

DESERT TORTOISE - AUTHORIZED BIOLOGIST and MONITOR RESPONSIBILITIES AND QUALIFICATIONS

AUTHORIZED BIOLOGIST – Authorized Biologists are responsible for being aware of the latest information on U.S. Fish and Wildlife Service (USFWS) protocols and guidelines for the desert tortoise. Please refer to our website: <http://www.fws.gov/carlsbad/PalmSprings/DesertTortoise.html>

Beginning November 1, 2008, Authorized Biologists are responsible for approving desert tortoise monitors, if monitors are needed for the project. Authorized Biologists will serve as mentors to train monitors and should approve monitors to conduct specific activities based on the monitor's demonstrated skills, knowledge and qualifications. Direct supervision is always required for clearance surveys; "direct supervision" means the Authorized Biologist has direct voice and sight contact with the monitor. An Authorized Biologist is responsible for the outcome of all desert tortoise related activities for which the project is approved, including errors committed by monitors. This process will be in effect for projects occurring within the area of the desert tortoise's range for which the Ventura Fish and Wildlife Office is responsible (i.e., San Bernardino, Los Angeles, Kern, and Inyo counties); outside of this area, please continue to follow guidance provided by the local Fish and Wildlife Service office.

The Authorized Biologist must have thorough and current knowledge of desert tortoise behavior, natural history, ecology, and physiology, and demonstrate substantial field experience and training to safely and successfully conduct their required duties. Authorized Biologists are approved to monitor project activities within desert tortoise habitat and are responsible for locating desert tortoises and their sign (i.e., conduct clearance surveys). Authorized Biologists must ensure proper implementation of protective measures, and make certain that the effects of the project on the desert tortoise and its habitat are minimized in accordance with a biological opinion or incidental take permit. All incidents of noncompliance in accordance with the biological opinion or permit must be recorded and reported.

In order to be authorized, the applicant must have the knowledge and experience to conduct any or all of the following, as needed:

- Locate, identify and report all forms of desert tortoise sign in accordance with approved protocols;
- Handle and temporarily hold desert tortoises;
- Move desert tortoises from harm's way when they enter project sites;
- Relocate/translocate desert tortoises prior to implementation of projects;
- Excavate burrows to locate desert tortoises;
- Reconstruct desert tortoise burrows;
- Unearth and relocate desert tortoise eggs;
- Approve individual monitors and their activities based on qualifications of the monitors;
- Directly supervise monitors during clearance surveys and train monitors in all aspects of protecting desert tortoises during implementation of projects;
- Be familiar with the project biological assessment and biological opinion or permit (copy in hand);
- Ensure proper implementation of protective measures;
- Record and report incidents of noncompliance in accordance with a biological opinion or permit;
- and
- Halt project activities per provisions of the biological opinion or permit.

DESERT TORTOISE MONITOR – Desert Tortoise Monitors will be approved by the Authorized Biologist(s) for a project. Applications for approval should no longer be sent to the Ventura Fish and Wildlife Office.

Desert Tortoise Monitors will be approved by the Authorized Biologist to monitor project activities within desert tortoise habitat, ensure proper implementation of protective measures, and record and report desert tortoise and sign observations in accordance with approved protocol. They will report incidents of

noncompliance in accordance with a biological opinion or permit, move desert tortoises from harm's way when desert tortoises enter project sites and place these animals in "safe areas" pre-selected by Authorized Biologists or maintain the desert tortoises in their immediate possession until an Authorized Biologist assumes care of the animal. Monitors assist Authorized Biologists during surveys and serve as "apprentices" to acquire experience. Monitors should not conduct clearance surveys or other specialized duties of the Authorized Biologist unless directly supervised by an Authorized Biologist; "directly supervised" means the Authorized Biologist has direct voice and sight contact with the monitor.