



**DMG Meeting  
Meeting Notes  
May 19 and 20, 2010  
Death Valley National Park**

*Action Items*

- *Ventura Fish and Wildlife Office (VFWO) request additional information on the Mohave ground squirrel that will assist them in the twelve-month status review. VFWO will accept information after the due date of June 28. There, however, will come a time when additional submissions cannot be incorporated because document deadlines.*
- *Agencies who manage Mohave ground squirrel (MGS) habitat are strongly encouraged to engage in the development of the MGS conservation strategy. Absent everyone's direct involvement, it will be difficult to develop an implementable plan.*
- *Please provide Amy Fesnock with your ideas for habitat enhancement projects and priority acquisition areas that can be used for alternative energy mitigation. Amy can be reached at [Amy.Fesnock@ca.blm.gov](mailto:Amy.Fesnock@ca.blm.gov).*
- *Russell Scofield requested additional comments on the current version of the DMG Charter and Strategic Plan no later than June 4. Updated versions will be distributed to the DMG by June 21. We will have a DMG conference call July 7 from 10:00 to noon to discuss the latest version of the documents.*
- *Agencies are invited to provide interpretive materials to the new San Bernardino County museum opening in Apple Valley.*
- *Russell Scofield asked that agencies distribute the Managing Mojave Wildfires Priorities and Guidance document to fire personnel.*

*Upcoming Meetings*

- *The next meeting of the MGS Work Group is June 22 at the Mojave National Preserve Office.*
- *LCC workshops for the Mojave subunit are June 29 in Moreno Valley and July 13 in Las Vegas. DMG members are encouraged to attend.*
- *The next RETI stakeholder meeting is June 28 at CAISO in Folsom.*

All handouts and PowerPoint slides are available at the DMG website.

<http://www.dmg.gov/announcements.php?id=114>

**Wednesday, May 19 (Open Session)**

- **Welcome, Introductions, and Overview of Death Valley National Park** (Sarah Craighead) PowerPoint provided. Death Valley has a number of ongoing ARRA projects including road and parking lot construction, a rehabilitation of the Furnace Creek visitor center, and

reconstruction of the Scotty's Castle cookhouse. An air tour management plan is being developed. Abandoned mine lands projects continue to be a priority.

- **Ivanpah Valley Projects**

- Tom Stone, the DesertXpress President, provided a PowerPoint presentation that discussed the project's rationale, technology, and route. DesertXpress would be our country's first interstate high speed rail and will run from Victorville to Las Vegas. The project plans to eventually extend to Palmdale and intertie with the proposed California High Speed Rail system. Ultimately, DesertXpress would become a part of the Western High Speed Rail Alliance and connect with Arizona, Utah, and Colorado. DesertXpress will consist of about 188 miles of dedicated, double track, primarily within the I-15 right-of-way. A tunnel will be required at Mountain Pass. The trains will be electric propelled and the project will require three new substations. It will take 84 minutes to get from Victorville to Las Vegas. At an average one-way fare of \$50, DesertXpress hopes to capture 5.6 million annual round trips, which by 2030 could divert fourteen-hundred vehicles per hour during its peak and reduce major pollutants in the I-15 corridor by an estimated average of 40%. A final EIS is anticipated by the end of this summer and they hope to begin construction this year. If this schedule is met, regular operation would begin in 2014.
- Mike Ford- Public Lands Consultant for DesertXpress and the Ivanpah Airport updated the group on the airport's status. Environmental studies continue with FAA as the lead. The project is still moving forward but the timeline has been pushed back.

*Update since meeting- The Clark County Department of Aviation (CCDOA) has suspended all current and future actions with respect to the Ivanpah airport, including all work associated with the EIS. This suspension will be indefinite and it is doubtful any further work will be done on the Ivanpah site for the next ten years, and perhaps beyond. However, the CCDOA has been working with the FAA and Nellis AFB on airspace issues and new runway alignments at McCarran and the result of those changes will be to increase capacity at McCarran substantially, which will effectively preclude the need for Ivanpah into the foreseeable future. The CCDOA will continue to own the 6,000 acres at Ivanpah.*

- **Desert Tortoise Recovery Office** (Roy Averill-Murray) There is no movement on the recovery plan revision. It is still in the regional office and there is no timeline. Monitoring is now complete in California with 417 transects.
- **Climate Change Workshop Summary** Debra Hughson provided a synthesis for the recent Mojave and Great Basin Climate Change Workshop held in Las Vegas. Debra discussed the key recommendations from the presentation and these recommendations are captured in her PowerPoint presentation. The workshop was well attended and a huge success. DMG was a cosponsor and many DMG agencies were well represented.
- **The Nature Conservancy Ecoregional Assessment** (John Randall- TNC Associate Science Director) PowerPoint provided. TNC is updating its 2001 Mojave Ecoregional Assessment and conducting an Energy by Design study for the ecoregion. Goals of the TNC assessment are:
  1. Characterize distribution of conservation values and threats across the Mojave Ecoregion.
  2. Inform renewable energy development siting and mitigation decisions to protect biodiversity.

3. Provide a common platform for partners and stakeholders in agencies, NGOs, and industry and contribute to a culture of data sharing.
4. Incorporate:
  - expert knowledge;
  - spatially explicit data on threats;
  - projections of climate change and habitat suitability.

The project will be complete in June and review will occur over the summer. A product is expected in August. The Energy by Design analyses is expected to be complete by the end of the year.

- **Desert Tortoise Information and Youth Education (DTIYE)**

- **Program Update** (Russell Scofield) The DTIYE program continues in maintenance mode. Anne Staley coordinated this year's Mojave Max Contest winners' parties. The Living Desert has applied for a \$110k Off-highway Motor Vehicle Recreation grant and will know June 7 if a grant will be awarded. One negative comment was received during the public comment phase from an individual who has been invited but refuses to become involved in the program. Joshua Tree is closing out the second National Fish and Wildlife Foundation (NFWF) grant. Once that grant is closed out, we can access funds in the third NFWF grant. Some deliverables of the grants include:
  - Coordination Labor
  - Wayside Development
  - Exhibit Development
  - Development and prototype of K-2 Educational Trunks
  - Teacher training
  - Community events
  - Production and marketing of radio PSAs
  - Continuance of the Mojave Max Contest
  - Printing of the coloring book
  - Produce third tortoise trunk
  - Addition of fun with a purpose content for kids to deserttortoise.gov
  - Reprinting brochures
  - Reprinting the Sue Foxx desert tortoise book
- **Desert Tortoise Smart Phone Application (SPA)** Fon Duke handed out a prospectus to develop a SPA for the tortoise. The SPA will incorporate citizen-science and youth education to provide a tool that allows the public to learn about the tortoise and then document tortoise occurrences. The occurrence database will be available to agencies and qualified researchers. The SPA would be piloted in the Mojave Preserve and then expanded range-wide. Costs for SPA development and testing are \$35k. Russell and Fon have a potential funding source identified. The DMG supported the SPA's development.

## Thursday, May 20 (Open Session)

- Mohave Ground Squirrel Work Group Carl Benz discussed the positive ninety-day finding and asked that additional information relevant to MGS status be provided. ***Ventura Fish and Wildlife Office will accept information after the due date of June 28.*** There, however, will come a time when additional submissions cannot be incorporated because document deadlines.
  - **Conservation Strategy Update** (Russell Scofield) The conservation strategy development is moving forward. ***The next meeting of the MGS Work Group is June 22 at the Mojave National Preserve Office. Agencies who manage MGS habitat are strongly encouraged to engage in the development of the MGS conservation strategy. Absent everyone's direct involvement, it will be difficult to develop an implementable plan.*** Please contact Liana Aker at [liana.aker@us.army.mil](mailto:liana.aker@us.army.mil), if you need a copy of the latest draft.
  - **Research Strategy Update** Russell Scofield provided a handout updating the status of the MGS research strategy. The California Energy Commission has tentatively selected the USGS habitat suitability model for funding.
  - **Volunteer Monitoring Effort** (Don Mitchell- ECORP Consulting) PowerPoint provided. Don has volunteered to coordinate volunteers that are willing to donate time to trap for MGS between their other projects. Six areas were identified for the trapping effort and volunteers were allowed to select from randomized points within each area. Thus far, no squirrels have been caught.
- Landscape Conservation Cooperative Update (LCC) (Russell Scofield) PowerPoint provided. The Desert LCC consists of the Mojave, Sonoran, and Chihuahuan Deserts, including Mexico. There is consensus (within both the DMG and the broader LCC community) that each ecoregion should be a separate subunit of the larger LCC. There may also be a subunit for water users and Colorado River issues. The proposed Mojave subunit would include all of the DMG's area of interest (Mojave and Colorado Deserts) in addition to the range of the Mojave population of desert tortoise.

There is a core organizing team. Russell and Dennis are on the team as well as Kent Turner, Chief of Resources for Lake Mead and Rick Kearney, Assistant Regional Director for Climate Change for FWS Region 8. Most of the other team members are from Arizona and New Mexico. There needs to be a DOD person on the team and Fon and Russell will work out who that could be in consultation with the installations.

Each ecoregion will host workshops to engage potential LCC partners. ***The workshops for the Mojave subunit will be June 29 in Moreno Valley and July 13 in Las Vegas. DMG members are encouraged to attend.***

- **County of San Bernardino Museum** Robert McKernan presented both the current museum operations located in Redlands and their new acquisition of the privately held museum in Apple Valley. The concept for the Apple Valley museum is a self-guided tour exposing the visitor to the various aspects of the Mojave. The theme of the museum will be the Mojave as the backyard to desert residents with the hopes in guiding visitors to go out and explore. The museum is

working towards a fourth quarter opening and they have requested some geospatial data support from MDEP. *Agencies are invited to provide interpretive materials to the museum.*

### **DMG Executive Coordination Session (DMG Members, staff)**

- **Raven Film** Russell Scofield has been working with film producer Tim Branning to develop a statement of work for a “script” of the proposed raven film. There is a consensus on what is required; however, the wording for the correct deliverables has not been identified. Mojave National Preserve and the counties have identified funding for the script.
  
- **Energy Update**
  - **Renewable Energy Transmission Initiative (RETI) update** (Carl Zichella- Sierra Club) PowerPoint provided. Carl provided an overview and update of RETI. The goal of RETI is to plan renewable energy and its transmission to avoid conflict and minimize impact to sensitive resources. RETI is a collaborative process of industry, environmental groups, stakeholders, and agencies. Phases I and II are complete and reports and GIS products are available at <http://www.energy.ca.gov/reti/documents/index.html>. RETI is entering Phase III and will develop detailed transmission plans based upon:
    - Real transmission projects ready for permitting
    - Detailed transmission plans of service
    - Interface with California Transmission Planning Group
    - “No regrets” transmission will be promoted
    - Emphasis will be on existing ROWs and infrastructure*Agencies are encouraged to become engaged in RETI. The next RETI stakeholder meeting is June 28 at CAISO in Folsom.*
  
  - **Mitigation Planning** California Senate Bill 34 Establishes a Renewable Energy Development Fee Trust Fund with initial \$10m. The purpose of the Trust Fund is to design and implement actions to protect, restore, or enhance the habitat of plants and wildlife that can be used to fully mitigate for the impacts of renewable energy development under CESA.

The Renewable Energy Action Team (REAT) (made up of BLM, FWS, CEC, and CDFG) MOA with National Fish and Wildlife Foundation (NFWF) is signed. This MOA establishes a mitigation fiduciary based upon the DMG California Desert Fund/Program (CDP) proposal. Once the mitigation program is operational, we can revisit CDP and how the two will be coordinated.

Amy Fesnock, BLM State Wildlife Biologist provided a PowerPoint describing mitigation for alternative energy. REAT agencies have agreed to nest mitigation requirements i.e. mitigation for one REAT agency would be accepted by all REAT agencies. REAT agencies

have also agreed that mitigation will include habitat enhancement in addition to acquisition. The DTRO spatial decision support system will be used to help plan mitigation.

The CLAWG will have a role in coordination of mitigation acquisition with other acquisition programs. Mitigation could provide a steady funding stream for raven control and other long-term management project coordinated by the DMG. ***Please provide Amy with your ideas for habitat enhancement projects and priority acquisition areas. Amy can be reached at Amy\_Fesnock@ca.blm.gov.***

- **Managing Mojave Wildfires Priorities and Guidance** (Russell Scofield) Handout provided. With the exception of a minor change to the aquatic invasive section, the Guidance has not really changed since it was issued last year. The DMG agreed to implement the Guidance again for the 2010 fire season. ***Russell asked that agencies distribute the Guidance document to fire personnel.***
- **DMG Strategic Plan and DMG Charter Review** (Russell Scofield/Fon Duke)  
Russell and Fon went through proposed changes to the Charter and updated the DMG on the latest version of the Strategic Plan. ***Russell requested additional comments on the current version of both documents no later than June 4. Updated versions will be distributed to the DMG by June 21. We will have a DMG conference call July 7 from 10:00 to noon to discuss the latest versions of the documents.*** Our goal is to have both documents complete and in final draft form for a DMG Executive Coordination Meeting in October.
- **Next Meetings**
  - Conference Call/Webex ***July 7, 10:00 am - 12:00 pm***  
Audio call in number: 888-790-2388  
Audio pass code: 2972879  
Webex URL:  
<http://www.mymeetings.com/nc/join.php?sigKey=mymeetings&i=741180795&p=DMG&t=c>
  - Conference Call/Webex ***August 4, 1:00 pm - 3:00 pm***  
Audio call in number: 888-790-2388  
Audio pass code: 2972879  
Webex URL:  
<http://www.mymeetings.com/nc/join.php?sigKey=mymeetings&i=741180795&p=DMG&t=c>
  - DMG Executive Coordination Meeting, week of October 18 or 25 hosted by USGS in San Diego. We will have a one-day Executive Coordination meeting and a one-day regular DMG meeting. The exact day will be determined by the executives' schedules.