

# Desert Tortoise Management Oversight Group Meeting

March 11, 2014  
Las Vegas, NV

U.S. Fish and Wildlife Service  
Desert Tortoise Recovery Office



# Objectives

- Update managers on Recovery Implementation Team (RIT) efforts undertaken to date
- Manager discussion and direction concerning RIT next steps
- Update managers on other topics of range-wide interest



# Update for managers on RIT efforts undertaken to date



# Recovery Implementation Teams

- Recovery Implementation Teams (RITs) set the stage for sustained management efforts

*Each RIT consists of regional:*

- *Land managers*
  - *Wildlife managers*
  - *Stakeholders*
  - *Scientists*
- Create a documented track record of recovery in the spatial decision support system

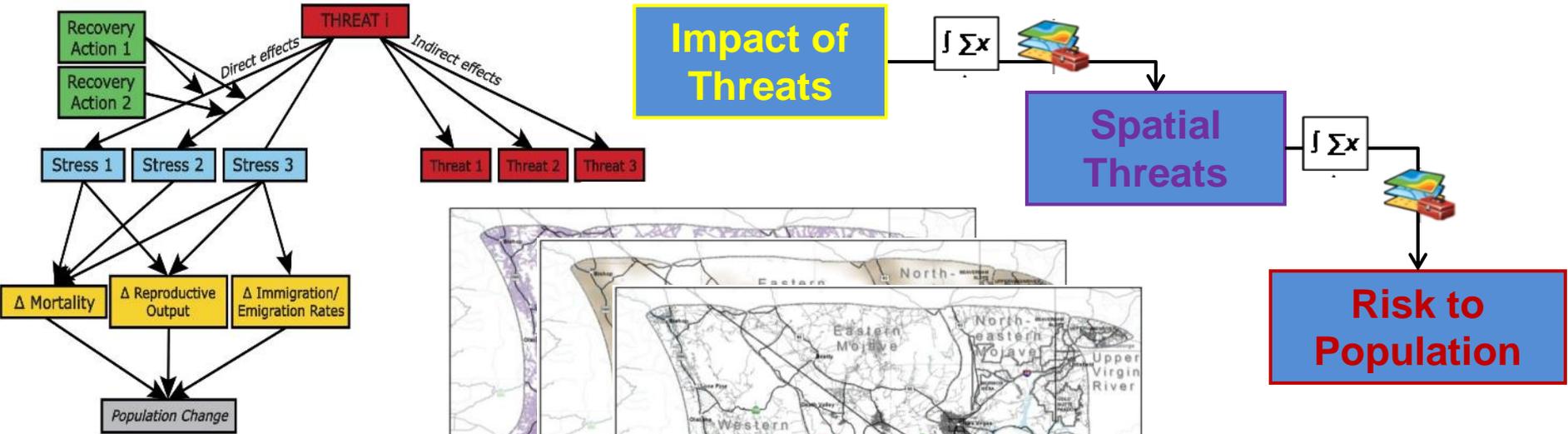


# Timeline

- May 2011: Revised recovery plan signed
- Early 2012: RIT appointment letters from FWS
- March 2012: RIT orientation webinars

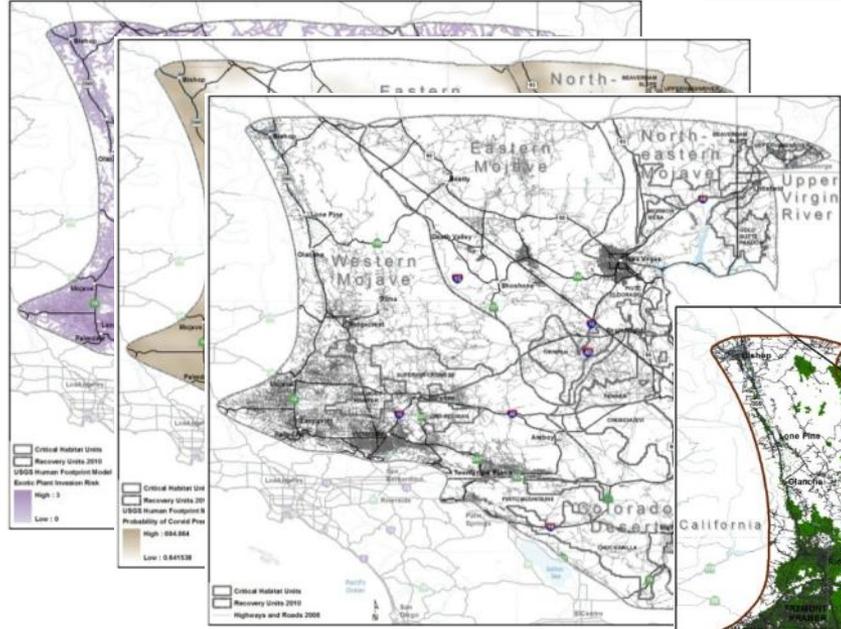


# Spring 2012: Spatial Decision Support System (SDSS)

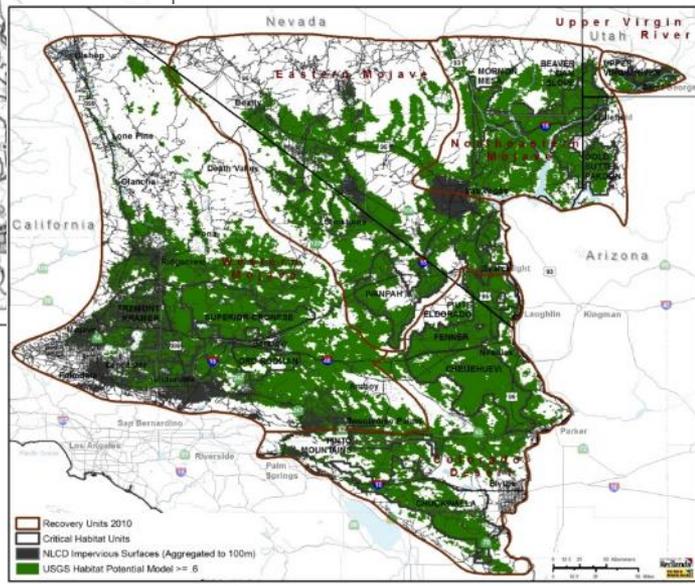


Model of how threats and recovery actions affect tortoises

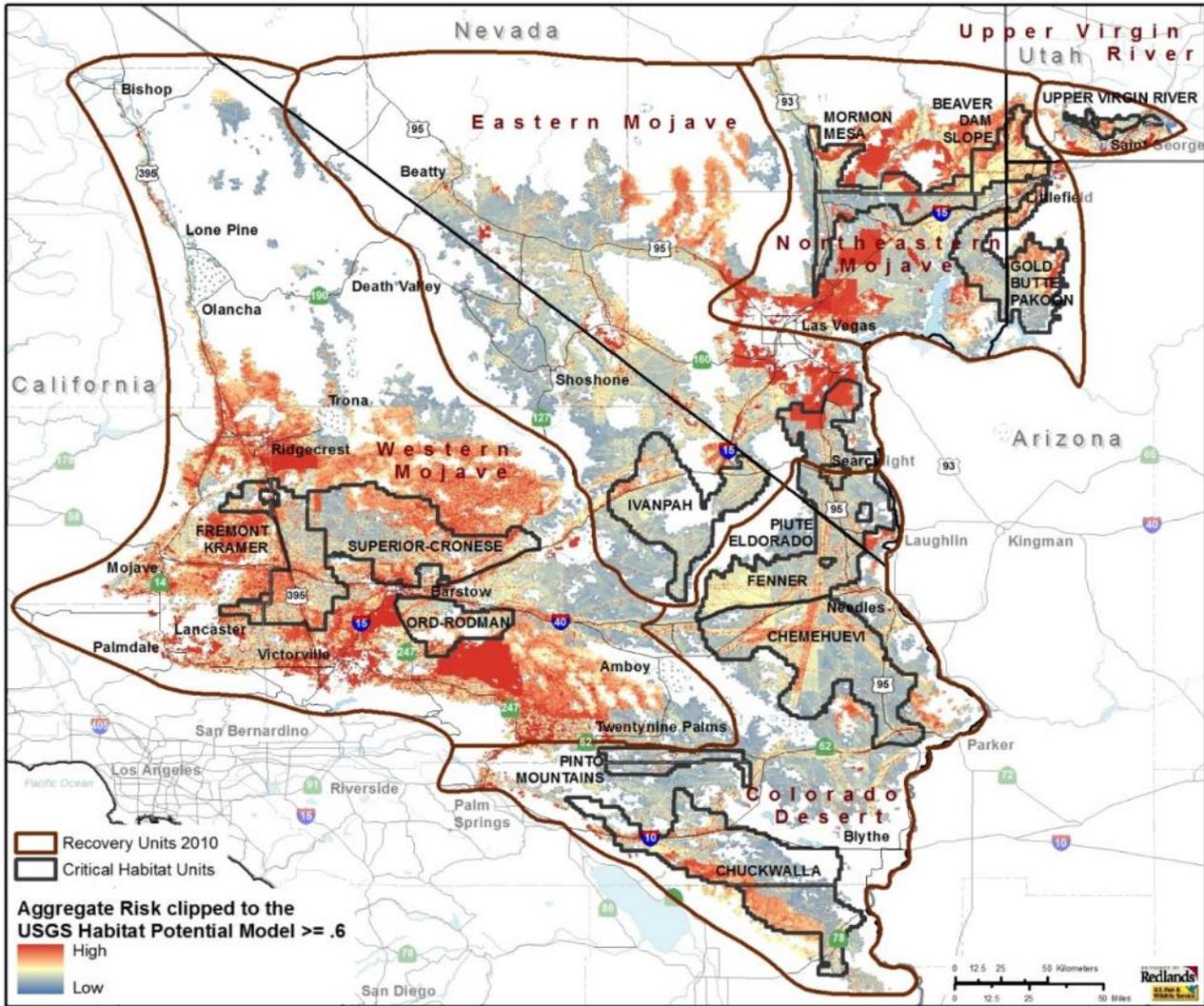
Spatial variation in threats



Where we expect tortoises to occur

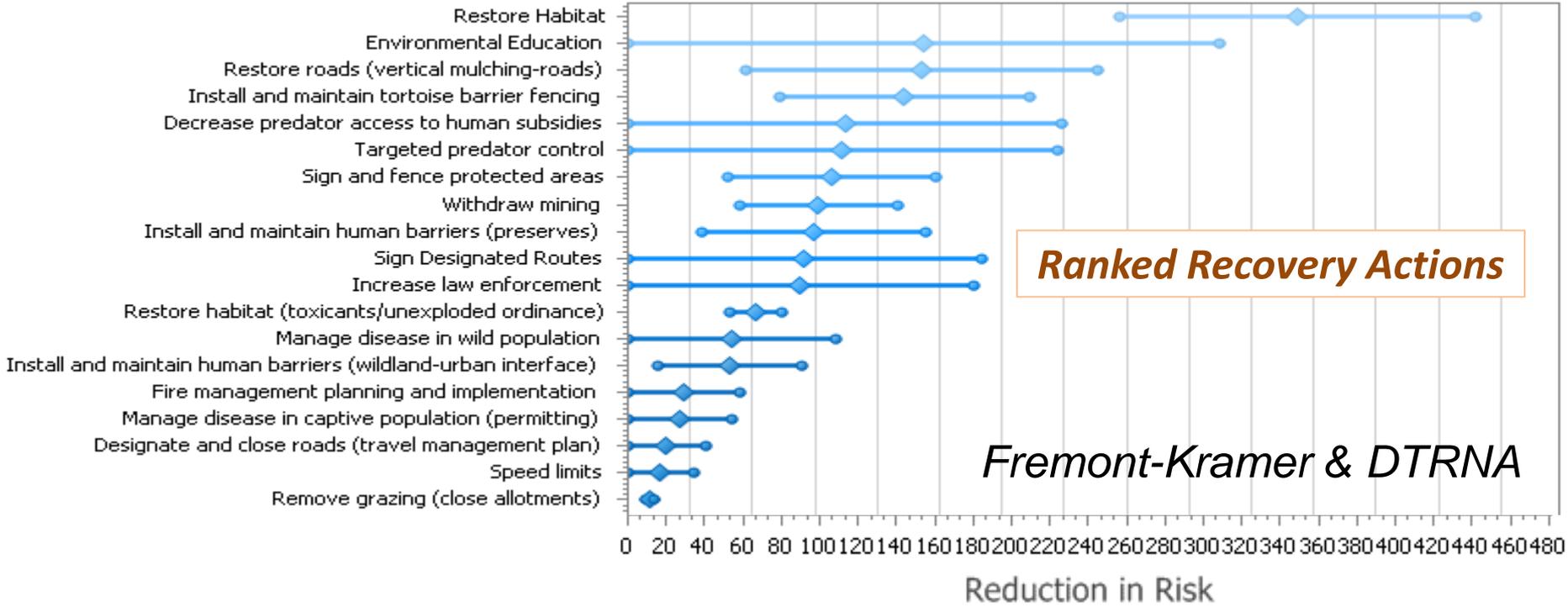
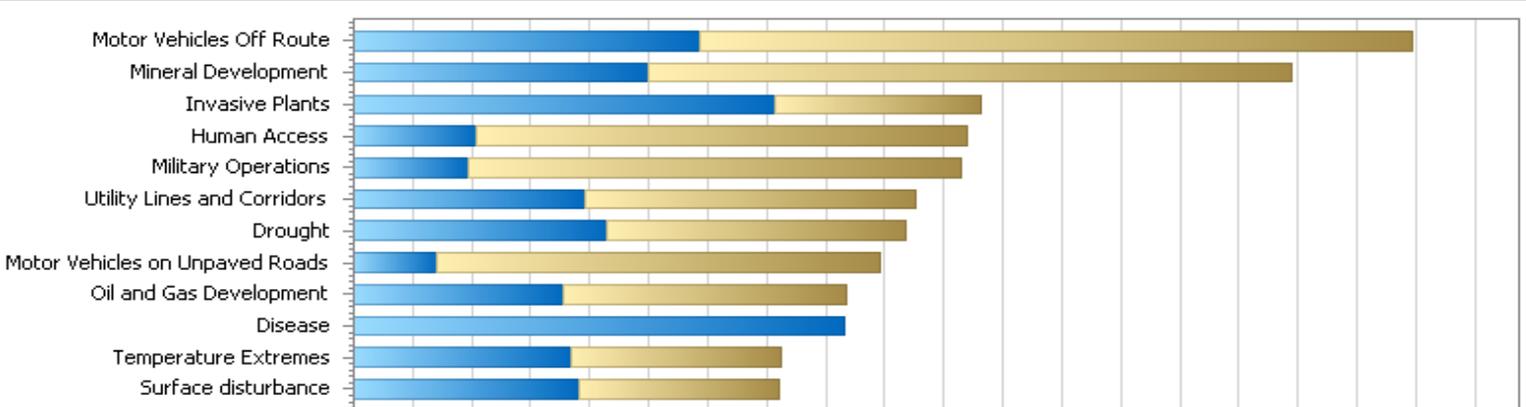


# Spring 2012: Spatial Decision Support System (SDSS)



Risk to the Tortoise

# Spring 2012: Spatial Decision Support System (SDSS)



# Timeline

- May 2011: Revised recovery plan signed
- Early 2012: RIT appointment letters from FWS
- March 2012: RIT orientation webinars
- Spring 2012: RIT review of SDSS
- Jun-Sep 2012: RIT webinars and input recovery action proposals



# Oct, Dec 2012: RIT In-person Meetings



Using a consensus-based framework, RIT workgroups prioritized:

- 1) Action proposals; and
- 2) Effectiveness monitoring & research topics



# Timeline

- May 2011: Revised recovery plan signed
- Early 2012: RIT appointment letters from FWS
- Mar 2012: RIT orientation webinars
- Spring 2012: RIT review of SDSS
- Jun-Sep 2012: RIT webinars and input recovery action proposals
- Oct-Dec 2012: RIT in-person meetings
- Feb 2013: Draft recovery action plans
- Apr-Jul 2013: Revised draft recovery action plans



# Draft Recovery Action Plans



# Draft Recovery Action Plans

## **PRIORITIZED ACTIONS BY WORKGROUP AND TCA**

- I. Actions as prioritized at the in-person meetings
- II. Comments and dissenting opinions
- III. Priority needs for effectiveness monitoring/research

**RITs**

## **ONLINE APPENDIX: SDSS BACKGROUND & SUPPORTING INFORMATION**

- I. Ranked threats for the each workgroup's TCAs & region
- II. Ranked recovery action types for each workgroup's TCAs & region

**SDSS**



# Draft Recovery Action Plans

- Iterative “living” documents intended to be updated based on new information and implementation progress
- Continued RIT coordination will provide opportunities for integration across workgroup boundaries
- Dissenting opinions capture concerns related to implementation and may stimulate ideas for alternative actions
- Cost, feasibility, politics excluded
- Recovery Action Plans do not preclude alternative innovative ideas to achieve tortoise recovery

# RIT Feedback



# Participant Feedback: Draft Recovery Action Plans

**Over 60% of respondents: recovery actions plans will be mostly or extremely useful in implementing recovery actions**

- 30% were somewhat to extremely dissatisfied with the RIT process and recovery actions plans
- The plans are not comprehensive—lack of policy-level prescriptions rather than site-specific actions
- Participants did not universally support all recommendations
- Lack of cost estimates for actions in plans
- Many participants felt the workgroups did not all contain the local management expertise to provide specific prescriptions
- Workgroup compositions heavily influenced recovery plan emphases

# Participant Feedback: Process & Direction

## **Most RIT survey respondents felt that:**

- Webinars were helpful
- In-person meetings were invaluable
- SDSS influenced prioritization for some and not for others
- Funding (and lack of staff) are greatest challenge to implementation

## **Other comments:**

- Diametrically opposed concerns about representation on workgroups
- Need for greater cross-workgroup coordination to reconcile inconsistencies

# Proposed Recommendations for RIT Next Steps



# Proposed Recommendations for RIT Next Steps

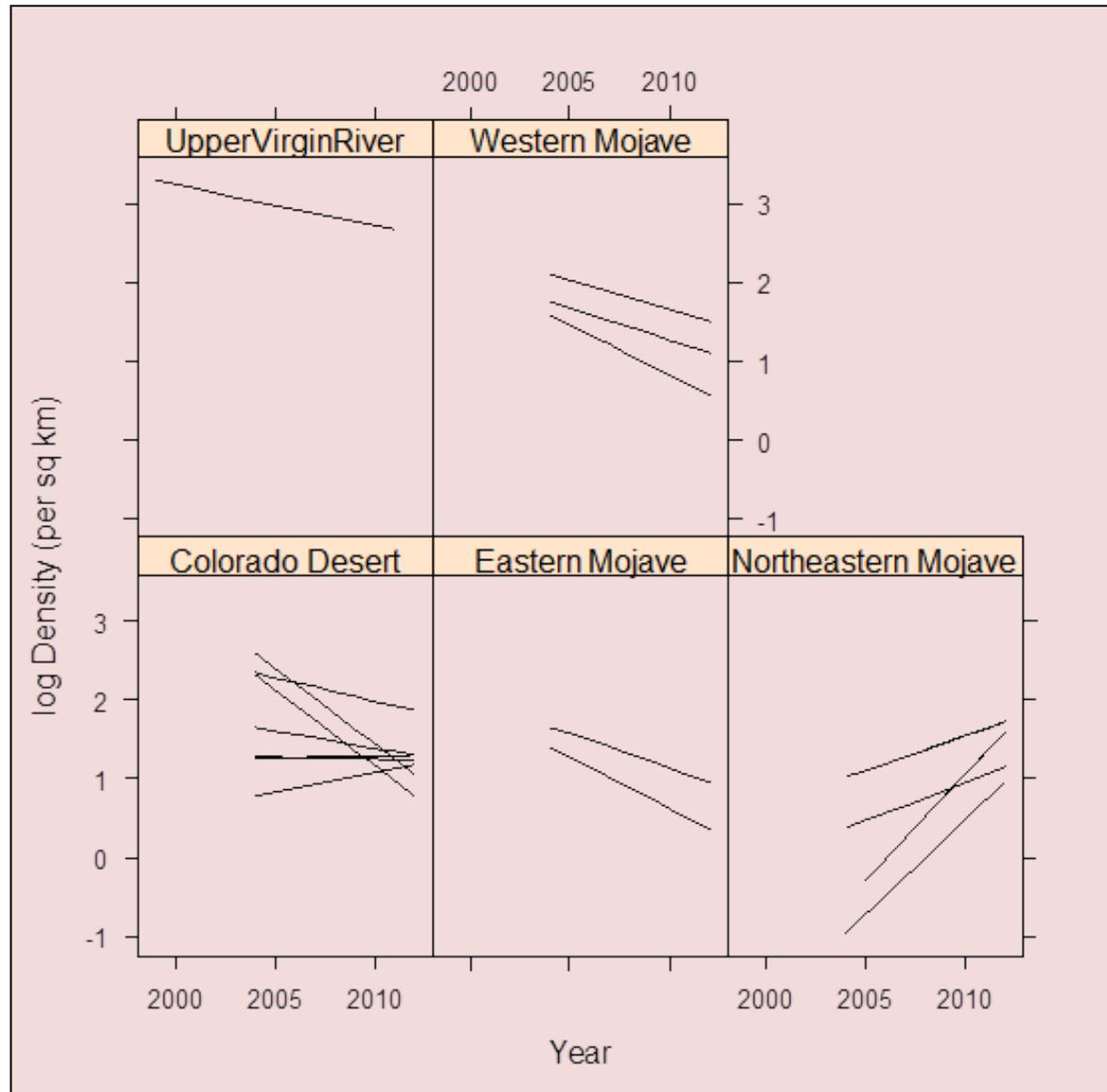
- MOG endorses Recovery Action Plans Version 1
- DTRO works with RIT task-groups to develop brief, specific, “shovel-ready” project proposals and seek implementation funding
- Agencies use Recovery Action Plans and specific project proposals to implement actions
- RITs use SDSS to track and evaluate recovery efforts
- Future RIT coordination occurs virtually
- RITs/DTRO report progress for review by MOG and public
- Version 2 of the recovery action plans produced in 5 years

# Update for managers on other topics of range-wide interest

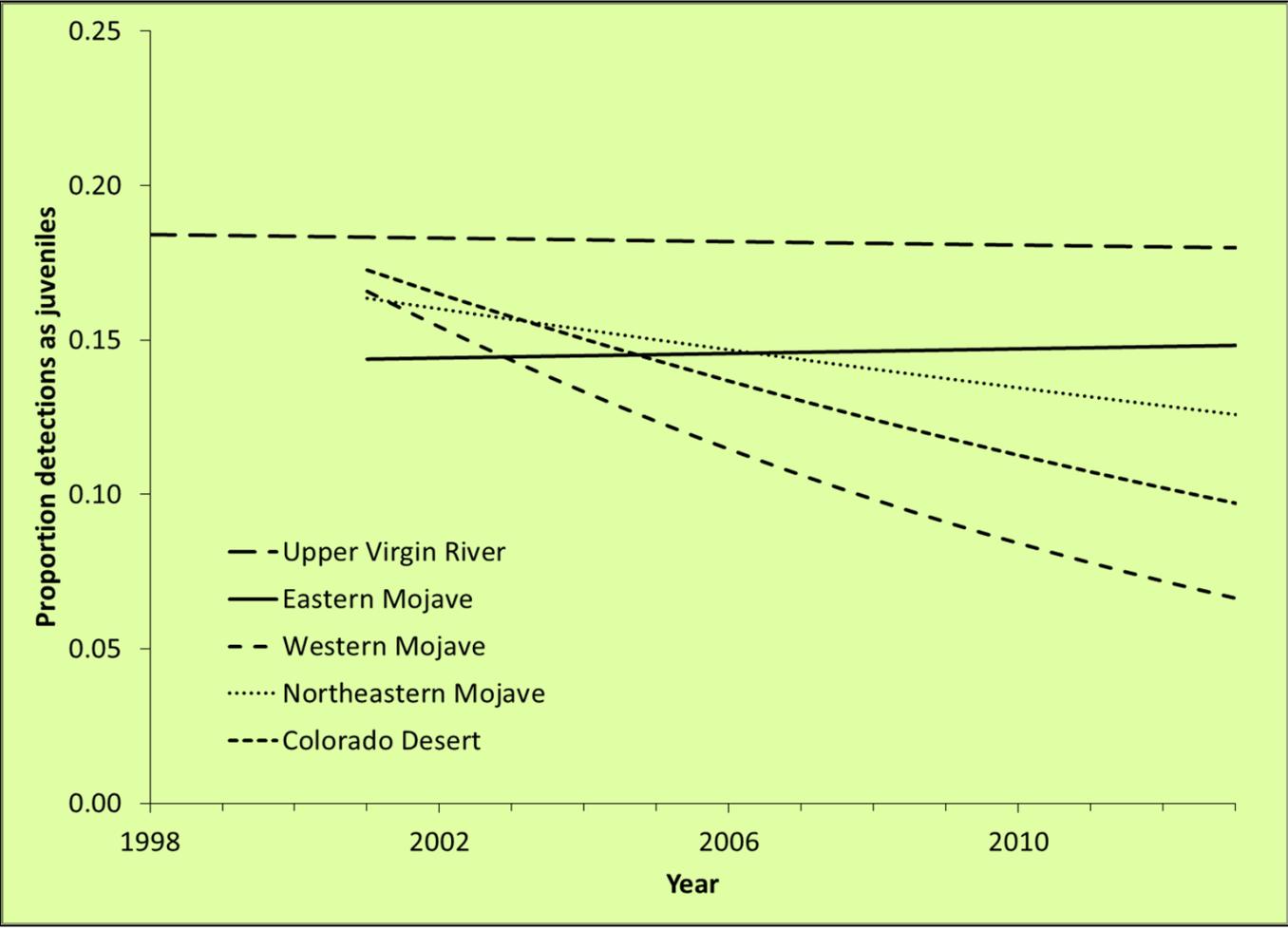
- I. Status of Renewable Energy Supplement
- II. Desert Tortoise Conservation Center: Status and Implications
- III. Range-wide Monitoring: Recent Results and Future



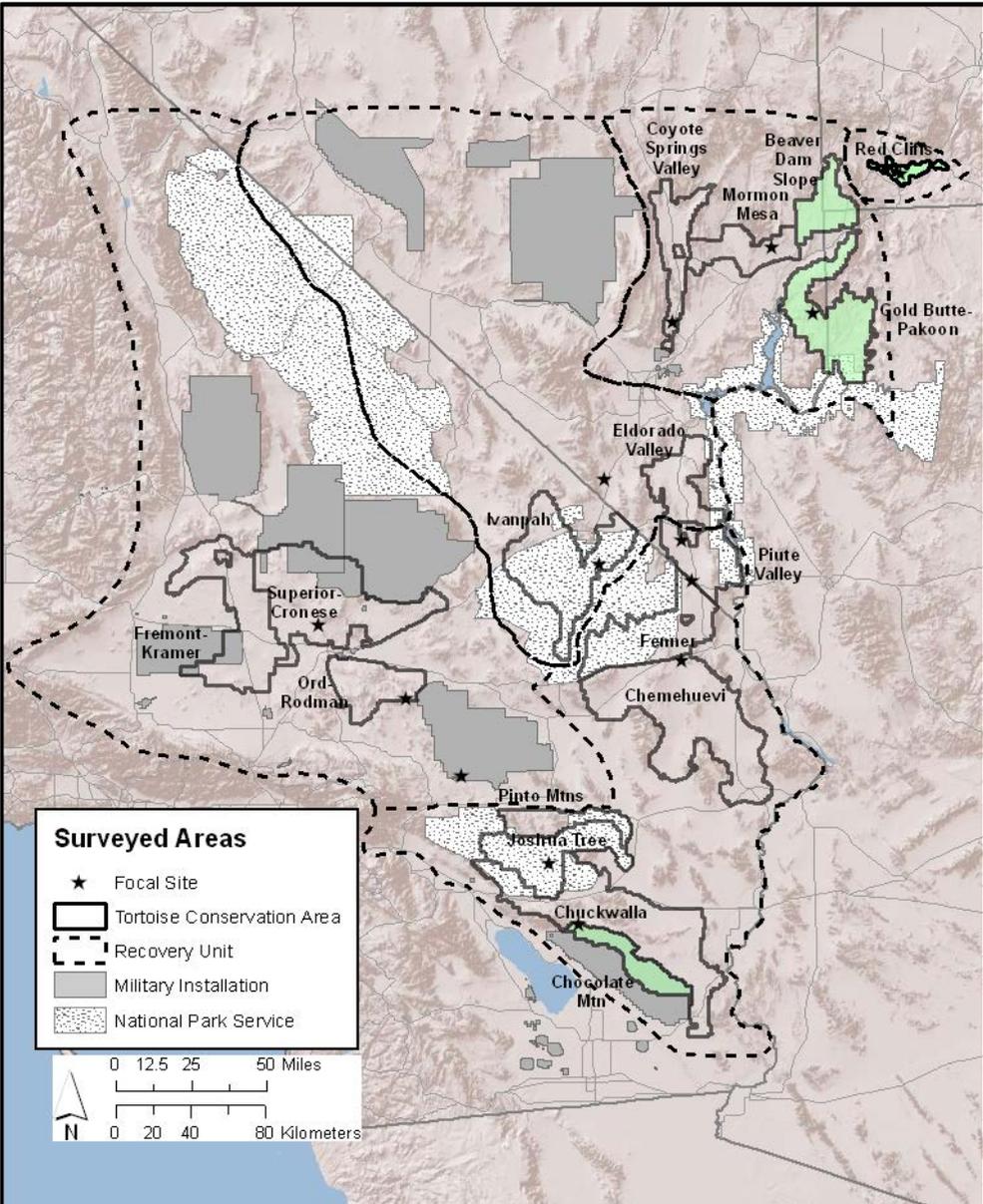
# Trends in Abundance of Adult Tortoises



# Relative Abundance of Smaller Tortoises (<180-mm)



# Range-wide Monitoring Progress



**2013:** We monitored four Tortoise Conservation Areas