

Mojave Desert Tortoise  
Management Oversight Group  
**MOG Member Updates**

**October 3, 2024**



*Photo credit: defendthemall.org*

# MOG Member Updates

- **Announcements and Needs**
- **High-Priority Recovery Actions**
  - Tortoise Monitoring
  - Predatory Management
  - Fencing and Vehicle Mortality
  - Habitat, restoration, and burros
  - Headstarting and translocation
  - Solar strategies
  - Outreach and Public Messaging
- **Other Updates**
  - Sentinel Landscapes
  - RASP
  - Miscellaneous

This synthesis includes updates submitted prior to October 2nd.

# Announcements and Needs

- FHWA is eager to know **what additional tasks you would like FHWA to participate in/fund on programmatic level**. Please contact Abdelmoez (Del) Abdalla ([abdelmoez.abdalla@dot.gov](mailto:abdelmoez.abdalla@dot.gov))
- The FHWA's technical team will provide **training on Section 7 of the ESA** on October 10, 2024. Please contact Craig Greg ([CCrick@dot.nv.gov](mailto:CCrick@dot.nv.gov)) to register.
- Naval Air Weapons Station **China Lake would like to plan to engage more with other DoD installations in future**, especially Ft Irwin and EAFB (due to shared boundary and northwestern Mojave location). Contact Julie Hendrix ([julie.m.hendrix2.civ@us.navy.mil](mailto:julie.m.hendrix2.civ@us.navy.mil))
- Living Desert Zoo would be happy to share **materials and tips related to outreach to OHV users**. Contact Katie Shaw ([kshaw@livingdesert.org](mailto:kshaw@livingdesert.org))
- **Mojave Desert Native Plant Materials Development and Restoration Workshop** is on October 8-10, 2024 at Victor Valley College in Victorville, CA. To register, Judy Perkins ([jlperkins@blm.gov](mailto:jlperkins@blm.gov)) with your name and affiliation. Please note if you are interested in remote participation. Workshop is free of charge.

# Mojave Desert Tortoise Monitoring (1 of 2)

- BLM CA - USGS resurveyed and analyzed the two long-term desert tortoise study plots in the Chemeheuvi CHU.
- UT DWR - Working with BLM to secure funding for the desert tortoise long-term monitoring program within the RCNCA.
- Clark County - Completed season of range-wide line distance to monitor tortoise population trends within Tortoise Conservation Areas occurring in Clark County, Nevada. Completed their 11<sup>th</sup> year of tortoise occupancy sampling on the BCCE. Have found no declining trends in occupancy across the easement over the last decade.
- China Lake - Planning line distance sampling survey support in spring 2025 on south range. Continuing regular tortoise monitoring and presence/absence surveys. 2019-2022 USGS Randsburg Wash Road tortoise movement study data analysis still in work (Esque et al).
- Death Valley NP - Volunteer collected field notes / photos of tortoises found in Greenwater Valley.
- USFWS Region 2 - Investigating possible different sources of funding to conduct surveying efforts in NW Arizona for Mojave/Sonoran/hybrid tortoises

# Mojave Desert Tortoise Monitoring (2 of 2)

## Drone Monitoring

- Clark County - Initiated a pilot project to test the efficacy of drones to detect tortoises. The first year saw limited success and will adjust methods next year.
- China Lake - Navy drones may be available and project proposal in work through Naval Facilities Command's GIS department.

## Demography Data

- BLM CA - University of Nevada, Reno established the second of three 1-km<sup>2</sup> demographic plots in the Chemehuevi CHU.
- China Lake - Funding to repeat Demographic plot (USGS/DTRO). 2022 data still in review for possible publication (Esque et al).
- Clark County - Will begin collecting demography data on established plots in Clark County in fall 2025.

# Predator Management



## Raven Management Plans

- Death Valley NP - Developing a raven management plan
- China Lake - Implementing management plan actions (outreach, raven subsidy mapping and reducing subsidies)

## Raven Monitoring

- USFWS Region 8 - Continues work with GBI and NDOW to monitor and control ravens
- BLM St George Field Office - conducted raven point count surveys
- BLM Las Vegas Field Office - completed raven surveys on transmission lines

## Raven Subsidies

- Clark County - raven management efforts around the Boulder City conservation easement (laser deterrents, nest surveys, techno torts, egg oiling)
- Living Desert Zoo - Time to Talk Trash campaign continues, now with dumpsters and food waste bins - collecting data from food related businesses
- China Lake - Outcomes of water rights adjudication in Indian Wells Valley will impact agriculture and potentially reduce raven populations

# Fencing and Vehicle Mortality

- BLM AZ - Installed pipe rail fence and tortoise fencing near Mesquite, NV; maintaining fencing along Highway 91.
- Ft Irwin - Upgrading fencing around Lane Mountain milk-vetch conservation areas.
- UT DWR, State Parks, BLM St George Field Office - Installing/upgrading <13 miles of boundary fencing in Red Cliffs National Conservation Area (RCNCA) and Snow Canyon State Park.
- Clark County - Road Warriors program involves collaborative roadway mortality surveys, routine fence and connectivity culvert inspections, and minor maintenance.
- Clark County - Supported NDOT Wildlife Crossings Pilot Program grant application to install 33 miles of new tortoise fencing along U.S. 93 through the Coyote Springs ACEC.
- FHWA - USFWS renewed the PBO on April 18, 2022, reducing issues of compliance dramatically working with NDOT on monitoring, fencing, and research.
- UT DWR - Monitoring desert tortoise road collisions along major roadways in the Reserve and RCNCA.

# Habitat Actions



## Wild Horses and Burros

- USFWS Region 2 - Section 7 consultation for the Tassi-Gold Butte Herd Management Area (HMA) Wild Burro Gather Plan in Mohave County.
- China Lake - October 2024 horse and burro gather canceled; reschedule pending. Having greater impact on China Lake south range tortoise habitat.
- Ft. Irwin - Working with Peaceful Valley Donkey Rescue on burro roundups to reduce their impact on natural resources, including the seeps and springs.

## Restoration Activities

- BLM AZ is applying herbicides to establish fuel breaks.
- UT DWR is applying targeted herbicide and preemergent at Red Cliffs Desert Reserve and RCDNCA.
- Clark County is planning restoration of 725 linear segments in the Piute-Eldorado Area.
- Clark County is evaluating long term effectiveness of restoration techniques.
- Las Vegas Field Office - Incorporating public comments on Northern Ivanpah Valley Desert Tortoise Habitat Connectivity and Restoration Project EA .
- St George Field Staff is revegetating and treating non-natives in fire damaged areas, road edges, and trailheads.

# Translocation

- Ft Irwin - Completed EA for translocation from Western Training Area (WTA). Working on clearance surveys and translocation to RASP focal area south of Ft Irwin.
- UT DWR - Implementing translocation management plan by releasing tortoises displaced by construction to a designated release site in the RCNCA.
- BLM Southern Nevada District - Supporting post-translocation monitoring per revised Translocation Plan for the Stump Springs site.
- MGACC - Translocation efforts are proceeding.

# Headstarting

- MGACC - Headstarting efforts are proceeding. Preparing manuscript with survival analysis.
- Living Desert Zoo - 75 hatchlings in the 2024/2025 cohort from Edwards Air Force Base. Hatchlings are heavier and longer than past years, very active, and have great appetites. First set of blood draws in October.



# Solar Energy Actions

## USFWS Region 8:

- ESA section 7 consultations for Dry Lake East Energy Center, Rough Hat Clark Solar Project, and the Solar PEIS.
- Evaluating facilities that maintain habitat - released 48 adults into the Gemini Solar Facility in April.
- Study with BLM to evaluate the thermal and environmental conditions associated with varying solar facility designs.

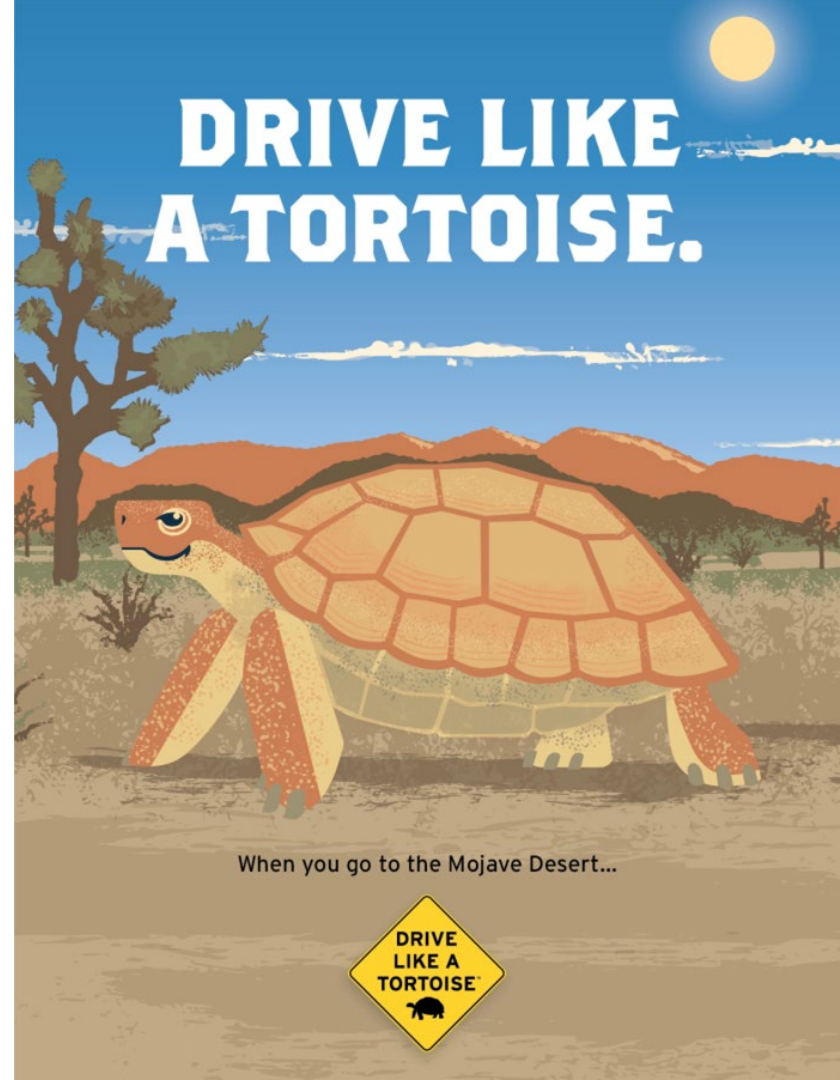


## USFWS Region 2:

- Communicating with DTRO about the BLM Solar PEIS plan to develop in the Black Mountains in AZ, a likely hybrid/pure zone for MDT. The plan did not include protection for MDT and SDT in the area outside of critical habitat.

# Outreach and Public Messaging

- Death Valley NP designated Greenwater Valley camping sites and installed “drive like a tortoise” signs.
- China Lake has a new Public Affairs Officer. They are planning 2024 Desert Tortoise Week.
- Living Desert Zoo identified a strong need for outreach and messaging after meeting with many OHV users. They have materials to share and better understand challenges.



# Other

## Mojave Desert Sentinel Landscape

- MGACC - The official designation was announced in May. Have held one preliminary meeting with CNRA and initial steering committee to help draft the organization structure of the partnership.
- China Lake - involved and tracking with John Kersey, Community Liaison and Public Affairs Officer, as point of contact

## Miscellaneous

- MGACC - several partners helped evaluate proposals for the 2024 RFP for the RASP for Desert Tortoise.
- Ft Irwin - Working with the installation Directorate of Emergency Services to have a Conservation Law Enforcement Officer (CLEO) presence around Army-owned parcels found in the RASP focal area.
- China Lake - Tracking multiple species (Joshua tree, Mohave ground squirrel, burrowing owl, pinyon jay, pollinators, others) within tortoise habitat. Involved in ongoing RASP discussions/actions and JT and CORA working groups.