

DRAFT Charter

Desert Tortoise Information and Education Work Group

Background/Introduction: 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. Accordingly, the Desert Managers Group developed and approved a multi-faceted desert wide Information and Education Project aimed at increasing public support of and involvement in desert tortoise recovery in California. The Project will develop and disseminate objective, consistent information to the public, stakeholders, and decision makers about the factors responsible for tortoise declines and the actions needed to facilitate tortoise recovery.

In January 2005, the DMG established the Desert Tortoise Information and Education Work Group to help facilitate implementation of the Project in a collaborative manner among land and resource managers, scientists and partners.

Mission: Assist in the development and implementation of an information and education campaign about the desert tortoise to build public support for, and involvement in, its recovery.

Duties and Responsibilities:

1. Review and provide recommendations on (a) implementation of the DMG Desert Tortoise Information and Education Project and (b) various products (brochures, education material, etc) developed through the Project
2. Assess public attitude, knowledge and beliefs about desert tortoise and evaluate the effectiveness of DT Information and Education strategies.
3. Assist with the deployment and dissemination of desert tortoise information and education products to identified target audience and markets
4. Report findings, provide updates, and develop recommendations for consideration by the DMG.

Work Group Members

- DMG agency information and education specialists
- DMG agency scientist or desert tortoise biologists
- One or two managers from the DMG

- Partners who support the mission of the Work Group and implementation of the Project

Staff support

- NPS Desert Tortoise Outreach Coordinator
- DOD and DOI DMG Coordinators