Meeting Summary
Coordination of DT Recovery Actions in California
November 8, 2004
BLM Office, Moreno Valley, CA

Purpose:

1. Define the mission, responsibilities, and membership of the proposed DMG Desert Tortoise Implementation Planning Work Group
2. Agree on the purpose, scope and desired outcome of the proposed side by side comparison of the desert tortoise recovery actions identified in DOD, NPS, and BLM land management plans, FWS Biological Opinions, and the DT Recovery Plan Assessment Report.
3. Define/clarify the relationship of the DMG to various agency processes and organizations involved with planning and implementation of recovery, monitoring, and research activities for the desert tortoise in California.
4. Identify gaps and overlaps in agency processes and organizations associated with planning and implementation of recovery, monitoring, and research activities for the desert tortoise in California.
5. Define role and responsibility of the DMG planning and implementation of recovery, monitoring, and research activities for the desert tortoise in California
6. Determine efficient method for integrating management and research needs.
7. Identify opportunities for increasing funding to support DT recovery and effectiveness monitoring

Participants:

- FWS: Bob Williams, Ray Bransfield
- BLM: Linda Hansen, Dick Crowe
- Edwards AFB: Shannon Collis
- NPS: Mary Martin, Larry Whalon, Debra Hughson
- GS: Todd Esque
- CDFG: Becky Jones
- University of Redlands: Paul Burgess, et al
- DMG: Clarence Everly and John Hamill

Results and Conclusions:

1. **New developments and updates.** Bob Williams discussed the letter that FWS intends to send to the MOG outlining a strategy for implementation of DT Recovery Actions (attached).

2. **Proposed DT Implementation and Planning Work Group**. A charter for the work group was developed and agreed to by the group (attached). The only unresolved issue is how to address stakeholder involvement in the process. Three options were identified:
   a. Establish a public involvement work group that would report to the DTRO
   b. Require interested stakeholders to submit a resolution of support as a condition of participating in the work group

c. Conduct scoping meetings to gather stakeholder input at appropriate times in the planning process.

No agreement was reached. However, the majority favored option 2(c). The revised charter and options for stakeholder participation will be presented to the DMG for a final decision

3. **Recovery Action Evaluation**: The University of Redlands agreed to conduct a side by side comparison of the desert tortoise recovery, research, and monitoring actions identified in DOD, NPS, and BLM land management plans, the Desert Tortoise Recovery Plan, and the DT Recovery Plan Assessment Report. The results of the Evaluation will be used to identify high priority actions to implement in the next 5 years and to develop the step down implementation plan for inclusion in the revised DT Recovery Plan. The group agreed to the following changes to the scope of work prepared by the University of Redlands (attached):
    a. Recovery, monitoring, and research actions (including studies) will be identified and evaluated. All relevant information about the actions should be captured for potential future use.
    b. No GIS analysis will be conducted (at least initially)
    c. Biological opinions on the various plans will NOT be evaluated
    d. In lieu of reviewing INRMPS, appropriate individuals at each military installation will be interviewed to summarize current and anticipated DT recovery research and monitoring activities (including studies/tests). Clarence Everly will identify the appropriate contact at each base.
    e. The revised Biological Assessment for the NTC expansion will be reviewed.
    f. Points of contact for Redlands include: Ray Bransfield (FWS); Dick Crowe (BLM); and Mary Martin (NPS)
    g. Redlands should evaluate the BLM WEMO management plan last, after the plan has been finalized.
    h. Redlands will complete a trial/pilot comparison of the BLM NECO management plan and the DT Recovery Plan and present to the group for review and comment.
    i. Dick Crowe will send a copy of the "NECO DT Analysis" to the Group.

The group requested the University of Redlands proceed with the evaluation of recovery actions. Redlands agreed to proceed.

4. **Relationship of the DMG to other organizations/agency processes**. The Group briefly discussed the relationship/role of the DMG to various other organizations/agency processes related to DT recovery planning and implementation. With the establishment of the DT Implementation/Planning Work Group, the role the DMG will to provide leadership in establishing priorities, reviewing progress, and evaluating effectiveness of recovery actions. In addition, the DMG will provide leadership in coordinating the implementation actions with are multi jurisdictional or have a broad geographic scope e.g., monitoring, raven management, etc. The group also discussed a possible DMG DT annual work planning process (attached), however, no conclusion or recommendation was reached. In addition, opportunities for increasing funding to support DT recovery and effectiveness monitoring (goal 7 above) and the specific relationship of the DMG to

the West Mojave Plan, other BLM land management plans, the Fort Irwin Mitigation Group and specific agency planning/budgeting/decision making processes was not discussed. These issues will be discussed at future meeting pending DMG approval.

5. **Proposed DT Science Committee:** The group reiterated their support for the proposal by FWS to establish a DT Science Committee under the direction of USGS and encourage FWS and USGS to establish the group in time to support the activities of the DT Planning/Implementation Work Group.

6. **Conclusion and next steps:** Results and recommendations developed at the meeting will be presented to the DMG on Jan 12-13 for final approval. The group requested the University of Redlands proceed with the evaluation of recovery actions. Additional meetings of the work group will be scheduled pending further direction by the DMG.

Charter
Desert Tortoise Implementation/Planning Work Group

Responsibilities:

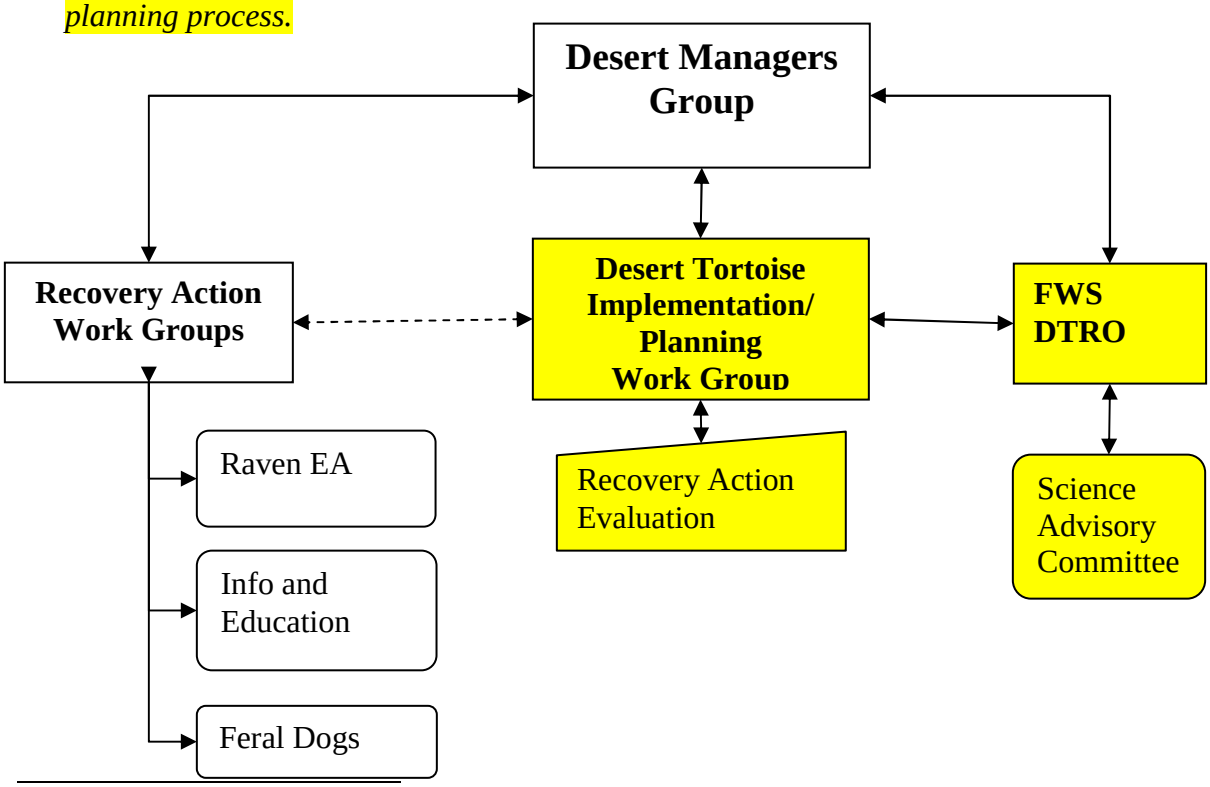
- Oversee mgt plan/recovery action assessment[1]
- Prioritize recovery, *monitoring, and research* actions for approval by the DMG
- Develop a step down desert tortoise recovery action implementation plan for inclusion in the revised DT Recovery Plan
- Annually review progress, evaluate effectiveness, and develop a coordinated DT recovery action work plan
- *Effectively gather and integrate stakeholder input to the process*

Membership

- Agency senior level biologists/resource specialists
- FWS-DTRO Coordinator (staff support)
- GS Science Committee representative
- *One or two managers from the DMG*

Stakeholder Involvement Options:

- *Establish a public involvement work group that would report to the DTRO*
- *Require interested stakeholders to submit a resolution of support as a condition of participating in a DMG work group (see attached)*
- *Conduct scoping meetings to gather stakeholder input at appropriate times in the planning process.*



[1] **Recovery Action Evaluation**: The University of Redlands will conduct a side by side comparison of the desert tortoise recovery, monitoring, and research actions identified in DOD, NPS, and BLM land management plans, the DT Recovery Plan (1994) and the DT Recovery Plan Assessment Report. The results of the Evaluation will be used to identify high priority actions to implement in the next 5 years and to develop the step down implementation plan for inclusion in the revised DT Recovery Plan. The evaluation will also identify where collaboration and cooperation among various land managers is necessary/possible.

Attachment
Resolution Concerning Participation in DMG Work Groups

Whereas:

1. The mission of the DMG is to
   a. Develop coordinated and complimentary management guidelines, practices, and programs.
   b. Coordinate and integrate efforts in the California deserts to:
      1. Conserve and restore desert resources
      2. Provide high quality recreation, public education, and visitor services
      3. Provide for safety of desert users
   c. Develop and integrate the databases and scientific studies needed for effective resource management and planning.
   d. Promote compatibility in the application of each agency's mission.

2. The DMG operates under the following principles:
   a. Agencies participating in the DMG will work to create opportunities and develop partnerships to effectively and efficiently manage resources.
   b. Participating agencies recognize their responsibility to keep the public informed and provide opportunities for comment on DMG activities and initiatives.

3. The DMG Charter (June 2000) indicates that Federal, State, local, and tribal government agencies that are not members of the DMG may serve as members of the DMG Work Groups, subject to approval of the DMG.

4. DMG Stakeholder Involvement Guidelines (June 16, 2004) indicate that
   a. Members of the general public and representatives of Non Government Organizations who have expertise in the mission of the work group may attend a DMG work group meetings and comment on Work Group activities.
   b. Stakeholders should indicate their interest in participating in a work group in writing to the DOI or DOD Coordinator.

Be it resolved that:

1. (name of organization, group or individual) has a direct interest in (DMG Goal) .

2. The DMG established (name) Work Group to coordinate implementation of (DMG Goal) .

Now therefore be it resolved that (name of organization, group, or individual):

a. requests an active role in participation in the (Name) Work Group
b. agrees to work cooperatively and in good faith to achieve the goals of the (Name) Work Group
c. Nominates (name) to participate in (Name) Work Group meetings and activities. The resume of (name) is attached.

Approved:
(Signature, Name, title, date, Requestor)

Approved:
(Signature, Name, title, date, DMG)

Attachment
University of Redlands
Scope of Work
Proposed Evaluation of Desert Tortoise Recovery Actions: An assessment of land management plans for the California Mojave

Scope of Work

The Redlands Institute (RI) will conduct a side by side comparison of the desert tortoise recovery actions identified in DOD, NPS, and BLM land management plans, FWS Biological Opinions, and the DT Recovery Plan Assessment Report. The results of the Evaluation will be used to identify high priority actions to implement in the next 5 years and to develop the step down implementation plan for inclusion in the revised the DT Recovery Plan. The evaluation will also identify where collaboration and cooperation among various land managers is necessary.

Tasks/Timeframe

Acquire Documents and Geographic Data (11-12/04)

- Determine which documents will be included in the assessment
- Acquire most recent documents
- Scan documents as necessary
- Assess GIS data needs and acquire data

Review Documents (11/04-1/05)

- Determine what types of actions will be assessed
- Develop schema for characterizing recovery actions (action type, implementing agency, implementation time-frame, location, funding, partners, monitoring strategy, etc)
- Develop method for locating and extracting relevant content from documents
- Develop tools for organizing, managing and reporting extracted content
- Review documents, capture relevant content
- Quality Control

Present Preliminary Findings (2-3/05)

- This will likely be delivered as a database with an interface for specifying queries and generating reports
- Solicit feedback from managers. "Ground Truth" plans against agency intentions. Incorporate activities not specified in plans. Verify that relevant information is being captured.

Develop Data Viewer (3-4/05)

- Assess user requirements. Design data viewer.
- Develop prototype viewer application. Viewer permits exploration of recovery actions geographically.
- Application testing/user validation. The prototype is used for application testing and validation with the users. It uses a sub-set of the data collected during document review.

- Develop release version. Release version will permit both tabular and geographic exploration of data through simple a user interface. It will incorporate all content generated during the assessment.
- Identify most appropriate distribution method (internet, CD-ROM, hard copy, etc)

Release Data Viewer (4-5/05)

- Present viewer to user group. Demonstrate functionality.
- Assess need for long-term maintenance and stewardship of this type of a system.

Required Near Term Support from DT Recovery Action Workgroup

- Designate points of contact from participating agencies
- Provide needed plans/Biological Opinions
- Prioritize plans for review
- Assist in schema development (for characterizing recovery actions)
- Provide 'ground truth' of plans

Deliverables

- Digital copies of All Plans/B.O.'s
- Database of recovery actions with user friendly interface for data exploration and simple analysis
- Map-based viewer for exploring geographic relationships between planned actions
- Prototype for long-term tracking and assessment of recovery activities

Appendix A: List of Issues and Considerations

1) Definition of recovery action (direct and indirect benefit to tortoises)

Refer to *Recovery Plan* to 'bound' definition of recovery actions

2) Determining scale of a recovery effort

one-off vs. long-term recovery action; cost, investment are possible measures of effort

3) Percent of planned actions included in the plans

Are there other planned actions not described in the plan?

4) Plan implementation

Are the plans being implemented? Are they the best source of information for planned activities?

5) Links to effectiveness of actions (monitoring)

Should we capture whether or not the effectiveness of the actions will be monitored?

6) Analyzing Biological Opinions vs. Management Plans

Are the BO's a better source of information on planned activities than the plans themselves?

7) Operating budgets to implement plans

Should this be captured? If so, how?

8) Association between actions and locations

How do we capture the geographic reference for a planned action? This will be multi-scaled (i.e. action implemented throughout DT range vs. an action at a specific location)

9) Plan versions

We may want to look at how a revised plan or draft plan differs from the final, recommended plan

10) Must be an iterative process

Analysis should be done in stages and should be adaptive to work group needs

11) Methodology for analyzing plans

There are different approaches that ought to be investigated; consider group review to establish common approach for interpreting plans; start with a straw man method and adapt as we learn

12) Database design/knowledge management

13) Develop a schema for classifying information; design a system for capturing it

14) Consistency in plan interpretation

How do we ensure that we're interpreting the plans in the same way?

Mission of Various Organizations Involved with Planning, Coordinating, or Implementing Desert Tortoise Recovery, Monitoring, or Research Activities in the California Desert

October 6, 2004

1. **DT Management Oversight Group**
   - Provides general guidance and coordination of desert tortoise recovery actions (research, monitoring, and funding) throughout the range of the desert tortoise.
   - Periodically reviews the status of the species and identifies range-wide high priority research and monitoring actions.
   - Tracks the accomplishment of desert tortoise conservation within each of the States and land management jurisdictions.
   - Provides guidance to local managers on priority actions needed to further the recovery of the species in that State and or local planning area.
   - Serves as forum to provide comments and recommendations to the Fish and Wildlife Service on implementation of the current Recovery Plan and during any revision or amendment to the current Plan.

2. **Fort Irwin Mitigation Working Group**
   - Evaluates proposals for land acquisition and other conservation measures to ensure they provide for adequate conservation of the species to reduce or offset the impacts of the proposed expansion of the NTC. The FWS, after consultation with the Working Group, makes the final determination as to whether any specific conservation measure is appropriate and should be funded with the authorized appropriations.

3. **West Mojave Plan Implementation Group** (Proposed)
   - Oversees the implementation of the West Mojave habitat conservation plan Major component of the West Mojave Plan related to DT include:
     - Land acquisition
     - Feral Dog Management
     - Disease management
     - Headstarting
     - Law enforcement
     - DT fencing
     - Raven management
     - Education and outreach
     - Grazing management/ retirement
   - **Note:** Similar Implementation Groups are proposed for the other BLM Planning units in the Cal Deserts (e.g., NECO, NEMO)

4. **FWS DT Recovery Office**
   - The FWS DTRO will be led by a Desert Tortoise recovery coordinator, located in Reno, who will supervise between two to three "local coordinators." These local coordinators will be located in various Service field offices (or with other cooperating entities)

throughout the range that coincide as much as possible with State geographic boundaries. This office and its staff will not have regulatory responsibilities (e.g., section 7 consultation, HCPs, etc.). Instead, it will focus exclusively on research, monitoring, and recovery action implementation. The primary responsibility of the DTRO will be to provide the staff support and momentum working with stakeholders to implement desert tortoise recovery actions range-wide. The local coordinator will be responsible for data management and coordination with researchers and land managers in his or her area, ensuring that monitoring information or data and reports from that area are incorporated into the centralized data base maintained by the DTRO.

5. **FWS Science Advisory Committee**
   - Provide expertise and advice to the DTRO and the MOG and DMG on specific subject matters related to the recovery of the species and its habitat. The SAC will be comprised of researchers from academia and the public with specific subject matter expertise.

6. **Desert Tortoise Monitoring Implementation Committee**
   - oversees and improve implementation of the DT Line Distance Sampling effort, including developing QA/QC procedures

7. **California Desert Managers Group**
   - Develops coordinated and complimentary management guidelines, practices, and programs.
   - Coordinate and integrate efforts in the California Desert to:
     - Conserve and restore desert resources
     - Provide high quality recreation, public education and visitor services
     - Provide for safety of desert users
   - Develop and integrate the databases and scientific studies needed for effective resource management and planning.
   - Promote compatibility in the application of each agency's mission

   Note: *The DMG has 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 is also addressing the role and responsibilities of the DMG in the planning and implementation of recovery, monitoring, and research activities for the desert tortoise in California*

8. **Agency Budget Processes**
   To varying degrees, each land and resource management agency/office currently sets priorities and budgets for desert tortoise recovery, monitoring and research activities. The relationship of agency/office priorities and budget processes to the responsibilities of the above organizations is unclear.

Possible
DT Annual Work Planning Process
Coordinated through the DMG

1. The DMG DT Implementation Planning Work Group will review and prioritize recovery, monitoring, and research actions (based on actions included in existing agency land management plans) for the east and west Mojave recovery units. Priorities will be reviewed and approved by the DMG and included by FWS in the revised DT Recovery Plan. DMG agencies/offices will align their DT effort to implement high priority recovery, monitoring, and research activities in their area/jurisdiction.
2. Each agency will submit to the DMG an annual report of its accomplishments, activities, and expenditures related to DT recovery, monitoring, and research activities. The annual reports will include an accounting of proposed budget requests related to DT recovery, monitoring, and research.
3. The DMG DT Implementation Planning Work Group will review 1, above, and other relevant information, and develop a draft coordinated annual work plan (CAWP) that identifies the goals, objectives, schedule, responsibility, and budget for implementing priority recovery actions. The draft CAWP will be submitted to the DMG for review and approval.
4. Each agency will identify its capability to provide resources (funding, staff, etc) to carry out the CAWP. Any shortfalls that may exist will be documented and reported to Department of the Interior (DOI), State and Federal agency executives, and the MOG. Identified shortfalls will be used as a basis for future budget requests.
5. The DOI should coordinate agency budget requests to provide the resources needed by FWS, BLM and NPS to implement high priority recovery, monitoring, and research activities