

## 2.0 FY 04 Accomplishments

DMG accomplishments for FY 04 are summarized below:

1. DMG staff and personnel from member agencies routinely attended Mojave Weed Management Area (MWMA) meetings. DMG members participated in the development and review of a MWMA strategy for addressing weed management issues.
2. The DMG hosted a restoration meeting 3 - 4 March, 2004 in Barstow. 53 restoration specialists/personnel responsible for restoration in their agencies attended the meeting. The meeting featured discussions on new/current restoration techniques, sources of labor and material for restoration activities, monitoring the effectiveness of restoration activities, ongoing agency restoration projects, and potential partnership opportunities for conducting restoration efforts.
3. USGS began development of a restoration database that will be accessible through the DMG website and provide data on the status of ongoing/completed restoration projects. Initial population of the database will be accomplished using information from questionnaires completed by attendees at the restoration meeting held on 3 and 4 March 2004 in Barstow.
4. The DMG Restoration Coordinator met on several occasions with researchers participating in the USGS Recoverability and Vulnerability of Desert Ecosystems (RVDE) Project. Discussions during the meetings focused on information and technology transfer to DMG member agencies. Initial information exchange occurred at the 3, 4 March 2004 restoration meeting.
5. With assistance from the MWMA Coordinator, the DMG conducted scoping meetings to determine the feasibility of establishing a Low Desert Weed Management Area. Sufficient interest exists in the low desert to establish a weed management area however, a lead agency and sufficient funding for the effort could not be found initially. The Low Desert Resource Conservation District has since expressed interest in becoming the lead agency for the effort. Work will continue in FY 05 to establish a Low Desert Weed Management Area.
6. The DMG Restoration Coordinator developed, staffed, revised, and finalized a Memorandum of Agreement (MOA) for interested DMG members to participate in conservation and restoration efforts for the San Felipe Creek – San Sebastian Marsh Watershed. The MOA is currently circulating among DMG member agencies for signature.
7. The DMG developed a draft “California Desert Riparian Challenge: A strategic plan for restoration of riparian habitats in the California deserts”. The riparian challenge establishes desert-wide priorities for 17 landscapes/watersheds, estimates funding requirements, and articulates best management practices for riparian habitat

restoration. The challenge will be used to help secure funding for priority sites in the desert.

8. DMG member agencies input new data into the DMG Illegal Dumps database. The MDEP webmaster is currently modifying the database as a result of input from users.
9. The DMG, along with Riverside County and others, hosted an Illegal Dumping Enforcement Workshop (IDEW) in Palm Springs in April 2004. Over 100 people from interested agencies participated in the meeting. As a result of the overwhelming interest in this effort, another IDEW event is being scheduled for San Bernardino County in FY 05.
10. The DMG participated in meetings with the California Integrated Waste Management Board (CIWMB) to review DMG efforts against illegal dumping. Meetings focused on potential cooperative efforts and support from the CIWMB and other State agencies.
11. As part of the illegal dumping enforcement effort, DMG staff is working with San Bernardino County, state, and non-profit agencies to establish a 1-800 number for the public to call if they find illegal dump sites or observe illegal dumping/littering taking place. Initial contacts have been made with follow-up and implementation to occur in FY 05.
12. The DMG initiated a study to evaluate the effectiveness of past recovery actions related to vehicle management, cattle and sheep grazing, and construction of tortoise fences. A total of 395 documents were obtained and reviewed for relevancy. Results of this review support the impression that relatively little of the material available to support implementation of recovery actions is based on scientific studies. This impression was reinforced through interviews with DMG agency biologists. First draft of the study report will be available for peer/agency review on 7 January 2005. The final report will include an annotated bibliography of relevant reports and maps of areas where studies occurred.
13. The DMG formed an ad hoc work group to review the USFWS proposal to establish a Desert Tortoise Recovery Office (DTRO).
  - Work group members supported the FWS proposal to designate a Desert Tortoise Recovery Coordinator along with three local field coordinators.
  - As part of the DTRO, the FWS will empanel a Science Advisory Committee (SAC) to serve in an advisory role.
  - The DMG agreed to form a Desert Tortoise Recovery Plan Implementation Committee. The committee will work directly with the DTRO, SAC, and DMG member agencies to develop and implement recovery action plans for each desert tortoise recovery unit in California. These recovery action plans will be included in the FWS revision of the Desert Tortoise Recovery Plan.
  - USFWS is currently developing a Memorandum of Understanding (MOU) between the DOD Mojave Desert Ecosystem Program, University of Redlands

– Redlands Institute, and the University of Nevada Reno to establish a master database for all desert tortoise data. Protocol development will commence once the MOU is in place.

14. The DMG resourced Line Distance Sampling (LDS) transect surveys for 2004.
  - LDS transect sampling was modified from that used in 2003 in order to produce spatially random samples across the sample area.
  - A total of 6,536 kilometers of transects were surveyed.
  - Analysis of 2004 survey results is currently underway.
15. The DMG participated in the USFWS Desert Tortoise Recovery Plan Assessment Committee (DTRPAC) effort. In terms of permanent study plots, the DTRPAC concluded current desert tortoise permanent study plots are insufficient as range-wide or regional population monitoring tools. The committee recommended DMG member agencies tie future surveys of existing permanent study plots and the establishment of future permanent study plots to specific research hypotheses.
16. The DMG successfully secured funding and developed several partnerships to implement a multi faceted education and outreach campaign aimed at increasing public support of and involvement in desert tortoise recovery in California. Funding was secured to implement the first phase of the project from the California OHV Commission, the National Fish and Wildlife Foundation, and the California Department of Fish and Game. In addition, the Defenders of Wildlife received a grant to support their active participation in the project. Joshua Tree National Park will lead the project on behalf of the DMG.
17. The Raven Management Workgroup continued assessing how to implement a raven management plan for the Mojave Desert. Project goals were defined and potential actions presented to the public, via the NEPA scoping process, for comment. More than 200 responses were received and compiled. Based upon comments received, some management actions not previously considered are being researched. Additionally, the work group is attempting to analyze the effect of the West Nile Virus, if any, on raven populations in the desert. The group expects to prepare an environmental assessment in FY05, with expectations of on-the-ground actions beginning in FY06. The group has presented actions to stakeholder groups that will allow them to participate in raven surveying/monitoring activities.
18. The DMG established a Feral Dog ad hoc work group which held three meetings during the course of the year. These meetings involved representatives from DMG member agencies as well as county and city animal control activities. Through the course of meetings held, it was identified that sufficient specific information on the breadth and frequency of occurrence of feral and uncontrolled dog incidents in the desert was not available. To remedy this problem, the group developed a feral/uncontrolled dog incident report form and distributed it to DMG member agencies, utility companies, biological consultants, OHV groups, and conservation organizations in an effort to determine the scope and severity of this issue. The form

is also available to the general public via the DMG website. Ultimately, analysis of data collected will allow the DMG to focus on areas of the desert where this problem is the most severe.

19. The DMG sponsored the Mojave Desert Science Symposium held 16 – 19 November, 2004 on the University of Redlands campus in Redlands, CA. The symposium consisted of presentations and poster sessions covering four themes (Threats to the Mojave Desert, Ecosystem Monitoring, Natural Recovery or Active Restoration, and Scales and Sustainability) 16 – 18 November and concluded on 19 November with a field trip. Approximately 200 people attended the conference with approximately 60 poster presentations set up.
20. DMG member agency staff attended the NPS “Vital Signs” workshop held in Las Vegas 25-27 May, 2004. The workshop resulted in the selection of vital signs that are available in a report that can be found on the DMG website.
21. The DMG, in coordination with the Mojave Desert Ecosystem Program, developed an internet accessible Research Inventory Database. The database, located on the DMG website, contains an inventory of existing resource, research, and monitoring studies. Protocols, designed to assist Managers in implementing this process in their respective agencies, are available for scientists conducting studies to input data for their project into the system. USGS has populated the database with information from their RVDE Project. Additionally, the National Park Service developed a mechanism to populate the database directly from their Research Permit and Reporting System.
22. The DMG removed burros from BLM, NPS, and DOD lands in 2004. Specific accomplishments to be reported later.