



**Draft
Meeting Summary
January 18 – 19, 2006, Palm Springs CA.**

Summary of Action Items

1. Provide the Desert Tortoise Recovery Office names of Managers/staff desiring to participate in the Desert Tortoise Monitoring Implementation Committee.
2. Provide the Desert Tortoise Outreach and Education Chair names of individuals/groups who should receive the Desert Tortoise Information and Education Outreach work group newsletter.
3. Provide FWS (Robert McMorran) with confirmation of Raven EA Work Group members.
4. Assist FWS in getting outstanding raven EA assignments completed and submitted to the work group.
5. Review listed FY 05 accomplishments and FY 06 goals/objectives and provide feedback/changes to Clarence Everly prior to 1 March 2006.
6. Support the Kern County Illegal Dumping Workshop with Manager and staff attendance.

January 18, 2006 – open to stakeholders

1. The DMG welcomed two new Managers. Steven Borchard replaces Linda Hansen as the BLM California Desert District Manager and Al Pepito replaces Craig Mattson as the California State Parks Mojave Sector Superintendent.
2. **BLM Palm Springs/South Coast Field Office Overview.** Gale Acheson provided an excellent overview of the mission, activities and operations of the Palm Springs/South Coast Field Office.
3. **Desert Tortoise Recovery Implementation Planning Work Group Update.** Roy Averill-Murray provided an update on the work group's activities. Roy articulated the Desert Tortoise Recovery Office (DTRO) is working with the DTRO Science Advisory Committee (SAC) reviewing and revising desert tortoise recovery criteria. When draft revised recovery

criteria are ready for review, they will be distributed to Managers, staff, and interested parties for comment. The DTRO has finalized an intergovernmental agreement with the U.S. Institute for Environmental Conflict Resolution to manage the recovery planning process. Roy provided the DMG with an outline of the scope of work (the full scope of work can be obtained by contacting Roy) defining the Institute's role in conducting stakeholder assessments in Nevada, Arizona and Utah. The Institute, with DTRO, Manager, and stakeholder input, will hire an independent third-party neutral to conduct stakeholder assessments in California. The stakeholder assessment process will be designed to get all the relevant issues out on the table and provide the DTRO with a determination whether a collaborative regional recovery process is feasible and how to proceed. The tentative schedule is to complete all assessments by the end of May with the recovery planning process and identification of recovery actions that can be easily implemented by DMG member agencies completed by the end of 2006. The Institute will contact managers and stakeholders in early February about their interest in participating in the interview process for the third-party neutral. The DTRO and the Institute will review the process in detail at the Desert Tortoise Management Oversight Group (MOG) meeting in Las Vegas on March 29.

4. **Desert Tortoise Monitoring Update.** Roy Averill-Murray provided the DMG with a letter articulating the DTRO's monitoring efforts for 2006. No Line Distance Sampling (LDS) monitoring will occur in 2006. Instead of conducting LDS monitoring, the DTRO will focus on quality assurance of LDS data already collected and on conducting detailed analyses of the existing data with the goal of analyzing the effectiveness of the monitoring program overall and identifying qualitative improvements to the process. The DTRO continues development of the 2001 – 2005 LDS Report. An initial working draft of the report was distributed to Desert Tortoise Monitoring Implementation Committee (DTMIC) members for review, input and comment. Preliminary 2001 and 2004 LDS databases have been distributed to DTMIC members for review and comment. Roy provided managers with tables depicting the results of LDS for both years. He emphatically stressed the fact that these are preliminary draft results and that no conclusions can be drawn from the information presented at this time. The 2002 database is due out the end of January with the 2003 database due out in mid February. The DTMIC is on track to complete and distribute a review draft summary report by mid-March, which will be discussed at the Desert Tortoise MOG meeting in Las Vegas on March 29. Roy asked DMG members if they were receiving the email documents he provided managers. The Managers stated they received the email documents sent. The DTRO is creating a monitoring coordinator position to oversee all desert tortoise monitoring efforts. Following analysis of existing monitoring data and processes, the DTRO will provide recommendations for monitoring implementation in FY 2007. **Roy stated he would like to expand the DTMIC to include managers and/or their representatives. The goal is to create a closer relationship between monitoring program goals and land management agency on the ground needs.**
5. **Stakeholder Input.** Gale Acheson asked if any stakeholders present wished to make comments at this point in the meeting. No comments were made.
6. **Desert Tortoise Education and Outreach Work Group Update.** Joe Zarki briefed the DMG on the current efforts of the work group. Joe attended the California Off-Highway

Motor Vehicle Recreation Commission meeting in October. He submitted a statement to the Commission on behalf of the DMG in support of the work group's FY06 proposal. The work group's proposal is on the Commission's FY06 consent list for \$46,750. The work group received a \$20,000 disbursement from the National Fish and Wildlife DMG grant. Total received to date from NFWF is \$30,000. Joe submitted the required quarterly report to NFWF on behalf of the DMG. The work group applied for a \$4,920 grant from the Riverside Community Foundation **Desert Legacy Fund** for logistical support associated with implementation of the Mojave Max contest in California. The work group also received \$1,000 in program support for the Mojave Max contest from the Joshua Tree National Park Association. Work group members set up a DMG/NPS booth at the California Science Teachers Association (CSTA) Conference in October. 957 California science teachers were contacted and rack cards containing information on the Mojave Max contest in California distributed. Work group members also conducted field trips to Joshua Tree National Park to discuss desert tortoise issues. An advertisement about the Mojave Max contest in California was placed in the CSTA magazine and work group members coordinated with the Clark County Nevada Mojave Max website to accommodate the California Mojave Max contest. Other work group education and outreach efforts included:

- a. Developing/writing education activities for the desert tortoise education trunks.
- b. Met with teachers to review the education project and discuss curriculum issues. Agreed that two trunks with five activities each will be produced.
- c. Wrote and released three public service announcements.
- d. Contracted with a professional writer to produce three desert tortoise articles. Article release dates scheduled for January, March and May.
- e. One article written, reviewed and ready for release (Mojave Max contest).
- f. Conducted field trip to Edwards AFB researching upcoming article on desert tortoise head starting.
- g. Developed plan for newsletter content. Two articles written and reviewed to date. Agreement reached with newsletter designer. Target release date for first newsletter is late February/early March. **Managers were requested to provide the work group with names of individuals/groups who should receive the newsletter.**

The Colorado State University desert tortoise knowledge and public attitudes survey project dates have been adjusted based on delayed procurement of funding. Funding has finally been secured and a project account established at Joshua Tree National Park. The scope of work and sole source justification are complete and have been reviewed and approved by NPS staff. Currently awaiting contract award by the Mojave National Preserve Contract Officer. At its last meeting, the work group discussed development of a desert tortoise web site. Research is ongoing for possible domain names and domain hosts. Following a presentation by Kristin Berry on her publication "Answering Questions About Desert Tortoises" the work group agreed in principle to help seek funding to update and reprint the document. The work group's next meeting is scheduled for 22 February 2006 in Barstow at the Mojave National Preserve.

Following the DMG meeting, the work group learned CDFG would not be able to provide year two (FY07) funding to support the project. The workgroup is exploring additional funding opportunities.

7. **Raven Environmental Assessment Update.** Judy Hohman provided the DMG with the current status of the environmental assessment (EA). She introduced Robert McMorran as the new FWS lead for the project. Robert recently received all the files for the project and is currently reviewing and organizing the files and has begun compiling the administrative record required for the project. He has reviewed the scoping letters received from the public on the project. Several previously unaddressed issues have been identified (implement non-lethal methods first; ensure lethal methods target only offending individuals). Robert is working to address these concerns. He is still awaiting input on sections from several work group members. **Managers are requested to assist in getting this information submitted.** In the interim, Robert is researching past raven management efforts for lessons learned on legal challenges that halted previous efforts. The EA, in its current draft form, was provided to the FWS Migratory Bird Treaty Act office for review and consultation. They see no problems with the EA at this time especially in light of the small number of ravens for which a take permit would be issued. The FWS recently received the results of two raven studies for which they contracted – surveys for raven nest locations and desert tortoise remains along transmission lines and analysis of breeding bird survey data for ravens to determine population trends. Study results are currently under review by the FWS. To reinvigorate the Raven EA process **FWS is requesting confirmation of all work group members still interested in participating in this effort.** A meeting for the work group is scheduled for early February (date and location TBD). Aside from completing the EA, the work group will begin focusing on:
 - a. Developing and compiling a list of raven management activities that might be implemented that do not require NEPA compliance.
 - b. Developing a timeline for EA project completion and management action implementation.
 - c. Coordination with the DMG Education and Outreach work group and NGOs to coordinate outreach efforts.
8. **Wind Energy, Issues and Collaboration.** Bruce Shaffer (BLM), DeEllen Brasher (DOD Region IX) and Russ Dingman (CA State Parks) provided presentations to the Managers on wind energy issues and collaborative efforts to address these issues. Bruce and DeEllen are members of a DOD-sponsored regional Wind Work Group (Region IX) whose mission is to maintain the military's capability to fulfill its national security obligations while at the same time ensuring the highest level of environmental stewardship consistent with national security mission requirements. The focus of the work group is to familiarize partners with respective missions, priorities and processes relative to land management planning and air space management; share resources and information; analyze discuss and resolve areas of concern; implement and sustain effective implementation of each agencies' respective mission and operations. Wind energy projects present two primary safety issues to military aviation operations – flight path obstructions and radar interference. Wind energy turbines, generators and blades reflect radar energy and therefore represent a flight safety hazard and

can also corrupt the radar testing environment. Turbines do not have to be in the direct flight path of aircraft or antenna point direction to be a source of interference. Unfortunately, some of those areas that are best for wind energy facilities in the desert are also critical military operating areas. To resolve these issues, the work group has established close interagency coordination particularly with BLM and the California Energy Commission. As a result of this coordination, the group has developed a Wind Proposal Process allowing wind industry firms to have their proposals evaluated for military impact early on in the process and receive one response from the Wind Work Group. Additionally, the group has developed a GIS tool allowing the wind industry and land management agencies the ability to identify and quantify potential impacts of proposed projects. Bob Wood added that development of large wind farms creates islands of biodiversity on federal properties, especially DOD installations. This becomes an encroachment impact to the affected installations. The next meeting of the DOD Wind Work Group will be 9 March 2006, at the BLM CDD office in Moreno Valley from 1000 to 1400. There will also be conferencing capabilities for those who cannot attend. The agenda will be forwarded and placed on the DMG website.

Russ provided DMG managers with a brief video outlining the visual resource issues and conflicts associated with proposed wind energy development projects adjacent to the California Poppy Reserve.

9. **West-wide Energy Corridor Programmatic Environmental Impact Statement.** Mike Hamilton provided a brief overview of the West-wide Energy Corridor Programmatic Environmental Impact Statement (PEIS) project. This project, as part of Section 368 of the 2005 Energy Policy Act, evaluates potential impacts associated with the proposed action to designate corridors on Federal land in the 11 Western States (Arizona, California, Colorado, Idaho, Montana, Nevada, New Mexico, Oregon, Utah, Washington, and Wyoming) for oil, gas and hydrogen pipelines and electricity transmission and distribution facilities, on Federal Lands only, projected for the next twenty years. The Programmatic EIS is currently in the planning stages and is tasked with identifying potential energy corridors, and will consider all alternatives, to include the No Action alternative. Because the proposed action may involve actions on all Federal Lands in the 11 Western States, to include sensitive habitats, culturally sensitive areas, as well as potential impacts on floodplains or wetlands, the draft PEIS will include assessments and the final PEIS or Record of Decision will include statements of findings. Based upon the information and analyses developed in this PEIS, the agencies issuing the PEIS would amend their respective land use plans by designating a series of energy corridors effective upon signing of the Record(s) of Decision. A series of scoping meetings have been scheduled for February and March 2006. It is expected the initial draft PEIS will be ready for public review in June 2006. Following his presentation Mike asked Managers if the DMG wanted to keep track and remain aware of this effort and its potential impacts on DMG member agencies. He further asked whether the managers wanted to include the wind and energy corridor issues in the DMG 5 Year Plan. The Managers requested the DMG Coordinators review current DMG goals and objectives in the 5 Year plan to determine if there were areas where the wind and energy corridor issues could be added to existing goals appropriately rather than add new goals.

10. **Stakeholder Input.** Gale Acheson asked if any stakeholders present wished to make comments at this point in the meeting. No comments were made.

Thursday, 19 January 2006 – Closed to stakeholders

1. Gale Acheson asked the Managers if there were any issues from the previous day's agenda requiring additional discussion or decision. No issues/decisions were identified.
2. **Hazmat Work Group Update. Hazmat Work Group Update.** Russell Scofield briefed managers the illegal dump database, a project started by the group in FY 2000, is not being used and in its current configuration does not contain sufficient data to be useful to DMG partners. To make the database useful, additional work is needed to develop useful database reports, database input/output forms and a GIS and photo interface. A small dedicated group is needed to develop these items. Kern and San Bernardino counties expressed interest in the database during the last work group meeting. Managers were presented with three options for the database:
 - a. Discontinue any further work on the database and its web interface.
 - b. Keep development of the database as a DMG goal but put it in an "on hold" status.
 - c. Place the lead for continued development of the database and its web interface with one of the interested county DMG members.

Kern County along with the Ridgecrest and Barstow BLM Managers agreed to form the core of a small group to continue work on the illegal dump database. The group will develop the database and its web interface and bring a demo of the database back to the group for further determination on support of the effort. Comments from managers included requesting OHV groups to assist in finding and reporting illegal dump sites, establishing a 1-800 number for reporting illegal dump sites and a statement articulating that if the database is developed and it is easy to use, Managers and staff may be able to use it once it is established.

Russell reported 25 people have already signed up to attend the March 23rd Illegal Dumping workshop in Ridgecrest. Kern County has taken the lead on agenda development and hosting the workshop. Online registration is available and email announcements and flyers for the event will be distributed in early February. A free lunch will be provided at the workshop for all attendees.

3. **Habitat Restoration Update.** Russell Scofield briefed Managers the Low Desert Weed Management Area (WMA) final MOU was completed and has been signed by more than half of the WMA participants at this point. The group had its first official meeting prior to the holidays. The next step for the group is to develop a strategic plan. Russell is working to add the group to the statewide WMA list in order to allow the group to start receiving state benefits. This also opens the door for the group to start applying for grant funding to initiate and resource projects. The date for the next LDWMA meeting will be posted on the DMG website for interested parties. Leslie Defalco, USGS, is currently developing protocols to

quantitatively describe disturbed sites for restoration. She will use permanent study plots to assess restoration technique success and from her results will develop a restoration database.

4. **Roadside Rest Area Project Update.** James Woolsey and Ernie Figueroa provided Managers with the current status of the project. To date, interpretive posters have been placed at rest stops along I-15 and I-40 and design and fabrication of exhibits for the Valley Wells rest area is underway. The 30% design drawings were delivered in December 2005. 60% design drawings are due March 1, 2006 with 100% design drawings due June 1, 2006. The start of fabrication is unknown at this time. Bids received for work at the Valley Wells rest area totaled \$9M. Only \$6M is available for the project leaving a \$3M shortfall. The project work group, along with Caltrans, is attempting to develop alternatives for procuring additional funding or scaling the project to fit within the existing budget. Potential future projects for the group include the Boron rest area on Hwy 58 and the Whitewater rest area on I-10. OHV groups, based on research they have conducted, expressed concern about the trash containers proposed for use at the renovated rest areas. The issue involves the ability of birds to gain access to trash in the containers making them food sources. Caltrans is aware of these concerns and is reviewing the issue. The work group is beginning to address the issue of long term maintenance for exhibits at the renovated sites. More discussion is required on this issue.

After the DMG meeting, Caltrans determined the exhibit design process should be placed on hold until the overall project is redesigned, making up for the \$3m shortfall. Redesign could significantly alter the environment of the entire rest area and builds or features might need to be scaled back or eliminated. Caltrans will reinitiate the exhibit design process once the design of the rest area is finalized.

5. **PACRAT Work Group Update.** Bob Bryson updated Managers on the status of the Mojave Desert Historic Resources GIS (MDHRGIS) system development now called the MDHRGIS Data Capture and User Interface Project (MDCUP) by the state. The State Historic Preservation Office (SHPO), through a contractor, has developed and demonstrated the initial stages of the cultural resources database, accessed via the internet, for the project area. The DMG testing and evaluation team continues review of the system and its continued development with discussion conference calls held every two weeks. Full system functionality is targeted for August 2006 with full project completion scheduled for October 2006. The California State BLM office is developing a parallel system. It is designed for BLM archaeologists to sort, catalogue and input data from BLM field offices. With its parallel development, it is designed to be compatible with and feed into the larger MDCUP system. The SHPO continues to work with its Information Centers on developing an automated statewide cultural resources system using the MDCUP as its model.
6. **Mojave Ground Squirrel Work Group Update.** Becky Jones briefed Managers the work group has created a draft outline for development of a conservation strategy. The overarching goal of the strategy will be to ensure the long term protection of Mojave Ground Squirrel (MGS) habitat and viability of the species with a focus on fostering communication and coordination among participants and other interested parties to identify opportunities for collaborative action to further the acquisition, protection, restoration and management of

MGS habitat. The outline is currently being circulated among stakeholders and biologists within agencies and academic institutions. Major objectives of the strategy include:

- a. Determine the Extent of the MGS range.
- b. Determine MGS habitat type.
- c. Develop and adaptive management plan.
- d. Develop and implement measures to sustain the long term viability of the species.

Some agencies have already begun MGS conservation efforts. Edwards Air Force Base is working collaboratively to analyze and present capture studies and biological data on MGS to date. Fort Irwin is implementing restoration efforts in designated conservation areas on the installation using MGS preferred food plants. The next work group meeting is scheduled for 28 February, 2006 at the Mojave National Preserve.

7. **Free Roaming Dog Work Group Update.** Becky Jones briefed Managers that Glenn Black met with senior Animal Control officials in San Bernardino County. They have new software that allows animal control to enter data from calls received along with actions taken. MDEP generated a map of the desert for animal control personnel indicating the DMG's area of interest for free roaming dogs. This map should allow animal control personnel to query their data for information on free roaming dog incidents in these areas. If feasible, this data will be incorporated with existing data for GIS analysis to determine, if possible, those areas where the free roaming dog/urban interface/desert tortoise canine trauma interface occurs. The group is also working on sending letters to desert veterinarians requesting any information they might have on canine trauma to desert tortoise. Once information is collected and analysis complete, this new information will be incorporated into the original draft free roaming dog report and distributed to work group members for review and comment followed by a formal presentation to the DMG.
8. **Southwestern Willow Flycatcher Critical Habitat Update.** Judy Hohman and Robert McMorran provided Managers an overview of the recently designated Southwestern Willow Flycatcher critical habitat and its potential impacts to them. 737 miles of riparian habitat in the western United States were designated as critical habitat for the Flycatcher on 19 October, 2005. Critical habitat for the species in the DMG area of interest is limited to the Mojave River and San Bernardino Mountains in San Bernardino County. Following a display of maps depicting Flycatcher critical habitat, Robert conducted a discussion of what impacts designation has on federal and non-federal actions within critical habitat.
9. **DMG 5 Year Plan Review and Update.** Russell Scofield presented Managers with a review of 5 Year Plan accomplishments for FY05 (see Palm Springs meeting archives on the DMG website). **Managers were requested to review listed accomplishments and provide input to Clarence Everly on additional accomplishments.** Following Russell's presentation, Clarence provided a presentation on recommended changes to the DMG 5 Year Plan goals and objectives for FY06 (deletions and additions attached). Based on input received during the presentation Clarence and Russell will update accomplishments, goals and objectives in the 5 Year Plan and distribute to Managers for review, comment and approval.

10. The next DMG meeting will be hosted by Fort Irwin 19 – 20 April 2006 in Barstow CA. The DMG summer meeting is scheduled for 26 – 27 July 2006 tentatively hosted by the U.S. Forest Service in Big Bear CA.

DMG 5 Year Plan Change Summary

1. Deletions.

- a. **Goal 1, Task E (task completed).** In cooperation with various federal, state and local agencies, the DMG will work with the Low Desert RC&D to establish the Coachella Valley/Southern Desert Weed Management Area (WMA). **(FY 05, BLM/ABDSP/FWS, on track)**
- b. **Goal 1, Task I (task completed).** The DMG will sponsor and conduct Introductory Wilderness Training for non-wilderness professionals at various DMG office locations throughout the California deserts. **(FY 05, BLM/NPS/USFS/USMC)**
- c. **Goal 2, Task C, Subtask 2 (task not currently feasible).** Implementing a 1-800 number to report incidents of littering.
- d. **Goal 3, Task B (task completed).** FWS will establish a Desert Tortoise Science Advisory Committee to provide scientific guidance to the DTRO, the DMG and other tortoise recovery and monitoring activities. **(FY 05, FWS, on track)**
- e. **Goal 5, Task C (task completed).** The DMG will provide support for the Three Corners Conference, a one-day archaeological meeting to be held at UNLV on October 15, 2005. **(FY 05, PACRAT, on track)**
- f. **Goal 5, Task I (task not feasible).** The DMG will consider organizing a session on desert archaeology, ethnography, and cultural resources management for presentation at the Society for California Archaeology's Annual Meeting. **(FY 05, PACRAT)**
- g. **Goal 7, Task C (task completed).** DMG agencies will install interpretive exhibits at Caltrans roadside rest areas in the California deserts. **(FY 05, Caltrans/State Parks/NPS/BLM/MDEP, on track)**
- h. **Goal 8, Task D (task completed).** Develop a framework or conceptual model to tie multiple agency efforts together across desert ecosystems and jurisdictional boundaries. **(FY 05, NPS, on track)**
- i. **Goal 10, Task C, Subtask 2 (task completed).** Developing a GIS map of the DOI areas of concern and the critical water and water dependent resources; **(FY 05, BLM-NV, on track)**
- j. **Goal 12, Task A (task completed).** The DMG will review, update and renew the DMG Charter and MOU to reflect current priorities and policies. **(FY 05/06, DOD/DOI Coordinators, on track)**

2. Changes (action taken described – original tasks shown).

- a. **Goal 1, Task B & C (combined). B.** The DMG will provide information via the DMG's restoration webpage to review new/current restoration techniques, sources of labor and material, partnership opportunities, ongoing restoration projects, and monitoring. **(FY 05, BLM/MDEP, on track)** **C.** A list and status report of ongoing restoration activities in the desert will be compiled and made available through the DMG website. **(FY 05, USGS/MDEP, on track)**
- b. **Goal 2, Task C, Subtask 1 (changed to Kern County).** Sponsoring an illegal dumping enforcement workshop (IDEW) in San Bernardino County
- b. **Goal 3, Task C, (moved to Goal 9 and combined with Task E).** FWS will establish an in-house repository for all desert tortoise data via an MOU. The MOU will outline protocols for the structure and maintenance of the data repository and accessing data in the repository. **(FY 05, FWS, on track)**
- c. **Goal 8, Task A (changed to reflect current status).** Selected papers from the 3rd Mojave Desert Science Symposium will be written up and published. **(FY 05, NPS, on track)**

3. Additions.

- a. **Goal 14. Make high priority Abandoned Mine Land (AML) sites that pose a significant environmental and safety threat safe by reducing or removing physical and chemical hazards associated with the site.**
 - A. Reclaim high priority AML sites that pose a significant environmental and safety threat. **(FY 06 – 10, BLM, NPS, Kern County, Ongoing, funding dependant)**
 - B. Gain a better understanding of AML sites by combining existing AML data into one database/data layer. **(FY 06, BLM, MDEP, resource dependant)**
 - C. Form partnerships to leverage funding and accomplish initiative goals. **(FY 06, BLM, ongoing, on track)**
- b. **Goal 15. Ensure the long-term protection of Mojave Ground Squirrel habitat and the viability of the species.**
 - A. Foster communication and coordination among participants and other interested parties to identify opportunities for collaborative action to further the acquisition, protection, restoration and management of MGS habitat. **(FY 06, CDFG/FWS/BLM/NPS/DOD/Kern County, ongoing)**

- B. Determine the extent of the MGS range. **(FY 06, CDFG/FWS/BLM/NPS/DOD/Kern County, ongoing)**
- C. Determine habitat type. **(FY 07, CDFG/FWS/BLM/NPS/DOD/Kern County, ongoing)**
- D. Develop an Adaptive Management Plan. **(FY 07, CDFG/FWS/BLM/NPS/DOD/Kern County, ongoing)**
- E. Develop and implement effective conservation measures to sustain long term viability of the species. **(FY 08, CDFG/FWS/BLM/NPS/DOD/Kern County, ongoing)**