



**Meeting Summary  
DMG Meeting  
November 28 and 28, 2007  
Ridgecrest**

The meeting agenda and list of attendees are attached (Attachments 1 and 2, respectively). The first day of the meeting was open to stakeholder attendance. *Major conclusions and action items are italicized.*

**Wednesday, November 28, 2007**

- **Welcome, Introductions and Administration** – Hector Villalobos (Ridgecrest BLM) and John O’Gara (NAWS China Lake), Co-Chairs for the meeting, welcomed the group to Ridgecrest on behalf of their respective agencies. Jon McQuiston (Kern County) also welcomed the group to Ridgecrest and his district. Jon stated that his office was available to provide administrative support to anyone requiring such. A brief administrative/logistical overview of the day’s activities was presented to the group. Introductions of all followed.
- **Ridgecrest BLM Overview** - Hector Villalobos (RIFO) provided an introductory Power Point presentation to the BLM’s Ridgecrest Field Office and its major resources and issues. OHV recreation, wild horse and burro management, and energy development were highlighted.
- **NAWS China Lake** – John O’Gara (NAWS) provided an introductory Power Point presentation to the Naval Air Weapons Station at China Lake. At over one-million acres, NAWS is the Navy’s largest land based facility. The mission of NAWS is to provide test ranges for weapons testing. The base provides habitat for a variety of listed species including Mojave ground squirrel, Inyo brown towhee, desert tortoise, and Mojave tui chub. Mojave tui chub was released into sewage ponds shortly prior to its listing in 1973. The base now manages the ponds and associated seeps as tui chub habitat. Their cultural resources program was also highlighted. Of particular interest was their curation facility, their cultural resources volunteer program and the restoration of an early military fort in the northern section of the base.
- **Desert Tortoise Information and Education**
  - **Public Attitude Survey** – Anne Staley (JOTR) introduced Dr. Jerry Vaske of Colorado State University who conducted the study. Dr. Vaske summarized his findings in a Power Point presentation (attached). Dr. Vaske’s complete report is available for download at [www.deserttortoise.gov](http://www.deserttortoise.gov).
  - **Work Group Update** – (Anne Staley) There is a Mojave Max costume on order. The costume will be used to promote the Mojave Max Contest. Anne is planning to attend and conduct outreach activities at 10 OHV events this year. Clark County has given the

DMG permission to use a DVD made to support environmental education for television public service announcements (PSAs). Anne is looking for a vendor who can remix sections of the DVD to make PSA's. The PSA will be sent to target audiences in Southern California. *She asked for assistance from agency PIOs who might have personal contacts with media outlets.* There are concerns with the California Desert Nature Festival (CDNF); we had planned to partner with the Natural Science Collaborative in holding the California Desert Nature Festival April 11 at the Living Desert in Palm Desert. This would meet our NFWF grant requirement. However, communication with the Natural Science Collaborative has been difficult. To date we have not met with the Collaborative and planning time is running out. Anne recommended that the DMG begin considering solely hosting the desert tortoise conference. A proposal will be developed at the upcoming *DTI&E work group meeting January 9, 2008*. The meeting will be held at Mojave National Preserve. Teacher training for the tortoise education trunks was held with twenty-five teachers in attendance. Currently, Wendy McIntyre has a trunk in Redlands where she will be testing it at the Redlands elementary schools. The Mojave Max contest is open. Stories have been gathered for the next edition of the Tortoise Times.

- **Program Funding** – Joe Zarki (JOTR) passed out a spreadsheet of FY08/09 DTI&E funding (attached). Currently there is a \$30k shortfall for Anne's labor in FY08. Unless additional funding is found, Anne will need to be pulled from the project. Many deliverables are planned to be produced in FY 08 and without Anne's dedicated support those deliverables will not be met. *Joe asked managers to consider solutions to the \$30k funding shortfall.*
- **Mojave Tui Chub**
  - **Downlisting Criteria** - Judy Hohman (VFWO) presented a short Power Point presentation (attached) on downlisting criteria for the Mojave tui chub. To downlist, five populations must be maintained for five years. Six is desirable in case one fails. Currently there are two populations. Three new sites have been located for populations: the Lewis Center, Mojave National Preserve, and San Bernardino National Forest. The Lewis Center in Victorville is raising money to improve Deppe Pond on their campus. They are removing cattails. There is also Gambusia that needs to be removed. The second location on San Bernardino National Forest is Coxie Pond located in the headwaters of Deep Creek. Deep Creek is a tributary to the Mojave River and is important to the historic population. Cattail removal is needed. Morningstar Mine is the third site in Mojave National Preserve. *One, preferably two more locations are still needed.*
  - **NAWS Populations** - John O'Gara (NAWS) described the mark-recapture and predator control programs at NAWS.
  - **Research Update** – (Debra Hughson, MOJA) Recent research indicated that the Asian tapeworm had a limited effect on the tui chub but did not cause mortality. Debra also described a study being conducted at the California Desert Information Center on hybridization. The public is interested in the project at the Information Center and people have come in asking to see the fish. Currently the tanks are in a back room but a display in the public area will be set up soon. Public support is critical for tui chub recovery. The fish quickly recovers once placed in a system with stable hydrology as evidenced at NAWS.

- **Mojave Ground Squirrel**
  - **Petition Status** – Judy Hohman (VFWO) provided a Power Point presentation (attached) discussing the FWS 90-day finding process. Currently the petition is awaiting review by the DOI Solicitor prior to being sent to Washington for publication in the Federal Register. Judy had no idea when Solicitor review would occur or what priority it was within the Solicitor’s office.
  - **The Road to Trona** – Becky Jones (CDFG) gave a Power Point presentation (attached) about the recent Mojave ground squirrel (MGS) trapping conducted by Caltrans in Poison Canyon along Trona Road. Last year Caltrans conducted trapping in ten grids and each grid contained MGS. Poison Canyon is not typical MGS habitat, as it was previously understood. The location is dominated by *Kochia americana*, which is a Chenopod. It is unknown if the Poison Canyon results are an anomaly but it does call into question our current knowledge of MGS habitat needs. More research is needed.
- **Stakeholder Comments**
  - Mike Skuja of Defenders of Wildlife made an announcement about a climate change workshop they are sponsoring February 8 in Joshua Tree. A handout (attached) was provided.
  - Gerry Hillier discussed several regional EISes dealing with energy transmission and asked for clarification between the proposals.
- The meeting adjourned for a field trip to Poison Canyon, Trona, Trona Pinnacles, and the BLM’s Wild Horse and Burro facility.

**Thursday, November 29, 2007**

- **Desert Tortoise Recovery Office**
  - **Recovery Plan Revision** - Jody Fraser (DTRO) provided an update of the recovery plan revision process. DTRO is currently working on incorporating comments on the recently released agency draft document. DTRO is also reviewing the comments from the open houses held in Redlands and Las Vegas. Implementation and the regional workgroups and how they will work was a major topic at the open houses.
  - **Monitoring** – (Linda Allison, DTRO) DTRO is preparing for FY08 monitoring. Linda provided a Power Point presentation (attached) outlining the field crew training. Linda made the point that Nevada was paying for development and implementation of the training. California will only need to pay crew time to attend the required training. Linda is hoping to survey 574 transects in California this year. ***Linda will be contacting you to discuss your agency funding contributions.***
- **Abandoned Mine Lands** – Bob Bryson (MOJA) provided an update of the abandoned mine lands (AML) initiative. Senator Feinstein has attached two line items to the Senate version of the Interior Appropriations bill that would provide funding for NPS and BLM AML safety mitigation measures in California during FY08. Because of continuing resolutions and concerns about what the final budget will look like, AML funding is uncertain and may well come late in the year, if at all. Nonetheless, NPS and BLM need to be ready to effectively handle this set of AML projects to provide justification for additional funding in FY09 or beyond. At the September meeting of the DMG AML work group, the discussion revolved around what was

needed to assist agencies in carrying out mine safety treatments, particularly in light of the possibility of funding in the short term. Streamlined NEPA/CEQA and National Historic Preservation Act (NHPA) compliance were identified as immediate needs. Bob and BLM State Archaeologist Ken Wilson will be meeting with staff of the State Historic Preservation Office (SHPO) to develop a programmatic agreement for AML closures of various types. In lieu of developing a multiagency programmatic agreement, one will be developed that each agency can adopt. Bob will also be developing templates that could be incorporated into NEPA/CEQA documents. Linda Manning from Death Valley is working with Lake Mead to develop an AML database. BLM is developing a CDD AML strategy. There is a need to prioritize AML projects across the desert so we are not competing against ourselves for limited California Department of Conservation matching funds. Russell will schedule an AML meeting for January to develop an initial plan for a “strike team” approach to implementation of closures.

- **Joint Land Use Study** – John O’Gara (NAWS) presented a Power Point presentation of the Joint Land Use Study (JLUS) for R-2508. JLUS is a DOD funded undertaking that is usually associated with a BRAC action or areas of incompatible use. The R-2508 JLUS involves China Lake, Edwards, and Ft. Irwin and covers 20k square-miles. Phase I of the JLUS is a broad-brush overview of the issues. A series of agency and public workshops were outlined in the Power Point presentation. Phase Two of the JLUS will focus more specifically on coordination. The impacts of the proposed Primm Airport are of specific concern for R2508 and NPS.
- **Stakeholder Comments**
  - Gerry Hillier asked who from San Bernardino County was participating in JLUS. Randy Scott is. Gerry would like to participate in the Conservation Acquisition Work Group. He indicated concerns over a loss of payment in lieu of tax by San Bernardino County. Russell will add Gerry’s name to the email list. Lastly, Gerry asked if anyone knew of a SERDP proposal for Desert Tortoise at Ft Irwin. No one had specifics at the time but Clarence later located the proposal (attached).

### **DMG Executive Session**

- **Alternative Energy** (Al Stein-CDDO) Handouts were distributed showing current BLM energy right of way applications. Maps showing application and Mojave ground squirrel core habitat and conservation areas as well as DWMA and ACECs were also distributed. Steve Borchard and Al explained the BLM planning process as it related to energy development. Discussion ensued relating to energy development in core habitat of sensitive species. ***BLM will send a letter to CDFG inviting them to participate in the Energy Strike Team.***
- **Raven EA Implementation** (Carl Benz and Judy Hohman-VFWO) The FONSI and decision record for the EA has not been signed because the EA is awaiting review by the DOI Solicitor in Sacramento. We cannot implement lethal control until the FONSI and DR are signed. Judy discussed the need for \$35k to implement a database of all old raven nesting data. Existing agency data (primarily BLM) of raven nesting and tortoise predation from the 1980s and 1990s would be mined and compiled and be used to plan implementation of lethal control. Steve Borchard (BLM) questioned the need for the database based on its actual usefulness and its high

cost. *After discussion, it was decided that agencies should see what data they actually have prior to investing in a data mining effort.*

Robert McMoran no longer works for VFWO's Desert Division so Carl will be assigning the raven project to someone new. *Once a new workgroup chair is identified, a meeting will be held with stakeholders to begin planning non-lethal control measures.* Judy announced that there would be a meeting December 13, 2007 with Bill Boarman in Mojave to develop protocols for landfill monitoring. The meeting will begin at 9:30 and be held at the Mojave Airport.

- **Activation of the Hawes Radio Relay Site and Runway for UAV use** (Bob Wood and Commander, 95<sup>th</sup> ABW, Edwards AFB) A presentation was provided Managers on the intent of Edwards AFB to reopen the WWII Hawes Radio Relay Site for use as an unmanned aerial vehicle training area. Existing WWII facilities will be demolished with moderate improvement to existing runways occurring.
- **DMG 5 Year Plan Review** Russell Scofield (DOI DMG Coordinator) outlined a process for reviewing the current DMG 5 Year Plan. Managers approved the process outlined.
- **Next Meetings**
  - Spring meeting: 28 – 29 May, 2008      Host: Marine Corps Air Ground Combat Center, Twentynine Palms
  - Summer meeting: 20 – 21 August, 2008      Host: Camp Pendleton, Oceanside, CA.
  - Fall meeting: 19 – 20 November, 2008      Host: USFWS DTRO