



Desert Tortoise Recovery Partnership

Update on DOD/DOI's Recovery and Sustainment Partnership (RASP)

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Desert Tortoise Management Oversight Group: October 11, 2022

Program Overview: Desert Tortoise Recovery Partnership (DTRP)

- RASP is a joint initiative of DOD and the Department of the Interior. **In June 2018, DOD and DOI signed an MOU to establish the RASP to develop species conservation and recovery initiatives** and provide increased flexibility for military missions nationwide.
- DTRP supports the desert tortoise RASP by **implementing off-base conservation actions identified by partners in support of the draft RASP biological opinions** in development for MCAGCC and Ft. Irwin National Training Center (NTC).



Implementation Plan Development (November 2020 – May 2022)

Objective: Produce measurable outcomes for the threatened Mojave desert tortoise in California's Mojave Desert, particularly in the Western Mojave Recovery Unit.

Process:

- Start with 5-year objectives and focal areas drawn from preliminary FWS RASP Appendix, clip them to exclude installation lands.
- Develop plan further with sections on conservation context, adaptive management, priority conservation strategies, metrics for tracking implementation and outcomes, a monitoring plan, and 10-year budget.
- Use collaborative stakeholder process to incorporate on-the-ground knowledge in prioritizing conservation actions



National Fish and Wildlife Foundation

Mojave Desert Tortoise Recovery Implementation Plan

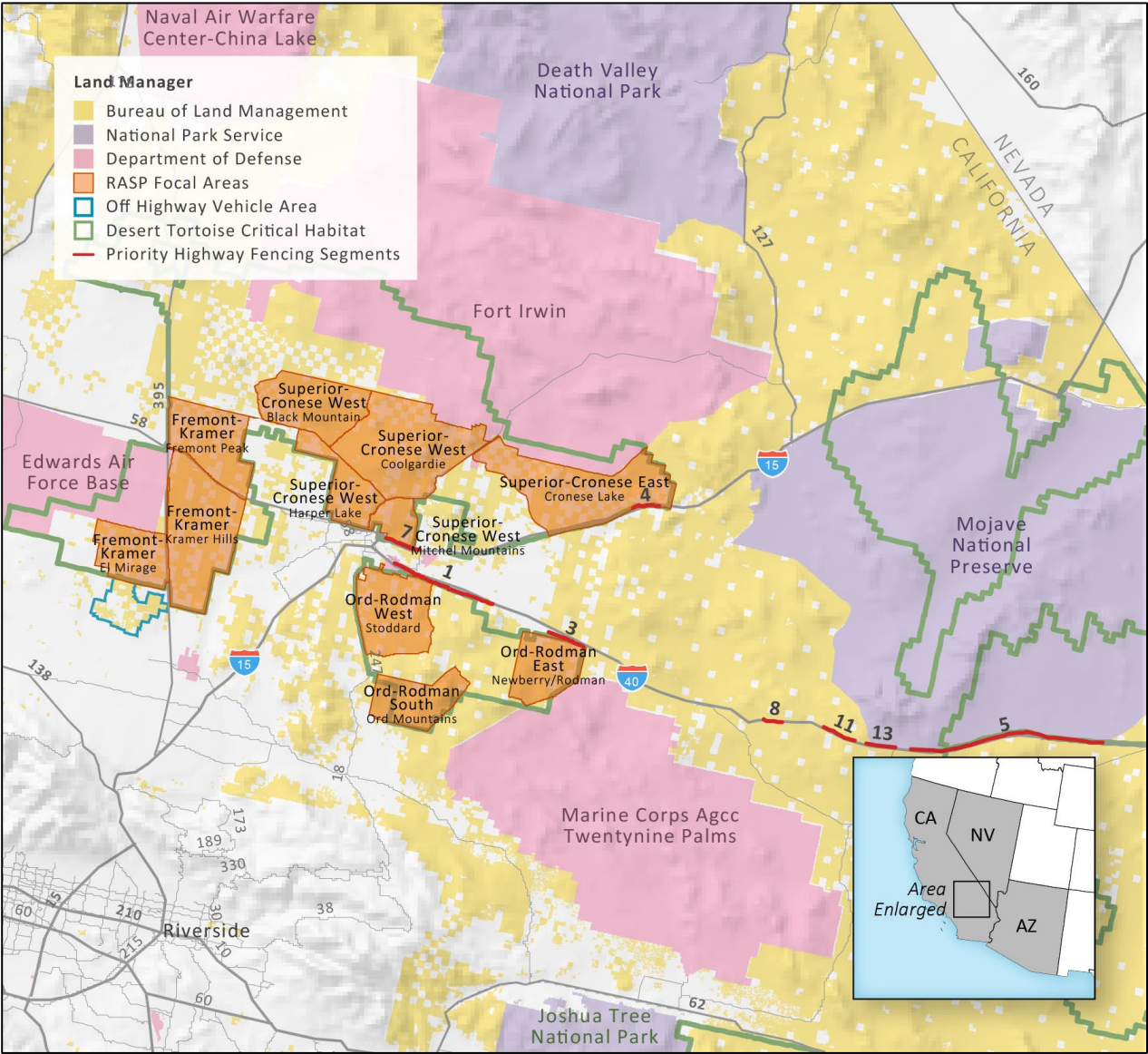
May 2022

<https://www.nfwf.org/sites/default/files/2022-05/mojave-desert-tortoise-implementation-plan-2022.pdf>



NFWF

Geographic Focus



Priority will be given to projects that address desert tortoise conservation needs in one or more of six focal areas in the Western Mojave Recovery Unit.

Priority highway fencing segments include: (1) I-40 Daggett to Newberry Springs, CA; (3) I-40 National Trails West of Pigsah, CA; (5) I-40 West of Van Winkle Wash to E of Essex Rd, CA; (7) I-15 North of Barstow, CA; (8) I-40 North of Black Ridge, CA; (11) I-40 Old Dad Mountains, CA; and (13) I-40 Kelbaker Rd, CA.



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Priority Implementation Strategies

Strategy 1. Mojave desert tortoise habitat improvement

1.1 Establish defensible polygons of desert tortoise habitat – Expanding existing or conserving new tracts of Mojave desert tortoise habitat via route restoration and land protection

1.1.1 Land acquisitions and conservation easements

1.1.2 OHV route signage

1.1.3 Vertical mulching

1.1.4 Physical barrier installation

1.1.5 Community outreach and education

1.1.6 Increase visitor contact staffing to reduce non-compliance with route and habitat restoration closures

(While no funding for this strategy will come through NFWF, other RASP partners intend to support this strategy.)

1.2 Improve desert tortoise habitat on protected lands– Restoring degraded tortoise habitat on defensible habitat space

1.2.1 Habitat restoration

1.2.3 Increase native seed banks



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Priority Implementation Strategies

Strategy 2. Support road crossing improvements

- 2.1 Construct or repair exclusion fencing along roads
- 2.2 Install or improve culverts, underpasses or overpasses

Strategy 3. Augment depleted Mojave desert tortoise populations

- 3.1 Head-starting and reintroduction
- 3.2 Translocation *(While no funding for this strategy will come through NFWF, some RASP partners intend to support this strategy.)*

Strategy 4. Increase capacity for project implementation and data management

- 4.1 Create a RASP Coordinator position
- 4.2 Support regulatory compliance
- 4.3 Support data collection and data management

Strategy 5. Monitoring and Adaptive Management

- 5.1 Species monitoring
- 5.2 Improve understanding of recovery action effectiveness
- 5.3 Host annual stakeholder meetings
- 5.4 Assess and revise Plan in years 4 and 8



Monitoring Plan



Key Principles

- Expand range-wide monitoring (particularly line-distance sampling) for **long term** trends
- Conduct more population diversity monitoring in the West Mojave to track impact of RASP investments on population trends in the **medium term**
- Make **short term** effectiveness monitoring consistent across projects and compatible with existing protocols and databases (ex. BLM)

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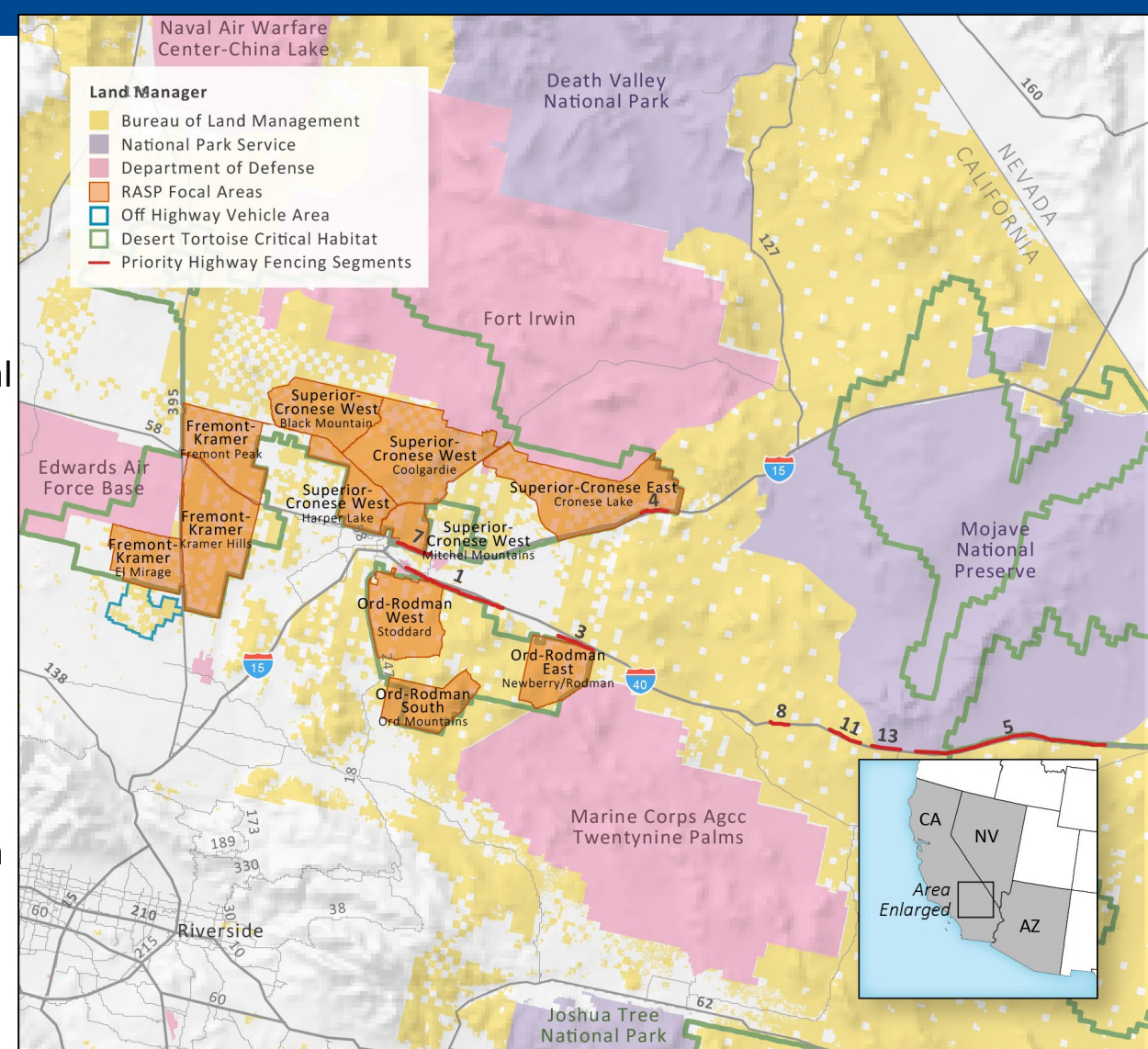
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2022 Request for Proposals

\$2.5M awarded to 4 projects *(currently in contracting)*

- \$1,200,000 to ***Preservation Ranch***
 - For their Pilot Project to restore habitat in the Ord-Rodman Critical Habitat Unit
- \$1,100,000 to ***Mojave Desert Land Trust***
 - To co-host the RASP Coordinator position in BLM Barstow office and contract American Conservation Experience crews for restoration in the Superior-Cronese Critical Habitat Unit
- \$132,821 to ***Transition Habitat Conservancy***
 - To continue ongoing restoration efforts in critical habitat units through an established program, monitoring, and a USGS research study to analyze the impact of soil decompaction.
- \$70,000 to ***USFWS Desert Tortoise Recovery Office***
 - For line-distance sampling in Ord-Rodman CHU



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2023 Request for Proposals

\$2.2 million available from a variety of sources

- REPI Challenge remaining from 2022
- USMC/MCAGCC
- Bureau of Land Management
- BNSF Railway corporate funding

2023 RFP Priorities

- Land acquisition and easements
- Improve tortoise road crossings (expand priority locations)
- Closure of unauthorized routes
- Restoration (invasives control and seed source development)
- Community outreach and education
- Species monitoring
- Headstarting and augmentation



Timeline

- Nov 29, 2022: RFP published on NFWF website
- Feb 2, 2023: NFWF held applicant webinar
- Mar 9, 2023: Full proposals due to NFWF
- First half of April 2023: Partners will review proposals and make funding recommendations
- Late May 2023: Grantees Notified of Awards



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Thank You! Comments and Questions?

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