



June 30, 2003

Memorandum

To: Desert Managers Group
DMG Interagency Working Group Team Leaders
DMG Coordinators and Interested Parties

From: DOI Executive Coordinator, Desert Managers Group
DOD Coordinator, Desert Managers Group

Subject: June 11-12, 2003 Desert Managers Group Meeting Summary

Attached is the draft summary of the Desert Managers Group meeting conducted on June 11-12, 2003, in Big Bear, CA. Documents referenced in the summary are also attached. Please review the action items and follow through on any assignments for which you are responsible. *Action items have been highlighted for easy review.* The Meeting Summary and all referenced documents are accessible on the DMG website at www.dmg.gov/documents. Please contact either John Hamill (760-255-8888) or Clarence Everly (760-255-8896) if you have questions.

Attachments--DMG Meeting Summary

Referenced Documents

1. DMG Meeting Attendance Roster
2. Letter from Forest Service re: Membership in the DMG
3. California Wild Heritage Act (draft)
4. PACRAT meeting summary
5. Hazmat work Group Update and Summary of Keep California Beautiful proposal re: Illegal dump/litter prevention
6. Burro Management Brief
7. Briefing re: Effectiveness of DT Recovery Actions
8. Proposal by Dr. Bill Boarman: Effectiveness Monitoring -- Are Management Actions Helping to Recover Tortoise Populations?
9. Briefing re: raven management
10. www.Californiadesert.gov brief
11. Update on the Mojave Desert Science Symposium
12. Habitat Restoration Report
13. Ecosystem Modeling Efforts at EAFB
14. Index of High Resolution Color Aerial Photo Coverage

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Meeting Summary and Action Items
Desert Managers Group Meeting
June 11-12, 2003

1. **San Bernardino National Forest Overview.** Max Copenhagen and staff provided an overview and slide show of the resources and activities in the San Bernardino National Forest. *Max distributed a memo from the Regional Forester confirming the Forest Service's request to become a formal member of the DMG.*
2. **California Wild Heritage Act** - Tom Bohigian and Alton Garrett from the Office of Senator Barbara Boxer distributed a copy of and summarized the California Wild Heritage Act (Attached). Tom emphasized that the bill was still undergoing revision, but that substantial changes were not anticipated. *Maps of the proposed wilderness area were being finalized and will be made available on a CD to the DMG.* Tom addressed a variety of questions about the bill and encouraged anyone who had additional comments or concerns to contact him or Alton.
3. **PACRAT Report.** Bob Bryson, the new co-chair of the PACRAT replacing Roger Kelly, provided a summary of the activities of the PACRAT (attached). *Bob indicated that a subcommittee of the PACRAT will looking into concerns about long term support and maintenance of the CHRIS and will provide its finding and recommendations at the next DMG meeting. The managers supported the PACRAT recommendation for presentations at the next DMG meeting on the Indian Rocks investigation and on new procedures for paleontological research in wilderness areas.*
4. **Hazmat Work Group Report.** John Key and Garry Brown provided an update on the work group's activities and a summary of the Keep California Beautiful proposal related to illegal dumping and litter prevention (attached). John indicated that dump clean up work on BLM lands will be suspended because of budget shortfalls. *Managers were requested to provide to Russell a point of contact within their office for entering information on illegal dumps into the dump database. Joe Zarki agreed to provide a copy of the Joshua Tree National Parks dump education Program to John and Garry.*
5. **Burro Management.** Hamill provided a status report on the status of the burro management program in the California deserts (attached). *There was agreement for BLM and NPS to meet to discuss several issues/proposals in more details including NPS (MOJA and DEVA) burro management goals and needs; BLM plans for FY 03-05 and opportunities within BLM to support/assist NPS; possible DMG/BLM support for NPS funding requests for burro management; the purpose, content, audience and production of a Cal Desert Burro Management Accomplishment Report; and coordination of habitat monitoring and population census among DMG agencies. Hamill agreed to coordinate and facilitate the meeting.*
6. **Field Trip.** Max Copenhagen led an excellent field trip to the Discover Center, Cactus Flats, and Mitsubishi Mine. Thanks to Max and his staff for a great trip!

7. **Desert Tortoise Recovery Plan Assessment Committee Update** –Dick Tracy outlined the process, timeframe, preliminary results of the scientific assessment of the desert tortoise recovery plan. The group is making excellent progress and plans to complete its assessment in January 2004. Information on the Assessment Process including meeting minutes and schedule is available at <http://www.brrc.unr.edu/> (click on DTRAPC). Agencies or other parties interested in attending DTRPAC meetings should contact Bob Williams, FWS, Reno.
8. **DT Monitoring Update.** Phil Medica summarized the preliminary results of FY 03 line distance sampling of desert tortoise populations. Generally, encounter rates were higher in FY 03 probably as a result of favorable weather conditions. A more complete report will be provided at the next DMG meeting. Phil also presented for viewing a preliminary copy of the draft FY 01 LDS report, which should be finalized and distributed after going through final FWS internal review.
9. **Monitoring Workshop-status/next steps.** Tracy indicated that instead on holding a monitoring workshop as originally planned, *the DTRPAC will conduct an in depth review of DT monitoring and provide recommendations later in 2003.*
10. **Tortoise Disease Report–status/next steps.** Becky Jones reported the report on the November 2002 disease workshop was put on hold pending a review and discussion with the DTRPAC. *Becky expects that the report will be finalized by the next DMG meeting (Oct 2003).*
11. **Education and Outreach Plan** –Doran Sanchez and Joe Zarki reported that a DIRT meeting was held to begin developing an education and outreach program for the desert tortoise. The group includes a mix of DMG agency, stakeholders, and previous and current members of the BLM desert advisory council. The group’s next meeting is July 2 in Barstow and *they should have a final plan to present at the next DMG meeting.*
12. **Effectiveness Monitoring** – Jim Kenna reported that the Effectiveness Work Group has completed its initial scoping of the actions needed to assess the effectiveness of management actions taken to help recover the desert tortoise. The Work Group’s primary recommendation was to implement the proposal it developed in collaboration with Dr. Bill Boarman: ***Effectiveness Monitoring -- Are Management Actions Helping to Recover Tortoise Populations?*** (attached). *The DMG endorsed/approved the proposal.* The direct cost of the proposal is approximately \$76K, which would be used by USGS primarily to hire a post doctorate student to lead the effort. The post doc student is only available for a limited time and USGS requested a decision on the project by the end of Aug 2003. *The proposal also identifies several needed DOI agency staff commitments:*
 - *BLM needs to commit two months of a lead BLM biologist (e.g., Ed LaRue) to search for, obtain copies of, and organize pertinent reports, literature and data from all sources.*
 - *Each NPS, FWS, BLM, and GS office working on DT needs to commit up to one-week staff time to assist the lead BLM biologist in compiling pertinent reports and data.*

13. **Raven Management Plan** – Ray Bransfield’s reported on the progress and direction of the Raven Management Work Group (attached). Overall, *the DMG supported the direction of the raven work group and encourage Ray to move forward to flesh out the program and present a proposal/recommendations at the next DMG meeting (Oct 7-8, 2003.)*. The DMG provided the following guidance:

- the program should include performance indices that relate to improvements in DT population. i.e., need to be able to assess the effectiveness of raven management in terms of desert tortoise survival/recruitment
- program needs to include measures to reduce the human subsidies to DT, not just control on raven populations
- program needs to be broad based i.e., should address human health issues and economic impacts associated with ravens in the desert and NOT be justified entirely/primarily on the damage to DT
- need to anticipate likely sources of opposition and engage environmental groups early on in the process. Also the group needs to consider concerns that may be raised by native Americans, given the sacred status of ravens in some native American cultures

14. **Feral Dog Management – status and next steps.** Becky Jones reported that her efforts to contact the local governments to discuss feral dog management have been unsuccessful. The University of Redlands is continuing to compile reports/incidences where feral or free roaming dogs have been a problem.

15. **Public Comment.** Roy Denner (ORBA) expressed support for on the ground actions to help recover the desert tortoise and distributed a report prepared by Chris Spoferra on non lethal devices to control raven populations. Roy agreed to provide copies of the report to interested parties.

16. **Desert Tortoise Recovery Implementation/Budget Strategies** – (DMG Members Only Session). The DMG discussed the draft MOA to fund and cost share desert tortoise recovery and monitoring actions. The Marine Corp indicated they generally supported regional MOU’s for endangered species recovery. They recommended that the cost sharing arrangement should be included in the body of the MOA not in the attachment. The Navy said the said there needed to be an agreement on how costs would be shared and that there must be a quid pro quo for the military to contribute to recovery and monitoring actions outside the base. Clarence Everly questioned if the draft MOA would really generate more DOI financial support if there was no new money available. Cal Fish and Game expressed concerns about language in the draft MOA related to ensuring that recovery actions would be consistent with the DT Recovery Plan and approved agency land management plans. DFG was also concerned about provisions of the MOU that would allow for stakeholder participation or input.

The Managers discussed funding for Dr. Bill Boarman's proposal: ***Effectiveness Monitoring -- Are Management Actions Helping to Recover Tortoise Populations?*** (attached). The direct cost of the proposal is approximately \$76K. *DOD agencies tentatively agreed to contribute \$16,000. The DOI managers/ representatives at the meeting recommended the remaining amount (\$60K) be split equally between FWS, NPS, and BLM (\$20K each).* However, they did not identify any funding sources or commit the money from their offices budget. *They did suggest that a Cooperative Agreement be developed with USGS so that the study could be readily funded with any end of year funds that may become available. The DMG recommended that John Hamill approach the Regional Executives to develop a coordinated DOI funding/implementation plan.*

The managers also discussed stakeholder participation at DMG meetings. The group recommended that the agenda be arranged so that stakeholders would not have to leave and then return.

17. **Californiadesert.gov.** Clarence Everly reported that the Website had been redesigned and was available for managers to input data on their recreation attractions in their area (attached). *Clarence requested the following from the Managers:*

- *Determine a contact for coordinating Cal State Parks entries into the data base*
 - *Determine a contact for Cal DFG*
 - *Determine a contact for USFWS*
 - *Encourage managers/staff to use the calendar and news feature in the new website*
- Clarence agreed to launch the new site when there are a minimum of 15 entries into the website.*

18. **Research database and Mojave Desert Science Symposium.** Debra Hughson reported that the research database was complete. Each manager will be responsible for ensuring that the data on any research project they fund, permit or approve are entered into the database. Primary responsibility for data entry will rest with individual researchers, with quality control provided by the managers/staff. *Managers agreed to provide to Debra the contact information for all the people in their office who were in charge of reviewing and/or approving research projects.*

Debra provided an update on the Mojave Desert Science Symposium which is scheduled for Nov 24 in Redlands (attached).

19. **Habitat Restoration Report.** Russ Scofield provided an update on various restoration projects (attached). He reported that he was working with AB State park, BLM El Centro and Cal Fish and Game to develop a MOU re restoration of the San Sebastian Marsh/Watershed . *The Managers approved Russ's request to hold a Restoration Work Group meeting next Fall/Winter to exchange information on restoration activities in the Cal deserts.* Tim Read provided a power point presentation on cooperative efforts by BLM to conserve and restore the Amargosa River and requested information on who was interested in participating in a Amargosa River field trip to be held in conjunction with the next DMG meeting.

20 **DMG Roundtable reports** (only major highlights are reported)

- **Linda Green (DEVA)**. -- FWS and NPS are meeting with the NV State Engineer to discuss Amargosa water issues. Pupfish populations are declining at Devils Hole. Working on EIS to address vehicle access at Surprise Canyon.
- **Gary Watts (Cal State Parks)** -- Anaza Borrego's General Plan should be approved in December 2003; Red Rocks GP not far behind. Funding for the Lancaster Visitor Center is still secure (at least for the time being)
- **Carl Benz (FWS)** -- working to improve consistency on DT bio opinions issued in NV and CA; Working on streamlined Section 7 consultation procedures for highway and pipeline projects.
- **Jim Kenna** – leaving on 3-6 month detail to the Washington Office. Tim Smith will be acting field manager.
- **Danella George (SR/SJ National Monument)**. Plan for the monument was recently completed.
- **Greg Thomsen (BLM, El Centro)**. Working on a business plan for the Imperial Sand Dunes.
- **John O'Gara (NAWS)**. Many comments provided on the DEIS; final should be complete by next September
- **Mickey Quillman (NTC)**. BA on the expansion has been sent to FWS
- **Robert Wood (EAFB)**. Distributed an overview of ecosystem modeling projects at EAFB and an index of high resolution aerial color photography now available through MDEP.

21 Next Meetings

- **October 7-8, 2003, Death Valley, CA.** Host: J.T. Reynolds. Preliminary agenda topics:
 1. Dump prevention plan
 2. Field Trip –Amargosa River
 3. Park and Public Lands Stewardship through the Arts
 4. Operation Indian Rock
 5. Paleontological Research in the Desert
 6. Report on CHRIS
 7. Desert Tortoise Recovery and Monitoring
 - Recovery plan review – process, timeframe, preliminary results (Williams/Tracy)
 - DT Monitoring Update (Medica)
 - Tortoise Disease Report–status/next steps (Jones)
 - DT Education and Outreach Plan –status and next steps (Sanchez/Zarki)
 - DT Effectiveness Monitoring – status and next steps (Kenna)
 - Raven Management Plan – status and next steps (Bransfield)
 - Feral Dog Management – status and next steps (Jones)
 - Interagency Funding MOA
 8. Californiadesert.gov (Everly/Hamill)
 9. Research database and Mojave Desert Science Symposium (Hughson)
 10. Burro Management
 11. DMG Executive Coordination Meeting
- **January 14-15, 2003, Helendale, CA (Silver Lakes):** host to be determined

