

March 19, 2002

Memorandum

To: Director, Bureau of Land Management

From: Executive Coordinator, California Desert Management Project, Department of the Interior, Barstow, CA

Subject: BLM support for monitoring desert tortoise populations in the California deserts

Yesterday, I was informed by your California State Office that the Bureau of Land Management (BLM) had no funding to support its continued participation in the interagency effort to monitor desert tortoise populations in the California deserts. Monitoring desert tortoise populations is fundamental to BLM management and planning in the California deserts and meeting the requirements of the Desert Tortoise Recovery Plan. The Fish and Wildlife Service and National Park Service are contributing \$140K and the Department of Defense installations (Army, Air Force and Marine Corp) are contributing \$500K to the effort this fiscal year. In December 2001, BLM committed before the Desert Managers Group (DMG) to provide \$200K to monitoring tortoise populations this fiscal year, the same amount they provided in FY 01.

BLM manages 48 percent of critical desert tortoise habitat in the California deserts. Without BLM participation this year, large portions of desert tortoise habitat will not be monitored, seriously compromising the scientific value of the data and undermining support for the entire interagency effort.

Funding to support BLM's participation in several DMG interagency initiatives was included in your FY 01 budget and in BLM's FY 02 budget request. Staff from the House Appropriations Committee informed me that the funding for the DMG initiatives (including the tortoise monitoring effort) was included in the final FY 02 appropriations bill.

The contracts to monitor desert tortoise populations will be finalized this week. Training for the monitor crews is set for the week of March 25 and field work will commence the first week of April.

On behalf of the DMG, I respectfully request your support to identify funding to allow BLM to participate in this year's desert tortoise monitoring effort in the California deserts.

Thank you for considering this request. If you or your staff have questions, I can be reached at (760) 255-8888.

cc Assistant Secretary - Fish and Wildlife and Parks
Deputy Assistant Secretary – Land and Mineral Management
Director, FWS
California State Director, BLM
CA/NV Operations Manager, FWS