



U.S. Fish and Wildlife Service
 DESERT TORTOISE RECOVERY OFFICE
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PROGRESS REPORT
January through June 2010

ACTIVITY	GOALS	PROGRESS/STATUS	NEXT STEPS
Recovery Planning	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Revise Recovery Plan 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> No activity while revised recovery plan is still in review by the regional office. 	<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"> Hired a post-doctoral fellows (to study demography and spatially explicit population viability) funded by the Army; had first coordination meeting at Univ. of Arizona on JUN 22. 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Form population augmentation work group
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 2008 and 2009 surveys Develop study plan to guide monitoring program Complete monitoring for 2010 Secure long-term funding agreements for the monitoring program 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> 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. JAN 12: Planning meeting in Las Vegas. MAR 15: Training began, overlapping all three field crews and different experience levels. MAR 23: 2010 monitoring began. Completed on JUN 1. JUN 8: Post-field season debriefing meeting. Through MAY – Accepted funds from Ft. Irwin, Grand Canyon/Parashant National Monument (NPS), Joshua Tree NP, Chocolate Mtn Air Gunnery Range, and California State BLM for 2010 monitoring. 	<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 Complete QA/QC process and develop final database products. Continue to seek secure funding from DMG agencies and other sources

<p>Recovery Data Management</p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Establish master database and spatial decision support system (SDSS) 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 SDSS. • 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). • JAN: Presented our work on the SDSS at the joint USFWS-NMFW Endangered Species Section 7-Recovery Coordination workshop. • Coordinated with RI and agency scientists to develop and refine models of how threats contribute tortoise population change and recovery action effectiveness. • Completed experts on-line assessments for weighting links with the conceptual model framework. • Coordinated with Mojave Data Ecosystem Program to post data and maps to deserttortoise.gov. 	<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
<p>Recovery Implementation</p>	<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"> • Developing timelines, initial membership lists, and “goals & outcomes” guidance for the first 1.5 years of RIT meetings with Center for Collaborative Policy. • REAT-NFWF MOU signed to allow funding of raven management and other recovery action implementation as part of mitigation strategy for renewable energy projects in California. 	<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
<p>Recovery Research and Permit Administration</p>	<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"> • Continued to coordinate activities on a total of 17 active permits. • Reviewed or corresponded with several prospective permit applicants. 2 new applications are pending. 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Finalize agreements and continue working with principal investigators on projects
<p>Desert Tortoise Conservation Center (DTCC)</p>	<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"> • Coordinated with partners on key disease-related research. San Diego Zoo’s pathology post-doc began work at DTCC. • MAR 8-9: DTCC MOU partners meeting in Las Vegas. • APR 12-13: Translocation research meeting with San Diego Zoo partners. Designed research project and visited field site. • MAY 13: Annual C2S2 meeting in Escondido. 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Continue necropsies and in-depth health sampling • Continue to inventory all tortoises on property • Work with partners to address short-term facility needs • Work with MOU partners to implement SNPLMA planning

		<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • JUN 15: DTCC issues coordination meeting 	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"> • 5-Year Review submitted to regional office. 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Publish final 5-Year 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"> • Developed recommendations for translocation of desert tortoises from development sites. • Drafted position paper on maintaining desert tortoise population connectivity. • Participated on various technical advisory teams: California Habitat Connectivity Project and Desert Connectivity Project, FWS Climate Change Strategic Team, Desert LCC workgroup, USFWS Threat Assessment Guidance policy team. • Renewable energy guidance: continued to coordinate internally as well as with the BLM and various state governments on renewable energy issues. • Developing aspects of SDSS to quantify recovery actions as potential mitigation for renewable energy projects in CA; coordinated with CA BLM on funding; applied for support from California Energy Commission PIER grants. • 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.
- The DTRO participated as a member of the Coyote Springs Investment/Lincoln County MSCHP Technical Advisory Committee.
- The DTRO and Nevada Department of Wildlife convened a Pet Tortoise Work Group to address issues regarding the overabundance of pet desert tortoises in southern Nevada. The group also includes Clark County’s Desert Conservation Program, the San Diego Zoo/Desert Tortoise Conservation Center, and Tortoise Group.
- Riedle, J.D., **R.C. Averill-Murray**, and D.D. Grandmaison (2010. Seasonal variation in survivorship and mortality of Desert Tortoises in the Sonoran Desert, Arizona. Journal of Herpetology 44:164-167) published.