



**Draft
Meeting Summary
November 1 - 2, 2006
Death Valley, CA.**

Summary of Action Items

1. Provide Roy Averill-Murray feedback on availability of funding to support FY 07 desert tortoise monitoring.
2. Managers affected by Mojave Ground Squirrel habitat are requested to provide comments on the draft conservations strategy to the Mojave Ground Squirrel Work Group.
3. Provide the Hazmat Work Group priority abandoned mine land projects for FY 07.
4. Provide the Hazmat Work Group a copy of all abandoned mine land database information.
5. Managers are requested to have their Archaeologists test the new automated Mojave Desert Cultural Resources Program and provide feedback to the State Historic Preservation Office POC.

Wednesday, November 1, 2006

1. **Introduction to Death Valley National Park.** J.T. Reynolds, Superintendent, Death Valley National Park, welcomed all to the meeting and to the Park. J.T. provided an excellent overview of the mission, activities/operations, history, and issues within Death Valley National Park. He articulated that 92% of the park is wilderness and that partnerships are a central theme in all management actions undertaken by the park.
2. **Desert Tortoise Recovery Office Update.** Updating the group on DTRO activities, Roy Averill-Murray, the DTRO Coordinator, stated USFWS presented the US Institute for Environmental Conflict Resolution report to the Desert Tortoise Management Oversight Group. The Institute report recommended USFWS not utilize a cooperative/collaborative approach to review and revise the 1994 Desert Tortoise Recovery Plan until firm funding for the effort could be obtained and a consensus on baseline science for the tortoise could be achieved. The report also stated this effort, if done properly and without any unforeseen delays, would take up to two years to complete. Given these limitations, USFWS is

reviewing implementing a modified collaborative approach that would enable them to complete a draft revision of the current recovery plan by the end of September 2007.

The Range-Wide Monitoring of the Mojave Population of the Desert Tortoise: 2001-2005 Summary Report is complete and available for download from the USFWS desert tortoise and DMG websites. Roy discussed and provided Managers with a handout summary version of the report. Managers and/or their staff can obtain all years of the monitoring data collected at the following website: www.mojavedata.gov/lds. The process for obtaining and developing a deserttortoise.gov website continues. Ultimately, data on the current website will be folded into the deserttortoise.gov website when it is fully developed.

Linda Allison provided an update on planning for the FY 2007 desert tortoise monitoring effort. She stated the Monitoring Committee was conducting an analysis of threats data collected in 2005 to determine what, if any, threats data would be collected during the FY 07 field season. The group is also reviewing use of a prototype desert tortoise habitat model for delineating monitoring areas. This would potentially expand monitoring into areas adjacent to existing monitoring strata (currently designated critical habitat).

Linda reviewed the targeted number of monitoring transects to be walked during FY 07 along with the estimated cost. Roy requested Managers provide input to him on the availability of funding for the FY 07 field season.

3. **Raven Environmental Assessment Work Group update.** Judy Hohman, USFWS, provided the DMG with the current status of the environmental assessment (EA). Based on comments received during scoping and review of the document by the work group, USFWS has decided to add a non-lethal alternative. The USFWS Solicitor has not had time to review the document. They are estimating mid November to early December before they will have the opportunity to conduct a review of the document. The Edwards Air Force Base (EAFB) NEPA Specialist has offered to assist by conducting a review of the document for compliance with CEQ regulations, guidance letters and case law. Following completion of the EAFB review and concurrence by the USFWS decision maker, the document will be staffed with the work group, with a short suspense, for final review (estimating early December). Following the work group review the document will be sent to the USFWS Solicitor with release of the document to the public in late December/early January with a 30 day review period. Review of comments received and preparation of the final document will occur in February with raven removal beginning in FY 08.

Judy also briefed Managers on Work Group activities. The work group is currently developing plans for the FY 07 raven nest survey program. The landfill subgroup is reviewing current management activities with a goal of developing standard raven management protocols. The work group is also working on development of standard raven management protocols that can be implemented by normal agency staff during the course of routine business operations. The group has also developed an estimated budget for FY 07 activities:

- a. raven nest survey - \$86K

- b. raven removal by Wildlife Services (Fall 07 and Spring 08) - \$63K
 - c. landfill management protocols - \$2.5K
4. **Stakeholder input.** None.
 5. **Mojave Ground Squirrel Work Group update.** Becky Jones, California Department of Fish and Game, discussed the background, purpose and mission statements developed by the work group to guide its efforts in development of a conservation strategy for the Mojave Ground Squirrel. She articulated a rough draft strategy was circulated among work group members. Comments were received from many but she is still waiting on comments from the remainder of the group. Becky stated the work group was reviewing the current hypothesized range map for the species. Several recent sightings of the species are not included in the existing range map. Additionally, differences exist between versions of the range map which need to be resolved (see attached presentation). Becky advised Managers the Mojave Ground Squirrel Workshop planned for this winter was put on hold temporarily. FY 06 funding problems occurred which prevented the initial planning and coordination needed to conduct the workshop. The workshop will be re-scheduled once firm commitments for funding have been established.
 6. **Free Roaming Dog Work Group update.** Glenn Black, California Department of Fish and Game Volunteer, provided Managers with an update on the status of the Free Roaming Dog effort. Glenn recently received a commitment from the San Bernardino County Animal Control to review its database for desert tortoise/dog incidents and provide the information to him. Glenn continues to coordinate with Dr. Kristin Berry on obtaining desert tortoise/dog incident reports from veterinarians across the desert. Following receipt of this information, he will review and revise the draft free roaming dog report and re-submit to the DMG.
 7. **Burro Update.** Dave Sjaastad, Ridgecrest BLM Field Office, provided Managers an overview of the current status of BLM's Burro Management Program. Dave stated 2006 efforts have not been as successful as originally hoped. Burro prescriptions contained in the Northern and Eastern Mojave Desert Management Plan were not executed in 2006. They are currently scheduled for January 2007. Some gathers will occur on the Naval Air Weapons Station, China Lake in December 2006. Dave stated the last major area for burro removal is the Clark Mountains region. Once this is accomplished burro numbers will be down to appropriate management levels across the Mojave Desert in California. Dave further articulated burro adoptions were very slow and they have a large backlog of captured animals. He encouraged Managers to advertise the wild horse and burro adoption program whenever possible.
 8. **Stakeholder input.** None.

Thursday, November 2, 2006

1. **Desert Tortoise Education and Outreach Work Group update.** Anne Staley, the NPS Desert Tortoise Outreach and Education Coordinator, provided Managers with an update of work group activities. The group is currently working with Victor Valley Community

College on the development of digital games to include with the desert tortoise education trunk. The tortoise education trunks are almost ready for test use. The only item missing are tortoise shells. They will be picked up following the DMG meeting. Anne has applied for \$32K in grants to support the FY 07 Mojave Max campaign. The work group is in discussions with the Palm Springs Desert Festival organizers for time and space to put up a desert tortoise education booth at the event. The group is also working with the Joshua Tree National Park Foundation to develop a marketing slogan and sales materials to further educate the public. The group is participating in the deserttortoise.gov website development underway at the Redlands Institute. The website will include an education and outreach component that will complement ongoing group efforts. Anne also stated the desert tortoise public survey was finally distributed. She will keep managers updated on results of the survey.

2. **Abandoned Mine Lands.** David Eck, Death Valley National Park and Ted Wiezma, Mojave National Preserve provided Managers with an update on the Hazmat Work Group's efforts addressing abandoned mine lands. The work group agreed a master map, depicting all agencies known mines and mining features would be an excellent tool to have. Each participating agency agreed to provide their data to the Mojave Desert Ecosystem Program for development of the map. The consolidated master database of all mines and mine features will also be available online for use by all agencies. During work group discussions it became apparent that each agency was competing for the same \$400K pool of funds available for abandoned mine land restoration. The work group decided to develop a list prioritizing each agency's worst case abandoned mine land projects. Work Group members also agreed to develop a list of in house capabilities for abandoned mine land restoration to share with other work group members.
3. **Caltrans Rest Area Renovation.** Quyen Tang, Caltrans, informed Managers the Valley Wells rest area renovation was again in the works. The contract is in the process of being re-bid. The project will occur in two phases. Phase I will address renovation of rest area facilities (general construction). Phase II will address construction of the interpretive displays. No scheduled completion date for Phase I or II is available.
4. **Restoration efforts update.** Russell Scofield provided managers with a brief overview of current DMG restoration efforts. The BLM Barstow Field Office will continue tamarisk control and restoration on the Amargosa River. Russell assisted the Palm Springs- South Coast Field Office in developing a \$613,000 grant with the Wildlife Conservation Board (WCB) for tamarisk control and restoration at Dos Palmas preserve. Subsequent to the DMG meeting, the WCB Board approved the grant without discussion. Russell is working with the new Death Valley botanist to develop a work plan for tamarisk control and restoration at Saline Valley. Death Valley, the BLM RidgeCrest Field Office, Fish and Game, and Inyo National Forest will be involved with this effort. Russell continues to research new funding opportunities and explore ways to include water resources monitoring in restoration grants.
5. **Desert Water Resources.** Terry Fisk, Death Valley National Park provided Managers with an overview of water issues the Park is addressing/dealing with. His presentation addressed the following questions:

- a. How much water is available?
 - b. Who does the available water go to?
 - c. When does the water available go to those authorized to withdraw it?
 - d. What are the science issues associated with withdrawal of authorized water allocations?
 - e. What land management impacts will occur as a result of authorized water withdrawals?
 - f. What water data issues exist?
6. **West Wide Energy Corridor Development Update.** Mike Hamilton, USMC WREC, Camp Pendleton provided Managers with a quick update on status of the west wide energy corridor project. Mike also informed Managers California has a similar effort underway addressing energy corridor needs within the state.
7. **29 Palms – Joshua Tree National Park Wildlife Corridor.** Mike Hamilton, USMC WREC, Camp Pendleton provided Managers with an overview of a meeting involving NGOs, MCAGCC and Joshua Tree National Park. Mike articulated to Managers the purpose of the effort and asked whether the DMG would be willing to provide oversight for the effort. The Managers agreed the DMG would be an excellent umbrella organization to facilitate this effort. Becky Jones, California Fish and Game was unaware of the effort but stated the State’s Missing Linkages Program may be able to assist with this effort. Becky stated she would provide a copy of the program documents to the DMG Coordinators for dissemination to interested Managers. Curt Sauer, Superintendent Joshua Tree National Park stated he was actively working to involve the leadership of the local communities that could be affected by this effort. Don Maben, Kern County Supervisor mentioned a similar effort in Kern County. He stated he would bring applicable Kern County ordinances to the next meeting. The Managers asked the DMG Coordinators to develop this topic for detailed discussion at the next DMG meeting.
8. **PACRAT Update.** Bob Bryson, Mojave National Preserve told Managers the automated Mojave Desert Cultural Resources Program (MDCUP) was virtually complete. System testing would occur on 13 and 14 November with training for cultural resource specialists scheduled for 29 November. Following system testing and training the system handbook would be provided with potentially one more “train the trainer” training session. The State Historic Preservation Officer is currently developing a system for authenticated access to the system as well as developing a close-out letter for acceptance and conclusion of the project.
9. **Mojave Fringe-Toed Lizard update.** Russell Scofield provided a brief synopsis of the Mojave fringe-toed lizard (MFTL) meeting that occurred in Barstow. Dr. Bill Presch (Cal State University Fullerton) provided a presentation summarizing his research and his preliminary findings. Last spring was Bill’s first year of monitoring. This upcoming spring Bill plans to refine his monitoring program with the ultimate goal being development of a habitat model. New research, not yet published, involving DNA sequencing of several populations of Mojave fringe-toed lizards appears to support the petition requesting that the Dumont Dunes, Ibex Dunes (DVNP) and Coyote Holes populations be designated a distinct population segment. This research will be published before January 1, 2007. Dr. Larry

LaPré (BLM-CDD) has analyzed the evidence and concluded that it is weak. However, a more important question involves the reality of potential threats. The next meeting will be February 13, 2007 at the Barstow BLM office.

10. Next meetings.

- a. The next DMG meeting will be hosted by the US Geological Survey on 31 January – 1 February 2007 in San Diego.
- b. The DMG spring meeting will be hosted by Joshua Tree National Park in 29 Palms. Meeting dates are 2 – 3 May 2007.