

DESERT TORTOISE MANAGEMENT OVERSIGHT GROUP CHARTER

I. Background

The Desert Tortoise Management Oversight Group (MOG) was established in 1988 to coordinate agency planning and management activities affecting the desert tortoise in the Bureau of Land Management's (BLM) Desert Tortoise Rangeland Plan. Charter members of the MOG included the four BLM State Directors from Arizona, California, Nevada, and Utah; the four State Fish and Game Directors from these States; the three Fish and Wildlife Service (FWS) Regional Directors that share tortoise management responsibilities; and a BLM Washington Office representative. Membership was subsequently expanded to include representatives of the National Park Service, Biological Resources Division of the United States Geological Survey (USGS), and officials of the four branches of military service (Army, Air Force, Navy, and Marine Corps) that manage Mojave Desert tortoise habitat. In 2008 membership was expanded to include County governments.

The original charter of the MOG, while never formalized, called for meetings at least once annually to a) standardize procedures for the analysis and interpretation of tortoise information, b) report on management actions completed for the benefit of the desert tortoise, c) recommend funding priorities, d) identify areas lacking sufficient information for management of Category 1 and 2 habitat, e) identify research needs to resolve management issues, f) identify threats and conflicts, g) complete annual status or progress reports, h) coordinate existing laws and guidance, and i) review ongoing research. A combination of events spurred change in the MOG and its charter. Emergency listing of the Mojave Desert population as Endangered in 1989, followed by the Mojave population's listing as Threatened in 1990, preceded a 1991 finding that the Sonoran population was not warranted for Federal listing. Following the publication of the Mojave Desert tortoise recovery plan in 1994, the MOG assumed a leadership role in coordinating agency activities directed toward recovery plan implementation, and the Sonoran population was de-emphasized as efforts for the Mojave population intensified.

In December 2002 the U.S. General Accounting Office completed an audit of recovery actions for the Mojave population of the desert tortoise. The primary recommendation of this report was to "develop and implement a coordinated research strategy that would link land management decisions with research results." This recommendation was reiterated in the October 2004 Desert Tortoise Recovery Plan Assessment, which called for the establishment of a Desert Tortoise Recovery Office (DTRO) to facilitate such coordination. In December 2004, the FWS formally established a DTRO and Science Advisory Committee (SAC). The Science Advisory Committee serves in an advisory role to the MOG, DTRO, and cooperators to provide scientific advice on significant issues in the recovery program. The DTRO also coordinates the Recovery Implementation Teams (RITs) and range-wide monitoring program in collaboration with MOG representatives and independent experts.

II. Vision

Achieve recovery of the Mojave desert tortoise (hereinafter, desert tortoise) through effective coordination of agency planning and management activities.

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III. Mission

The mission and guiding principles of the Desert Tortoise Management Oversight Group are to:

- A. Enhance interagency coordination of desert tortoise recovery efforts, where discretion is allowed within each agency's separate mission, including:
 - 1. Provide oversight and direction to regional Recovery Implementation Teams (RITs) in planning, prioritizing, and recommending recovery actions on lands administered by members of the MOG and elsewhere;
 - 2. Assess the results and effectiveness of implemented conservation and recovery actions and make appropriate changes in conservation and recovery actions as part of an adaptive management framework;
 - 3. Formulate and prioritize management-related questions and needs, develop and promote research relevant to those questions and needs, evaluate results, and utilize results to enhance recovery in an adaptive management framework;
 - 4. Coordinate resource allocation and budget initiatives and develop partnerships to support implementation of recovery actions.
 - 5. Develop and implement through the participating agencies a strategic communication and outreach plan to support and enhance Mojave desert tortoise conservation and recovery.
- B. Provide a roundtable for sharing information and raising and resolving issues that cross jurisdictional boundaries, including consideration of other species that may affect recovery of the Mojave desert tortoise.
- C. Provide a forum for stakeholder input on desert tortoise issues (see stakeholder participation guidelines following the charter).

IV. Membership

The Desert Tortoise Management Oversight Group shall be chaired by the Region 8 Director, FWS. The DTRO shall provide coordination and technical support services. The MOG shall be comprised of executive-level managers or their official designee of the following agencies. Any designee in attendance must be empowered to act on behalf of their executive manager.

Department of Interior

Bureau of Land Management state offices from Arizona, California, Nevada, and Utah
Fish and Wildlife Service regional offices from Region 2 (Arizona), Region 6 (Utah), and
Region 8 (California-Nevada)

Bureau of Indian Affairs, Western Regional Office
Lake Mead National Recreation Area

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Death Valley National Park
Joshua Tree National Park
Mojave National Preserve
U.S. Geological Survey, Western Ecological Research Center

Department of Defense

Naval Air Weapons Station, China Lake
Marine Corps Air Station, Yuma
Marine Corps Air Ground Combat Center, Twentynine Palms
Marine Corps Logistics Base, Barstow
National Training Center, Fort Irwin
Edwards Air Force Base
Nellis Air Force Base

Department of Transportation

Federal Highways Administration

States

State wildlife agencies from Arizona, California, Nevada, and Utah
State transportation agencies from Arizona, California, Nevada, and Utah

County Governments

Mohave County, Arizona
Imperial County, California
Inyo County, California
Kern County, California
Los Angeles County, California
Riverside County, California

San Bernardino County, California
Clark County, Nevada
Lincoln County, Nevada
Nye County, Nevada
Washington County, Utah
Quadstate Local Governments Authority

Additional government agencies/offices may be added to the MOG based on the consensus of the group. Federal, state, local, and tribal government agencies that are not members of the MOG may serve as members of MOG Work Groups, subject to approval of the MOG. Tribal governments will be kept informed of MOG activities and invited to MOG meetings.

V. Duties and activities

The activities of the Desert Tortoise Management Oversight Group are intended to provide executive-level oversight and coordination of desert tortoise conservation and recovery on a range-wide basis. Coordination of MOG oversight activities may be addressed in bi-annual meetings or other frequency as determined by the MOG. In general, there will be a Spring

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meeting to identify fiscal year recovery goals and select priorities, and identify shared resources, funding opportunities and initiatives, and a Fall meeting to review annual progress towards recovery and current research, and to identify, prioritize and select research needs. Additional meetings may be scheduled as necessary at the discretion of the MOG.

The participation of MOG members in the MOG and implementation of the MOG Charter is predicated on the understanding that nothing in this Charter is intended to limit the authorities of the members or otherwise limit or diminish their legal obligations and responsibilities under their respective laws and regulations.

The MOG's primary activities are outlined below.

- A. Recovery planning and review: Provide input and contribute to recovery plan five-year reviews and revisions in collaboration with the DTRO. This activity will also be coordinated with the RITs, as needed.
- B. Recovery implementation: Direct and support active agency participation of the RITs with support from the DTRO to effectively implement management actions prescribed in Recovery Action Plans, consistent with range-wide recovery priorities identified by the MOG.
- C. Secure funding and develop budget initiatives for range-wide priorities: Coordinate agency budgets, identify funding opportunities and partnerships, and develop funding initiatives to fund coordinated implementation of conservation and recovery actions or other MOG priorities and initiatives.
- D. Oversight and direction for RITs: Establish range-wide recovery priorities and provide direction on annual work objectives, identify funding for range-wide recovery priorities, assist with resolving issues identified by the RITs, and review and approve Recovery Action Plans.
- E. Research Priorities: Review research projects, developments, and trends affecting tortoise recovery and develop range-wide priorities for research that will help promote recovery. Identify shared opportunities and funding for priority research projects.
- F. Strategic outreach and communication: Develop and implement through the participating agencies a strategic communication and outreach plan that includes desired objectives and results and processes that will be used to support and enhance Mojave desert tortoise conservation and recovery.
- G. Tortoise monitoring: Support the range-wide desert tortoise population monitoring program overseen by the DTRO. The MOG commits to implement the General Accounting Office's recommendation (from its 2002 audit of desert tortoise recovery efforts) to seek continued funding for range-wide population monitoring through its emphasis on this activity in the charter. The DTRO will report annually on the previous year's monitoring activities.

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Identify opportunities for and coordinate implementation of effectiveness monitoring of recovery actions with support from the DTRO. Information from recovery action implementation and effectiveness monitoring will be integrated into a recovery decision support system identified in Activity D.

- H. Integrate and share data for effective recovery implementation and planning: Support and contribute available pertinent data to a recovery decision support system and database for all desert tortoise recovery implementation, monitoring, and research data. The DTRO will provide oversight for the decision support system and database in coordination with other technical partners. The MOG will direct the RITs to coordinate to ensure that the database is updated as new management actions are implemented and/or data are available.
- I. Crisis intervention: Coordinate in response to unforeseen or emergency situations, such as wildfires, invasion of exotic organisms, disease outbreaks, excessive predation, and extreme climatic events.
- J. Review MOG initiatives and activities: Evaluate progress and effectiveness of MOG initiatives and activities covered under this charter. Review and potentially revise the charter every five years to modify listed activities as necessary or desired by group consensus.
- K. Sunset: This charter shall expire if no activity occurs for a period of five years.

Stakeholder Involvement Guidelines

Purpose and Background

To promote and facilitate constructive stakeholder involvement in the Desert Tortoise Management Oversight Group to further conservation and recovery of the Mojave desert tortoise. The primary purpose of the MOG is to provide executives of government agencies working within the range of the Mojave population of the desert tortoise a forum to share information and discuss and collaborate on issues relevant to desert tortoise recovery. MOG meetings are not part of any legally mandated environmental or administrative hearing process (Federal Advisory Committee Act, National Environmental Policy Act, or other open-meeting laws) that requires public involvement. For the purposes of these guidelines, a “stakeholder” is defined as an officially designated representative or member of a local government, tribe, federal, or state agency who is not a member of the MOG; the general public; or a member of a non-governmental organization.

Guidelines and Procedures

MOG meetings are working interagency meetings and are not required to be open to attendance by stakeholders. However, MOG agencies recognize that involving stakeholders will foster support and understanding of the MOG and its goals and will help meet their agencies'

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responsibilities to keep interested parties informed and provide opportunities for comment on MOG activities and initiatives.

Stakeholder involvement in MOG meetings will be conducted in accordance with the following guidelines:

- a. As a general rule, the first half of the MOG meeting will be open to stakeholders. The second half of the meeting may be restricted to MOG members, agency staff, and invited guest speakers. Exceptions to this general rule may be approved by consensus of the MOG members.
- b. Stakeholders will be invited to provide comments at designated times identified on the meeting agenda or other times at the discretion of the Chair. Stakeholder comments will generally be limited to three minutes unless agreed to otherwise with the meeting organizers prior to the start of the meeting. Stakeholder comments should be relevant to a topic on the agenda or a goal or objective identified in the MOG charter.
- c. Stakeholders may suggest topics for discussion on the MOG meeting agenda to the Chair.
- d. Notification and summaries of MOG meetings will be posted on the DTRO website (www.nevada.fws.gov/desert_tortoise).

Additional Public Involvement Opportunities

Stakeholders are encouraged to also participate in:

- a. The agency land and resource management planning process related to specific projects or areas of interest;
- b. Meetings of the BLM advisory councils; and
- c. Appropriate NEPA and State compliance activities as specified in the guidelines for those processes.

All actions implemented or coordinated by the MOG are subject to compliance with all appropriate Federal and State laws, as applicable.

Relationship of MOG, RITs, and DTRO

