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MEMORANDUM

February 6, 2007

To: Desert Tortoise Management Oversight Group

From: Desert Tortoise Recovery Coordinator, Nevada Fish and Wildlife Office, Reno

Subject: January 18, 2007, Meeting Summary

The Desert Tortoise Management Oversight Group (MOG) met on January 18, 2007, at the Suncoast Casino in Las Vegas, Nevada. The meeting focused on discussion of 1) a strategy to revise the desert tortoise recovery plan, and 2) clarifying the role of and drafting a charter for the MOG.

#### Recovery Plan Revision

The MOG and stakeholders reviewed the draft "Strategy for Revising the Desert Tortoise Recovery Plan," which was distributed prior to the meeting. Consensus was reached to accelerate the revision process to complete a draft plan by September 2007, even though this will limit the amount of direct stakeholder collaboration. Key points of clarification to the draft Strategy arising from discussion at the meeting include the following:

- The process will be initiated with two regional workgroups, one for California and one for the combined states of Arizona, Nevada, and Utah. These workgroups may subsequently be subdivided, if necessary, based on the issues within each of the larger regions.
- The workgroups will include county HCP representatives and university cooperative extension unit representatives.
- The MOG will have an opportunity to review the draft recovery plan prior to publication as an official public review draft. Comments received during each of these review periods will be addressed in the final recovery plan.

The updated Strategy and the associated "Foundations for Recovery Plan Revision" are available on the Desert Tortoise Recovery Office's website: [http://www.fws.gov/nevada/desert\\_tortoise/](http://www.fws.gov/nevada/desert_tortoise/). A timeline/Gantt chart has also been posted and will be updated on the website, so interested parties can keep up with progress of the revision. In addition, points of contact for the work groups (and the MOG itself) will eventually be identified on the website.

#### MOG "charter"

The MOG reviewed a draft charter developed in an attempt to clarify and focus the role of the group. Compared to the Desert Managers Group (DMG) in California, the MOG is composed of agency executives responsible for policy-level decisions, while the DMG is composed of operational line officers responsible for getting things done "on the ground." Various guiding principles were brainstormed, including 1) vehicles for interagency coordination (where discretion allows); 2) forum for stakeholder input on DT issues; 3) planning, prioritizing, and

recommending desert tortoise recovery actions on MOG lands (and elsewhere); 4) formulate questions/needs, direct research, prioritize needs, evaluate results, and assess effectiveness – lead to changes in management; and 5) roundtable for information-sharing and issue raising (consider in future possible expansion to include other species).

Membership of the MOG has previously included BLM state directors, state wildlife agency directors, FWS regional directors, NPS superintendents, commanding officers of DOD installations, and a USGS regional director. The MOG agreed to invite a BIA representative, as well as county representatives, although the number of county representatives or whether counties within a state share a seat remain to be resolved. Major duties and activities listed on the draft charter include recovery planning and review, recovery implementation, tortoise monitoring, integrate and share data for effective recovery implementation and planning, public participation, crisis intervention, formulating budget initiatives for major range-wide activities, and report on management actions completed for the benefit of the desert tortoise.

Roy Averill-Murray will modify the draft charter based on comments and discussion at the meeting. Any additional comments should be sent to Roy for incorporation. Further revision will take place electronically between MOG members.

#### Other issues

- The need for a dedicated funding source for recovery plan implementation was raised. A potential avenue to address this need may be organization of a separate work group by interested stakeholders to seek dedicated funding from appropriate sources.
- The need for increased transparency of the Science Advisory Committee (SAC), as well as a better understanding of SAC-member backgrounds, was raised by several individuals. Two members of the SAC will be giving presentations and will be available for questions in a DTRO session, in addition to Dr. Kristin Berry, at the upcoming Desert Tortoise Council Symposium (February 24). An open forum with the SAC and MOG has been slated for summer 2007 to discuss the status and scientific review of the draft recovery plan, as indicated in the “Strategy for Revising the Desert Tortoise Recovery Plan.” In addition, attendees were reminded that biosketches of each SAC member are posted on the DTRO website. Links to each member’s academic/agency web page have also been added, so readers can learn more details about their expertise, current projects, etc. Finally, the Fish and Wildlife Service agreed to discuss, at the February 10-11 SAC meeting, the possibility of beginning each future meeting with an open session for stakeholder (government and non-government) interaction, questions, or comments.