

DESERT LANDS RESTORATION TEAM
SUBGROUP MEETING
Barstow BLM Headquarters
31 August 2000

In Attendance:

John Hamill	DOI Lead, DMG
Clarence Everly	DoD Lead, DMG
Eric Boerner	MDEP (DRLTF Webmaster)
Matt Brooks	USGS, BRD
Dave Charlton	Ft. Irwin, NTC DPW
Zina Dean	Stover Seed Company
Nona Evans	MDRCD
Pete Lounsbury	MDRCD
Carolyn Martus	29 Palms
Lynn Moody	Cal Poly SLO
Patti Novak-Echenique	USDA, NRCS
Hunter Seim	BLM, Palm Springs
Ruth Sparks	Charis, Ft. Irwin
Eli Smith	USGS
Amy Waddell	USGS, Stanford Univ.
Jessie Walker	BLM, Barstow
Ric Williams	Charis, Edwards AFB

MINUTES

9:30-10:00 AM Introductions

Meeting started with welcome by Ruth Sparks, round table introductions, and an update on activities at the various locations, as follows:

- Amy W. has been involved in Valley Fever research at Fort Irwin
- Pete L. announced that the MDRCD has brought Nikki Grieci on board to work on grant proposals and the RC&D
- Ruth S. has six rehabilitation projects in line for this coming fall and reported that several existing sites were hit very hard by the recent rains.
- Ric W. discussed some relatively inexpensive, high-resolution aerial photos and software, call him if you want more info
- Dave C. is heading up tamarisk removal projects at the springs on Fort Irwin
- Hunter S. is primarily involved in Wilderness Act implementation at the moment
- Jessie W is doing tamarisk work and preparing for an upcoming burn at Afton Canyon and Amargosa River, also monitoring perennial vegetation and exotic grasses at the Willow Fire area and working on the Ord Mountain grazing EIS
- Lynn M. teaches soil science with an environmental management emphasis, SLO has an interdisciplinary program including earth science, geography, GIS and geology and is planning a landscape rehabilitation minor set to come on-line in 2001 which will involve a project internship

- Patti N. announced that the soil survey is beginning at JOTR, work is also set to start at DEVA as soon as logistics of hole digging are settled, also negotiating with BLM for large-scale mapping throughout the Mojave
- Zina D. is continuing work on native seed collection with greater variety of species and developing a seed increase program to avoid overharvesting of existing stands
- Matt B. has a journal article on wildland weed species in review and is still taking comments on the current list, also working with JOTR data on fire behavior and succession in blackbrush, changes in soil nutrients and availability, and working through CalEPPC to set criteria for listing of wildland weed species
- Carolyn M. is involved in tamarisk and Russian thistle control and working with USGS on the Recoverability/Vulnerability of soils

10:00-10:15 AM Upcoming training opportunities

The group shared information about upcoming classes, conferences and workshops as follows (these will also be posted on the DLRTF website):

- From UCR Riverside: Edible and Useful Plants (Biol 1012) 6-8 Oct; still slots available; call Cal State San Bernadino Extension at 909-880-5975 to sign up.
- From California Native Grass Association: Techniques and Strategies for Using Native Grasses and Graminoids in Restoration Projects; this one is past, but they will likely hold similar workshops in the future so check it out (www.essexenv.com/cnga/Restoration_Workshop_Information.html)
- From Southern California Botanists: symposium in October on soils and mychorrhizae (no further information available yet)
- From California Association for Fire Ecology: Nov 27 – 1 Dec in San Diego including a desert-specific session (www.ice.ucdavis.edu/cafe)
- From CalEPPC: 2000 Symposium 6-8 October in Concord; there will be an informal desert studies working group meeting during the symposium (<http://www.caleppc.org/symposia/00symposium/symposium2000.html>)
- From SERCAL: Annual meeting October 26-29 in Santa Barbara with a session on Invasive Weeds Friday afternoon and a session on Arid and Mined Lands Restoration on Saturday afternoon (www.sercal.org/sercal2000.htm)

10:15-10:30 AM Current job announcements

Position announcements were as follows:

- MCAGCC has a 6 month entry-level position involving a variety of plant and animal work. Requires a BS in biology or related field and would be a great introduction for a recent graduate.
- Fort Irwin is still looking for a Wildlife Biologist. Position is full-time with the Charis Corporation and approximately equivalent to GS 9/11 depending on experience.
- DEVA has a Natural Resource Specialist term position available.
- USGS needs 1 or 2 biological technicians to work on fire projects in the Mojave and Great Basin Deserts

10:30-11:15 AM DMG Issues

John Hamill and Clarence Everly updated the group regarding Desert Manager issues. The Annual Report for FY99 (“Partners for the Desert”) was distributed and is available upon request. It provides a brief overview of work sponsored by the DMG including wild burro management initiatives, dump cleanup, the Gateway Visitor Center concept and various GIS and internet services. The current 5-year plan was also distributed and includes goals and budgets based on input from the various DMG subgroups. This document provides a vehicle for continued dialogue and a means of tracking expectations and accomplishments.

There was \$400K in the President’s budget for FY01, but this did not pass Congress. There may still be some money forthcoming for restoration in FY01 and the priority is to hire a Restoration Coordinator to take the lead on future inter-agency work.

Rules and Operating Procedures have been developed for the DMG and all work groups. These rules and operating procedures are currently in draft form and may be viewed on the DMG website (www.dmg.gov). Rules specifically covering list server protocol were discussed. Basically, there will be two lists: one for group members (representatives of those agencies listed in the DMG Charter) and a second list for interested parties (any individual or representative of a group who wants to be informed of group activities). The first list will allow send/receive capabilities to all list subscribers and the second list will allow individuals to receive announcements and other messages sent by the Team Leader. It was stressed that the involvement of interested parties is welcomed and encouraged and that feedback from these individuals regarding any DMG or work group issue may be addressed to Team Leaders.

The final Desert Manager issue concerned the vacant co-chair position for the Restoration Team. As per the Rules and Operating Procedures, work groups will now elect a chair and vice-chair for a term of one year. The Restoration Team is in need of several members who would be interested in serving in this capacity. Please contact Clarence or John if you are interested or know of someone else who would be willing.

11:15–11:45 PM Recoverability/Vulnerability Field Trip Report (Ruth Sparks)

Ruth provided a recap of the Recoverability/Vulnerability Field Trip co-sponsored by the Restoration Team and USGS in May. The 2-day event was well attended with 29 participants including managers, restorationists, and researchers from throughout the Mojave. Tour agendas and other materials are available from Ruth Sparks and will be posted (eventually) on the Restoration Team homepage. Field sites visited included the Mountain Pass Burn, a geomorphology viewing area near Zyzzx, Valjean railroad cut, Camp Ibis (Patton camp), and Viceroy Gold Mine. Some of the points of discussion from the field sites were summarized as follows:

- Fire is unlike other disturbances in that there is little associated compaction and greater soil nutrient changes.
- Surface age is an important factor affecting soil hydrology which determines the response of a surface to various impacts and the process of recovery. Geomorphological maps can aid in the interpretation of soil survey information.
- Climate variability is an important feature of the Mojave Desert ecosystem. We may be entering a drier period, but most of our current understanding of recovery and restoration is based on the last 20 years of higher precipitation. We are likely to

experience an increase in the number of days of precipitation but reduced intensity with less frequent runoff events.

- Soil crusts are important for control of wind erosion and changes in species composition may be expected as a result of air pollution. Development of a predictive model of crust occurrence and species composition may be possible based on soil chemistry, lithology, surface age, texture, elevation and precipitation, but this needs more work in the Mojave.
- Susceptibility to compaction is a primary determinant of vulnerability to disturbance and varies with texture and soil moisture conditions. Preliminary mapping of vulnerability for areas near Valjean has been completed.
- The Patton site provided an example of recover on a young surface. Vegetative cover was good, but larger species had still not come back. This led to a discussion of what constitutes recovery; recovery depends on whether the goal is stabilization, visual, or functional.
- In many instances no action may be the best alternative since compaction decreases naturally within a fairly short time and many restoration activities actually increase disturbance.
- Eliminating berms and other linear features is important.

11:45-12:15 Recoverability/Vulnerability Cost Modeling (Eli Smith)

Following the field trip, Len Gaydos (USGS Sacramento) suggested that some consideration of costs and successes of various restoration techniques was necessary to make the R&V model truly useful to restorationists. Eli Smith, a graduate student with the Center for Science Policy, presented a methodology for incorporating costs into the USGS Recoverability/ Vulnerability Modeling effort. He described a five stage process for collecting economic data, relating project success to restoration techniques and site characteristics, and creating risk maps that could be used by restoration decision makers. He requested help from those doing restoration work to provide cost and success data or information about existing data sources (such as CERPI). Comments from the group suggested that this process needs to somehow account for subjective information such as criterion for success, goals of the different agencies, timelines for recovery, and changing climate conditions. It was pointed out that the proposed analysis would require a huge sample size in order to deal with the potential variability. It was also suggested that in the course of collecting this information, Eli could help populate some restoration project databases. The group provided Eli with contact information so that he could follow up with individuals who may have some of the necessary data.

12:15-1:15 PM Lunch

1:15-2:30 PM Pulling Together Initiative (Matt Brooks)

The Pulling Together Initiative provides DoD/DOI funds for conservation initiatives at a 1:1 or 1:2 match of state or local monies. Funds are available for up to three years of a project. Matt proposed that this could be used as seed money for a high desert Weed Management Area (WMA). Funding could be applied for once an MOU has been drafted and priorities have been determined. Discussion followed as to appropriate boundaries for such a WMA, what entity is best positioned to lead the initiative, and what

stakeholders need to be involved. The WMA needs to be multi-county and focus on weed management problems away from coastal areas that currently get the most attention and funding. Matt suggested it would be best to begin with an existing entity such as the DLRT or the Mojave Desert RC&D. Deadline for FY01 proposals is 7 November – probably too soon for a response from the DLRT. There is a possibility of forming a weed working group within the DLRT which would interface with the WMA once established. Pete Lounsbury (MDRC&D) will draft a briefing paper to be presented at the next DMG meeting (28 Sept) which will define the concept for a high desert WMA and identify a possible role for the DLRT.

2:30-3:00 PM Fire history database project

Ruth asked the group for information about an Access database program created by Pam Anning at Saquaro National Park for handling fire history data. Data entry and reporting follow the standard DOI format for the Historical Fire Events Database. Ruth is attempting to use or modify the database for capturing fire history data at Fort Irwin. She was seeking feedback as to the usefulness of this format and ways to simplify the data without losing critical information. Matt emphasized the need to include a comment field for notes about fire behavior in addition to the basic site information.

3:00-4:00 PM Miscellaneous agenda items

Other brief agenda items were as follows:

- Carolyn offered to review the restoration homepage for necessary design and content changes. Ruth will send her copies of previous comments/changes that were identified by Jane, Val and Ruth last fall. Team members were asked to look at the homepage and provide feedback to Carolyn within the next month. Updates will be made prior to the next team meeting and will be available for comments from the group.
- Ideas for a workshop (late FY01/early FY02 timeframe) were discussed and included (1) technology for restorationists (i.e. remote sensing, aerial photos, GIS applications, scanning software), (2) a training session on site monitoring techniques (John Willoughby?), or (3) fire ecology and management. It was decided to put out a request via the list server for additional training/workshop suggestions and add it as an agenda item for a decision at the next meeting.
- John emphasized the need for better communication from the Restoration Team to the Desert Managers Group and better follow-through, particularly on development of the restoration project database. Eric will make edits to the database based on previous comments from the group and tie-ins to the dump cleanup database. These will be demonstrated at the next meeting for final comments.

The next meeting date was tentatively set for Tuesday and Wednesday, 14-15 Nov 2000, in Death Valley National Park. Final plans for meeting time and location, camping, and a possible field site visit will be posted on the web and sent out on the list server once these have been confirmed with Dana York.

Respectfully submitted,

Ruth Sparks