

Briefing

Date: September 16, 2004

For: DMG

Title: DMG Desert Tortoise Information and Education Project

Issues:

1. responsibilities of the Defenders of Wildlife in the Project
2. designation of lead DMG agency for the Project
3. OHV Commission grant funding is uncertain

Background/Status:

1. A work group of the DMG headed up by Joe Zarki (NPS) and Doran Sanchez (BLM) develop the DMG DT Information and Education Program that was approved by the DMG in October 2003.
2. Goal 3, item 6 of the DMG 5 year Plan (April 22, 2004) is to “seek funding, staff and partnerships to implement an education and outreach campaign aimed at increasing public support of and involvement in desert tortoise recovery in California”.
3. On April 21, 2004, the DMG approved and signed a Resolution to support and encourage the development of partnerships and grant opportunities to provide staff and funding necessary to implement the DMG DT Information and Education Project.
4. Grant applications to fully fund the Project have been submitted on behalf of the DMG to the National Fish and Wildlife Foundation (\$68K) and the California Off-Highway Vehicle Commission (\$75K). The NFWF grant has been forwarded to their Board by NFWF staff with a positive recommendation—approval is expected on November 12, 2004. The OHV Commission will act on the DMG grant request on December 3, 2004. Preliminary indications are that the OHV Commission will only approve a portion of the DMG grant request. This will present two problems for the Project:
 - Insufficient funds will be available to hire a DT Outreach coordinator for the Project
 - Additional non Federal funds will be required to meet to meet the NFWF matching fund requirements. (The NFWF grant requires a 2 to 1 non Federal funding match). A summary of potential sources of matching funds is attached.
5. At the July 2004 meeting, the DMG supported involving the Defenders of Wildlife as a partner in the project. Since the July 2004 meeting, the Defender’s major role/responsibilities have been better defined to include:
 - Participation on the DMG DT information and education work group which would be established to oversee and coordinate implementation of the project
 - Provide education and outreach aimed at reducing raven populations in the desert using non lethal means. This will include
 - Writing/producing raven stories, PSAs, brochure, etc. to educate the public about the impact of ravens on desert tortoise and other wildlife
 - Working with trash companies to use raven proof trash containers

- Promoting local anti raven feeding and lawn watering ordinances
- Other measures developed in coordination with the DT info and education work group
- Public education regarding Desert Tortoise
 - Design and layout of the DMG Desert Tortoise brochure
 - Mojave Max emergence promotion
 - Participation in and contribute to the DT media campaign

A more detailed description of Defenders role/responsibilities in the project is attached. The Defenders contributions to the project will amount to

6. A DMG agency/office should be designated to lead the Project on behalf of the DMG. Responsibilities of the lead agency/office would include:
 - Participating (and perhaps leading) the DT Information and Education Work Group
 - Recruiting, supervising and providing direction to the DMG DT Outreach Coordinator including providing logistical support to the Coordinator (office space, vehicle, payroll, travel, internet access, etc)
 - Administering and accounting for project funds
- NPS-JOTR has volunteered to assume these responsibilities on behalf of the DMG

Proposed Next Steps:

1. DMG approve the proposed role/responsibilities of the Defenders in the project.
2. Designate NPS-JOTR as the lead office for the project on behalf of the DMG.
3. DOI Coordinator (and others) should explore additional non Federal funding opportunities e.g., CDFG, Cal State Parks, and others.

Attachment (2)



**Desert Tortoise Information and Education Project:
Potential Defenders of Wildlife Role and Responsibilities
September 7, 2004**

Background: Declines in desert tortoise populations are attributed to a number of factors, many of which are directly related to the growth of human population in the desert. For example, predation by common ravens and free roaming/feral dogs on desert tortoise has increased in the desert with increased human populations. In addition, illegal or unauthorized off road vehicle use in the desert, often associated with residential development, is widely regarded as a serious impact to tortoises and tortoise habitat in many areas. People also commonly collect tortoises as pets which directly reduces the number of tortoises in the wild. Pet tortoises may serve as vectors for diseases when they are released back into the wild.

An educated public that appreciates the value of the desert tortoise and understands how human activities and other factors are contributing to its decline is fundamental to a successful recovery effort. However, there is presently no coordinated or comprehensive effort to communicate information about the desert tortoise to the public. There is also no comprehensive effort to provide objective, consistent information to stakeholders, decision makers and local communities about the factors responsible for tortoise declines and current activities to recover the desert tortoise.

Goal: Develop and implement an information and education program about the desert tortoise to build public support for, and involvement in, its recovery.

Priority Messages

1. Desert tortoises are an important and valuable part of the Mojave Desert ecosystem and are worth saving.
2. Individuals can help conserve and protect desert tortoise by:
 - a. Disposing of trash properly
 - b. Staying on open roads and trails
 - c. Keeping hands off –i.e., not picking tortoises up unless they are in harms way
 - d. Not releasing pet tortoises into the wild
3. Agencies are working collaboratively to recovery the desert tortoise. Recovery efforts are based on sound science while accommodating human uses in the desert.

Priority markets:

1. Coachella Valley
2. Morongo Basin
3. Barstow/Lenwood
4. Needles/Bullhead/Laughlin
5. Lancaster/Palmdale
6. Victorville/Hesperia/Apple Valley/Helendale

7. El Centro/Imperial Valley
8. Ridgecrest
9. Riverside/San Bernardino/Moreno Valley

Priority Audiences

1. Residents
2. Desert recreation users
3. School children
4. Officials – decision makers, stakeholders
5. Tortoise pet owners
6. General public

Proposed Course of Action: The following course of action will be implemented over a three year period. The specific work plan will be adjusted annually based on an evaluation each year's work activities and the results of the DT Public Attitude/Effectiveness Survey (Item 7 below).

All products would be coordinated by DMG with oversight by the Desert Tortoise Information and Outreach Working Group, of which Defenders will be party. Implicit in the descriptions below is Defenders participation in this Working Group. We have highlighted areas where additional in-kind work would be provided by Defenders.

1. **Mojave Max Campaign:** The desert tortoise outreach and education program will be built around Mojave Max, a popular cartoon desert tortoise that is the spokes tortoise for the Clark County (Nevada) Desert Conservation Program (the CCDCP). Mojave Max is also a real desert tortoise that lives in a special habitat at the Red Rock National Conservation Area in Clark County, Nevada. The DMG will enter into an agreement with the CCDCP for use of the Mojave Max image and trademark in California. The agreement will address use of the Mojave Max image in the following specific applications:
 - a. Radio and television public service announcements
 - b. Brochures targeted at desert tortoise pet owners
 - c. Curriculum-based education programs for use in California schools (K-12)
 - d. A proposed desert tortoise documentary for broadcast on public television via KCET-TV Los Angeles PBS, or through the Corporation for Public Broadcasting.
 - e. Expansion of the Mojave Max annual emergence media event into the southern California media market
 - f. Use of Mojave Max mascot at fairs and community events in conjunction with DMG-sponsored educational programming
 - g. Articles to appear in agency-sponsored publications such as newsletters, newspapers, and other free literature distributed to desert recreation users and the general public.
 - h. Use of Max image on agency-sponsored or agency-affiliated web sites such as www.californiadesert.gov, www.dmg.gov, www.nps.gov, or www.joshuatree.org (a non-profit partner).
 - i. Use of Max in a limited program of product development designed to raise tortoise awareness and generate funds for additional education and outreach ventures.
 - j. Establishment of a resident California Mojave Max/Maxine around which to focus California desert tortoise education and outreach initiatives.

***Defenders:** promote Mojave Max in media and in appropriate outreach materials.. Coordinate with DMG and Clark County to ensure a consistent communication of the Mojave Max campaign and messages. Defenders will use Mojave Max image in our Raven conflict brochure.*

2. **Desert Tortoise Media Campaign:** A multi-faceted campaign will be implemented to get key messages related to desert tortoise in the media. Elements of the media campaign will include:
- a. **Radio Public Service Announcements (PSA)—The Mojave Minute:** The DMG will produce a minimum of 12 PSAs per year for broad distribution to radio stations throughout the desert. PSAs are inexpensive to produce and afford the opportunity to reach a large audience. The PSAs will address a variety of topics related to desert tortoise, general desert appreciation, recreation opportunities and agency/DMG efforts to recover the desert tortoise. The DMG will explore a possible partnership with the Clark County media center to produce the PSA's.

Defenders: Defenders and DMG would coordinate PSAs through the Desert Tortoise Information and Outreach Working Group. Defenders' Raven PSAs would contribute to DMG monthly PSAs and Defenders would also develop one PSA on synergistic threats to desert tortoise recovery.

- b. **Desert Tortoise Media Kit.** A desert tortoise media kit will be designed, developed and disseminated. The kit will include information such as:
- desert tortoise life history, population status, and recovery efforts,
 - answers to commonly asked questions about the desert tortoise,
 - a digital photo disk of desert tortoise images, maps, etc.,
 - contact information,
 - Mojave Max literature.
- c. **Desert Tortoise News Releases.** The DMG in cooperation with the Joshua Tree National Park Association, will be produce and disseminate a minimum of 6 news releases per year on newsworthy events and information.
- d. **Desert Tortoise Television PSA/Programs.** The DMG will explore and implement the production of television PSAs and programs related to the desert tortoise. A series of 30- to 60- second television spots will be produced for broadcast on regional television stations in the Palm Springs and Los Angeles/San Diego markets. A prospectus will be developed that outlines TV suitable events or subject matter. Partnerships with Clark County will be explored. Huell Howser (PBS) has indicated an interest in filming an episode of California Gold related to the desert tortoise—this opportunity will be explored. An appropriate celebrity will also be approached to act as the media spokesperson for the desert tortoise.

Defenders: Defenders would promote and support the TV PSAs.

- e. **Desert Tortoise Summit:** In concert with the release of the new desert tortoise Recovery Plan by the Fish and Wildlife Service, the DMG, in coordination with other DT recovery efforts will host a desert tortoise summit to:
- Create awareness of the status of the desert tortoise population, factors that are contributing to its decline, and efforts and accomplishments related to recovery of the desert tortoise.
 - Promote a dialogue and collaborative approach to resolving ESA (especially desert tortoise) issues among government, stakeholders, and business
 - Build support for implementation of an effective and timely desert tortoise recovery effort

Defenders: Defenders could cosponsor the Summit with the MOG, DMG and others (e.g., develop program, help coordinate and market the event the event) depending on the timing and the content of the Recovery Plan.

- f. **Media Field Day.** The DMG will host an annual media field day in conjunction with appropriate desert tortoise field activities (e.g., annual population monitoring) at several locations/media markets in the desert. The purpose will be to establish a working relationship with the media and promote positive stories about the desert tortoise and desert tortoise recovery efforts.

Defenders: could be involved with organizing one or more media field days in various areas of the desert, most likely focused on proactive raven work.

3. **Desert tortoise curriculum in desert schools.** Incorporate a Mojave Max-based desert tortoise curriculum in desert schools (target 50,000 K-8 students over a three-year period). The curriculum will be designed to comply with State educational standards.
 - a. Create four trunks containing a variety of educational materials and a curriculum guide. The trunks will be designed to travel to various locations throughout the desert and will be mailed out to teachers upon request. (2000 students per trunk per year)
 - b. Publicize the availability of education materials/workshops through PSAs and mass mailings/emails to teachers and school districts.
 - c. Conduct teacher workshop throughout the desert region and sponsor a booth and conduct a workshop at California Science Teachers Association annual meeting.
 - d. Translate the curriculum guide from the trunk into Spanish through the Spanish Colonial Research Center of the National Park Service. Share information with Mexico educators through the Border Environmental Education Resource Group.
 - e. Develop and produce a curriculum-based educator CD that includes the curriculum guide, video clips and interviews with experts, stories, activities, games, handouts, etc, that teachers can use to teach students about tortoises. Explore partnerships with the San Diego Zoo Education Department.
 - f. Work with teachers to review and test the materials on the CD for their effectiveness, ease of use and age appropriateness in the classroom.
 - g. Place the CD on the website and make it available as a free download for teachers. Publicize the availability of the education materials/CD through PSAs, mass mailing and emails to teachers and school districts.

Defenders: could advertise and promote the availability of these programs.

4. **Desert Tortoise Newsletter.** Produce one-two desert tortoise Newsletters annually to provide objective and timely information on desert tortoise recovery activities and progress. The newsletter will be targeted at decision makers, stakeholders, opinion makers, and community groups. The newsletter will be composed of news releases and other off-the-shelf material and include interesting/objective articles related to desert tortoise recovery actions, life history, population status, threats, agency profile, researcher/ conservationist profiles, desert tortoise events, etc. A high quality printed newsletter will be distributed via mail and an electronic version will be available via the DMG desert tortoise web site.

Defenders: Could contribute articles to the newsletter.

5. **DT Color Brochure.** A color DT brochure will be developed to promote tortoise awareness and appreciation among desert recreation users and the general public.

Defenders: could take the lead on design and layout of the brochure which would be developed in coordination with the DMG. [Please note, we've added funds for this project into the Defenders California Desert Campaign" proposal].

6. **Desert Tortoise Pet Owner Brochure.** A brochure about tortoise diseases and about responsible tortoise ownership will be developed for distribution through veterinarian offices, pet stores, animal shelters, and tortoise clubs/rescue groups. The brochure will identify sites where the public can take sick, unwanted or rescued tortoises.
7. **Desert Tortoise Webpage:** An expanded or new desert tortoise web page will be developed that will be a repository and clearinghouse for all information developed through the Information and Education Project. Existing resources at the Department of Defense and/or the University of Redlands will be used to design, develop and host the site. The initial step will be to develop a plan for the site and a no cost agreement with DOD/UR to develop, host and maintain the site.
8. **Desert Tortoise Public Attitude and Outreach Effectiveness Study.** A contract will be issued to conduct a sociological study to generate baseline data on public attitudes, perceptions, and values about the desert tortoise, about tortoise recovery efforts, and about broader California desert conservation and appreciation. The survey would be used to help design effective public outreach messages and strategies. A follow-up survey will be conducted at the end of the 3 year project to evaluate the effectiveness of outreach and education efforts.

Defenders: The Defenders proposed economic study should be coordinated with this effort. Results from both studies will be available to both parties and contribute to both overall programs.

9. **Desert Tortoise Sale Items.** In cooperation with non-profit cooperating associations, a merchandise plan will be developed for low-cost, high impact sales items related to the desert tortoise, i.e. bumper stickers, decals, patches, t-shirts. The plan will determine products, quantities, pricing, shipping, and billing agreements, inventory management, and retail and wholesale sales outlets. A DMG representative(s) will be identified to work directly with the non-profit partner in the development/approval process. Product could be developed and distributed among the DMG agencies in two ways:
 - Cooperating association may develop products with their vendors and sell at a wholesale cost to other agencies or their non-profit organizations.
 - Two or more cooperating associations may share in the purchase of new product in order to meet the minimum purchase of that product. The vendor would bill and ship to each association separately.

Defenders: Investigate the possibility of the Defenders marketing team to purchase and distribute sale items.

10. **Desert Tortoise Outreach Coordinator.** Past experience has shown that a Coordinator is needed to directly facilitate day-to-day implementation and coordination of the Program among the many partners involved in the effort. Accordingly, a full time Desert Tortoise Information and Education Coordinator will be hired by one of the land/resource

management agencies to coordinate and facilitate implementation of the project. Project oversight and assistance will be provided by the DMG and the DMG Information and Education Work Group. Major responsibilities of the Coordinator will include:

- reviewing and providing quality control for Radio and TV PSA's, press releases, information and education products, etc
- writing and assembling the media kit
- organizing a desert tortoise summit
- distribution of PSA's and news releases to the media
- administering contracts for the development of various products (brochures, education materials, effectiveness survey, etc)
- organizing media field days
- working with the non profit cooperating associations to develop and implement an appropriate DT merchandising program.
- assisting with the design and implementation of a desert tortoise web page.
- organizing and providing staff support to the DMG DT Information and Education Work Group that will provide general technical oversight over the Program
- assisting with the design of the DT effectiveness survey and evaluation
- monitoring progress and providing quarterly reports to the DMG
- coordinating with various partners in the Program
- seeking grants to implement various aspect of the Program
- tracking expenditures and accounting for contributions for various agency and partners

***Defenders:** DMG and Defenders should coordinate the hiring of individuals with complementary skills (marketing, education, media/journalism, design, etc).*

Major Focus Areas for the Defenders of Wildlife: The Defenders could be an active participant in the DMG DT Outreach and Education Work Group which will be established to provide general oversight and coordination of the Program. In addition, the Defenders will take lead responsibility to provide education and outreach aimed at reducing raven populations in the desert using non lethal means. This will include

- Writing/producing raven stories, PSAs, brochure, etc. to educate the public about the impact of ravens on desert tortoise and other wildlife
- Working with trash companies to use raven proof trash containers
- Promoting local anti raven feeding and lawn watering ordinances
- Other measures developed in coordination with the DT info and education work group

Funding Overview: The Desert Managers Group has applied for \$68,500 funds per year for a three year period from the National Fish and Wildlife Foundation. This grant requires from a 1:1 to a 2:1 match. Defenders proposes to dedicate approximately \$56K in staff time of the Defenders proposed Desert Program Coordinator and CA Species Associate will be committed to the above work. In addition, the costs of raven PSAs and brochures, and the desert tortoise brochures (totaling \$10,000) would be a match. Therefore, the total of the proposed match is \$66,000 over a two-year period.

Draft
Estimated non Federal Matching Funds
for the DMG DT Information and Education Project

California OHV Vehicle Commission: A \$75K/year for 3 year grant request has been made to the OHV Commission; funding would be used to hire the Outreach Coordinator from the project. The OHV Commission only approves grants for 1 year and we will need to reapply each year for the three year term of the project. The OHV Commission is expected to make a decision on our grant request in October 2004. Total: \$225K

Defenders of Wildlife/Resource Law Group (RLG): The DMG has been actively discussing a partnership and grant with the Defenders/RLF to help implement the DT Outreach Program. The amount contribution will be about \$66K for two years. The RLG is expected to make its decision on grant in December 2004. Total: \$66K

California Department of Fish and Game: Committed to provide \$20K cash contribution to the Program. In addition, DFG personnel will participate on the DT Outreach Work Group at an estimate cost of \$2000 per year for three years. Total: \$26K

Clark County NV Desert Conservation Program: providing in kind services and materials to help implement the Mojave Max education program in California. Estimated at \$5000 per year for three years. Total: \$15K

Joshua Tree Tortoise Rescue: Providing in kind services and materials to provide a repository and care for unwanted captive tortoises. Estimated at \$5000 per year for three years. Total: \$15K.

Joshua Tree National Park Association. Develop and implement a DT merchandising program. Estimated at \$5000 per year for three years. Total: \$15K.

Summary: The total estimated non Federal contribution is \$362K over three years (about \$120K/year). This assumes that the OHV Commission Grant the Resource Law Group grants are approved.