

MEMORANDUM

January 6, 2015

To: Desert Tortoise Management Oversight Group

From: Ren Lohofener, Regional Director, Pacific Southwest Region

Subject: December 18, 2014, Meeting Summary

The Desert Tortoise Management Oversight Group (MOG) met on December 18, 2014, at the Springs Preserve in Las Vegas, Nevada. The meeting focused on discussion of the structure and function of MOG, including its relationship with the regional Recovery Implementation Teams (RITs). Presentations from the meeting are posted at http://www.fws.gov/nevada/desert_tortoise/dtro_meet_events.html.

Action Items	Owner(s)	Due Date
1. Update MOG contact list	Mike Senn and Roy Averill-Murray	MAR. 1
2. Attempt to increase DOD participation by “reaching out” to DOD leaders	Jim Kenna and Ren Lohofener	JUNE 1
3. Summarize current research and research needs and discuss with RITs. Present the results of what is/is not working at the summer MOG meeting.	Roy Averill-Murray and RITs	JUNE 1
4. Revise MOG Charter and send draft back to MOG	Mike Senn	JAN. 15
5. MOG members review draft charter and provide comments to M. Senn	ALL	FEB. 15
6. Finalize MOG Charter	Mike Senn	MAR. 1
7. DTRO to look at RAPs and attempt to identify top 5 range-wide recovery priorities and provide to MOG	Roy Averill-Murray	MAR. 1
8. RITs provide input to MOG on: <ul style="list-style-type: none"> a. Top 5 priorities for range-wide recovery actions that will provide the highest return on investment using list identified by DTRO in #7 above. b. How to best measure our return on investment? 	Roy Averill-Murray and RITs	JUNE 1
9. Set meeting dates for this year via Doodle poll	Mike Senn	FEB. 1
10. Develop alternatives on roles and function for Science Advisory Committee for MOG action.	Mike Senn, Roy Averill-Murray, Marci Henson, Larry Whalon, Cristina Jones, Cris Tomlinson	JUNE 1
11. Send RIT project lists to MOG members: http://www.fws.gov/nevada/desert_tortoise/documents/RIT2-Page_Proposals_Sept2014.zip	Roy Averill-Murray	Completed

12. MOG members to work with their RIT member(s) to: <ul style="list-style-type: none"> a. identify projects that can be implemented this year b. identify projects requiring coordination with other entities to implement c. reach-out to other MOG members to implement high-priority projects 	ALL	MAR. 1
13. Develop diagram showing relationship between MOG, RITs, DTRO, etc. including a glossary of terms/abbreviations	Roy Averill-Murray	Completed

Opening Remarks

All agency executives provided opening remarks about the need for the MOG to provide overall guidance and direction for range-wide recovery actions for the Mojave desert tortoise. Some of the common themes included:

- It is important that the cooperating agencies be able to demonstrate effectiveness in the implementation of actions to recover the tortoise.
- We need to be able to speak with “one voice” to communicate the importance or conserving the desert tortoise and Mojave desert ecosystem.
- It is important that we are able to protect the investments made by local and regional HCPs.
- It is important that the MOG work effectively to address issues and recovery in a landscape context and are working to provide connectivity of habitats across the landscape.
- It is important for the MOG to know what is currently being done and ensure that we are working on the “most important stuff.”
- It is important that we are using the best available information versus assumptions.
- There is a need to ensure we are promoting positive messages about the good work we are doing.
- It is important for the MOG to establish the top priorities for range-wide activities and research.
- There were questions about the current structure and function of the Science Advisory Committee and the best use of this committee moving forward.
- We need to be able to manage threats with continued use; everything is not black and white.

MOG Charter Review and Revision

MOG members reviewed the current MOG Charter, specifically covering the following topics.

1. Composition, Structure, and Membership

General consensus existed that executive-level participation is important to success of the MOG and to integrate the relatively new recovery component of RITs with coordinated, upper agency management. While it was recognized that the chief executive cannot always be present at any given meeting, there was consensus that any delegates attending the MOG must possess the authority to speak and act on behalf of their respective agency. To reflect this level of

engagement, future MOG communications from the Fish and Wildlife Service will come from Regional Director, Ren Lohofener.

It was agreed that the MOG should meet twice/year, at least for the foreseeable future until we can ensure the MOG is reinvigorated. One meeting will be held in December or January and will focus on reviewing annual progress and current research. A second meeting will be held in June or July and will focus on developing range-wide recovery and research priorities and identifying funding sources or developing initiatives for the coming fiscal year.

2. Duties and Activities

The focus of the MOG is to provide executive-level oversight and coordination of desert tortoise conservation and recovery on a range-wide basis. A strategic communication and outreach plan needs to provide clear messages relative to MOG process, objectives, and results. Additional activities will be listed in the charter.

3. Research Priorities and Role of the Science Advisory Committee

The group agreed it is important for the MOG to establish priorities for research across the range of the tortoise. The current role of the Science Advisory Committee is unclear, and MOG members felt it could help play an important role in informing MOG decisions and developing research priorities. There was consensus that a subcommittee comprised of Marci Henson, Larry Whalon, Gerry Hillier, Cristina Jones, Cris Tomlinson, and Mike Senn would work to develop alternatives for the MOG to consider at the upcoming summer meeting.

4. Relationship to RITs

- The MOG will direct and support agency participation in the RITs to further implementation of conservation and recovery actions for the desert tortoise.
- The MOG will establish priorities for range-wide recovery actions and research as informed by the RITs (e.g., project proposals derived from recovery action plans) and provide direction on annual work objectives. What are the top/common priorities (top 3-5) among the RITs?
- The MOG will aid the RITs by identifying and securing funding for range-wide recovery priorities.
- Provide assistance to the RITs in resolving issues and potential conflicts that cannot be resolved at the field level.
- The MOG will review and approve RIT Recovery Action Plans.
- An outstanding question is how to best measure recovery action and get the best “bang for the buck.”

5. Funding Options and Partnerships

The group agreed it was important for the MOG to help establish priorities for range-wide project proposals and work to secure funding through the prioritization and commitment of agency resources where possible, and seek additional funding through outside funding initiatives.

6. Logistics – meeting frequency, times, etc.

It was agreed the MOG will meet twice per year in the foreseeable future to ensure the MOG continues to effectively promote range-wide recovery and conservation. In general, there will be a winter meeting (December/January) to review annual progress towards recovery and current research, and to identify, prioritize and select research needs. In addition, a summer meeting may be held (June/July) to identify fiscal year recovery goals and select priorities, and identify shared resources, funding opportunities and initiatives.

RIT Update

A short update on history and status of the RITs was provided, including a short discussion on the unreconciled footnotes in the current versions of the Recovery Action Plans (RAPs). There was a question on when it would be appropriate to begin developing a “version 2” of the RAPs. In subsequent conversation, the MOG directed the RITs to initiate version 2 of the recovery action plans in two to five years, subject to implementation projects and accumulation of new information, which will be revisited in subsequent MOG meetings. The MOG also requested the RITs provide assistance in developing responses to the following questions.

- What are the focal areas or highest priorities for range-wide conservation and recovery actions in the next 1-2 years?
- In looking at tortoise recovery at a landscape scale, what can “we” own and who can do what in the next 1-2 years?

Streamlining compliance

There was general agreement among the group that we should work together to streamline compliance for NEPA, ESA, etc. where possible using programmatic approaches to increase efficiency and reduce cycle time for implementation of recovery actions.

MOG Attendees (not including agency support staff or other stakeholders)

Agency	Name	Title
Clark County	Marci Henson	Desert Conservation Program Administrator
Nye County	Levi Kryder	HCP Administrator
Washington County	Robert Sandberg	HCP Administrator
QuadState Local Governments Authority	Gerry Hillier	Executive Director
Arizona Game and Fish Department	Cristina Jones	Turtles Project Coordinator
Nevada Department of Wildlife	Cris Tomlinson	Wildlife Diversity Supervisor
BLM, Arizona	June Shoemaker	Deputy State Director, Resources
BLM, California	Jim Kenna	State Director
BLM, Nevada	Amy Lueders	State Director
BLM, Utah	Juan Palma	State Director
FWS, Region 2	Steve Spangle	Field Supervisor, Arizona Ecological Services Office
FWS, Region 8	Ren Lohofener	Regional Director
FWS, Region 8	Mike Senn (MOG facilitator)	Field Supervisor, Las Vegas Fish & Wildlife Office
Mojave National Preserve	Larry Whalon	Deputy Superintendent