



U.S. Fish and Wildlife Service
 DESERT TORTOISE RECOVERY OFFICE
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PROGRESS REPORT
April through June 2009

ACTIVITY	GOALS	PROGRESS/STATUS	NEXT STEPS
Recovery Planning	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Revise Recovery Plan 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Continued review and synthesis of, and response to, public and peer-review comments. 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> 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 Identify and prioritize science and technical needs specific to desert tortoise recovery 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> The SAC charter was revised and changes in membership went into effect. Final edits are being incorporated into the disease white paper. A new disease work group was formed and the first meeting will be AUG 21 in Escondido, CA. 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Finalize disease white paper First meeting of disease work group Form population augmentation work group Further develop 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"> MOG charter circulated for agency signatures. 13 signatures have been received; many remain outstanding. 	<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 and 2008 surveys Develop study plan to guide monitoring program Complete monitoring for 2009 Secure long-term funding agreements for the monitoring program 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Cooperator comment period has ended; draft 2007 report is ready to finalize. 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 and 2009. 2009 monitoring began on 1 APR and was completed on 6 JUN. JUN 9: Post-field season debriefing meeting. MAR - ongoing: Began drafting new agreement with Clark County for funding monitoring in eastern part of range in 2010; low funding levels for western part had noticeable impact on planning and implementing improvements to monitoring program in 2007-2009. 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Finalize annual report on 2007 monitoring results; draft 2008 results Complete internal draft and initiate external review of long-term monitoring plan Complete quality assurance/quality control procedures on 2009 data; develop final database products Finalize agreement with Clark County for 2010 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 for all desert tortoise data 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Continued to coordinate with Redlands Institute staff and others to develop a recovery decision support system. • Continue to coordinate with Redlands Institute staff and agency scientists to compile, define, and assimilate spatial data layers for the Mojave desert (e.g., locations of threats and management actions). • Coordinating with Redlands Institute staff and agency scientists to develop and refine models of tortoise mortality mechanisms and recovery action effectiveness. • Begin coordination with national IPaC-ROAR systems. 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Continue to meet with relevant parties to develop the database • 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"> • 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
<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"> • Created a two-year SAC postdoctoral position to develop a spatially-explicit population viability analysis. • 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. 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"> • APR 15: DTCC MOU partners meeting in Las Vegas. Updates to protocols underway. • MAY 27-28: Participated in annual meeting of the Conservation Centers for Species Survival. • JUN 25-26: DTCC MOU partners meeting and design charrette (SNPLMA planning project) in Escondido. Changes to protocols and use of space discussed. Conceptual diagram of what is needed to meet current and future needs developed. 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Continue to implement changes to DTCC husbandry protocols • Continue to inventory all tortoises on property • Work with partners to add details to conceptual diagram in preparation for development of design drawings. • Work with MOU partners to implement SNPLMA planning project for DTCC upgrades

		<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. The current agreement expires AUG 31. Negotiations are underway for a new 22 month agreement. 	
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 to compile, define, and assimilate spatial data layers for status of threats across the Mojave desert. • Continued to assess population status for the revised Recovery Units. 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Edit and 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"> • Translocation recommendations • 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. • JUN 11: Presentation on recovery program to Clark County's Community Advisory Committee. • JUN 12: Meeting with Arizona Game and Fish Department and University of Arizona to discuss monitoring program for Sonoran (AZ) population. • 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. Planning for the Western Expansion Area translocation continued with the completion of the translocation plan amendment.
- 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.