



U.S. Fish and Wildlife Service
 DESERT TORTOISE RECOVERY OFFICE
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PROGRESS REPORT
July through December 2008

ACTIVITY	GOALS	PROGRESS/STATUS	NEXT STEPS
Recovery Planning	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Revise Recovery Plan 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> AUG 4: Notice of availability for public comment published in Federal Register. Solicited review from 6 peer reviewers. NOV 3: Public comment period ended. Initiated review and synthesis of, and response to, public and peer-review comments. 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Address comments, edit, and publish final revised plan Establish regional RITs
Science Advisory Committee (SAC)	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Coordinate with recovery plan revision process 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> OCT: Initiated revision of disease white paper based on latest information. NOV 14: Addressed public comments on recovery plan relative to scientific underpinnings of the plan. 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Complete revision of disease white paper Outline concepts/approach for implementing monitoring of demographic study areas
Desert Tortoise Management Oversight Group (MOG)	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Effective coordination of agency planning and management activities 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> OCT 23: Discussed 1) the status of the revised recovery plan, 2) organization of RITs, 3) fire suppression guidelines, and 4) finalizing the MOG charter. 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Circulate charter for agency signatures Revise RIT terms of reference, and hold follow-up meetings at more local levels to finalize how each RIT will be organized.
Range-wide Monitoring	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Reporting on 2007 surveys Develop study plan to guide monitoring program 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> NOV 25: The FWS 2007 Annual Monitoring Report was posted as a draft on the DTRO website. Cooperator comments were solicited by email. OCT 1: Completed quality assurance and distribution database for 2008 field data. Continued development of monitoring plan and associated SOPs, including field methods, training, and data handling draft sections using written materials developed and implemented in 2008. DEC 22: 2009 Monitoring Handbook posted as draft to DTRO website. Cooperators for 2009 begin circulating revisions of materials for training, data management, etc. 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Finalize annual report on 2007 monitoring results Complete internal draft and initiate external review of long-term monitoring plan Complete preparations for 2009 monitoring

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	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Secure long-term funding agreements for the monitoring program 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> OCT 21: Agreement signed with Clark County to provide 2009 funding for eastern part of range; low funding levels for western part had noticeable impact on planning and implementing improvements to monitoring program in 2008 and are anticipated for 2009. DEC 2: Held distance sampling seminar for cooperators in the Management Oversight Group. 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Continue to seek secure funding from DMG agencies and other sources
Recovery Data Management	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Establish master database and spatial decision support system for all desert tortoise data 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Continued to coordinate with Redlands Institute staff (including development of scope of work and cooperative agreement) and others to develop a recovery decision support system as part of the recovery planning process and which will be integrated with or be a part of the recovery database. 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Continue to meet with relevant parties to identify roles in database development Work with RITs to update database of threats/recovery actions
Recovery Action Implementation	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Establish regional Recovery Implementation Teams (RITs) Develop detailed recovery action plans Implement recovery action plans; track and report progress utilizing the recovery decision support system Monitor effectiveness of recovery actions 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Discussed draft terms of reference for the RITs with MOG (see above). DTRO is co-lead with the Ventura Fish and Wildlife Office on the implementation of a raven management program in CA, for which environmental documentation was recently completed. Drafted scope of work with the Center for Collaborative Policy to assist with Recovery Implementation Team (RIT) facilitation. 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Once the recovery plan has been finalized, RIT members will be appointed and teams organized Intra-Service consultation required for raven management program; working group will meet quarterly
Recovery Permit Administration	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Lead recovery permit review, in coordination with Region 8 and field offices 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Continued to coordinate activities on a total of 14 active permits. Reviewed or corresponded with several prospective permit applicants. 	<ul style="list-style-type: none">
Desert Tortoise Conservation Center (DTCC)	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Manage the DTCC as an integrated part of the recovery program Work with partners to ensure proper care of tortoises 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> JUL 11-12: DVM provided tortoise health assessment training for personnel at DTCC. AUG 22: Met with Zoological Society of San Diego to discuss potential agreement to take over management of DTCC. OCT: Posted grants.gov announcement of intent to enter into a cooperative agreement for operation of DTCC. Drafted MOU for DTCC coordination (Conservation Centers for Species Survival [C2S2], BLM, NDOW, FWS). Drafted cooperative agreement with the Zoological Society of San Diego for DTCC operations. 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Continue to implement changes to DTCC husbandry protocols Circulate MOU for signature Implement operations agreement with ZSSD Work with BLM to implement SNPLMA planning project for DTCC upgrades

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		<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Work continues under an agreement between Clark County and FWS for the care of tortoises brought to the DTCC as part of the MSHCP. 	
Status Review	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Complete a 5-year review of the status of the desert tortoise 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • On hold pending completion of revised recovery plan. 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> •
Technical support and guidance for decision-making	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Develop information syntheses, guidance and protocols, and apply Service and partner programs 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Translocation recommendations • Survey protocols • Renewable energy guidance: continued to coordinate internally as well as with the Bureau of Land Management and various state governments on renewable energy issues. • Ongoing intra- and inter-agency investigation on applying recovery actions to mitigation. 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • All are in the development phase • Continue energy-related coordination

Other Activities

- The DTRO continued to coordinate with the Ft. Irwin Conservation/Mitigation Working Group (CMWG) and research cooperators on desert tortoise translocation related to expansion of the National Training Center. Coordination with and among research teams continued through implementation of the Southern Expansion Area translocation. Planning for the Western Expansion Area translocation has also begun.
- The DTRO continued participating in the California Desert Managers Group quarterly meetings. The DTRO also participates in and provides technical input to the Information and Education Workgroup, the Conservation Land Acquisition Workgroup, and the Raven Management Workgroup.
- The DTRO participated in a coordination meeting with the BLM and other researchers to discuss the “kick-off” of a contract between BLM and SWCA to collect information and develop action plans for 2 DWMA (Superior-Cronese and Gold Butte). Effort will be made to integrate this work with the RITs as they get up and running.
- The DTRO continues to coordinate with and provide technical support to the FWS Ecological Services field offices on various issues.
- The DTRO participated in two climate change workshops, gave invited presentations at the Turtle Survival Alliance symposium, and participated in other work groups.