



U.S. Fish and Wildlife Service
 DESERT TORTOISE RECOVERY OFFICE
 1340 Financial Blvd., Suite 234
 Reno, Nevada 89502
 Ph: 775-861-6300 ~ Fax: 775-861-6301



PROGRESS REPORT
July through December 2009

ACTIVITY	GOALS	PROGRESS/STATUS	NEXT STEPS
Recovery Planning	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Revise Recovery Plan 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Revised recovery plan submitted to regional office for review. 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Publish final revised plan Establish regional RITs
Science Advisory Committee (SAC)	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Coordinate with recovery plan revision process Identify and prioritize science and technical needs specific to desert tortoise recovery 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> AUG 21, SEP 28-29: Disease work group met and developed a research proposal to investigate transmission of <i>Mycoplasma</i> Developed a position announcement for a post-doctoral fellowship (studying demography and spatially explicit population viability) funded by the Army. 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Form population augmentation work group Fill post-doc position
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"> No activity while revised recovery plan is still in review. 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Circulate charter for agency signatures Revise RIT terms of reference; hold follow-up meetings at local levels to discuss RIT organization
Range-wide Monitoring	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Reporting on 2007, 2008, and 2009 surveys Develop study plan to guide monitoring program Begin coordination for 2010 monitoring Secure long-term funding agreements for the monitoring program 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> OCT: Finalized 2007 annual report; posted on DTRO web page. OCT: QA/QC completed and 2009 databases prepared Drafting 2008 and 2009 results into a single report Continued development of monitoring plan and associated SOPs, including field methods, training, QA/QC, and data handling draft sections developed and implemented since 2008. OCT: All agreements for field monitoring (with Great Basin Institute, Kiva Biological, and Institute for Wildlife Studies) drafted, as well as those for data collection system development (with UNR) and final database products (with Topoworks). This is the first year that all agreements are overseen by USFWS. The monitoring project will not be implemented and funded in Nevada as an annual contract to the Desert Conservation Program in Clark County. 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Finalize annual report on 2008 and 2009 monitoring results Complete internal draft and initiate external review of long-term monitoring plan Host a face-to-face planning meeting in January, training in March, and complete monitoring by June 2010. Continue to seek secure funding from DMG agencies and other sources

		<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • OCT: For the first time, California BLM state office includes funding for annual tortoise monitoring as part of their continuing budget. 	
Recovery Data Management	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Establish master database and spatial decision support system (DSS) for all desert tortoise data 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Continued to coordinate with Redlands Institute (RI) staff and others to develop a recovery DSS. • Continued to coordinate with RI and agency scientists to compile, define, and assimilate spatial data layers for the Mojave Desert (e.g., locations of threats and management actions). • Coordinated with RI and agency scientists to develop and refine models of how threats contribute to tortoise population change and recovery action effectiveness. • Developed lexicon for conceptual model framework based on Salafsky et al. (2008). • Began coordination with national IPaC-ROAR systems. 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Continue to meet with relevant parties to develop the database • Conduct assessments to quantify refined models of how threats contribute to tortoise population change • Work with RITs to update database of threats/recovery actions
Recovery 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"> • DTRO is co-lead with the Ventura Fish and Wildlife Office on the implementation of a raven management program in CA. 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Once the recovery plan has been finalized, RIT members will be appointed and teams organized • Raven management working group will meet at least bi-annually; Wildlife Services is scheduled to conduct nest surveys and control activities this spring
Recovery Research and Permit Administration	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Coordinate and conduct priority research • Lead recovery permit review, in coordination with Region 8 and field offices 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Coordinated with CSU-Stanislaus to investigate the spatial and temporal variation in coyote foraging that may affect predation on desert tortoises. • Continued to coordinate activities on a total of 16 active permits. • Reviewed or corresponded with several prospective permit applicants. 1 new application is pending. 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Finalize agreements and continue working with principal investigators on projects
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"> • OCT 28: DTCC MOU partners meeting in Las Vegas. Discuss ongoing issues and needs • NOV 20: Translocation Research meeting with San Diego Zoo partners in Escondido. 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Continue to implement changes to DTCC husbandry protocols • Continue to inventory all tortoises on property • Plan for research-based translocations of tortoises from the DTCC

			<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Work with MOU partners to implement SNPLMA planning project for DTCC upgrades
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"> • Continued drafting the 5-year review. 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Circulate for inter-office review.
Technical support and guidance for decision-making	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Coordinate with and provide technical support to FWS Ecological Services field offices • Develop information syntheses, guidance and protocols, and apply Service and partner programs 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Began developing recommendations for translocation of desert tortoises from development sites. • Revised pre-project survey protocols. • Dissemination of technical information science to field offices • Participated on various technical advisory teams: California Habitat Connectivity Project and Desert Connectivity Project, FWS Climate Change Strategic Team • 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"> • Continue energy-related coordination, including developing best management practices, identifying mechanisms to expedite permitting, and participating in regional planning efforts • Continue coordination to facilitate and support the use of recovery actions as mitigation

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 for the Southern Expansion Area translocation.
- 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.
- Reed, J.M., N. Fefferman, and **R.C. Averill-Murray** (2009. Vital rate sensitivity analysis as a tool for assessing management actions for the Desert Tortoise. *Biological Conservation* 142:2710-2717) published.