



**Summary
DMG Meeting
27 – 28 April, 2005
Ridgecrest, CA**

1. The meeting agenda and list of attendees are attached (attachment 1 and 2, respectively). The first day of the meeting was open to stakeholder attendance. *Major conclusions and action items are italicized.*
2. **Day 1 – 27 April, 2005**
 - 2.1. **Welcome, Introductions and Administration** – John O’Gara and Hector Villalobos, honorary Co-Chairs for the meeting, and Don Maben (Kern County Board of Supervisors) welcomed the group to Ridgecrest on behalf of their respective agencies. A brief administrative/logistical overview of the day’s activities was presented to the group.
 - 2.2. **NAWS China Lake Overview** – CAPT. Gleason, Executive Officer of the installation, provided an overview outlining the mission of the installation as well as those natural, cultural and compliance activities currently being administered on the base. CAPT. Gleason stressed the collaborative nature/approach being used by the installation to accomplish these activities.
 - 2.3. **BLM Ridgecrest Overview** – Hector Villalobos, the BLM Ridgecrest Resource Area Manager, provided an overview of BLM activities occurring on the lands he is responsible for. Hector focused on conservation activities, recreational opportunities, and the collaborative nature by which his office effects land management.
 - 2.4. **Habitat Restoration and Illegal Dump Report** (Russell Scofield)
 - 2.4.1. **Habitat restoration** – The Nature Conservancy and the National Fish and Wildlife Foundation (NFWF) are funding restoration work on the Amargosa River. The San Sebastian Wash area is the next priority area for receiving funding. The deadline for submitting funding grants to NFWF for this project is the end of May. *An announcement identifying a meeting date to begin development of a work plan for this project is due out shortly. Field*

offices owe comments to Russell on the funding strategies outlined in the Riparian Challenge document. The final riparian strategy document is due out the end of June.

- 2.4.2. **Low Desert Weed Management Area** – The group was provided and overview of the current status of the effort to establish a low desert WMA. This effort is moving forward slowly but positively.
 - 2.4.3. **Saharan Mustard Workshop** – With the significant rainfall experienced in the desert this year an enormous bloom of Saharan Mustard, an invasive plant, is occurring throughout the desert. A workshop, to be held in late summer or early fall, was proposed to address this pervasive species. The focus of the workshop will be to discuss the issue of how to best apply the limited resources available to agencies to address this species – on research efforts or against on the ground removal activities. It is hoped the results of the workshop will help focus future research priorities for the species. Funding is already available for the workshop and there would be no participant cost to attend. *The DMG agreed to help sponsor the workshop and further agreed to allow Russell to support the effort. The DMG recommended the workshop planning group get the counties involved as well.*
- 2.5. **Valley Wells Rest Area Design and Next Steps** – John Hamill and Craig Mattson provided a summary of the project to date (enclosed). Ray Dresselle presented a drawing depicting the results of the final conceptual design plan for the Valley Wells rest area. This successful process has resulted in Caltrans adopting this process throughout the state for the redesign of all their aging roadside rest areas. Work on the Valley Wells rest area is scheduled to begin in mid May. The Boron rest area is next on the list for refurbishment.
- 2.6. **Mojave Ground Squirrel Conservation**
- 2.6.1. **California Department of Fish and Game** (Becky Jones) – The Mojave Ground Squirrel is a California state listed species. Research on population status has been ongoing for several years. Concerns exist in the environmental community over the perceived lack of a good conservation strategy for the species. CDFG believes if a good conservation strategy can be developed, litigation and a petition to list the species under the ESA by outside parties can be avoided. The informational presentation provided to the DMG by CDFG identified the range of the species, identified core populations based on existing knowledge, and focused on military and BLM lands located within the range of the species, and their importance to the existence of the species.
 - 2.6.2. **Bureau of Land Management** (Larry LaPre) – BLM provided an informational presentation to the DMG outlining the management prescriptions, contained in the West Mojave Plan, for conserving the species. Little research and surveying has been done to date by the BLM for the species. The corollary Habitat Conservation Plan (HCP) would eliminate

surveys for the species on private lands. Mitigation fees would be charged for development actions in ground squirrel habitat with the use of these funds to support ground squirrel conservation as determined by local governments. *It was recommended that a military coordination group be formed to discuss Mojave ground squirrel issues. It was noted that a Mojave ground squirrel management group already exists.*

2.7. Stakeholder Comments

- 2.7.1. A member of the Ridgecrest general public attending the meeting asked a general question about local government spending of mitigation funds for the Mojave ground squirrel was asked by stakeholders present. It was articulated that the HCP corollary to the West Mojave Plan is still under development and the process of prioritizing and spending mitigation funds was not yet completely work out. It was stated each city, county, and private government entity would need to pass its own ordinances with respect to fees associated with the HCP. Funds could potentially be pooled under a Joint Powers Authority if one were developed or be held by local jurisdictions. The current thought is that funding committees would be established to decide funding priorities under the HCP. It was estimated finalization of this process is still a year away.
- 2.7.2. **John Stewart** (CA 4 Wheel Drive Association) – Mr. Stewart encouraged CALTRANS to look at rest area refurbishment from a multi-user perspective. Many rest areas do not have sufficient motor home docks for waste water drainage. Many people passing through rest areas are enroute to OHV areas. He wanted to know if it was possible to include OHV safety of use messages as part of the rest area development process.
- 2.7.3. **Chirs Spofera** (San Diego Off Road Coalition) – Mr. Spofera recommended the use of newspaper dispensers to disseminate paper materials. He supports the inclusion of additional motor home dump stations at rest areas. He further stated that rest areas are frequent havens for aviary pests such as ravens. He recommended CALTRANS look into “bird proof” trash containers to address this issue.

2.8. Desert Tortoise Recovery Action Reports

- 2.8.1. **Desert Tortoise Education and Outreach Project Update** (Curt Sauer) – The Outreach Coordinator position description was released and the position is actively being recruited. The Education and Information work group met and reviewed its charter. A teleconference is scheduled for 11 May for the work group to discuss and finalize plans for a public attitude survey. *John Hamill will forward the revised work group charter to Managers. Managers agreed to a two week timeline to provide any comments or changes to the proposed charter. The work group will finalize and publish the charter following the two week comment period.*

- 2.8.2. **Feral Dogs** (Glenn Black) – Mr. Leo Grillo from D.E.L.T.A Rescue provided a short video tape of his animal rescue facilities and articulated his organizations mission and operations. He articulated his willingness to work with the DMG in addressing feral dog issues.
- 2.8.3. **Raven EA** (Amy Fesnock) – An overview of an EA screening form, modified to meet the diverse requirements of DMG member agencies, was provided to the group. Each member agency needs to review the form, approve and sign it, and return it to Amy at Joshua Tree National Park. A question was asked whether tribes had been contacted with regard to the EA development. It was articulated that information about the project was disseminated to tribes initially and once the EA is completed will be sent to the tribes again. *Managers agreed to review and concur with the scope and direction of the EA as described in the Environmental Screening Form by signing or commenting on the form by 16 May. The next teleconference for the work group is scheduled for 17 May.*
- 2.8.4. **Desert Tortoise Recovery Planning Implementation Work Group** (John Hamill) – The work group charter identifying duties, responsibilities, and members was reviewed for Managers. The elements for the proposed recovery action plans were identified and the relationship between the Univ. of Redlands recovery action assessment and the proposed recovery action plans articulated. Roy Averill-Murray described the Nature Conservancy Threats Assessment model the group will use to prioritize threats and their associated recovery actions. *The threats assessment sub work group will meet on 5 May to discuss the first workshop which will focus on the east Mojave desert in California. The main work group's next meeting is scheduled for 12 May. The group will finalize its charter, finalize the threats assessment workshop, discuss stakeholder participation in the process and develop appropriate guidelines, and address the role of the DTRO Science Advisory Committee in the recovery action plan development process for DMG review and approval.*

2.9. Next Meetings

- 2.9.1. The summer DMG meeting will be held in Ventura, CA. on 27 and 28 July 2005. US Fish and Wildlife Service will host the summer meeting.
- 2.9.2. The fall DMG meeting will be held either at the Mission Inn in Riverside, CA. or in Primm, NV. depending on facility availability. Meeting dates are 5 and 6 October 2005 and Mojave National Preserve will serve as host.

2.10. Stakeholder Comments

- 2.10.1. **John Steward** (CA 4 Wheel Drive Association) – Mr. Stewart thanked the DMG for the opportunity to provide comments. He articulated that it is often difficult to get constituents to participate in and support projects and convince them it is for their own good.

2.10.2. **Stan** (Ridgecrest citizen) – Complimented BLM for their work on the issue of OHV trespass on private property. Stated this is a widespread problem that needs to be addressed on a much broader scale. Asked the group to support California Bill AB 8106 which would increase law enforcement capability to cite OHV users for riding in the wrong areas.

2.11. **Field trip to Petroglyph Canyon, NAWA China Lake**

3. **Day 2, 28 April 2005**

3.1. **Follow-up from Day 1** – None.

3.2. **DMG Update**

3.2.1. **5 Year Plan** - The new DMG's FY04 Accomplishments Report and FY05 Five Year Plan, dated March 2005, was distributed to all Managers present and copies made available to the public.

3.2.2. **County government participation in the DMG** – Managers were briefed that San Bernardino County, Kern County, and Imperial County have accepted the DMG's invitation to become members of the group. All three counties have complied by either providing a letter or adopting a board resolution to participate in the group and provide a county supervisor as their respective representative. *In its acceptance letter, Imperial County requested the QuadState County Government Coalition be allowed to attend DMG closed session meetings. The DMG unanimously agreed not to allow QuadState County Government Coalition to attend DMG closed session meetings and requested that John Hamill and Clarence Everly respond in writing to the Imperial County request.*

3.2.3. **Wilderness Training** – The Managers were provided an overview of the numbers of participants attending the DMG sponsored wilderness training sessions conducted in January and February of this year. Thanks was extended to Chris Barnes (Carhart Center), Paul Brink, Chris Roholt and Major Jon Aytes for providing the training to DMG member agencies.

3.2.4. **Upcoming Events**

3.2.4.1. Desert Tortoise Recovery Planning and Implementation Work Group threat assessments sub work group meeting 5 May at the Univ. of Redlands.

3.2.4.2. Feral Dog Work Group meeting 9 May at the Mojave National Preserve in Barstow.

3.2.4.3. Desert Tortoise Recovery Planning and Implementation Work Group meeting 12 May at the Mojave National Preserve in Barstow.

3.2.4.4. Raven EA Work Group meeting 17 May; teleconference.

3.2.4.5. Amargosa River meeting 18 May at Death Valley National Park.

3.2.4.6. DMG Executive Coordination meeting 24 May at the Mission Inn in Riverside.

- 3.2.5. **Scenic Byways Feasibility Meeting** – The DMG Five Year Plan states the group will look at this process to see if it is feasible to designate appropriate locations as scenic byways. *Members of this ad hoc work group include Craig Mattson, Bob Wood, CALTRANS, Curt Sauer, and the Mojave RC&D. BLM will designate a participant at a later date. Don Maben recommended the Autoclub be contacted to determine if they have any interest in participating in this effort. John Hamill will coordinate a meeting date of this group for sometime in June 2005.*
- 3.2.6. **Californiadeserts.gov website** – An ad hoc work group meeting involving James Woolsey, Gary Hatch, Craig Mattson, Gloria Mender, and Eric Boerner will be scheduled to discuss methods to make the website current and determine how to keep it current. The group will discuss whether to bring in tourist groups as participants in this process and make a recommendation to the DMG. The website is featured on CALTRANS rest area posters.
- 3.3. **Kinder Morgan Pipeline Spill – lessons learned** (John Key) – The group was provided a presentation outlining the cause and consequences of the fuel line spill. The presentation emphasized the collaborative nature of the work required to remediate the site once the spill was stopped.
- 3.4. **California Desert Conservation Fund** - Claire Thorpe provided an overview of the National Fish and Wildlife Fund (NFWF) and the proposed California Desert Conservation Fund (CDCF) which would be established to support the goals of the DMG. NFWF is seeking a \$115K grant from the Resources Legacy Foundation to establish and grow the CDCF. It was articulated that DMG members would be included in the governance of the CDCF including having a DMG representative on the CDCF advisory board which will guide and prioritize proposals for approval of funding. DMG Managers agreed to support NFWF efforts to establish the conservation fund. Mary Martin stated she will verbally pass on the DMG's support to Jim Maddy. *John Hamill and Clarence Everly were tasked to develop and sign an official letter of support from the DMG for the effort and send to Jim Maddy.*
- 3.5. **Mojave Desert Historic Resources GIS** (Bob Bryson) – The Managers were provided a short overview of the history of the project. Current status of the project was also articulated as being on track. The SHPO continues to be very supportive in the execution of this effort. It was proposed that the DMG hold another Native American law training class. Linda Hanson stated BLM managers are periodically trained in updated protocols for Native American consultations and are currently up to date. Bob Bryson articulated NPS has a programmatic agreement with the California SHPO to assist them in rapidly dealing with cultural resource issues. A second proposal was put forward to conduct a review of the basis in law by which each of the different DMG agencies deals with native American/cultural resource issues and base a training

event on this information. *Bob Bryson and Russell Kaldenburg were tasked to brainstorm both proposals and make a recommendation to the DMG.*

3.6. **USGS Science and Research Report** (Karen Phillips) – The managers were given a presentation providing a brief overview of the many ongoing USGS science projects in the desert along with the current status of each. Project report summaries can be found at www.werc.usgs.gov. A copy of the presentation is enclosed.

3.7. **DMG Charter and MOU**

3.7.1. **DMG Charter** (Everly) – The managers conducted a line by line review of changes proposed to the DMG charter. Recommended changes were incorporated into the second revision of the document. The revised document is located at enclosure _.

3.7.2. **DMG MOU** (Hamill) – The managers conducted a line by line review of the DMG's implementing MOU. *The Managers agreed the MOU should be signed by regional/local executives. The Managers also agreed the MOU should have a 5 year timeline for review purposes but that no expiration data should be articulated in the document. Managers requested a paragraph articulating requirements for how a member agency leaves the group be added to the document. The Coordinators were tasked to make the recommended changes to both the Charter and MOU for review by the DMG and discussion at the upcoming DMG Executive Coordination meeting. The revised MOU and Charter are attached.*

3.8. **Spanish Trail** – A representative of NPS and BLM provided an overview of the development of a management plan for the Spanish Trail.

3.9. **Desert Tortoise**

3.9.1. **Monitoring and Blood Sampling Update** (Roy Averill-Murray)

3.9.1.1. **Blood Sampling** - The controversy surrounding toe nail clipping versus brachial sticks for obtaining blood samples from desert tortoise continues. Toe nail clipping is being used in Nevada, Utah, and Arizona. Brachial sticks are being used in California except in Mojave National Preserve where no blood sampling is being permitted by NPS.

3.9.1.2. **Line Distance Sampling Data** – Difficulty in providing quality control of LDS data continues to be the problem holding up LDS reports. It is anticipated that quality review of all 2001 – 2004 LDS data will be completed by late spring or early summer. The USFWS Desert Tortoise Recovery Office (DTRO) is planning a Line Distance Sampling workshop for the fall timeframe. The focus of the workshop will be to discuss the existing LDS data and the analyses derived for it with Managers and resource specialists. Additionally, the workshop

will serve as a discussion and coordination forum for FY06 LDS monitoring.

3.9.1.3. **Monitoring Agreement/MOU** (Hamill) – The desert tortoise GAO report outlined the need to establish coordination and establish responsibilities between DOD and DOI agencies for monitoring the species. The DTRPAC report identified and expanded need for an effective monitoring program. Additionally, there has been a lot of discussion about database development, data management and agency responsibilities associated with these topics. However, no solid actions, plans, or reports have been developed to address these issues. Currently, land management agencies provide funding for on-the-ground monitoring. USFWS has the responsibility for monitoring processes, data management, data analysis, and reporting. Perhaps the newly established DTRPIWG is a good place to begin looking at the integration of these processes into an overarching program articulated via an MOU. Hamill proposed a MOU (enclosed) to articulate the roles and responsibilities of the various parties in funding and execution of the desert tortoise monitoring program in California. *Managers agreed to table the MOU discussion for the moment and bring it back for discussion after the Fall monitoring workshop.*

3.9.1.4. **Desert Tortoise Recovery Coordination** (Roy Averill-Murray) – A desert tortoise Management Oversight Group meeting is scheduled for 29 June 2005 at the USGS building in Henderson, NV. The desert tortoise Science Advisory Committee inaugural meeting is scheduled for 16 and 17 May, 2005 in Reno, NV.

3.10. **DMG Executive Coordination meeting** (Hamill) – The DMG Executive Coordination meeting will occur on 24 May, 2005 at the Mission Inn in Riverside, CA. *The proposed agenda was reviewed and approved by the Managers. Bob Wood agreed to host the cultural resources accomplishments session on the agenda. Linda Hanson and Bob Williams will host the natural resources accomplishments session. Hamill and Everly will conduct the DMG overview and program management portions of the agenda.*

3.11. **California Desert Interagency Fire Operations Plan** (Tom Patterson) – This discussion was tabled until after adjournment of the days meeting.