Summary
DMG Meeting
July 14-15, 2004
San Diego, CA

Note: The **meeting agenda** and **list of attendees** are attached (attachment 1 and 2, respectively). The first day of the meeting (through item 17 below) was open to stakeholder attendance. ***Major conclusions and action items are italicized.***

1. **Introduction and administration** (Mike Carr, USGS)
   Mike Carr welcomed the group and reviewed the stakeholder participation guidelines.

2. **USGS mission and activities in the Cal Desert** (Mike Carr, USGS)
   Mike provided an overview of the mission of GS and GS activities in the desert. He also distributed a handout showing GS' organization (attachment 3) and a list of GS contacts (attachment 4). An updated contact list is available via the web at: www.usgs.gov/div_contacts/. Wes Ward is responsible for GS' Geology program, the Southwest Strategy and the DMG.

3. **DMG Research Database**. Debra Hughson updated the group on the status of the DMG Research Inventory database (attachment 5). ***Debra encouraged the managers to have the contact persons that had not already done so to contact Eric Boerner to set up an administrators accounts. Agency contacts that have not contacted Dric include Judy Hohman (FWS), Dale Steel (CDFG), Chris Knauf (BLM-El Centro), Bob Parker (BLM-Ridgecrest), Charles Sulllivan (BLM-Barstow), and Brent Hsung (MCAGCC). Agency/Managers should also encourage/require researchers to enter data into the database.***

4. **Mojave Desert Science Symposium** Debra Hughson distributed an announcement and call for papers for the MDSS. ***She urged Managers to register by Oct 8 to get the discounted registration fee***. (Agencies can pay after October 8).

5. **Coordinated Natural Resources Monitoring**. Debra reported that NPS had its vital signs workshop last spring. Vital signs were broadly defined and a workshop report should be available soon. ***John Hamill will organize a small work group to evaluate report and discuss how to coordinate monitoring efforts and related data management systems in the desert.***

6. **Road Ecology study and Uplands Restoration Review**
   - Russ Scofield reported that Matt Brooks (USGS) will meet next Tuesday (July 20) with agency resource staff to discuss how to make Road Ecology study relevant to management needs (attachment 6).

   - Todd Esque reported that USGS was heading up a study to evaluate the costs and benefits of upland restoration efforts. Lesley DeFalco is currently compiling list of past and current work and will then focus of evaluating the cost/benefits of the work (attachment 6).

7. **Chromium Contamination along the Colorado River.** Peter Martin (USGS) reported the results of several USGS studies to evaluate Chromium Contamination along the Colorado River near Topock (attachment 7).

8. **Biogeographic Information Observation System-BIOS.** Tom Lupo (CDFG) provided a presentation on BIOS (attachment 8). Debbie Maxwell opined that the system would have broad application to monitoring and Habitat Conservation Plans in the desert. ***The Coordinated Monitoring work group (see 5 above) will evaluate the application of this system and provide recommendations for how the DMG may want to be in the effort.***

9. **DT Education and Information Program.** John Hamill reported that grant requests have been submitted to NFWF and the OHV commission for the DT Information and Education Program. The Commission and NFWF should make a decision in October 2004. John reported that the San Diego Off Road Coalition had formal withdraw its support for the effort. However, the Defenders of Wildlife have indicated a desire to partner with the DMG on the effort (attachment 9). ***The DMG supported the development of the partnership with the Defenders***.

10. **Feral Dog Management Plan**. Glenn Black reported that he organized a DMG feral dog work group to evaluate and develop management recommendations to address the impacts of feral or free roaming dogs of desert tortoise. The group was currently involved with interviewing people to document occurrences of free roaming dogs. The next meeting of the group will be July 27 in Barstow. Interested parties should contact Glenn Black.

11. **Translocation Plan/Activities** Todd Esque reported that he is heading up a work group that is develop in a plan for translocating approximately 1500 desert tortoises that will be displaced as a result of the expansion of FT Irwin (attachment 6). ***Todd said he was looking for input on how to identify areas where DT will be released. A draft plan should be available for review by the DMG by Sept 15.***

12. **DT Landscape Model.** Todd Esque reported on the status of the DT landscape model (attachment 6).

13. **Raven Management EA update**. Judy Hohman reported that the public scoping letter will be sent out Friday July 16 (copies are available at http://dmg.gov/documents/ravenmanagment.pdf). Public comments are due by Aug 16. The goal is to draft the EA by late September and then begin the ESA compliance process. A draft work plan and budget for implementing the raven management program will be developed in the late summer or early fall.

14. **Recovery Plan update**. Bob Williams reported that the final Recovery Plan Assessment Report should be available by August 1, 2004. FWS intends to establish a small science advisory committee and hire a contractor to write DT Recovery Plan and gather stakeholder input. Stakeholder meetings will be held at various locations in California. The FWS DT Coordinator position should be advertised in 2-3 weeks. The MOG should meet sometime this fall.

15. **Effectiveness of Recovery Actions** Bill Kristan, USGS consultant, provided a preliminary report on the findings of the literature review that evaluated the effectiveness of various actions taken to help recover the DT in the California deserts (attachment 10). In summary, the study was inconclusive—most of the studies did not provide information about whether the recovery actions were effective or ineffective.

16. **DMG Wilderness Training Class**. Hamill distributed a draft prospectus for a proposed introductory wilderness class (attachment 11) that would be taught by Chris Roholt, Paul Brink and a yet to be identified NPS instructor. BLM, NPS and the USFS expressed strong interest in the course. ***Mary Martin agreed to find a NPS person to help teach the class. BLM and NPS agreed to pay the travel costs for their instructors, respectively. Hamill will work with the instructors to agree on dates and locations. To minimize travel and make it convenient for staff to attend, the DMG would like the class offered at 3-5 locations in the desert over the course of a 1-2 week period. The USFS would like one class offered in their office in Redlands.***

17. **Stakeholder Comments**
    - **Jerry Hillier** said the Stakeholder Involvement Guidelines were acceptable, but that more time or more frequent comment periods should be provided. Comments should be entertained at time topic is on the agenda. The DT Effectiveness study should be expanded to entire range of the DT, especially the range in UT and NV.
    - **Michelle Casella**—More time should be set aside for stakeholder comments and involvement. DT Information and Education is a low priority. The focus should be on raven and disease. (see Attachment 12 for more details her comments and concerns)
    - **John Stewart**: Agreed with Jerry Hillier. He opined that DMG meetings should be public meetings because the DMG is seeking funds and provides project oversight. Concerned about affects of DT translocation on recreation. The DT I&E program is a low priority fro funding compared with other factors that need

to be addressed (ravens and disease). Cal 4 wheel is interested in education related to implementation of recovery actions

- **Jim McGarvie**: Expressed opposition to DT I&E grant request that is pending before the OHV Commission. He is not opposed to education, but doesn't think OHV are major cause of mortality and therefore they do not have responsibility to fund the I&E program. The OHV community is willing to support active recovery efforts (e.g., raven and disease).

18. **Manager follow-up on day one discussions**. No follow-up discussions occurred.

19. **Role of DMG in DT recovery** The purpose of this session was to:
    - Understand the role and responsibility of various organizations/groups involved with planning and implementation of DT recovery, monitoring and research activities
    - Define role and responsibility of the DMG in the planning and implementation of recovery, monitoring, and research activities for the desert tortoise in California.

    Several presenters summarized the roles and responsibilities for various organizations involved with DT recovery planning and implementation in California

    - **DT Management Oversight Group** (Williams)—see attachment 13.
    - **Fort Irwin Mitigation Group** (DOD) – see attachment 14 and 15.
    - **West Mojave Plan Implementation Group** (Hamill) -- see attachment 16.
    - **Desert Tortoise Monitoring Implementation Committee** – (Williams reported that this group was established to oversee and improve implementation of the DT LDS effort, including developing QA/QC procedures. The membership is made up of scientists and data managers from the University of Nevada, Reno; MDEP; GS; FWS; and the University of Redlands. The group is focused exclusively on LDS and does not address other DT monitoring efforts (e.g., permanent study plots)
    - **Desert Tortoise Recovery Plan Assessment Committee** – (Williams) see attachment 17
    - **FWS DT Recovery Office** (Williams). see attachment 18.
    - **DT Recovery Team**. Williams reported that a recovery team would not be created to revise the DT Recovery Plan. Rather, FWS will establish a small science advisory committee and hire a contractor to write plan and gather stakeholder input.
    - **Desert Managers Group** (Hamill). see attachment 19.

    Following is a summary of comments provided by the Managers:

    - It's unclear how DT work gets coordinated or done.
    - The relationship between the DMG and MOG is unclear.
    - There appears to be duplication of effort and overlap among the groups.
    - The relationship between the responsibility of the various groups and the land managers responsibilities is unclear.

- It's unclear how land managers can get DT science support and advice. There appears to be duplicative or competing forums that provide science advice.
- The focus needs to be getting recovery actions implemented on the ground. In spite of all the discussion, there is currently a lack of direction and consensus on management actions. There is a need for fewer committees and more on the ground implementation of recovery actions.
- Staff are needed to make recovery actions happen (FWS-Ventura is allowing staff to dedicate a portion of their time to work on recovery actions)
- While FWS has statutory authority, no one is clearly in charge
- A primary role of the DMG is to coordinate implementation of recovery actions in California (e.g., raven management)
- DOD wants to get away from single species management and take an ecosystem approach (focused on avoiding future ESA/CESA listings). DOD may be interested in providing funding for ecosystem management activities if FWS can and will provide greater certainty that they can carry out their mission

Next Step: The DMG established an ad hoc work group to define the role and function of the FWS recovery office and its relationship to various work groups/organizations, including the DMG. The Work Group will also address the role and responsibilities of the DMG in the planning and implementation of recovery, monitoring, and research activities for the desert tortoise in California. Members of the work group include Mary Martin, Bob Williams, Ray Bransfield, Glenn Black, Linda Hansen, and Todd Esque. The effort will be coordinated/facilitated by the DOD and DOI coordinators.

20. **Stakeholder Involvement Guidelines**. Everly and Hamill reviewed the results of the the Managers survey re: attitudes about stakeholder involvement and the final Stakeholder Involvement Guidelines. ***No further concerns were expressed and there was agreement to finalize the Guidelines***. Several managers recommended providing a few added spots on the agenda for stakeholders to provide comments. Several managers also thought it would be a good idea to invite stakeholders to make a presentation to the DMG about their recommendations, issues, concerns, etc. However no clear direction was agreed to by the DMG.

21. **Habitat Restoration Report**
    - San Felipe Creek, Fish Creek, and Carrizo Creek Watersheds MOA (State Parks). Mark Jorgensen (Anza Borrego State Park) reported that there have been many successes to restore the San Felipe Creek, Fish Creek, and Carrizo Creek Watersheds –the MOU (attachment 20) should facilitate further success. ***Russ Scofield will coordinate with the involved parties to get the MOU signed***.

    - Russ Scofield indicated that the draft Riparian Habitat Restoration Strategy is available for agency review (attachment 21). He plans to meet with the National Fish and Wildlife Foundation and the Wildlife Conservation Board later this summer to discuss funding to implement the strategy. ***Managers were requested to review and provide comments to Russ by August 16.***

22. **HAZMAT and Illegal Dumping report** (Scofield)
    - Russ Scofield reported on briefing with the California Waste Management Board (attachment 22 and 23). CIWMB members and staff were receptive to input and ideas from the DMG. He reported that legislation had recently been signed to increase fines for illegal dumping.
    - John Key reported that a training class on Unexploded Ordinances will be offered in Yuma, AZ on July 27-28. Interested parties should contact John ASAP.
    - John Key reported that attendance at Hazmat Work Group meetings has been declining due to competing priorities and lack of funding. In addition, several Hazmat related training classes had to be cancelled due to lack of enrollment. John requested the Managers to make their staff available to participate in future meetings. Greg Thomsen suggested the John personally calls work group members to solicit ideas for new agenda items.

21. **Caltrans Rest Area MOA and Update**. Hamill reported that bids to design the roadside exhibit were coming in—a meeting will be held on Aug 4 to select the design contractor. A draft MOU (attachment 24) has been developed among the California Department of Transportation, the National Park Service, the Bureau of Land Management, the California Department of Parks and Recreation, and the County of San Bernardino concerning the Design, Fabrication, and Maintenance of Environmental Interpretive Exhibits at the Valley Wells and John Wilkie Roadside Rest Areas. One issue that is still unresolved is who will pay for the fabrication of the exhibits at Valley Wells.

22. **PACRAT Report**
    - Hamill reported that the DMG ARPA/Law Enforcement Training Class will be held on Nov 03 - Nov 05, 2004 at 29 Palms, CA. Registration information is posted at http://dmg.gov/announcements.php?id=34. NPS (JOTR) and the BLM National Training Center are sponsoring the class which is free to all DMG member agencies and tribes in the California desert.
    - Bob Bryson reported that a meeting with the SHPO will occur on July 29 to discuss issues related to the Mojave Desert Historical Resources GIS. The demonstration of the MDHRGIS at PACRAT meeting in June was a failure and the dataset that was provided to the Mojave National Preserve was not useful.
    - Bob also reported that there was interest in having the PACRAT sponsor another Cultural Resource Conference/Workshop. The Bureau of Reclamation is organizing a CR conference that will encompass CA, UT, AZ – ***Bob will investigate whether DMG wants to get involved. Bob will also investigate interest in a Native American Coordination/Consultation training class.***
    - The next PACRAT meeting will be sometime September. ***Bob will provide a report on the MDHRGIS at next DMG meeting***

23. **Agency Roundtable Reports**

- FWS--Recovery permits issued are being revised and standardized. The 12 month finding to list the desert symotera is going thru internal review—will be published this fall.
- BLM-El Centro—An ARPA conviction in Federal Court on BLM lands was widely publicized. El Centro, BLM will be updating the Eastern San Diego management plan
- EAFB- Security forces on the base are being more aggressive with feral dogs. New technology that is being used to track migrating birds provides a better understanding of what's going on.
- Mike Carr thanked DMG support for the USGS Mojave Desert research initiatives.
- Clarence – Vegetation maps of the Mojave Desert are available through MDEP. LDS preliminary results are coming in– the area sampled was doubled in FY 04 but the cost stayed same; report will be forthcoming.
- State Parks: waiting on budget. Matt Fuzie is new Colo Desert Parks Superintendent
- BLM-Ridgecrest – The ROD on route designation for NEMO was signed. WEMO is progressing.
- JT Reynolds: lots of interest in Death Valley Regional Flow System Model—GS is finalizing model; NPS is exploring potential new partnership Nye County re: how both parties can share use of the aquifer.

24. **Meeting Evaluation**
    - Like the current meeting format (1 day open; 1 day closed)
    - Research reports got into too much detail

25. **Next Meetings**:
    - **Sep 30-Oct 1, 2004, Edwards Air Force Base**. Host: Bob Wood. The DMG will get an advanced viewing of the Air Show which is scheduled for Oct 2. ***DMG agencies were invited to set up information booths or displays at the Air Show on Saturday Oct 2 (Set up on Friday afternoon). Interested parties should contact Bob Wood***.

    - Winter Meeting**: Jan 12-13, 2005** –BLM Moreno Valley (Mission Inn) or Anza-Borrego State Park. Host: BLM or State Parks (to be determined).