

West Mojave Plan
Species Conservation Measures (Group 1)
Green Tree Inn, Victorville, CA
December 17, 1999

Task Group Members Present: Ileene Anderson, Marie Brashear, Paul Condon, Mike Connor, Mark Dedon, Tom Egan, Jeri Ferguson, Art Gleason, Gerry Hillier, Becky Jones, Peter Kiriakos, Lowell Landowski, Steve Lilburn, Lorelei Oviatt, Bob Parker, Mickey Quillman, Mike Rauschkolb, Bob Rudnick, Robert Strub, Donna Thomas, Barbara Veale, Hector Villalobos,

Others Present: Bill Haigh, Project Leader, Larry LaPre, Ed LaRue - West Mojave Plan team; Alana Knaster, Facilitator Lori Diggins, Assistant, Torry MacLean (Observer)

Agenda Item #1 Previous Meeting Notes

The Task Group reviewed the past meeting notes with no changes.

Agenda Item #2 Project Update

Bill Haigh announced that there had been high level meetings in Washington to discuss the issues pertaining to the Fort Irwin expansion. The agencies have agreed to convene a scientific panel to examine the implications from a biological perspective of the expansion to the West Mojave Plan. This information will be utilized to help form a decision on how to proceed. Since the panel will be meeting in mid-January, Bill suggested that the meeting of the Super Group be postponed until February when there could be important information to share.

Agenda Item #3 Review of Draft Evaluation Report

The Task Group had been asked to review the Draft Evaluation Report and come prepared to discuss issues that they would put on their "unacceptable" list and those that they would put on a "concern but could negotiate" list. These lists would then provide the basis for further deliberations by the group.

Before beginning this exercise, the "Equitable Precepts" statement and principles was distributed. This document was approved by the Super Group in September 1997 and is intended as the guidepost for acceptance of components of the Plan.

Below are the lists generated by the Task Group.

Deal Breakers: These include issues that members indicated were non-negotiable as well as some that are strong concerns that have to be addressed.

- Under development of some dropped bird species
- Need for special permitting if any dropped species become a species of significant concern.
- On page 2-24 change the 4th paragraph to read, "A Routine, non-emergency maintenance of pipelines that requires ground disturbance should occur during the late fall and winter only or other seasons only when it is safe to do so and proper mitigation is used. (Environmental conditions such as continued high temperatures, rain or lack thereof, etc. may cause calendar dates to be unreliable.)"
- Assumptions regarding: What is the correct definition of "critical habitat"? and its implications on the plan.
- Not deleting the area south of Edwards AFB, which is considered fragmented due to the

- number of private properties, from the Fremont-Kramer DWMA.
- Re-vegetation should not only be a concern in the DWMAs, MUAs but also in the ITAs.
- Problems with successful re-vegetation criteria. Is there a trustworthy/proven formula for deciding this.
- Need more detail on plants, species specific to get a clearer picture of what is out there and in what amounts to help define the previous item.
- Mojave River and surrounding resources inadequately addressed and/or undervalued.
- El Mirage, Shadow Mountain, along with the South Edwards area should be in conservation areas.
- Use of “Eminent domain” or mandatory requirements for zoning changes (may use level of mandatory mitigation required as a criteria for receiving permits.)
- No mineral entry withdrawals without claim owners agreement.
- There needs to be areas where cattle and sheep grazing are permitted. (may need to have a subgroup begin working on grazing issues.)
- Need strategy re. bighorn sheep and mountain lions.
- Seminars for those living in the conservation areas to certify them as volunteers(?) to cover when a wildlife biologist is unavailable.
- No net loss of private land.
- No overarching ban on new acres for agricultural development.
- No imposition of restrictions on private lands in MUAs.
- Need a Plan wide raven control strategy. Where will the money come from? (is it classified as a migratory bird species?).
- Need specific regulations peculiar to cities.
- Need same level of reporting for Bases.
- Compliance with Federal “Sikes Act”.
- Need quantifiable biological basis re. proposed route closures. (Future use patterns may be different causing different consequences and requiring different forms of mitigation.)
- Why blanket prohibition of open areas in DWMAs?
- May need smaller designations for some areas- DWMA may not be the only size area to protect (e.g. in cities)
- Prohibition of all off-highway travel eliminates all modern mineral exploration possibilities. (temporary use permits?)
- Unrealistic size limits for new mines. (what about rolling size limits?)
- Lumping of Government and Private lands in Plans “take issue”.
- Not complete by in to biological goals due to the cumulative impacts of several plans over a county wide area.
- Inadequate attention given to the effects of disease and ravens. (If these issues were better understood would they change the plans design and prescriptions?)
- The large size of the proposed area covered by the DWMAs is too large to be politically viable.
- Need clear factual basis for the cancellation of grazing. (page 2-27)
- Object to withdrawal of mining acreage.
- Need threshold criteria to cause a review of mining plans.
- What about existing mines, where do they fit in?
- Roadbed and berm height and slope values need to be reviewed re. juvenile tortoises.
- Both new and existing pipelines need to be included. (2-24)
- Private property should be viewed as sites where existing species might be supported but not required to promote recovery.
- A needs ratio, a nexus (connection), between cost and impact avoidance needs to be proposed.
- A strategy of converting habitat to Ag use needs discussing. (Add to grazing sub group?)
- Any conservation requirements/actions should not themselves be a cause for further mitigation.

Heartburn but Negotiable: Items which are not “deal breakers” but have to be better defined or modified.

- Need to present whatever threshold level agreed on in a way that will prevent a quick land grab
- How to manage interface between DWMA and inholdings. (Buffer zones can be difficult to manage and define.)
- Need for ITAs within a DWMA
- Need to spell out in detail when surveys are going to be done and insure that they are. (“Every five years” is a bit vague.)
- Make it clear in the Plan that grazing is incompatible within DWMA.
- Need for dog proof fencing along some areas near cities. (If such is available need to describe it in detail.
- What is the scientific basis for the DWMA 1% allowance and the MUA 5% allowance.
- How will expanding sewage treatment needs affect the plan, specifically re. raven control
- Equity or lack thereof, tortoise vs. cities
- Is a mine at 6000 ft within a DWMA under the same guidelines as at lower elevations? (Optimal tortoise habitat is generally accepted to be up to 5000 ft)
- Need to have creative ways/choices for raising fees.
- Need to find incentive based or voluntary solutions. (Other groups or agencies may have good ideas to suggest.)
- Need to address exotic plant species in more detail.
- Need to insure that raven control is on a more general basis and not just limited to where it is a proven threat.
- Need for good bat gate criteria included in plan. (Possibly something approved by Bat Conservation International.)
- More information on good habitat enhancement.
- Address washes in route designations.
- Create a Raven education program.(For example food/debris disposal).
- Clear guidelines re. horse and burro management, especially on ground squirrel habitat.

- Plan seems to be driven simply by biological goals. Are there other goals which should also be considered. (2-17.).
- Change or clarify more “Incidental take”. It can be confusing.
- Need clear guidelines for reclaiming mines.
- Clear guidelines re. what is an acceptable survey and what are the protocols to follow and provide a list of acceptable resource persons qualified to do them.
- Need to increase ability and staffing to conduct surveys.
- Need to designate alternative contingent corridors for utilities if others now designated as such are eliminated.
- Better definition as to what is “new agriculture”.
- “Threat ranking Chart” should be deleted since no longer relevant. (Can be done on the web site.)
- Need to eliminate all disinformation on web site.\
- Need idea of costs for plan implementation. (For example the cost specifically for the gunnery range cleanup, etc.

Follow-Up Discussion: Several additional points were raised.

- There was a question about including areas that have experienced little significant human interference but are outside of the proposed boundaries for consideration. This will be discussed at a later time.

- The Task Group agreed by consensus that the use of eminent domain or condemnation would not be included as options in the Plan. These had been listed as “Deal Breakers” by several members. This recommendation will go to the Super Group.
- Questions were raised concerning which stage(s) of tortoise development are the most critical? Should juveniles, reproductively active adult females or some other stage receive more of the resources/management should funding be limited?
- The Task Group indicated that most critical issue for discussion at the next meeting are the specific DWMA boundaries. Informal subgroups covering some of the prior “no and maybe” concerns while needed will remain less of a focus for now.

Maps at a scale of 1:100,000 covering the DWMA's will be made available prior to the next meeting at the three BLM office sites. The main focus for next meeting will be the Fremont-Kramer DWMA which will be used as a test case for the remainder of the DWMA's. BLM will make it's computer available at the next meeting to assist in clarifying, using overlays for all the DWMA's, land status, legal descriptions on a spot basis, and ownership patterns. Township and range marking would be helpful on maps. The computer will also assist the group in juggling the boundaries a bit to test ideas out. Maps will be ready on January 26, 2000.

Pages 2-7 through 2-17 give the reasoning behind setting the DWMA boundaries as they are. Should this not be enough the members of the task group should notify Bill ASAP, as to why and what else is needed for clarification in the reasoning. Bill, Ed or some other team member will then try to respond to the questions.

The next meeting will be Friday, February 4, 2000 at 9:30 a.m. in Victorville.

Agenda items for the next meeting are:

1. Review previous meeting notes.
2. Raven control input
3. Fremont- Kramer DWMA discussions. Task Group members should come ready to apply the list of “No's” and “Maybe's” to this test discussion.
4. Development of subgroups as needed based on these lists and the discussion of the Fremont-Kramer DWMA.
5. Decide on next meeting date(s)