



Meeting Summary
Second Annual Executive Coordination Meeting
October 23, 2001
Ontario, CA

1. **Attendees:** Agency executives in attendance included: John Reynolds (Regional Director--NPS); Mike Pool (BLM State Director); Dick Troy (Deputy Director, California State Parks), Patrick Muffler (Regional Geologist, USGS); Steve Thompson (Acting Operations Managers, FWS); Dirk Brazil (Deputy Director, State Fish and Game). A list of all the attendees is attached.

2. **FY 01 DMG update and accomplishments.** Hamill provided an overview of the DMG, including its history, mission, organization, and role in management of the California desert. Everly summarized the major accomplishments of the DMG in FY 01, including:
 - Study of desert wetland and riparian habitats
 - The Millenium Conference
 - The clean-up of illegal dumps
 - Monitoring desert tortoise populations
 - Completion of the Lancaster visitor center
 - www.californiadesert.gov
 - burro managementOverall, the executives and managers were very satisfied with the FY 01 progress of the DMG.

3. **National and State Policy Perspective**
 - John Reynolds expects that NPS rangers will be stretched thin for the foreseeable future due to details related to national security. This may make it difficult for NPS to focus on interagency programs and support. The Department is focused on the Secretaries 4-C's. The President's Management Reforms may have positive implications for the DMG. While the FY 02 budget for NPS is generally good, no base increases are expected for the desert parks in FY 02. He expects the budget situation to be difficult in FY 03. Reynolds believes that it will be important for the DOI agencies to raise the DMG to the Department in a coordinated manner.
 - Mike Pool felt that it is important to get DOI appointments out on the ground to review Cal Desert issues and discuss the role that the DMG plays in management of the desert.
 - Steve Thompson reported that the AS/FWP and Director of FWS should be confirmed in the next 3 weeks. The focus of the administration has been on

addressing ESA issues, energy development, State Rights and water transfers (e.g., Salton Sea). He expected there will not be major reforms to the ESA this FY.

- Patrick Muffler indicated that the new administration had shown little interest in USGS field activities or programs. Several GS funding issues in the desert southwest were not funded for FY 02.
- Dirk Brazil reported that the desert was not a high priority with the governor's office or the legislature. It does not look promising for new funding or personnel for DFG. Curt Taucher reported that the Region expects to receive \$208K for work on the desert tortoise next FY.
- Dick Troy reported that visitation at State Parks increased by 30% this year. However, the desert parks will see reduced budgets, which may affect meeting attendance and discretionary spending. Parks will be looking at partnerships like DMG to leverage their resources and help accomplish more with less.
- Major Soderberg said MAGTFTC is looking at severe budget cuts in the Base's environmental program next FY, which will impact their ability to participate in the DMG. They also expect there will be fewer Legacy funds available for DMG initiatives.

4. **Agency/Office Priorities for the DMG.** Hamill presented the results of the survey of the managers on the priority of the goals in the DMG 5-Year Plan (attached). These results suggest that there is broad support for DMG involvement in coordinating desert tortoise recovery and monitoring activities.

5. **Future of the DMG**

- Steve Thompson questioned whether the DMG was structured appropriately and suggested that more executive leadership may help the DMG be more successful. He advised the DMG to elevate its budget issues to Senators Reid and Feinstein and that it might be best to fund the group's initiatives through NPS and DOD.
- Dirk Brazil said the group should focus on solving important resource problems and less on process and structure.
- John Reynolds said that the DMG was a very valuable forum for learning and networking and the group provides a foundation for collaboration. He suggested that some of the DMG goals/activities should be grouped. Managers should be more mindful of their responsibilities identified in the DMG Charter which he felt were well conceived. Any budget initiatives should build on the budget process that exists in each agency (as opposed to creating a new, competing process). He was very encouraged so far and said we need to find a way to keep the process alive.
- Dick Troy felt that the DMG should have some collaborative projects born through the DMG and suggested it may be time to have some kind of executive summit to bring attention to the Group and define its future direction.
- Patrick Muffler suggested the group could benefit from more executive leadership and that the SW Strategy may be an effective model for the group to study.
- Mike Pool felt that there is great value to the DMG and that issues should be resolved at the lowest level possible. The DMG should structure its agenda to

focus on emerging issues and other topics that would stimulate the group.
NGO's should be involved in providing the group a different perspective of the
desert.

DESERT MANAGERS GROUP

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