



Desert Tortoise Recovery Office
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MEMORANDUM

July 18, 2005

To: Desert Tortoise Management Oversight Group

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

Subject: June 29, 2005, Meeting Summary

The Desert Tortoise Management Oversight Group met on June 29, 2005, at the USGS office in Henderson, Nevada. The summary of the meeting follows.

Role of Desert Tortoise Recovery Office/MOG

Since the December 9, 2004, MOG meeting, FWS has staffed the Desert Tortoise Recovery Office (DTRO). Roy Averill-Murray is the Desert Tortoise Recovery Coordinator and is located in the Nevada Fish and Wildlife Office in Reno, Nevada. Three regional recovery coordinators have also been hired: Sandy Marquez (Carlsbad Fish and Wildlife Office), Amy Salveter (Ventura Fish and Wildlife Office), and Kim Field (Nevada Fish and Wildlife Office, Reno). The DTRO will provide support to the MOG on range-wide desert tortoise issues and will work with regional working groups (e.g., the California Desert Managers Group) on local and regional issues. The DTRO has also established a Science Advisory Committee, which will assist the DTRO with scientific expertise, advice, and product review.

Regional Working Groups and Recovery Plan Revision

The DTRO is currently initiating the revision of the 1994 desert tortoise recovery plan. This process involves working with regional working groups, including managers, scientists, and stakeholders, to conduct updated threats assessments and develop regional recovery action plans. These recovery action plans will form the basis of a revised recovery plan. In California, the Desert Managers Group has organized a Desert Tortoise Recovery Planning and Implementation Work Group to facilitate this process. In Nevada, the Clark County MSHCP's Implementation and Monitoring Committee/Desert Tortoise Work Group will form the core recovery planning work group, with additional representation from Lincoln and Nye counties.

The best way to organize work groups for Arizona and Utah was discussed at the meeting. The general consensus was that there should be a single group for the two states, given the small size of the area and overlapping issues and agency representatives. The DTRO will begin formally organizing this work group in the coming weeks. The Washington County, Utah, MSHCP's Habitat Conservation Advisory Committee may provide core personnel for the work group. A final issue to resolve is the most appropriate work group for Lincoln County's participation, given its position between Clark County and Utah/Arizona. The DTRO will work with the affected representatives to identify the most appropriate/efficient place to participate.

Research Meeting

The DTRO/SAC will host a research meeting in the fall or early winter. All researchers permitted to work with the desert tortoise will present a summary of work completed this season and study results to date. This meeting will not take the place of the Desert Tortoise Council Symposium. However, given the fact that not all researchers present on the DTCS, the DTRO research meeting will be a required forum for dissemination of current research activities as part of the recovery permitting process.

Status of Range-wide Monitoring

QA/QC for the 2004 data has been completed. QA/QC for 2001-2003 data will be done in July. A meeting of the monitoring program's principal investigators is scheduled for mid-August to plan analyses needed to complete a report of monitoring conducted to date by the end of the year. A forum for managers will be held this fall/winter to verbally present analyses, get feedback, and prepare for the 2006 field season. A critical issue with the monitoring program, which was identified by the GAO's audit of the recovery program, as well as the Desert Tortoise Recovery Plan Assessment Committee, is the need for secured funding for a comprehensive program. To date, virtually all monitoring funds have been directed to field surveys with little allocated to QA/QC, analysis, and reporting. This disparity in funding allocation has led to delays in the dissemination of monitoring results. The DTRO continues to work toward balancing the program to complete all monitoring activities in a timely manner.

Fire

The current fire season was a significant, range-wide topic of discussion at the meeting. Many acres of tortoise habitat have already burned in each state or are at risk. There was consensus that suppression of fires as soon as possible is of the utmost importance and may require aggressive techniques. Steve Thompson will send a memo to BLM and FWS field offices encouraging the use of appropriate tactics.

The question of pros and cons of using fire retardants that contain nitrogen (given that nitrogen facilitates exotic annual grass production) to suppress fires in tortoise habitat was raised. There are no known research studies specifically on this topic, but it may be an important topic to consider in the future.

Coordination of restoration activities will be especially important this season. BLM indicated that not enough seed bank is available for all restoration needs. BAER processes can be slow, so Steve reiterated that FWS will provide support to move through those processes as quickly as possible. Additional research is needed on the effectiveness of reseeding and/or pre-emergent herbicide treatments in desert restoration efforts following fires. Native seed mixes appear to be in shorter supply than mixes that contain non-native species, so questions regarding native-seed harvest, what constraints exist on such harvest that affect price and availability, and whether such harvest may actually cause adverse impacts (e.g., mechanical harvest disrupting soil and facilitating spread of invasive species) also need to be addressed.

Roy C. Averill-Murray

June 29, 2005, MOG Meeting Attendance List

Name	Affiliation	Phone
Ron Morrow	UNR	702-364-1836
Kim Field	USFWS	775-861-6322
SANDY MARQUEZ	USFWS	760-LF3j-9440 x268
LIMY SAWETER	USFWS	805-644-1766 x244
DAN Reinke	Edwards AFB	661-277-7000
Bill Mader	Washington Co.	435-134-5356
DAVE VINCELETTE	CITY of MESQUITE-NV	702-346-2835
Ed LORENTZEN	CA State Office, BLM	916-978-4646
Christy Klinger	NV Dept. of Wildlife	702-466-5121 ext 3718
Ross Haley	NPS	702-293-8950
Cynthia Martinez	FWS	702 515 5230
Heather Adams	FWS	702 515 5230
Michael Burroughs	FWS	702 515 5230
LISA CHRISTIANSON	BLM LVFO	782-515-5137
Jeff Servoss	FWS AZ-ESD	602-242-0210
Ted Cordery	BLM - AZ State Office	602/417-9242
Peter Woodman	Kim Biological Consulting	760 377 3466
John Stewart	CA & WDC	619-390-8747
Gerald Hillier	Quadrant	951-683-5725
BILL LAMB	QUADRANT	801-295-3882
Henry Maddux	FWS-UTAH	801-975-3330 x124
Clarence Everts	DOD	760-256-7033
John Hamill	DOI	760-252-6108
Robert Wood	Edwards AFB, CA	661-277-1407
Diane Nola	FWS	805-644-1766
Marie Cottrell	Marine Corps, 29 Palms	(760) 830-7396
RHYS EVANS	USMC, 29 PALMS	(760) 830-7396 x234
Steen Black	CDFG	(909) 987-7449
Carrie Ronning	BLM-Nevada	(702) 515-5143

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Larry Whalton	NPS - AADJAVE Pr.	760 252-6140
Debra Hughson	JPS - Mojave NP	760 252 6105
Neil Lynn	Fort Irwin/NIC	760-380-4674
Amy Fesnock	NPS - Joshua Tree Nat. Park	760-367-5578
STEVE THOMPSON	USFWS	916-414-6464
Phil Medica	USGS/BRD	702-564-4573
RONALD BOLANDEK	BLM UT. STATE OFFICE	801-539-4065
RICHARD SPOTTS	BLM ARIZONA STRIP DISTRICT OFFICE	435 688-3207
Slot Franklin	BLM AZ Strip	435-688 3305
SHANNON COLLIE	Edwards Air Force Base	661-277-1420
Ann McLuckie	UDWR	435-688-1426
Becky Jones	CDPS	661-285-5867
Thomas Leutenitz	Univ of Redlands	909-335-5383
Jeri Krueger	VSEWS Las Vegas	702-515-5230
Sonya Kokos	UNK	702-648-2910