

Who let the dogs out!!

(aka Free Roaming Dogs in the California Deserts)

Glenn Black, CDFG
6 October 2005



Purpose and Goals

- **Work Group interim findings and status report**
- **Work Group interim recommendations**
- **Obtain DMG guidance on future direction**



Background

- **Feral dogs identified as threat in 1994 Desert Tortoise Recovery Plan**
- **WEMO calls for development and implementation of a Feral Dog management plan**
- **Increased number of feral dog reports (anecdotal)**
- **DMG 5 Year Plan Goal 3, Recover the Desert Tortoise in the California recovery units**
 - **Establish Feral Dog ad hoc work group**
 - **Report results of feral dog survey**
 - **Develop a feral dog management plan**
- **Partners**
 - **FWS***
 - **BLM***
 - **NPS**
 - **DOD***
 - **CDFG (lead)***
 - **LA County**
 - **SB County**
 - **Kern County**
 - **DELTA Rescue***
 - **Pet Assistance Foundation, Inland Empire Chapter***
 - **Desert Tortoise Preserve Committee**



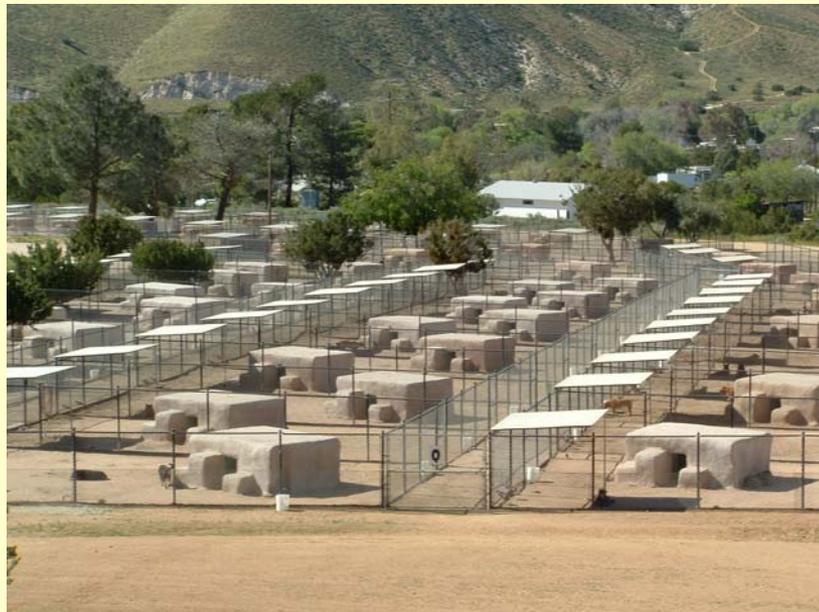
Responsibilities and Authorities

- **Counties and Cities**
 - Focus on municipal/rural areas
 - Focus on public health and safety (not wildlife or public lands)
 - Leash laws on private lands
 - Spay/neuter
- **FWS**
 - ESA authority to regulate illegal take (difficult to enforce)
- **NPS**
 - Impound, adopt or dispatch (must be observed)
- **DOD**
 - Human capture and removal
 - Prevention
- **BLM**
 - Authority limited to livestock damage
- **CDFG**
 - Limited to impacts to protected mammals in state wildlife areas or ecological reserves



Definitions

- **Feral Dog – defined as a dog born and living in the wild**
- **Free Roaming Dog – any dog found off leash or out of an owner's control wandering desert areas**

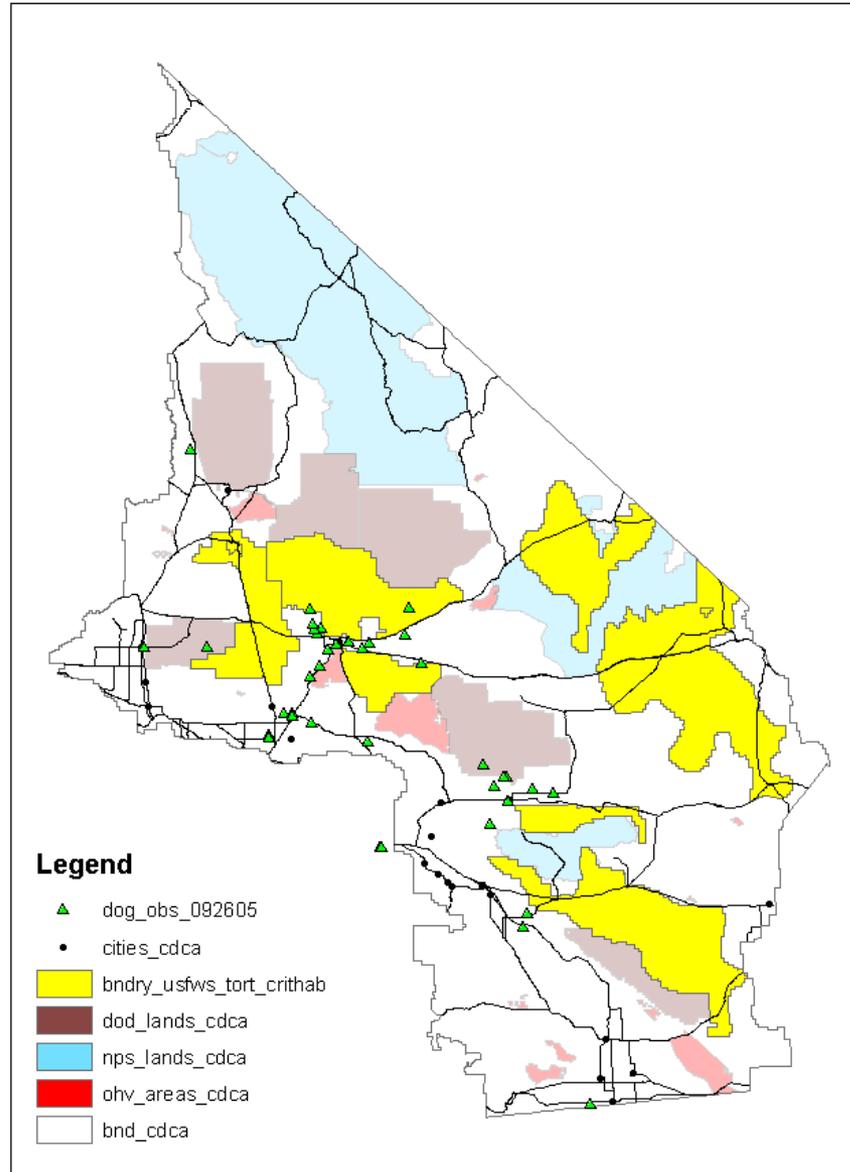


Interim Findings

- **Feral Dog Survey**
- **Desert Tortoise Line Distance Sampling Survey**
- **Other Observations/Reports**
 - **Scientists**
 - **Joshua Tree Tortoise Rescue**
 - **Agency reports**



Dog Observations



Interim Conclusions

- **No conclusive evidence that “feral” dogs exist in the desert**
- **All dog–tortoise encounters documented through this project are from outside established tortoise recovery areas (DWMAs, critical habitat, National Parks). No information/evidence exists to show that dogs pose a serious threat to desert tortoise populations, especially in desert tortoise recovery areas**
- **Free roaming dogs occur primarily in desert-urban interface areas (which includes some public lands) outside DT recovery areas**
- **Anecdotal evidence exists that some desert tortoise are being harmed or killed by dogs in desert - urban interface areas**



Recommendations

- **Focus future management and monitoring efforts on areas where urban development abuts established tortoise recovery areas (i.e. DWMMAs, critical habitat, National Parks).**
 - **Develop map identifying current and projected urban development tortoise recovery area interfaces.**
- **Land managers should enter into cooperative agreements with local animal control agencies, local humane organizations or USDA Wildlife services to address local problems (be prepared to provide funding to implement solutions).**
- **Develop protocols and training for agency field personnel on reporting, capture and/or removal of free roaming dogs.**



Recommendations

- **Work with the DMG Desert Tortoise Outreach and Education Work Group to educate the public about keeping dogs under control.**
- **Acquire additional scientific data in urban-tortoise recovery interface areas**
 - **LDS – work with FWS to develop data requirement/protocols**
 - **Permanent Study Plots – request analysis of existing data and reports on future findings**
 - **Research/take permits**
 - **Fund research to test the hypothesis that it is possible to differentiate wild vs domestic canid trauma to desert tortoise**



Next Steps

- **Formalize findings and recommendations in a Free Roaming Dog Management Plan/Report (draft by January DMG meeting)**



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