked if the information panels discussed during the previous presentation would be similar in scope to those planned for California highway rest areas. He also requested that containers for flyers be attached to the information panels. Joe Zarki responded that this was a good idea and agreed to work with Chris to develop the panels and flyer holders.

DMG Executive Coordination Session

1. Alternative energy development.

Dennis Schramm, Superintendent, Mojave National Preserve mentioned during this discussion that Southern California Edison will do free energy assessments of government facilities. John King is the federal contact for Southern California Edison. He is located in Irwindale, CA. His phone number is 626-633-7167 and his email is john.king@sce.com. Anyone wanting information about rebates and incentives should contact John, or peruse their website at www.sce.com.

2. Laura Crane, The Nature Conservancy's Mojave Program Director introduced Julie Faulkner who provided a presentation on TNC's Energy by Design program. (see presentation titled [TNC Energy by Design 022908](#))
 - a. Energy by design has been used by BLM and industry in the Rockies to site off-site mitigation for oil and gas development
 - b. The principles of Energy by Design utilize TNC ecoregional planning to:

- a. avoid impacts to sensitive/conservation areas;
- b. minimize and restore impacts;
- c. maximize the conservation benefit for off-site mitigation.
- c. Julie outlined the process that TNC used to develop a strategy for off-site mitigation as an oil field in Wyoming. A similar approach could be used with the DMG's CLAWG.
- d. Discussion centered on how mitigation could include actions other than acquisition and the concern that modeling assumptions could affect outcomes.
- e. For more information contact Laura at lcrane@tnc.org or Julie at jfaulkner@tnc.org.

3. **DMG 5 Year Strategy discussion.**

Russell Scofield, DOI DMG Coordinator, walked Managers through each of the 14 goals in the DMG 5 Year Plan. For each goal, Russell asked Managers the following questions:

- a. Is the goal working?
- b. If not, why not.
- c. What can we do to fix it?

Results of the discussion concerning each goal are as follows:

- a. Goal 1 – goal 1 is working
- b. Goal 2 – goal 2 is working; discussion focused on integrating this effort with the Raven EA once published
- c. Goal 3 – The goal is still valid however, with revision of the Desert Tortoise recovery plan there is a need to conduct a detailed review of the tasks and objectives associated with this goal. Russell and Clarence will work with Dennis Schramm, Roy Averill-Murray and the DTRO staff to revise the tasks and objectives for this goal and present to Managers for approval at the May DMG meeting.
- d. Goal 4 – goal 4 is working
- e. Goal 5 – discussion focused on whether the PACRAT Work Group was still viable or whether it should be inactivated. The current Work Group chair will convene a work group meeting in mid April to determine if work group members see a need to continue meeting, what the potential tasks and objectives of the work group would be and to elect a new work group chair if the group desires to continue to remain active.
- f. Goal 6 – goal 6 is working
- g. Goal 7 – tasks A and D are working; tasks B and C have been slowed by the recent state budget issues; they continue to progress slowly.
- h. Goal 8 – goal 8 is working
- i. Goal 9 – tasks A and C are working; task B is deleted; task D is deleted
- j. Goal 10 – tasks A, B and D are working; task C is deleted and incorporated into task B
- k. Goal 11 – tasks A, C, D, E and F are working; task B is deleted
- l. Goal 12 – goal 12 is working
- m. Goal 13 – tasks A and C are working; task B is deleted
- n. Goal 14 – goal 14 is working

4. **Next meetings.**

- a. The next DMG meeting will be hosted by the Marine Corps Air Ground Combat Center, Twentynine Palms. Meeting dates are 28 – 29 May, 2008.
- b. The DMG summer meeting will be hosted by Camp Pendleton, 20 – 21 August, 2008 in Oceanside, California.

- c. The DMG winter meeting will be hosted by the USFWS Desert Tortoise Recovery Office, 19 – 20 November, 2008 in Primm, Nevada.