



U.S. Fish and Wildlife Service
 DESERT TORTOISE RECOVERY OFFICE
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PROGRESS REPORT
January through March 2006

ACTIVITY	GOALS	PROGRESS/STATUS	NEXT STEPS
Range-wide Monitoring	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Conduct data analysis and report on monitoring conducted to date 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> MAR 22: Draft 2001-05 report released and posted on DTRO web page; includes recommendations for improving future monitoring efforts and providing direct links to management actions. MAR 28: Monitoring results and the direction of the program were discussed with managers and stakeholders at a Management Oversight Group meeting. In lieu of field sampling in 2006, a 5-year review of the monitoring program is under way, beginning with solicitation of feedback on the draft report. Land and wildlife management agency representatives were invited to participate on the Desert Tortoise Monitoring Committee to increase interaction between managers and the technical group and to facilitate communication of agency monitoring needs. APR 6: Selection made for the Monitoring Coordinator who will start on JUN 19. 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Ongoing 2006: Additional analyses and program review in coordination with the DTMC, expanded to include manager representatives MAY 31 – JUN 2: DTRO Coordinator and Monitoring Coordinator will attend an Occupancy Estimation and Modeling Workshop for potential application to the monitoring program
Data Management	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Develop MOU between DOD MDEP, Redlands University, & UNR to establish master database for all desert tortoise data Develop protocols for structure, access, and maintenance of database 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> A FWS-BLM-NPS project to develop a “Listed Species Consultation and Recovery Information Tracking System” was funded under the Southern Nevada Public Lands Management Act. The system will streamline consultations under the Endangered Species Act and facilitate the collation of data to assist in implementing recovery actions. 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Continue refining database concept Meet with relevant parties to identify roles in database development Finalize MOU

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<p>Science Advisory Committee</p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Coordinate with recovery plan revision process • Revise or develop new recovery criteria 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • The SAC met on JAN 20-21 and MAR 16-17 to continue work on revising desert tortoise recovery objectives and criteria. Meeting summaries are posted on the DTRO website. 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Continue developing recovery objectives and criteria; refine threat analysis process; identify research needs and recovery actions; integrate with regional working groups • Summer 2006: Host a forum to discuss draft recovery criteria with stakeholders and managers
<p>Recovery Planning</p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Establish Recovery Planning and Implementation Working Groups • Revise/amend Recovery Plan 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • MAR 8: Interviews were held to select a facilitation team to conduct a situation assessment in California (stakeholders were invited to participate in the interview process). The interview panel (DTRO, USIECR, and 10 government and non-government stakeholders) unanimously selected the Center for Collaborative Policy (CCP). • MAR 28-29: An organizational and planning session was held with DTRO, USIECR, CCP, managers, and stakeholders at the MOG meeting. 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • APR-MAY: USIECR and CCP complete stakeholder assessment interviews • JUN: Decision on whether or not to proceed with collaborative Regional Working Group process

Other Activities

- The DTRO continues to coordinate with the Ft. Irwin Conservation/Mitigation Working Group (CMWG) on desert tortoise translocation prior to expansion of the National Training Center. An RFP for translocation research was issued by the Army and the CMWG met on March 28 to review the single proposal received.
- The DTRO continues working with partners, including Clark County, in evaluating new roles and objectives for the Desert Tortoise Conservation Center (DTCC), to better integrate regional land management and desert tortoise research and recovery objectives, especially with regard to management of tortoises cleared from development and the best use of those tortoises for research and recovery purposes. A “master plan” for the new facility was completed. A proposal to develop architectural designs for new facilities is under review.
- In January, a Coyote Springs Science Advisory Team, including the DTRO, completed a white paper on *Conservation of the Desert Tortoise and Other Species of Concern in the Coyote Springs Habitat Conservation Plan*. This white paper provides a framework for future conservation-related activities in an adaptive management program. It also details a research agenda designed to reduce key uncertainties that currently limit the ability of land and resource managers to reverse tortoise population trends through directed management actions. The proposed research plan in particular has implications for tortoise conservation beyond the immediate Coyote Springs planning area, including adjacent tortoise habitats in Nevada’s Mojave Desert and desert lands in neighboring states. Specific research projects were discussed at a meeting on March 10.

- The DTRO continues as lead in recovery permit review, in coordination with the regional office and field offices.
- The DTRO participates in the DMG Desert Tortoise Information and Education Project (DTI&E), focused on building public and stakeholder awareness of tortoise issues and tortoise recovery. The DTI&E Working Group is developing and implementing an education program that includes a media campaign, a Decision Makers Desert Tortoise Newsletter, webpage, education materials for teachers, and a public attitudes and effectiveness study, among other activities. The work group has coordinated with Clark County, Nevada, to expand the Mojave Max emergence contest to public schools in the state of California. The working group continues to seek funding to support these activities.
- The DTRO participates in meetings with the FWS Ecological Services field offices and environmental groups to address concerns and issues in the California/Nevada Mojave and Colorado Desert regions.