

Working together to conserve our desert lands

STRATEGIC PLAN

Desert Managers Group

1 December 2010



Cover Photo: Afton Canyon

Afton Canyon is designated as an Area of Critical Environmental Concern to protect plant and wildlife habitat, and to preserve scenic values of the riparian area within the canyon.





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Introduction

The California Desert is seemingly vast, limitless, and harsh. In reality, this fragile treasured landscape supports a diverse, unique, and sensitive biota, provides recreational opportunities to millions, serves as training grounds for military activities, and has renewable energy potential. Approximately eighty-percent of the California Desert, or twenty-million acres, is publicly owned and includes two national parks, one national preserve, six military installations, seventy-two designated federal wildernesses, twelve state parks, and the Bureau of Land Management's California Desert Conservation Area. The area also includes eight county jurisdictions, about one-hundred communities, and thirty-seven federally recognized American Indian tribes.

Conflicting demands for use of California's desert resources make it imperative for governmental agencies to work cooperatively in support of agency missions, protection of desert resources, and public use. The Desert Managers Group (DMG) is the forum for government agencies to address and discuss issues of common concern relative to the California Desert. Through cooperative management, each agency achieves greater operational efficiency, enhances resource conservation, and more effectively serves the American public.

The purpose of this document is to form a roadmap for the future of collaboration among the land and resource managers participating in the DMG. Tasks in this strategic plan will assist DMG agencies in their pursuit of DMG goals. Short and long-term work plans for the DMG will be derived from this document and agency budget justifications and work plans.

Vision Statement

To work together to conserve and enhance the California Desert for current and future generations

Mission Statement

The mission of the Desert Managers Group is to:

- A. Develop coordinated and complimentary management guidelines, practices, and programs.
- B. Coordinate and integrate efforts in the California Desert to:
 1. Conserve and restore desert resources
 2. Provide high quality recreation, public education, and visitor services
 3. Provide for safety of desert users
- C. Develop and integrate the databases and scientific studies needed for effective resource management and planning.
- D. Promote compatibility in the application of each agency's mission.

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Strategic Plan

Mission Area 1: Maintain a healthy, sustainable California Desert landscape that ensures adaptability and resilience to the effects of change.

A key to the continued use of the California Desert resides in our ability as land and resource managers to adequately conserve sensitive resources. The effects of climate change, associated changes in fire regimes and increased invasions of exotic species, will exacerbate the sensitivity of this already fragile biota. Collaborative efforts will be required to successfully recover and conserve wide-ranging species such as the federally and state threatened desert tortoise, state endangered and federally petitioned Mohave ground squirrel and more localized endemics such as Lane Mountain milkvetch and Mohave tui chub. A key to recovery and conservation success will be focused education that targets youth and ensures future generations will have an appreciation of the desert ecosystem. As climate change causes desert ecosystems to shift, it will be imperative for plants and animals to be able to migrate and adapt. Habitat restoration and conservation, protection from unnatural catastrophic wildfire, exotic species control, and the management of impacts from burros will all improve the desert's resiliency to change. Protection of the region's ground water resources will help maintain the unique and often endemic aquatic biodiversity and riparian systems.

Goal	1.1	Recover federal and state-listed species and conserve sensitive species in order to avert the need for additional Endangered Species Act listings in the California Desert.
Tasks	1.1.1	Coordinate and implement the California desert tortoise recovery implementation teams.
	1.1.2	Coordinate recovery of the Mojave tui chub to achieve downlisting from endangered to threatened.
	1.1.3	Coordinate the implementation of a raven management program in the California Desert.
	1.1.4	Coordinate the monitoring of listed and sensitive species populations in California.
	1.1.5	Plan and implement collaborative conservation measures that benefit the Mohave ground squirrel.
	1.1.6	Coordinate the management of wide-ranging sensitive species that cross multiple jurisdictional boundaries
Goal	1.2	Restore and maintain habitat connectivity in order to preserve the desert's genetic diversity and ability to adapt to change.
Task	1.2.1	Coordinate conservation land acquisitions and management actions to ensure key habitat corridors are placed in conservation or public status.

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Goal	1.3	Restore degraded habitats.
Tasks	1.3.1	Provide coordination and support for interagency restoration projects.
	1.3.2	Facilitate technology transfer on the current state-of-the-art restoration techniques and resources.
	1.3.3	Participate in the Low Desert and Mojave Weed Management Areas to prevent and control invasive weeds.
Goal	1.4	Maintain burro populations to appropriate management levels and in appropriate locations.
Tasks	1.4.1	Reduce burro populations to appropriate management levels.
	1.4.2	Monitor habitat within the three remaining herd management areas located in the California Desert.
Goal	1.5	Protect water resources.
Tasks	1.5.1	Coordinate among DOI agencies and Department of Justice's <i>Nevada Federal Family</i> to gain a better understanding of the Death Valley Regional Flow System.
	1.5.2	Take proactive steps to protect federal water rights and interests.

Mission Area 2: Provide land and resource managers with a relevant understanding and knowledge of natural resources, ecosystems, and processes within the California Desert and how changing environments will affect long-term sustainability and adaptability.

In order to manage sustainability in the California Desert, agencies must base all decisions upon sound, unbiased science. New research will elucidate the potential effects of climate change and other local and global changes on sensitive desert resources, allowing managers to implement adaptive management strategies that ensure future sustainability. Common protocols and data sharing platforms such as the Mojave Desert Ecosystem Program (MDEP) will result in a common language for desert scientists and managers as well as presenting a cost saving to the taxpayer.

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Goal	2.1	Facilitate and promote high quality research that provides a scientific basis for resource management decisions.
Tasks	2.1.1	Utilize the Landscape Conservation Cooperative framework to form government, academic, and NGO partnerships that develop scientific investigations that have management applications for the California Desert and Greater Mojave Desert Ecoregion.
	2.1.2	Provide a forum for technology transfer between researchers and resource managers.
	2.1.3	Gain a more complete understanding of how global change will affect desert ecosystems, in particular habitat migration, the movement of species, and their adaptability (e.g., develop predictive models for sensitive species).
	2.1.4	Coordinate research and knowledge to gain a better understanding of Mohave ground squirrel habitat requirements, ecology, range, and distribution.
	2.1.5	Coordinate research and knowledge to identify the key habitat corridors required to preserve the desert's genetic diversity and resilience.
	2.1.6	Gain a better understanding of desert aquifers and how global change will affect water availability and related impacts to aquatic/riparian species.
Goal	2.2	Collaborate and improve the use of technology for the savings of tax dollars and greater efficiency in knowledge dissemination to DMG members and the public.
Tasks	2.2.1	Maintain and expand current common language electronic knowledge sharing resources at MDEP.
	2.2.2	Develop data standards and protocols shared among DMG agencies that will facilitate more seamless data transfer among agencies.
	2.2.3	Build and maintain central data sharing platforms.
	2.2.4	Support data collection through enterprise level solutions and support

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Mission Area 3: Promote a greater understanding of the desert and its resources so that citizens can make informed choices about land use in this unique and often misunderstood region.

The California Desert is within a day’s drive for over forty-million people and by 2020, the residing population of the California Desert is predicted to exceed one-million. In 2009, over ten-million people visited the California Desert for its recreational opportunities. Californiadesert.gov, the DMG’s public recreation website received 2.4 million hits in 2009. Recreational experiences in the California Desert vary widely from the extremes of off-highway vehicle use to wilderness hiking. Often, families pass these recreational experiences from generation to generation, with today’s youth enjoying the same types of activities as their parents or grandparents. A key to recovery and conservation for the California Desert’s sensitive species is focused education that targets youth and ensures future generations will appreciate the desert ecosystem. Because desert use is multi-generational, introducing youth to an understanding of desert ecosystems provides them with a basic understanding that they can build on as future stakeholders.

Goal	3.1	Implement a multifaceted public information and youth education program to aid in the recovery of listed species and desert conservation.
Tasks	3.1.1	Utilize internet resources that engage youth in activities with a learning purpose.
	3.1.2	Develop and distribute brochures, public service announcements, and other materials that inform the public how their personal actions affect desert conservation and why desert conservation is important.
	3.1.3	Utilize classroom educational settings to deliver desert conservation messages.
Goal	3.2	Promote recreational opportunities and experiences in the California Desert.
Tasks	3.2.1	Develop and maintain interagency outlets (including the internet) for distribution of California Desert recreational information.
	3.2.2	Provide desert conservation experiences to youth.
	3.2.3	Provide desert interpretive information at California highway rest areas.
	3.2.4	Promote ecotourism and sustainable desert use.

Mission Area 4: Protect cultural resources

The California Desert has a long been occupied by humans with some assemblages that may date from the Pleistocene, prior to twelve-thousand years ago. More recent native peoples left reminders, such as rock art and artifacts, of their desert occupation. Today, tribes continue their rich heritage in the California Desert. Emigrants, fortune seekers, traders, and bandits also left their mark in California Desert History. The Old Spanish National Historic Trail and the Juan Bautista de Anza National Historic Trail both cross the California Desert.

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Goal	4.1	Provide agency archaeologists with a regional perspective of cultural resources in the California Desert.
Task	4.1.1	Facilitate technology transfer and information sharing on the current state of knowledge of the cultural resources within the California Desert.

Mission Area 5: Promote collaboration among DMG members and with stakeholders

Successful wide-ranging species conservation, reduction of range-wide threats, integrated science, and seamless recreation opportunities all require cooperation and communication among the California Desert’s many land and resource management agencies. To achieve landscape level goals, it is important for California’s Desert Managers to coordinate actions with partnerships from other states such as the Southern Nevada Agency Partners, Mojave Desert Initiative, and Western Regional Partnership. The DMG functions to provide a forum for managers to discuss common issues and build collaborative programs.

Goal	5.1	DMG agencies work to resolve conflicts in each agency’s mission on mutual interests goals.
Tasks	5.1.1	Gain a better understanding of partner agency missions and potential impacts to that mission.
	5.1.2	Consider long-term consequences of management decisions upon partner agency missions.
Goal	5.2	Ensure orderly and efficient operation of the DMG.
Tasks	5.2.1	Develop long-term and short-term work plans to implement the DMG mission and its strategies.
	5.2.2	Provide leadership and support to DMG work groups and activities.
	5.2.3	Keep federal, state, and local agencies, Congressional representatives, and interested parties informed of DMG strategies, priorities, needs, and activities as requested.
Goal	5.3	Coordinate DMG actions with other regional partnerships.
Task	5.3.1	Exchange information between the DMG and other regional partnerships regarding strategies, goals, activities, and opportunities.

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Goal	5.4	Demonstrate more efficient use of public tax dollars.
Tasks	5.4.1	Minimize duplication of effort between agencies and utilize the best capabilities of each organization, staff, facilities, and equipment.
	5.4.2	Seek additional collaborative programs and projects among DMG members and stakeholders that contribute to the DMG mission.
	5.4.3	Provide economical, high quality, interagency training opportunities for employees.
Goal	5.5	Coordinate renewable energy planning with other lands uses in the California Desert.
Tasks	5.5.1	Actively participate in the California Desert Renewable Energy Conservation Plan and Solar Programmatic EIS.
	5.5.2	Coordinate DMG activities and DMG supported research with desert land use planning activities.

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