

Desert Managers Group

5-Year Plan

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Information about the DMG is available at www.dmg.gov or by contacting:

Desert Managers Group
222 East Main Street
Suite 215
Barstow, CA 92311

1.0 Background and Purpose

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The California deserts (Figure 1) include some 100 communities, 2 national parks, 1 national preserve, 6 military bases, 8 counties, 10 state parks, 37 federally recognized Native American Indian tribes, and more than 11 million acres of public lands managed by the Bureau of Land Management. The 25 million-acre desert region is situated within a day's drive of 40 million people and is a well-known destination for hundreds of thousands of out of state visitors each year. The California deserts' abundant sunshine, wind, and geothermal resources also make it an important source of renewable energy in the western United States. In addition, the California deserts are critically important training and testing grounds for the U. S. military.

By 2020, the deserts' permanent population is expected to increase by over 1 million and the population of the surrounding area is expected to increase by about 10 million. The demands of increasing use by millions of visitors and permanent residents will create mounting pressure and new challenges for land management agencies in the deserts. A mechanism for addressing desert-wide issues was established in 1994 in the form of the Desert Managers Group (DMG), an interagency group that is coordinating and integrating desert conservation, visitor services, and public safety efforts in the California deserts. Under the multi-agency management umbrella provided by the DMG, interagency collaboration is occurring; duplication of effort is being eliminated; resources are being shared; data are being collected in a uniform manner; and complementary and more uniform management policies are being developed. Partners involved with the DMG include the State of California (Fish and Game, Parks and Recreation, and Caltrans), the Department of the Defense (Army, Navy, Air Force and Marine Corps), the Department of the Interior (Bureau of Land Management, National Park Service, Fish and Wildlife Service, and Geological Survey), and the U.S. Forest Service. More information on the DMG, including the Group's charter, organization, and current events is available at www.dmg.gov.

The purpose of this document is to describe the goals and plans established by the DMG for fiscal year 2002 through 2006. As with all cross-cutting, multi-agency programs, performance is dependent on the availability of adequate funds and staff for each agency to carry out the plan.

2.0 The DMG 5-Year Plan

The 5-Year Plan is an operational plan that is updated and approved annually by the DMG. The 5-Year Plan is intended to:

1. Facilitate internal and external communication about the goals and activities of the DMG;
2. Provide a tool for the DMG and its Work Groups to track activities and projects; and
3. Serve as a basis for future budget planning for DMG agencies.

In 2001, the DMG Managers reviewed the precepts, methodologies, and processes by which the DMG operates, how projects would be managed, and its priority goals and objectives. This review resulted in major changes to the DMG 5-Year Plan. Many of the goals/projects included in last year's 5-Year Plan were identified as a lower priority that would not be pursued given the current level of staff, funding, and agency support (see Appendix A). These goals/projects will be pursued by DMG agencies as time/resources permit.

The DMG 5-Year Plan includes 15 goals in four general categories:

1. Resource Conservation and Management
2. Visitor Services
3. Science and Data Management
4. DMG Program Management

A brief description of these goals is provided below. The objectives/tasks, schedule and responsibilities for each goal are described in Table 2.0.

2.1 Resource Conservation and Management Goals

Goal 1. Restore selected upland and riparian habitats identified for restoration. Selected riparian and upland habitats identified in various agency land management plans will be restored based on agency priorities and available funds. Partnership with local governments and private groups (e.g., Quail Unlimited, LA Youth Conservation Corp, etc.) will be pursued where possible. In FY 02, an interagency partnership will be established to acquire land and restore habitat in the San Felipe Creek-San Sebastian Marsh Watershed. In addition, DMG agencies will sign a Memorandum of Understanding (MOU) to establish a Mojave Desert Weed Management Area.

Goal 2. Clean up and restore illegal dumps that pose a public health or environmental threat and reduce the incidence of illegal dumping in the future. Illegal dumps throughout the deserts will be inventoried and incorporated into a database, and high priority sites will be selected for clean-up based on established criteria. Nine illegal dumps will be cleaned up and restored in FY 02, including:

1. Indio Hills
2. Continuation of Berdoo Canyon
3. High Vista
4. Continuation of Farm and Ranch Grant sites
5. Sandy Valley
6. Fargo Canyon
7. Andre Road
8. Border sites
9. Vidal

A concerted effort will be made to prevent illegal dumping by (a) educating the public about the

problems associated with illegal dumping, (b) enforcing laws related to illegal dumping, (c) providing viable alternatives to illegal dumping, and (d) protecting sites that have been restored.

Partnerships with the California Integrated Waste Management Board, counties, nonprofit organizations and other federal agencies will be continued or created. Funds will be leveraged to the maximum extent possible.

Goal 3. Recover the desert tortoise in the California recovery units. Desert tortoise recovery actions included in the various agencies' land management plans will be evaluated to determine where collaboration and cooperation will improve effectiveness. Recommendations for consolidating and integrating recovery efforts among agencies will be developed and implemented by the agencies, where appropriate, as funding and staff are available. Activities will be carried out in coordination with the Desert Tortoise Management Oversight Group.

Goal 4. Reduce and maintain burro populations to Appropriate Management Levels and in appropriate locations. Appropriate Management Levels (AML) of burros will be defined/refined as part of the BLM land management planning process. Burro populations will be reduced on BLM, FWS, DOD and State lands to "appropriate management levels" and eliminated on National Parks and Preserves by 2003. Management actions (e.g., fences) will be implemented as practical to prevent movement of burros to areas where they are not supposed to be (e.g., outside herd management areas or into National Parks/Preserves). Standardized population monitoring protocols will be developed and burro population and range land health monitoring will be conducted. The BLM will have lead responsibility for coordinating burro management activities throughout the desert in coordination with NPS, FWS, DOD, and State Parks/Fish and Game.

Goal 5. Protect cultural resources and enhance public awareness of the sensitivity and value of paleontological and cultural resources in the California deserts. Proceedings of the Millennium Conference will be published early in FY 02. The PACRAT work group will address priority cultural/paleontological issues where interagency cooperation is needed. In FY 02, the focus will be on developing a site stewardship program and improving coordination between cultural resource experts and BLM/NPS law enforcement staff. PACRAT will also monitor CHRIS GIS implementation, management, and maintenance.

Goal 6: Ensure the long-term sustainability of the military mission in the California deserts. BLM, NPS and the State will consider the DOD mission requirements in their land and resource management planning and analyze potential impacts of proposed land management decisions/actions on DOD lands and airspace.

2.2 Visitor Services and Public Safety Goals

Goal 7. Develop a coordinated interagency system for delivering useful, comprehensive, and consistent information about desert resources and recreation opportunities. The California deserts web site (www.californiadesert.gov) will be updated and maintained by DOD and the NPS (Joshua Tree NP). The website will be redesigned to provide easy access to information about recreation opportunities in the desert. The interagency "gateway" visitor

center at Lancaster will be maintained by Cal State Parks.

Goal 8. Resolve noise issues related to aircraft overflights for all participating agencies.

Working through the Overflight Work Group, information will be exchanged concerning military low level aerial overflights and associated resource and visitor use impacts. An interagency overflight brochure will be finalized and distributed by DMG agencies.

2.3 Science and Data Management Goals

Goal 9. Coordinate and conduct scientific studies and monitoring programs needed for effective resource management. An inventory of existing research and monitoring studies will be completed. A statement of need for additional studies will be developed.

Goal 10. Coordinate natural resource monitoring program. A workshop will be held to review agency monitoring programs and plans. DMG agencies will:

1. Continue to cooperate to fund and implement desert tortoise line distance sampling;
2. Participate in the January 2003 NPS workshop to develop a conceptual framework for monitoring in the California deserts;
3. Describe existing weather data in the California deserts and develop recommendations for how important data gaps could be addressed.

Goal 11. Monitor desert tortoise population status in relation to recovery goals for the California deserts recovery units. Line distance sampling will be implemented on BLM, NPS, DOD and state lands to assess the density of desert tortoise in the 5 recovery units in the California deserts. The interagency data management system will be maintained by the DOD Mojave Desert Ecosystem Program (MDEP) and data will be collected in a manner that facilitates a regional multi-state assessment of the status of desert tortoise populations. An annual report will be produced by the FWS Desert Tortoise Coordinator no later than December of each year.

Goal 12. Monitor and protect desert water resources. Springs, riparian and wetland habitats will be mapped throughout the California deserts by FWS. Several DMG offices will assess the biological and hydrological characteristics and assess the Proper Functioning Condition (PFC) of priority springs/wetlands according to standard protocols developed by the DMG. Data will be stored in an interagency database developed and maintained by the DOD Mojave Desert Ecosystem Program (MDEP).

Goal 13. Integrate and share data and database management systems needed for effective resource management and planning. The Mojave Desert Ecosystem Program (MDEP) will maintain the Geographic Information System (GIS) of natural and cultural resources in the California deserts (see www.mojavedata.gov). To expand the database, each Manager will provide a minimum of five corporate data sets, adhering to the DMG established data standards. MDEP will also provide data management and analysis support to a variety of DMG initiatives (wetland/springs inventory, desert tortoise monitoring, etc.) as the need arises.

2.4 DMG Program Management Goals

Goal 14. Ensure the orderly and efficient operation of the DMG and its work groups. The DMG's 5-Year Plan will be updated annually. Detailed annual work plans will be developed for specific initiatives. The BLM Natural Resources Restoration Coordinator will coordinate implementation of dump clean up and habitat restoration efforts. The FWS Desert Tortoise Coordinator will coordinate tortoise recovery and monitoring activities. The DMG will also explore opportunities to establish a California deserts fund within the National Fish and Wildlife Foundation.

Goal 15. Garner support for the DMG, its mission, activities, and funding initiatives. The DMG briefing packet and a report on DMG accomplishments will be produced/updated annually. The DMG website (www.dmg.gov) will be maintained to allow for the efficient dissemination of information about DMG and work group activities.

**Table 2.0 Desert Managers Group
5-year Plan (FY2002 - 2006)
April 2002**

	ACTIVITY	WHO	STATUS	FY 02 10/01 - 9/02	FY 03 10/02 - 9/03	FY 04 10/03 - 9/04	FY 05 10/04 - 9/05	FY 06 10/05 - 9/06
<u>Resource Conservation and Management</u>								
1.0	Restore selected upland and riparian habitats identified as restoration priorities.							
1.1	Develop partnerships to acquire land and restore habitat in the San Felipe watershed.	A-B State Park	On track	X				
1.2	Develop partnerships among federal, state, local, tribal government entities and private organizations to secure funding, foster awareness and support for restoration efforts, and implement restoration efforts.	Restoration Coordinator	On going	X	X			
1.3	Sponsor a workshop to foster an awareness of restoration projects and methods in the California deserts.	Restoration Coordinator	On track	X	X			
1.4	Sign a memorandum of understanding (MOU) to establish the Mojave Desert Weed management Area and cooperate with local agencies to control invasive species.	Managers	On track	X	X	X	X	X
2.0	Clean up and restore illegal dumpsites that pose a public health, safety, or environmental threat and reduce illegal dumping in the future.							
2.1	Input data and maintain illegal dumpsite database and produce a list of priority sites for clean up.	Hazmat Team /Restoration Coordinator	On track	X	X	X	X	X
2.2	Clean up and monitor up to 20 illegal dump sites per year (9 sites will be cleaned up and monitored in FY 02).	Hazmat Team /Restoration Coordinator	On track	X	X	X	X	X
2.3	Foster federal, state and local partnerships and develop a desert wide constituency to support illegal dumpsite clean up and prevention.	Hazmat Team /Restoration Coordinator	Ongoing	X	X	X	X	X
2.4	Develop and implement a program to reduce/prevent the incidence of illegal dumping.	Restoration Coordinator	On track	X	X	X	X	X
3.0	Recover the desert tortoise in the California desert recovery units.							
3.1	Review Land Management Plans to identify where collaboration makes sense.	Tortoise Coordinator	On track	X				
3.1.1	Develop and implement recommendations for coordinating recovery actions. Clarify the roles of each agency.	Tortoise Coordinator	On track	X	X	X	X	X
3.1.2	Prioritize and identify budget requirements for desert tortoise recovery activities in each recovery unit.	Tortoise Coordinator	On track	X	X	X	X	X

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	ACTIVITY	WHO	STATUS	FY 02 10/01 - 9/02	FY 03 10/02 - 9/03	FY 04 10/03 - 9/04	FY 05 10/04 - 9/05	FY 06 10/05 - 9/06
4.0	Reduce and maintain burro populations to appropriate management levels and in appropriate locations							
4.1	Identify and implement management actions to control populations and movement.	Sjaastad (BLM), NPS, DOD, and State	On track	X	X	X	X	X
4.2	Define Appropriate Management Levels through BLM land management planning process.	BLM	Ongoing	X	X			
4.3	Remove burros and place in adoption programs; FY 02 - 838; FY 03 - 1000.	Sjaastad, (BLM), NPS, DOD and State	On track	X	X	X	X	X
4.4	Standardize population monitoring techniques and monitor population status.	Sjaastad, (BLM), NPS, DOD and State	On track	X	X	X	X	X
4.5	Monitor rangeland health.	Sjaastad, (BLM)	On track	X	X	X	X	X
4.6	Adjust AML, as needed, based on results of 4.4 and 4.5	Sjaastad, BLM	On track	X	X	X	X	X
5.0	Protect cultural resources and enhance public awareness of the sensitivity and value of paleontological and cultural resources in the California deserts.							
5.1	Publish conference proceedings	PACRAT	On track	X				
5.2	Maintain and implement the California Historic Resource Information System GIS for the California deserts.	SHPO	On track	X	X	X	X	X
5.3	Improve coordination between cultural resources and law enforcement staff	PACRAT	On track	X				
5.4	Implement site stewardship program.	PACRAT	On going	X	X	X	X	X
6.0	Ensure the long-term sustainability of the military mission in the California deserts.							
6.1	Consider the DOD mission requirements in BLM, NPS and State land management planning.	DOI and State Agencies	On going	X	X	X	X	X
6.2	Analyze potential impacts of proposed land management decision/actions on DOD lands and airspace.	DOI and State Agencies	On going	X	X	X	X	X

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<u>Visitor Services</u>								
7.0	Develop a coordinated interagency system for delivering useful, comprehensive, and consistent information about desert resources and recreation opportunities.							
7.1	Update and maintain the <i>California Deserts</i> website.	Joshua Tree NP	Ongoing	X	X	X	X	X
7.1.1	Redesign the California Deserts website.	MDEP	On track	X	X			
7.2	Maintain the Lancaster Visitor Center.	State Parks	Ongoing	X	X	X	X	X
8.0	Resolve noise issues related to aircraft overflights for all participating agencies.							
8.1	Develop, print and distribute a brochure on overflight activities in the desert and their relationship to land management.	Overflight WG	On track	X				

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<u>Science and Data Management</u>								
9.0	Coordinate and conduct scientific studies and monitoring programs needed for effective resource management and planning							
9.1	Identify ongoing research and monitoring activities in the California deserts and develop a list of prioritized needs	Hughson/ Gaydos	On track	X				
9.2	Develop and implement projects addressing unmet high priority needs.		Funding dependent	X	X	X	X	X
10.0	Coordinate natural resource monitoring programs.							
10.1	Conduct a workshop to review and summarize each agency's monitoring programs/practices. Identify existing barriers and opportunities to make the monitoring programs/practices compatible.	DOI Coordinator	Complete	X				
10.2	Conduct workshop for DMG agencies to develop monitoring framework for the California deserts	NPS	On track		X			
10.3	Review existing weather data and develop recommendation to fill data gaps.	Ad hoc group	On track	X				
11.0	Monitor Desert Tortoise population status in relation to recovery goals in the California recovery units.							
11.1	Refine line distance sampling monitoring procedures and sampling locations	Tortoise Coordinator	On Track	X				
11.2	Implement line distance sampling in all California desert recovery units.	Tortoise Coordinator	On Track	X	X	X	X	X
11.2.1	Analyze data collected and produce annual report with recommendation for the next year's monitoring.	Tortoise Coordinator	Behind schedule	X	X	X	X	X
11.3	Update and maintain data management system.	MDEP	Ongoing	X	X	X	X	X
11.4	Establish independent review process for monitoring program.	Tortoise Coordinator	On track	X				
12.0	Monitor and protect desert water resources.							
12.1	Inventory and assess the hydro and bio resources of priority wetland areas according to established DMG protocols.	NPS, BLM, DOD	On track	X	X	X		
12.1.1	Map and digitize wetland and riparian areas.	FWS	On track	X	X	X		
12.1.3	Develop user friendly graphic interface to allow access to hydro and bio database.	DOD	On track	X				
12.1.4	Provide water rights training for all desert managers.	NPS	Complete	X				

13.0	Integrate/coordinate and share data and Data Base Management Systems needed for effective resource management and planning							
13.1	Identify, acquire/develop new datasets from DMG agencies	MDEP and DMG Agencies	Ongoing	X	X	X	X	X
13.2	Provide data management and analysis support to DMG initiatives.	MDEP	Ongoing	X	X	X	X	X

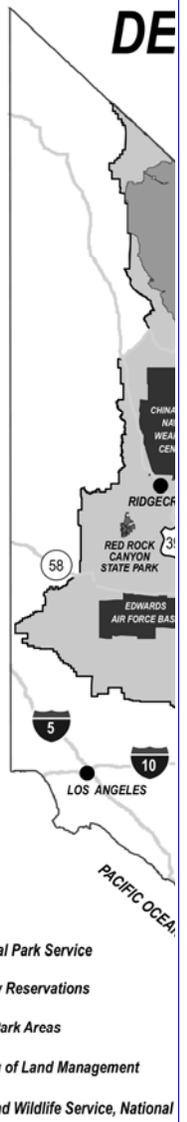
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<u>DMG Program Management</u>								
14.0	Ensure orderly and efficient operation of the DMG and its work groups.							
14.1	Develop and update/maintain the DMG's 5 year plan.	DOI/DOD Coordinators	Ongoing	X	X	X	X	X
14.2	Ensure adequate staffing to administer the DMG and provide for effective coordination and implementation of desert wide initiatives.							
14.2.2	Fund DOD/DOI Coordinators.	DOD/DOI	Ongoing	X	X	X	X	X
14.2.4	Fund FWS Desert Tortoise Coordinator	FWS	Ongoing	X	X	X	X	X
14.2.5	Fund BLM Restoration/Dump Coordinator.	BLM	Ongoing	X	X	X	X	X
14.3	Explore opportunities to establish a California deserts fund within the National Fish and Wildlife Foundation.	DOI ,DOD Coordinators	On track	X	X			
15.0	Garner Support for the DMG, its mission, activities and funding initiatives							
15.1	Update the DMG briefing packet.	DOI Coordinator	Ongoing	X	X		X	X
15.2	Produce annual accomplishment report.	DOI/DOD Coordinators	Ongoing	X	X	X	X	X
15.3	Update and maintain DMG website.	DOD Coordinator	Ongoing	X	X	X	X	X
15.4	Inform stakeholders and policy makers about the DMG activities and funding initiatives.	All	Ongoing	X	X	X	X	X

Figure 1. California deserts



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Appendix Lower Priority DMG Goals

The following goals or elements of goals included in the Feb 2001 DMG 5-Year Plan have been determined too ambitious to complete given the current level of staff, funding, and agency support. These goals/elements will be maintained as long-term goals that will be pursued as time/resources permit.

Goal: Reclaim priority abandoned mines in the California deserts. Abandoned mines will be inventoried, incorporated into a database, prioritized, and reclaimed by agencies on a priority basis. An interagency group will be established to evaluate and streamline processes for complying with environmental laws and regulations.

Goal: Reduce the incidence of wire burning in the desert. There is anecdotal evidence that the California deserts are being used increasingly to illegally burn wire to salvage the valuable metals (e.g., copper) contained in the wire. Neighboring states have passed laws outlawing the sale of salvaged wire. This action may have displaced illegal wire burning activities to the California deserts. An information paper, brochure and action plan will be developed on wire burning. The action plan will provide direction for determining the extent of the problem and reducing the incidence of wire burning in the future.

Goal: Reduce the incidence of roadside litter in the desert. Roadside litter is widespread throughout the desert. The Hazmat Team will review existing litter clean up and prevention efforts, evaluate opportunities for interagency cooperation, and develop an action plan.

Goal: Protect cultural resources and enhance public awareness of the sensitivity and value of paleontological and cultural resources in the California deserts. Funding will be pursued to develop a Regional Handbook of the History and Prehistory of Desert Cultures.

Goal: Develop a coordinated interagency system for delivering useful, comprehensive, and consistent information about desert resources and recreation opportunities. An inventory of existing and planned visitor centers will be completed and recommendations for establishing additional gateway visitor centers will be developed. The feasibility of establishing a centralized system that allows visitors to make reservations at all agency's recreation facilities will be evaluated and implemented.

Goal: Educate the public about the value and importance of desert resources to promote a conservation ethic. Information and educational materials will be produced to provide consistent information to the public about California desert resources. This will include teacher packets, displays and a desert access guide. In addition, the DMG will develop and implement a desert-wide information and education strategy for the California deserts.

Goal: Coordinate and integrate efforts in the California deserts to provide for the safety of desert users and agency personnel and to protect natural and cultural resources. This goal will be achieved by (a) providing interagency training of rangers and wardens and (b) developing and implementing a plan to share law enforcement and emergency response personnel to deal more effectively with large events.

Goal: Assist managers/staff in the use/application of technological and scientific information and knowledge in day-to-day decision making processes. Based on the recently completed study of the feasibility of establishing a decision support system for the California deserts, a pilot application of a DSS will be implemented. The pilot will focus on information/decision making needs and processes common to all desert land/resource management agencies (e.g., NEPA assessments, evaluating alternative futures

for the desert, tortoise habitat assessment, livestock grazing forage allocation, etc.).

Goal: Ensure the orderly and efficient operation of the DMG and its work groups. Agencies will hire the staff needed to coordinate implementation of initiatives included in the DMG 5-Year Plan. Two positions remain to be funded and filled:

- Outreach and Education Coordinator
- Research and Monitoring Coordinator

Goal: Garner support for the DMG, its mission, activities, and funding initiatives. An annual newsletter on the DMG will be produced and broadly disseminated.

Goal: Ensure that Native American tribes, local governments, non-DMG State and Federal agencies, and stakeholders are appropriately represented on the DMG and/or informed of DMG activities. Native American tribes and local governments in the California deserts will be contacted to determine their interest in participating in the DMG and/or its work groups. Options for involving interested parties will be identified, assessed, and implemented as appropriate.