

DESERT TORTOISE MANAGEMENT OVERSIGHT GROUP
CHARTER

I. Background

The Desert Tortoise Management Oversight Group (MOG) was established in 1988 to coordinate agency planning and management activities affecting the desert tortoise in the Bureau of Land Management's (BLM) Desert Tortoise Rangeland Plan. Charter members of the MOG included the four BLM State Directors from Arizona, California, Nevada, and Utah; the four State Fish and Game Directors from these States; the three Fish and Wildlife Service (FWS) Regional Directors that share tortoise management responsibilities; and a BLM Washington Office representative. Membership was subsequently expanded to include representatives of the National Park Service, Biological Resources Division of the United States Geological Survey (USGS), and officials of the four branches of military service (Army, Air Force, Navy, and Marine Corps) that manage Mojave Desert tortoise habitat.

The original charter of the MOG, while never formalized, called for meetings at least once annually to a) standardize procedures for the analysis and interpretation of tortoise information, b) report on management actions completed for the benefit of the desert tortoise, c) recommend funding priorities, d) identify areas lacking sufficient information for management of Category 1 and 2 habitat, e) identify research needs to resolve management issues, f) identify threats and conflicts, g) complete annual status or progress reports, h) coordinate existing laws and guidance, and i) review ongoing research. A combination of events spurred change in the MOG and its charter. Emergency listing of the Mojave Desert population as Endangered in 1989, followed by the Mojave population's listing as Threatened in 1990, preceded a 1991 finding that the Sonoran population was not warranted for Federal listing. Following the publication of the Mojave Desert tortoise recovery plan in 1994, the MOG assumed a leadership role in coordinating agency activities directed toward recovery plan implementation, and the Sonoran population was de-emphasized as efforts for the Mojave population intensified.

In December 2002 the U.S. General Accounting Office completed an audit of recovery actions for the Mojave population of the desert tortoise. The primary recommendation of this report was to "develop and implement a coordinated research strategy that would link land management decisions with research results." This recommendation was reiterated in the October 2004 Desert Tortoise Recovery Plan Assessment, which called for the establishment of a Desert Tortoise Recovery Office (DTRO) to facilitate such coordination. In December 2004, the FWS formally established a DTRO. The DTRO includes a Science Advisory Committee (SAC), which serves in an advisory role to the DTRO and cooperators to ensure that recovery action plans, recovery plan revision, monitoring, and evaluation of recovery action effectiveness meet rigorous scientific standards. The DTRO also coordinates the range-wide monitoring program in collaboration with MOG representatives and independent experts. In September 2006, a situation assessment for collaborative recovery plan revision conducted by the U.S. Institute for Environmental Conflict Resolution found that the effectiveness of the MOG could be improved by clarifying its roles and function relative to the current state of recovery efforts.

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II. Vision

Achieve recovery of the Mojave population of desert tortoise (hereinafter, desert tortoise) through effective coordination of agency planning and management activities.

III. Mission

The mission and guiding principles of the Desert Tortoise Management Oversight Group are to:

- A. Provide a vehicle for interagency coordination of desert tortoise recovery efforts, where discretion is allowed within each agency's separate mission, including:
 - 1. Plan, prioritize, and recommend recovery actions on lands administered by members of the MOG and elsewhere;
 - 2. Formulate and prioritize management-related questions and needs, assist research relevant to those needs, evaluate results, and assess effectiveness to lead to appropriate changes in management;
 - 3. Coordinate resource allocation and budget initiatives to support implementation of coordinated recovery actions.
- B. Provide a roundtable for sharing information and raising issues that cross jurisdictional boundaries, including consideration of other species.
- C. Provide a forum for stakeholder input on desert tortoise issues (see stakeholder participation guidelines following the charter).

IV. Membership

The Desert Tortoise Management Oversight Group shall be chaired by the Region 8 Director, FWS. The DTRO shall provide coordination and technical support services. The MOG shall be comprised of executive-level managers of the following agencies or designated representatives:

Department of Interior

Bureau of Land Management state offices from Arizona, California, Nevada, and Utah
Fish and Wildlife Service regional offices from Region 2 (Arizona), Region 6 (Utah), and
Region 8 (California-Nevada)

Bureau of Indian Affairs, Western Regional Office

Lake Mead National Recreation Area

Death Valley National Park

Joshua Tree National Park

Mojave National Preserve

U.S. Geological Survey, Western Ecological Research Center

Department of Defense

Naval Air Weapons Station, China Lake

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Marine Corps Air Station, Yuma
Marine Corps Air Ground Combat Center, Twentynine Palms
Marine Corps Logistics Base, Barstow
National Training Center, Fort Irwin
Edwards Air Force Base
Nellis Air Force Base

States

State wildlife agencies from Arizona, California, Nevada, and Utah

County Governments

Mohave County, Arizona	San Bernardino County, California
Imperial County, California	Clark County, Nevada
Inyo County, California	Lincoln County, Nevada
Kern County, California	Nye County, Nevada
Los Angeles County, California	Washington County, Utah
Riverside County, California	Quadstate Local Governments Authority

Additional government agencies/offices may be added to the MOG based on the consensus of the group. Federal, state, local, and tribal government agencies that are not members of the MOG may serve as members of MOG Work Groups, subject to approval of the MOG. Tribal governments will be kept informed of MOG activities and invited to MOG meetings.

V. Duties and activities

The activities of the Desert Tortoise Management Oversight Group differ from other similar interagency groups, such as the California Desert Managers Group which provides a forum for interagency coordination of on-the-ground recovery action implementation within the California range of the desert tortoise, in that the MOG provides executive-level oversight and coordination of desert tortoise management on a range-wide basis. Coordination of MOG oversight activities may generally be addressed in a single annual meeting in October or November, which will include discussion recovery goals for the current fiscal year, the resources to implement those goals, and identification of out-year recovery goals and their required implementation resources. Additional meetings will be scheduled as necessary. The MOG's primary coordination activities are outlined below.

- A. Recovery planning and review: Contribute to recovery plan five-year reviews and revisions in collaboration with the DTRO. Technical working groups will be formed, or coordination with other regional working groups will occur, as necessary to conduct this activity.
- B. Recovery implementation: Direct and support active agency participation in the cooperative implementation of management actions prescribed in the recovery plan with support from the DTRO. Technical working groups will be formed, or coordination with other regional working groups will occur, as necessary to conduct this activity.

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- C. Tortoise monitoring: Support the range-wide desert tortoise population monitoring program overseen by the DTRO. The MOG commits to implement the General Accounting Office's recommendation (from its 2002 audit of desert tortoise recovery efforts) to seek continued funding for range-wide population monitoring through its emphasis on this activity in the charter. The DTRO will report annually on the previous year's monitoring activities.

Identify opportunities for and coordinate implementation of effectiveness monitoring of recovery actions with support from the DTRO. Information from recovery action implementation and effectiveness monitoring will be integrated into a recovery decision support system identified in Activity D.

- D. Integrate and share data for effective recovery implementation and planning: Support and contribute available pertinent data to a recovery decision support system and database for all desert tortoise recovery implementation, monitoring, and research data. The DTRO will provide oversight for the decision support system and database in coordination with the DOD Mojave Desert Ecosystem Program and other technical partners. The MOG will coordinate to ensure that the database is updated as new management actions are implemented and/or data are available.
- E. Crisis intervention: Coordinate in response to unforeseen or emergency situations, such as wildfires, invasion of exotic organisms, disease outbreaks, excessive predation, and extreme climatic events.
- F. Formulate budget initiatives for major range-wide activities: Coordinate agency budgets and develop budget initiatives to fund coordinated implementation of recovery actions or other MOG initiatives.
- G. Review MOG initiatives and activities: Evaluate progress and effectiveness of MOG initiatives and activities covered under this charter. Revise the charter at least every five years to modify listed activities, including expanding its scope beyond the desert tortoise, as necessary or desired by group consensus.
- H. Sunset: This charter shall expire if no activity occurs for a period of five years.

Stakeholder Involvement Guidelines

Purpose and Background

To promote and facilitate constructive stakeholder involvement in the Desert Tortoise Management Oversight Group. The primary purpose of the MOG is to provide executives of government agencies working within the range of the Mojave population of the desert tortoise a forum to share information and discuss and collaborate on issues relevant to desert tortoise recovery. MOG meetings are not part of any legally mandated environmental or administrative hearing process (Federal Advisory Committee Act, National Environmental Policy Act, or other open-meeting laws) that requires public involvement. For the purposes of these guidelines, a “stakeholder” is defined as an officially designated representative or member of a local government, tribe, federal, or state agency who is not a member of the MOG; the general public; or a member of a non-governmental organization.

Guidelines and Procedures

MOG meetings are working interagency meetings and are not required to be open to attendance by stakeholders. However, MOG agencies recognize that involving stakeholders will foster support and understanding of the MOG and its goals and will help meet their agencies' responsibilities to keep interested parties informed and provide opportunities for comment on MOG activities and initiatives.

Stakeholder involvement in MOG meetings will be conducted in accordance with the following guidelines:

- a. As a general rule, the first half of the MOG meeting will be open to stakeholders. The second half of the meeting will be restricted to MOG members, agency staff, and invited guest speakers. Exceptions to this general rule may be approved by consensus of the MOG members.
- b. Stakeholders will be invited to provide comments at designated times identified on the meeting agenda or other times at the discretion of the Chair. Stakeholder comments will generally be limited to three minutes unless agreed to otherwise with the meeting organizers prior to the start of the meeting. Stakeholder comments should be relevant to a topic on the agenda or a goal or objective identified in the MOG charter.
- c. Stakeholders may suggest topics for discussion on the MOG meeting agenda to the Chair.
- d. Notification and summaries of MOG meetings will be posted on the DTRO website (www.nevada.fws.gov/desert_tortoise).

Additional Public Involvement Opportunities

Stakeholders are encouraged to also participate in:

- a. The agency land and resource management planning process related to specific projects or areas of interest;

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- b. Meetings of the BLM advisory councils; and
- c. Appropriate NEPA and State compliance activities as specified in the guidelines for those processes.

All actions implemented or coordinated by the MOG are subject to compliance with all appropriate Federal and State laws, as applicable.

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FOR THE U.S. FISH AND WILDLIFE SERVICE (Region 8)

Ren Lohofener, Regional Director

Date