



DESERT TORTOISE COUNCIL

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Via email only

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Bureau of Land Management-Utah St. George Field Office
Attn: St. George RMP Planning Team, Keith Rigtrup
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Cc. Dawna Ferris d8ferris@blm.gov; Keith Rigtrup kigrtrup@blm.gov; Brian Tritle btritle@blm.gov

RE: Comments on the Beaver Dam Wash and Red Cliffs National Conservation Area Draft Resource Management Plans

The Desert Tortoise Council (Council) is a non-profit organization comprised of hundreds of professionals and laypersons who share a common concern for wild desert tortoises and a commitment to advancing the public's understanding of this species. Established in 1975 to promote conservation of tortoises in the deserts of the southwestern United States and Mexico, the Council regularly provides information to individuals, organizations and regulatory agencies on matters potentially affecting the desert tortoise within its geographical range.

The Council appreciates the opportunity to provide the Bureau of Land Management (BLM) with input for the Draft Resource Management Plans (RMPs) for Beaver Dam Wash National Conservation Area (NCA) and Red Cliffs NCA and a Draft Amendment to the St. George Field Office Resource Management Plan/Draft Environmental Impact Statement (EIS). Whereas a full list of our concerns is included in the attached table, the following seven points capture most of our general concerns with several of the alternatives, and particularly Alternative D, which we oppose in its entirety.

1. Having reviewed the Draft RMPs (from which chapter, page, and section numbers are referenced below), the Council supports Alternative C as the only one most likely to accomplish and/or honor the following goals, objectives, regulations, and existing agreements (see draft document for cited references):

- Chapter 1, Page 3, Section 1: The two NCAs were created to “conserve, protect, and enhance...the ecological, scenic, wildlife, recreational, cultural, historical, natural, educational, and scientific resources” of the public lands (OPLMA Sections 1974 and 1975).
- Chapter 1, Page 4, Section 1.1: The purpose of the Beaver Dam Wash NCA is: “To conserve, protect and enhance for the benefit and enjoyment of present and future generations the ecological, scenic, wildlife, recreational, cultural, historical, natural, educational, and scientific resources of the Beaver Dam Wash National Conservation Area. (OPLMA Section 1975 (a)).”
- Chapter 1, Page 5, Section 1.1: The purpose of the Red Cliffs NCA is the same as for the Beaver Dam NCA, plus: “To protect each species that is located in the National Conservation Area; and listed as a threatened or endangered species on the list of threatened species or the list of endangered species published under... the Endangered Species Act of 1973. (OPLMA Section 1974 (a))”
- Chapter 1, Page 11, Section 1.2.2: “The public lands of the Red Cliffs NCA comprise approximately 70% of the land base of the approximately 62,000 acre, multi-jurisdictional Red Cliffs Desert Reserve (Reserve). The Reserve was established by Washington County’s multi-species *Habitat Conservation Plan* (HCP), approved by the United States Fish and Wildlife Service (USFWS) in 1995.”
- Chapter 1, Page 11, Section 1.2.2: “The Reserve’s land base encompasses designated critical habitat for the federally-listed threatened Mojave desert tortoise ... within the Upper Virgin River Recovery Unit. This recovery unit was identified as the smallest and most at-risk recovery unit within the desert tortoise’s range by the *Mojave Desert Tortoise Recovery Plan* (USFWS 1994, revised 2011).”
- Chapter 1, Page 11, Section 1.2.2: “In 1996, Washington County was issued an Incidental Take Permit (ITP) authorizing the development or ‘take’ of approximately 12,264 acres of non-federal lands in critical habitat and the loss of 1,169 tortoises, based on the mitigation afforded by restrictive management of the Reserve and other commitments made through the HCP and Implementation Agreement.”
- Chapter 1, Page 14, 1.3.1: “The mission for BLM management of the Beaver Dam Wash NCA is to conserve and protect the ecological, geological, cultural, and biological resources of the public lands; to assist the recovery and delisting of federal and state-listed species; to restore native species habitats and populations within functional ecosystems that support species’ resilience to climate change; and to enhance opportunities for scientific research, environmental education, sustainable recreational uses, and citizen stewardship of the public lands.” This is the same as the mission statement for Red Cliffs NCA (Section 1.3, Page 16).

2. There are numerous places throughout the Draft RMPs where BLM proposes to “Authorize the reintroduction, translocation, and population augmentation of special status species [including desert tortoise] populations into current or historic habitats in the NCA, in coordination with USFWS and UDWR, to assist recovery and delisting of threatened or endangered species and preclude the need to list other at-risk species” (Page 90, Section 2.3.1). Invariably the analyses throughout the document refer to the advantages of manipulating wild populations without describing either the difficulty of executing these projects properly or the associated risks. As given in the comment table below, there are numerous places where the final document must identify and discuss risks associated with manipulating wild populations of tortoises and clearly define how such manipulations will be funded including the monitoring required to assure success.

3. The Council opposes the translocation, relocation, and augmentation of tortoises for the following reasons. Number 1: Where have we seen a successful reintroduction program with the desert tortoise? Number 2: Where is the information that the tortoises (both resident and introduced or translocated) will be tested for known and potentially new, unidentified and infectious diseases? Number 3: Where is the information that the release areas can support more tortoises in the form of introductions or so-called augmentations? We are seeing deteriorated habitats in the management areas from new and recurring fires, from invasive plants, loss of key food plants, climate warming, etc. In such areas, including the NCAs, augmentations are inappropriate without substantive published research work showing it will benefit the tortoises.

4. We note that the function of the Washington County HCP is described in three paragraphs on page 512. Missing from these descriptions is the amount and location of private lands comprising occupied tortoise habitats that have been developed outside the Red Cliffs Desert Reserve under authority of the HCP. How much private land has been acquired within the Reserve to offset this impact and where is it located? The draft RMP indicates on Page 11 that the HCP authorized the development of approximately 12,264 acres of non-federal lands in critical habitat and the loss of 1,169 tortoises, but the actual acreages and numbers of tortoises affected to date are not given in the document. This information is important in determining how the function of the Washington County HCP would be affected by the various alternatives, and particularly with regards to developing a highway through the HCP-designated, Reserve conservation lands. The Council contends that the function of the HCP may be impaired and undermined if a highway is constructed through conservation lands purchased under this HCP agreement.

5. With regards to the following statement on Page 659, Section 4.10, “Under Alternatives B, C, and D, the ACEC designation would be revoked, but would not result in lesser levels of protection for the relevance and importance values of the ACEC,” what are the current protections provided under the ACEC status that would no longer be applied if the ACEC status is rescinded? Given that the function of ACECs is to protect targeted resources, which includes the desert tortoise in this case, wouldn’t existing protections be eliminated or reduced if the ACEC status is eliminated? There should be a table showing exactly how elimination of this ACEC status would affect current management. It is our understanding, for example, that ACEC status obligates the BLM to prioritize funding in ACECs for proactive management even when funding is limited. Wouldn’t eliminating the ACEC status adversely affect BLM’s criteria for high priority of funding and managing these areas?

6. The Council strongly opposes the designation of a new utility and transportation corridor through the Red Cliffs NCA for the following reasons (all taken, verbatim, from the text on pages 789 through 791):

- “Approximately 4,281 acres of the 6,350 proposed new utility and transportation corridor are designated critical habitat for the threatened desert tortoise.”
- “Estimates of tortoise numbers in this area would range from 158 to 208 tortoises that could be impacted by developments or construction within the proposed utility and transportation corridor, although this number could be substantially higher.” We suspect that these data estimate the numbers of adult tortoises, and expect that when juveniles, immature, and subadult animals are included twice as many tortoises may be affected.
- “The new utility and transportation corridor proposed under Alternative D contains all five of the habitat-related PCEs [Primary Constituent Elements of designated tortoise critical habitat].”

- “Within the proposed new designated corridor area, below the 1200 meter contour, slightly more than half of the habitat has been damaged by recent wildfires. The remaining acreage of unburned habitat is now crucial to the survival of the tortoise populations, as it provides necessary shade, shelter, and intact native vegetation communities that better meet tortoise nutritional needs than do invasive annual grass species.”
- “A new multi-lane roadway, constructed along any of the alternative alignments proposed by Washington County, would fragment habitat. Injuries and mortalities to tortoises during new utility developments or roadway construction could occur, as this area has some of the highest tortoise densities documented in the Upper Virgin River Recovery Unit.”
- “Management decisions under this alternative related to Lands and Realty management would not meet the conservation, protection, and enhancement purpose of the NCA for ecological resources.”
- “The potential impacts on desert tortoise populations as a result of some level of adverse modification to as much as 4,281 acres of designated critical habitat could threaten the viability of tortoises in the Upper Virgin River Recovery Unit.”
- “The potential adverse modification of critical habitat and ‘take’ of tortoise related to future developments in the designated corridors, in concert with the loss of habitat to developments and fire in the CIAA, could cumulatively jeopardize the survival of desert tortoises in the Upper Virgin River Recovery.”

7. We note that the highest densities of tortoises in the Red Cliffs NCA (Utah Division of Wildlife Resources 2015) would be bisected by this utility and transportation corridor. The analysis given on pages 789 through 791 and reiterated above is already compelling evidence why the new corridor should not be identified or adopted in any alternative. However, the analysis fails to quantify the impact a new highway would have on the efficacy of the Washington County HCP. BLM needs to divulge how many acres and how many tortoises have been taken from HCP-authorized projects on private lands compared to how many acres and tortoises have been acquired and conserved, respectively, within the Red Cliffs Desert Reserve as a result of implementing the HCP. Furthermore, the BLM needs to divulge information about how the fires (since the 1990 federal listing) have damaged habitat, injured and killed tortoises, and affected the efficacy of the Washington County HCP. Then the BLM needs to analyze how construction of the new utility and transportation corridor would affect acquired lands and conserved tortoises; and how previous agreements under the Washington County HCP may be undermined by construction of this highway. These analyses are currently lacking from the draft document, which is deficient in this respect, and should be remedied in the final document. There are general statements in Section 4.34.4, but the Cumulative Effects Analysis fails to provide the level of detail requested above.

Again, we appreciate the opportunity to comment on these draft plans, and ask that the BLM continue to consider the Desert Tortoise Council as an Affected Party regarding future actions and documents affecting management of tortoises in the St. George office of the BLM.

Regards,



Edward L., LaRue, Jr., M.S.

Desert Tortoise Council, Ecosystems Advisory Committee, Chairperson

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Beaver Dam Wash/Red Cliffs NCA Draft Resource Management Plans
Comment Tracking Form**

Comment #	Page Number	Section Number	Figure Number	Table Number	Comment and/or Reference
					<p>To expedite tracking and responses, please use this form for all your comments.</p> <ol style="list-style-type: none"> 1. Each reviewing organization should return a single set of consolidated comments. 2. Please provide specific text corrections/suggestions regarding your substitutions, deletions, and additions. Providing detailed recommended replacement text is strongly encouraged. This table's cells will expand to fit. 3. Comments should be as specific as possible, e.g., "Replace cumin with cardamom" is preferable to "Make this taste better". 4. Please remember to add your initials, so you may be contacted if clarification is needed or if there are instances of conflicting comment
<p>Although BLM has created a wonderfully visually-appealing document, it has resulted in a product that is difficult to navigate, with slow computer time responses, and occasional frozen computer screens. For reviewing purposes, a document without all the colored photographs would be preferable and more easily reviewed and navigated. Hopefully, there will be a final version of the RMPs that is not encumbered with the photographs, which will expedite review time.</p>					
<p>Chapter 1. Purpose and Need</p>					
1	24	1.4			<p>"The new RMPs for the two NCAs must be able to quickly respond to changing environmental factors, new scientific data, and changing land use patterns." Allowing the construction of a new highway through the Red Cliffs NCA would result in an irreversible impact resulting in known deleterious environmental factors and would adverse impacts that could not be completely remedied short of removing the highway after constructed and massive restoration efforts. BLM would not be able to "quickly respond" to these environmental factors, and must not permit this highway.</p>
2	34	1.6			<p>"Some commenters noted that development of this proposed multi-lane road through the NCA could invalidate Washington County's Incidental Take Permit for desert tortoise populations and critical habitat, issued by the USFWS under Section 10 of the Endangered Species Act in 1996. This permit has allowed growth and development to occur in an orderly and predictable manner on private lands in desert tortoise habitat in Washington County since 1996." The Council concurs with this statement, as given below in Comment 23.</p>
<p>Chapter 2. Alternatives</p>					

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3	44 45	2.2.2			The Council is supportive of the two following prescriptions associated with Alternative B, as they would benefit desert tortoise recovery: “The restoration of damaged lands is also emphasized under this alternative;” and “Three new ACECs (Photo 2-4) would be designated and eight existing ACECs would be carried forward.”
4	45 46	2.2.3			The Council fully supports Alternative C, particularly because of the following prescriptions: “Public lands in the NCAs would not be available for livestock grazing in the Beaver Dam Wash NCA;” “this alternative emphasizes environmental education outreach, interpretation, and scientific research;” “Fourteen new ACECs for threatened, endangered or at-risk species are proposed for administrative designation and eight existing ACEC designations would be carried forward;” and “designate the highest amount of acreage, 385,033 acres, of public lands in the SGFO [St. George Field Office] as Limited.” Although not specifically cited, we understand that one or more of these prescriptions would prohibit the construction of the highway through the Red Cliffs NCA, which a majority of our 15-member Board supports.
5	46	2.2.4			The Council is opposed to the following prescriptions associated with Alternative D: “Emphasizes a broader array and higher levels of public use and access;” “Public lands within the NCAs would continue to be available for livestock grazing;” and “Corridors would be retained or designated to accommodate new utility and/or transportation ROWs.”
6	55 65 78	2.3.1		2-1	“Apply Best Management Practices (BMPs) and other site-specific mitigation measures to maintain soil stability, protect physical and biological (cryptogamic) soil crusts, and minimize wind erosion of soils (refer to Appendix F for BMPs for all programs and resources).” The Council has recently completed BMPs that would also facilitate this objective (see Best Management Practices Fact Sheets at deserttortoise.org). We recommend that BLM consider these BMPs for inclusion in the Final RMPS for these two NCAs. This recommendation also applies to management guidance and actions identified for Native Vegetation Communities (Table 2-7) and Noxious Weeds and Invasive Species (Table 2-10) for all alternatives. We refer BLM to the Council’s website (deserttortoise.org) for applicable BMPs.
7	80	2.3.1	Map 2.2	2-11	Currently a component of Alternative C, the Council asks that BLM’s Preferred Alternative B be modified to “Make 61,995 acres of the following allotments unavailable for livestock grazing within NCA over the life of the RMP: a) Beaver Dam Slope; b) Castle Cliffs; c) Cedar Pocket; d) Scarecrow Peak; e) Within designated critical habitat for the Mojave desert tortoise within the ROW corridor that bisects the NCA. Eliminate 3,099 AUMs of livestock forage over the life of the RMP,” which would contribute to desert tortoise recovery.

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8	84	2.3.1	Map 2.2	2-11	Similarly, the Council asks that the Preferred Alternative B be modified to include the following component of Alternative C: “Public lands within the NCA would be unavailable to grazing over the life of the RMP.”
9	84	2.3.1	Map 2.2	2-11	Further, the Council asks that the Preferred Alternative B be modified to include the following component of Alternative C: “Remove range improvements that do not further the purposes of the NCA [sic] nor benefit diverse resource values (e.g., wildlife, recreational use).”
10	90	2.3.1		2-13	With regards to the following prescription common to all but the No Action Alternative, “Authorize the reintroduction, translocation, and population augmentation of special status species populations into current or historic habitats in the NCA, in coordination with USFWS and UDWR, to assist recovery and delisting of threatened or endangered species and preclude the need to list other at-risk species,” the Council believes strongly that experts must assess the efficacy of tortoise translocations implemented in southern Nevada and in the central Mojave Desert, California, before any similar population manipulations occur within either of these NCAs. Unless there is documented high survival with these recent mass-translocation efforts, the Council contends that BLM should not implement similar population manipulation in these two NCAs.
11	90	2.3.1		2-13	We understand that wild tortoises displaced from private lands authorized by the Washington County HCP have already been introduced into the Red Cliffs NCA; however there is no analysis of the success or failure of these introductions in the draft document. BLM must report on the efficacy of these previous introductions before authorizing additional reintroduction, translocation, or population augmentation of tortoises in the NCAs. Furthermore, we understand that clinical signs of infectious disease (mycoplasmosis) have been observed in some tortoises in these areas.
12	90	2.3.1		2-13	With regards to Comment #10 above, we understand that the mass translocations of captive-pet tortoises and displaced wild tortoises throughout southern Nevada, including critical habitats, were in response to the closure of the Desert Tortoise Conservation Center in Las Vegas, Nevada. We are not aware of any such similar situation in Utah, nor do we think that tortoises displaced from large projects, such as some solar projects, should be placed into either of these NCAs. The Council strongly opposed the releases of pet tortoises in Nevada and would continue to oppose the release and introduction, especially of captive tortoises, into critical habitats in Utah. We request that the Preferred Alternative be changed to reflect that no mass translocations of tortoises would occur in the NCAs until recent actions in southern Nevada are fully analyzed and demonstrate beneficial results supporting recovery of the tortoise.

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13	139	2.3.1		2-31	The Council fully supports removing the Extensive Recreation Management Area-designation from the NCAs. We would appreciate it if the ramifications of this action and how ERMA's function could be better explained in the Final RMP.
14	141	2.3.1		2-31	The Council fully supports the prohibition of competitive equestrian and vehicle events in the NCAs. We note that the Washington County HCP states that no competitive sports of any kind would be permitted within the Red Cliffs Desert Reserve. However, the BLM would allow competitive bike racing and running in their Preferred Alternative B. To be consistent with the HCP, the BLM should not permit any competitive sports in the NCA, including not only equestrian and vehicle racing, but also running and biking.
15	145	2.3.1		2-31	With regards to discharging firearms, the Council supports prohibitions in tortoise critical habitats, although we understand that hunting would still be allowed. We believe that target practice in NCAs could undermine tortoise recovery and conservation actions and should be prohibited.
16	163	2.3.1.		2-34	With regards to Lands and Realty, the Council supports only Alternative C, which would eliminate all designated transportation and utility corridors from the NCAs. It is not clear why BLM's Preferred Alternative would maintain corridors that it does not intend to use. In reading available information, we note that both USFWS and BLM have continued to deny construction of the Northern Corridor, Washington Parkway, etc. in the Red Cliffs NCA. Eliminating the transportation and utility corridor now in this RMP is BLM's opportunity to remove this threat from further consideration.
Chapter 3. Affected Environment					
17	512	3.33.2.5			We note that the function of the Washington County HCP is described in three paragraphs on page 512. Missing from these descriptions is the amount and location of private lands comprising occupied tortoise habitats that have been developed outside the Red Cliffs Desert Reserve under authority of the HCP; and, how much private land has been acquired within the Reserve to offset this impact and where is it located. This information is important in determining how the function of the Washington County HCP would be affected by the various alternatives, and particularly with regards to developing the Northern Corridor through these HCP conservation lands. The Council contends that the function of the HCP would be impaired and undermined if a highway is constructed through conservation lands

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					purchased under this HCP agreement.
18	507	3.33.2.5			The general discussion of the desert tortoise given in Section 3.33.2.5 is not sufficiently detailed to reveal how various alternatives would affect the desert tortoise or critical habitat. Most importantly, it does not show the relationship between a highway constructed through the Red Cliffs NCA and tortoise critical habitat or the relative densities of tortoises that would be affected by this proposed highway. We ask that the final document provide a single map that shows the Northern Corridor, tortoise critical habitat, and estimated tortoise densities.
Chapter 4. Environmental Consequences					
19	659	4.10			In the following description, “Alternatives B, C, and D include other management actions to benefit desert tortoise and other special status species, including the potential to authorize population augmentations, translocations, and predator control. Tortoise population augmentation and translocation of desert tortoises to the NCA, coupled with disease and genetic screening, could help to re-establish tortoise density and genetic variability, better ensuring reproductive success, a major benefit, with no adverse impacts,” there is no discussion about the potential adverse impacts of translocating tortoises into the NCAs. The Council believes that translocations may introduce diseased tortoises into otherwise healthy populations; affect carrying capacities of host populations in potentially deleterious ways; introduce tortoises whose genetics and points of origin are not known; overload the carrying capacity of a damaged habitat deteriorated from fire and invasive plants, etc. As written, in numerous places, translocation, augmentation, and population manipulation are touted as positive approaches to tortoise management without any consideration or discussion of the downsides. The deleterious effects of introducing tortoises into the NCAs are missing from the draft document and should be expanded upon in the final.
20	659	4.10			With regards to the following statement, “Under Alternatives B, C, and D, the ACEC designation would be revoked, but would not result in lesser levels of protection for the relevance and importance values of the ACEC,” what are the current protections provided under the ACEC status that would no longer be applied if the ACEC status is rescinded? Given that the function of ACECs is to protect targeted resources, which includes the desert tortoise in this case, wouldn’t existing protections be eliminated or reduced if the ACEC status is eliminated? There should be a table showing exactly how elimination of this ACEC status would affect current management. It is our understanding, for

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					example, that ACEC status obligates the BLM to prioritize funding in ACECs for proactive management even when funding is limited. Wouldn't eliminating the ACEC status adversely affect BLM's priority funding criterion for managing these areas?
21	788 789	4.34.2.7			“Alternative D would also designate a new utility and transportation corridor, totaling 6,350 acres in size,” which we understand is referring to the corridor that would accommodate a new highway, referred to variously as the “Northern Corridor” and “Washington Parkway.” Is Alternative D the only one that would facilitate construction of the new highway? Would it be allowed under BLM's Preferred Alternative B? How did BLM determine that 6,350 acres would be affected?
22	789	4.34.2.7			<p>The Council strongly opposes the designation of a new utility and transportation corridor through the Red Cliffs NCA for the following reasons (all taken, verbatim, from the text on pages 789 through 791):</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • “Approximately 4,281 acres of the 6,350 proposed new utility and transportation corridor are designated critical habitat for the threatened desert tortoise.” • “Estimates of tortoise numbers in this area would range from 158 to 208 tortoises that could be impacted by developments or construction within the proposed utility and transportation corridor, although this number could be substantially higher.” • “The new utility and transportation corridor proposed under Alternative D contains all five of the habitat-related PCEs [Primary Constituent Elements of designated tortoise critical habitat].” • “Within the proposed new designated corridor area, below the 1200 meter contour, slightly more than half of the habitat has been damaged by recent wildfires. The remaining acreage of unburned habitat is now crucial to the survival of the tortoise populations, as it provides necessary shade, shelter, and intact native vegetation communities that better meet tortoise nutritional needs than do invasive annual grass species.” • “A new multi-lane roadway, constructed along any of the alternative alignments proposed by Washington County, would fragment habitat. Injuries and mortalities to tortoises during new utility developments or roadway construction could occur, as this area has some of the highest tortoise densities documented in the Upper Virgin River Recovery Unit.” • “Management decisions under this alternative related to Lands and Realty management would not meet the

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					<p>conservation, protection, and enhancement purpose of the NCA for ecological resources.”</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • “The potential impacts on desert tortoise populations as a result of some level of adverse modification to as much as 4,281 acres of designated critical habitat could threaten the viability of tortoises in the Upper Virgin River Recovery Unit.” • “The potential adverse modification of critical habitat and ‘take’ of tortoise related to future developments in the designated corridors, in concert with the loss of habitat to developments and fire in the CIAA, could cumulatively jeopardize the survival of desert tortoises in the Upper Virgin River Recovery.”
23	789	4.34.2.7			<p>We note that the highest densities of tortoises in the Red Cliffs NCA (Utah Division of Wildlife Resources 2015) would be bisected by this utility and transportation corridor. The analysis given on pages 789 through 791 is already compelling evidence why the new corridor should not be identified or adopted in any alternative. However, the analysis fails to quantify the impact a new highway would have on the efficacy of the Washington County HCP. BLM needs to divulge how many acres and how many tortoises have been taken from HCP-authorized projects on private lands compared to how many acres and tortoises have been acquired and conserved, respectively, within the Red Cliffs Desert Reserve as a result of implementing the HCP. The damaged habitat from fires and tortoises injured or killed by the fires should be included in this analysis. Then the BLM needs to analyze how construction of the new utility and transportation corridor would affect acquired lands and conserved tortoises; and how previous agreements under the Washington County HCP may be undermined by construction of this highway. These analyses are currently lacking from the draft document, which is deficient in this respect, and should be remedied in the final document. There are general statements in Section 4.34.4, but the Cumulative Effects Analysis fails to provide the level of detail requested in this comment.</p>
24	791	4.34.4			<p>Relative to the following statements, “In 1996, Washington County was issued an Incidental Take Permit (ITP) authorizing the ‘take’ of approximately 12,264 acres of non-federal lands in critical habitat and 1,169 tortoises, based on the commitments made through the HCP and Implementation Agreement. The ITP does not authorize the incidental take of tortoises or the adverse modification of critical habitat within the boundaries of the Reserve,” if BLM’s RMPs facilitated the development of this highway, the Washington County HCP would cease to function as envisioned due to this unforeseen impact as stated on page 791. We give this as one more reason the highway should not be developed, and why BLM RMPs should not facilitate this development.</p>

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Appendix F. Best Management Practices					
25	Not Applicable		The Council requests that the BLM consider Best Management Practices Fact Sheets available on our website (deserttortoise.org) to augment those measures given in Appendix F. Our five fact sheets include Restoring Perennial Plants, Enhancing Forage, Salvaging Topsoil, Rehabilitating Severe Disturbance, and Reducing Impacts of Roads.		