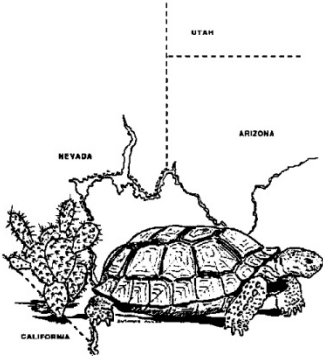


THE DESERT TORTOISE COUNCIL NEWSLETTER

Spring 2013-OUR 38th YEAR

Our Goal: To assure the continued survival of viable populations
of the desert tortoise throughout its range



INSIDE THIS NEWSLETTER...

BOARD OF DIRECTORS.....	3
FROM THE EDITOR.....	3
ANNOUNCEMENTS.....	3
NEWS	6
MEETINGS	11
JOB OPPORTUNITIES Error! Bookmark not defined.	
DESERT TORTOISE COUNCIL MEMBERSHIP.....	12

Support Flows in for Sick Desert Tortoises

News that hundreds of threatened desert tortoises face euthanasia with the pending closure of a refuge near Las Vegas has generated a storm of reaction that has government officials scrambling to find alternatives and fielding offers from people wishing to adopt the reptiles or make donations.

The Associated Press reported this week that the Desert Tortoise Conservation Center, which has sheltered thousands of displaced tortoises for 23 years, is scheduled to close in 2014 as funding runs out.

As the location just south of Las Vegas begins to ramp down, it is euthanizing tortoises deemed too unhealthy to return to the wild. Healthy tortoises won't be killed.

U.S. Fish and Wildlife Service desert tortoise recovery coordinator Roy Averill-Murray estimated last week that about 50 percent to 60 percent of the 1,400 tortoises that live at the refuge were sick. Such tortoises cannot be released into the wild because they could infect their healthy wild brethren.



"The Barstow to Vegas race, c. 1976. In its heyday, 3,000 riders would tear across 150 miles of prime desert tortoise territory. It was discontinued after the 1989 listing of the desert tortoise. (by USGS, Howard Wilshire)"

<http://www.hcn.org/issues/45.13/can-we-save-mojave-desert-tortoises-by-moving-them-out-of-harms-way/a-timeline-of-the-desert-tortoises-slow-and-steady-decline>

The estimate prompted a public outcry and debate among the various agencies connected to the refuge about the number of at-risk tortoises. It also forced the agency to issue a statement assuring the public that no healthy tortoises will be killed but saying that euthanasia is the only option for many of the animals because they are sick. Fish and Wildlife also assigned four people to field calls and put a message about the situation on its spokeswoman's answering machine.

Deputy Fish and Wildlife Service director Carolyn Wells said Wednesday that the 50 percent estimate of sick tortoises at the facility may be correct, but added that not all of the ailing animals will be killed. Some of them could potentially go to research facilities, she said, though she could not say how many, and she does not yet have commitments from biologists.

Fish and Wildlife operates the center in conjunction with the San Diego Zoo.

Allyson Walsh, associate director for the zoo's Institute for Conservation Research, said just 30 percent of the residents are receiving medical treatment, though some others have been quarantined and need new evaluations.

"The ones that don't get better and that are sick and suffering will probably be euthanized because that's the sensible thing to do," she said.

She disputed the notion that budget cuts are forcing the reptiles to be put down. Although the center has housed sickly tortoises for years, Walsh said they eventually would have been euthanized anyway.

Walsh said sick tortoises cannot be adopted out and she has not been contacted by any researchers interested in taking in the sick animals.

"That's a possibility but we wouldn't transfer an animal to anyone who was doing destructive research," she said.

The right thing to do for a sick animal is euthanize it, she said.

Seth Webster disagrees.

Webster, a 36 year old programmer from New York, created a Change.org petition that together with a similar one on the site has drawn more than 3,000 signatures. He said he is working with a Florida tortoise refuge that recently bought land in Nevada to see if Fish and Wildlife will transfer the tortoises, or at least let an outside evaluator decide which animals are so sick they should be killed.

"Animals have a very strong will to survive," he said. "These tortoises live to 100 years. If we euthanize him, are we robbing him of 30 years? It doesn't seem fair to euthanize them just because the tortoises are sick and someone ran out of money."

Desert tortoises have made their rocky homes in Utah, California, Arizona and Nevada for 200 million years. But the prehistoric animal has some unfortunate evolutionary quirks, including a susceptibility to flu-like respiratory infections and difficulties settling in to new homes. They are also sensitive to change as the tortoises sometimes dehydrate themselves by voiding a year's worth of stored water when handled.

These weaknesses have combined with widespread habitat destruction in the quickly developing Southwest to dramatically reduce the tortoises' numbers.

The Bureau of Land Management has partially funded the conservation center through fees imposed on developers who disturb tortoise habitat, but when the housing bubble burst several years ago, that funding dropped far below what was needed to run the center.

"Here's an upside to this. It's gone international," U.S. Fish and Wildlife spokeswoman Jeannie Stafford said. "We have gotten hundreds of people saying they would like to adopt. Thousands of people signing petitions. It's been people wanting to help us with the situation."

But most of the would-be tortoise Good Samaritans cannot actually adopt the animals. Federal laws

intended to protect the reptiles ban their transportation across state lines.

People who live in Nevada can adopt the slowpokes through the Desert Tortoise Group. But they should know that owners who kill or release their long-lived pets could face prison time.

The Humane Society of the United States is setting up a fund this week for out-of-staters who want to help but cannot take a tortoise home.

Despite the overwhelming response, the Bureau of Land Management is not reconsidering its plan to pull funding that goes toward the center's \$1 million annual budget.

“Although it’s wonderful that people want to give money, it won’t change the outcome for the Desert Conservation Center,” BLM spokeswoman Erica Haspiel-Szlosek said. “There just isn’t money to keep it going, nor is it really the best use of conservation funds.”

The agency plans to redirect the \$810 fee that developers pay for each acre of tortoise habitat they disturb to environmental preservation efforts.

The center has historically taken in about 1,000 tortoises a year, but will stop accepting new residents in coming months.

Click here to see the original article:
<http://www.rgj.com/viewart/20130831/NEWS07/308310043/Support-flows-sick-Nevada-desert-tortoises-facing-euthanasia>

BOARD OF DIRECTORS

Officers
Senior Co-Chair: Bruce Palmer
Junior Co-Chair: Vacant
Past Co-Chair: Dan Pearson
Recording Secretary: Ed LaRue
Corresponding Secretary: Tracy Bailey
Treasurer: Mike Bailey
Membership Coordinator: Mari Quillman

Board Members at Large

Board Member: Kristin Berry
Board Member: Rebecca Jones
Board Member: Heidi McMaster
Board Member: Joe Probst
Board Member: Glenn Stewart
Board Member: Peter Woodman
Board Member: Maggie Fusari

Newsletter: Sean Daly
Website: Mary Cohen

FROM THE EDITOR

Since most of the newsletters are being received electronically, we would like to invite everyone to send us your photos. Have really great pictures of tortoises or other wildlife? Send them to us and we will put a few of them in the newsletter each issue. Any other updates or news items are welcome as well.

Please make sure you update your mailing and email addresses.

In an effort to conserve time, money, and paper, we strongly encourage all of our members to receive the newsletter electronically rather than hardcopy.

Send your photos and any other updates to sdaly@burnsmcd.com.

ANNOUNCEMENTS

ADDRESS UPDATES!!!

Please renew your addresses, including e-mail. Every time we e-mail newsletters, at least 10 to 20 percent of the e-mail addresses we have are bad.

SAVE THE DATE

DESERT TORTOISE COUNCIL SYMPOSIUM

February 21-23, 2014 Ontario, California

The Council is excited to announce that the 2014 Symposium will be held at:
DoubleTree Hotel by Hilton Ontario Airport, 222
N. Vineyard Avenue
Ontario, California 91764

The Symposium registration form will be available on our website www.deserttortoise.org on October 14, 2013, as well as hotel reservation information. Please be prepared to take advantage of early-bird registration rates. If your registration is postmarked, or processed online, after January 18, rates are higher.

39th SYMPOSIUM PLANNING IS UNDERWAY

Please reserve February 20-23, 2014 on your calendars for the 39th Annual Meeting Symposium of the Desert Tortoise Council at the Doubletree Hotel in Ontario, California. Field trips will be held on February 20th, the day before the meeting. The meeting will start promptly at 9:30 a.m. on Friday, February 21st. For those wishing to give presentations, the Call for Papers is on the website at www.deserttortoise.org and the due date for titles and abstracts is November 20. Last year the Council had a record attendance of 250 people and a full program by early December, so if you are interested in giving a paper, please be sure to contact the program chair, Dr. Kristin Berry, as early as possible to reserve a space.

The 2014 program will feature a special session on golden eagles on Saturday morning. Dr. Todd Katzner is chairing this session and has arranged for several speakers. Dr. Katzner, who spoke last year about his ongoing research project of movement patterns of golden eagles in the Mojave Desert, will present his latest findings. Dr. Katzner has already lined up Dr. Adam Duerr to speak about determinants of eagle flight behavior. In addition, Dr. Peter Bloom, drawing on banding data, will reveal the connectivity of California raptors to multiple ecosystems; Carl Thelander will discuss

population surveys of eagles in the desert in the context of long-term trends; and Katie Umekubo of the Natural Resources Defense Council will cover legal issues surrounding raptors and renewable energy, especially legal take of condors and eagles. There will also be more--to be announced later.

We are very pleased to announce that Laura Cunningham, another featured speaker, will tell us about her new book, *A State of Change: Forgotten Landscapes of California*. She has researched the history of California's early landscapes and summarizes her findings in print and with paintings and line-drawings. Her book opens with descriptions of a canyon in the Panamint Mountains.

DAVID J. MORAFKA MEMORIAL RESEARCH AWARD 2014

In honor and memory of Dr. David J. Morafka, distinguished herpetologist and authority on North American gopher tortoises, the Desert Tortoise Council, with the aid of several donors, has established a monetary award to help support research that contributes to the understanding, management and conservation of tortoises of the genus *Gopherus* in the southwestern United States and/or Mexico: *G. agassizii*, *G. morafkai*, *G. berlandieri* and/or *G. flavomarginatus*.

Award Amount

\$2,000 to be awarded at the Desert Tortoise Council's Annual Symposium, depending on the availability of funding and an appropriate recipient.

Eligibility

Applicants must be associated with a recognized institution (e.g., university, museum, government agency, non-governmental organization) and may be graduate students, post-doctoral students or other researchers. They must agree to present a report on the results of the research in which award funds were used at a future symposium of the Desert Tortoise Council.

Evaluation Criteria

Applications will be evaluated on the basis of the potential of the research to contribute to the biological knowledge of one or more of the above gopher tortoise species, and to their management and conservation. Important considerations are the significance and originality of the research problem, design of sampling and analysis, preliminary data supporting the feasibility of the research, and the likelihood of successful completion and publication.

Application Procedure

1. Download an application form from the Desert Tortoise Council's website www.deserttortoise.org. The form is electronically interactive.
2. Provide all information requested on the application, including a description of the research project in no more than 1,200 words.
3. Submit the completed application to grstewart@csupomona.edu as a pdf attachment.
4. Applications must be supported by three letters of recommendation, one of which must be from the applicant's research advisor, supervisor, or a knowledgeable colleague. Instruct the recommenders to submit their letters as pdf attachments to grstewart@csupomona.edu
5. Completed applications and letters of recommendation must be received by December 2, 2013. They will be evaluated by a committee of gopher tortoise biologists appointed by the Desert Tortoise Council Board of Directors.
6. The research award recipient will be notified of his/her selection by January 17, 2014, and the award will be presented at the 2014 Desert Tortoise Council Symposium, February 21-23, 2014.

On behalf of the Desert Tortoise Council, the Board of Directors recently approved a "Grant Request Policy" that provides direction to the Board for consistent evaluation of proposals for project funding. With approval of this Policy, the Board

will now begin accepting grant requests for appropriate projects benefiting the conservation of the desert tortoise.

Please refer to the Policy (click Grant Request Policy) for application procedures and required content for the grant request. The Board will evaluate all suitable proposals but is particularly interested in proposals that address current management issues including:

Methods to address corvid and/or canid predation on juvenile tortoises;

1. Sterilization techniques and implementation on captive tortoises;
2. Analysis of range-wide population data; and
3. Analysis of survivorship at the long-term tortoise translocation site, or other translocation sites where at least 5 years of post-release data are available.

Details can be found at:

<http://www.deserttortoise.org/awards/grants.html>

2013 DESERT TORTICE WORKSHOP

**THE DESERT TORTOISE COUNCIL IS
HOLDING 2 IDENTICAL WORKSHOPS:
SATURDAY-SUNDAY NOVEMBER 2-3
MONDAY-TUESDAY 4-5, 2013**

Space is still available as of this date and you can enroll by going to the DTC website (deserttortoise.org) and linking to the enrollment forms. Enroll and if you selected an available session then you pay and you will be registered. Hint: Do not check a wait list unless the session you want is NOT available to select. You will receive a confirmation when we receive payment.

Introduction to Desert Tortoises and Field Techniques is a two-day workshop and basic course for beginners. Includes important information on ecology, habitat preferences, life history, health, physiology, and threats; applicable state and federal

laws and required permits; and field sessions on surveys and identification of tortoises and tortoise sign. This two-day session is a comprehensive introduction to Agassiz's or the Mojave Desert tortoise (*Gopherus agassizii*), designed for wildlife biologists, zoologists, natural resource specialists, wildlife managers, land managers, recreation specialists, persons dealing with the public, teachers, and the general public.

This course is recommended for entry-level tortoise field biologists looking to prepare themselves concerning the desert tortoise and its ecology, for the job of locating tortoises and sign in the field, and for seeking authorizations for tortoise field work. There are class lectures and field exercises. There will be an on line test that you must take to complete the course.

The course does not guarantee any authorization but is recognized by state and federal agencies as providing important information and skills training. For additional information and the draft syllabus see the DTC website.

instrumental in helping the FWS maintain a healthy population of desert tortoise in the wild. Managing to recover desert tortoise, a threatened species, is a complex task in which all options need to be considered, and all risks and benefits to the species must be assessed.

Many pet tortoises, unfortunately, are diseased or otherwise in poor health, and run the risk of spreading disease to wild tortoises. These tortoises cannot be relocated to the wild, or otherwise contribute to recovery of the desert tortoise population. Sometimes euthanasia of unhealthy pet tortoises is necessary, but only as last resort, and only after we evaluate other options. All healthy tortoises at the DTCC will be relocated to sites that will support the recovery of the species.

Progress is being made on translocating the healthy DTCC tortoise population to the wild. A Programmatic Environmental Assessment is complete, and tortoises are already being translocated by the FWS to an approved site in Trout Canyon, Nevada. Public scoping for a second translocation plan was completed Aug 22, 2013, for a proposed translocation area south of Coyote Springs, Nevada.

The Animal Foundation (TAF), Lied Animal Shelter continues to take in unwanted pet tortoises from the public. However, the fact remains that the DTCC does not currently have the capacity or the funding to accept and care for additional tortoises.

Recovery of the desert tortoise in the wild continues to be our top priority. However we are deeply concerned about the growing number of unwanted pets, and will continue to work with our partner agencies toward finding a suitable solution for tortoises that cannot be returned to the wild.

Click here for the original USFWS statement:
<http://www.fws.gov/cno/press/release.cfm?rid=526>

NEWS

STATEMENT REGARDING MEDIA REPORTS ON STATUS OF DESERT TORTOISE AT THE DESERT TORTOISE CONSERVATION CENTER IN NEVADA

Recent media reports regarding the status of desert tortoises at the Desert Tortoise Conservation Center (DTCC) have implied that the FWS is currently euthanizing desert tortoises at the facility. We want the public to know that the FWS is not euthanizing healthy tortoises.

The DTCC was established in 1990 to receive wild tortoises in harm's way from development and has taken in unwanted pets since 1996. Over 1,000 tortoises arrived at the DTCC each year, and approximately 98 percent of those are surrendered or stray pets. Science-based protocols developed for desert tortoises brought to the DTCC have been

ARIZONA GAME AND FISH PROGRAM SEEKS TO MINIMIZE POPULATION OF CAPTIVE DESERT TORTOISES

Awareness seems to be increasing recently about the plight of the desert tortoise, especially those that are captive. While desert tortoise numbers appear to be declining in the wild, the number of tortoises being held in captivity is increasing at an alarming rate.

The Arizona Game and Fish Department, through its Tortoise Adoption Program, has been working for 30 years to educate the public about desert tortoises. Two of the elements of the program that are considered essential to avoiding overpopulation of captive desert tortoises are: never remove a tortoise from the wild – it's illegal – and never allow captive tortoises to breed.

Just like cats and dogs, there are currently more desert tortoises available for adoption in Arizona than there are homes willing to have one as a pet. Once captive, desert tortoises cannot be released back into the wild as captive animals can pass on upper respiratory tract disease or pathogens to wild tortoise populations.

“Without the public’s help in keeping wild tortoises wild and preventing backyard breeding of captive tortoises, Arizona has the potential to end up with a conservation challenge similar to the one being faced by the closure of the tortoise conservation center in Nevada,” said Cristina Jones, Arizona Game and Fish’s turtle program coordinator. “The public must do their part to help this iconic desert species.”

Desert tortoises are native to the southwestern desert and can live up to 100 years. They grow to be about 15 pounds and hibernate in the winter months. A desert tortoise can produce up to 12 hatchlings per year, which then must remain in captivity to protect wild tortoise populations.

Those interested in sharing their yard with a tortoise should visit www.azgfd.gov/tortoise for more information on feeding, caring for, and creating a habitat for a tortoise. A desert tortoise adoption

packet, which includes the adoption application, can also be downloaded at this site. There is a limit of one tortoise per household to prevent breeding

Click here for the original article:

<http://www.sonorannews.com/archives/2013/130904/comm-AZ-game.html>

TORTOISES WILL BE MOVED, MONITORED IF BASE EXPANDS

A plan for desert tortoises is part of the final environmental impact statement examining a proposed expansion of the Marine Corps Air Ground Combat Center.

The document, released July 27, deals in depth with how to avoid damaging populations of desert tortoises in the Johnson Valley land being examined for use by Marines in training exercises.

It describes creation of special-use areas, including one in which no mechanized maneuvers would be allowed and another in which bivouacs, off-highway vehicles or training involving vehicles will be discouraged but not prohibited.

The document proposes the combat center develop a program for moving tortoises from areas targeted for high and moderate use before the first large-scale training exercise.

The program would monitor tortoise health, habitat and population for at least two years before moving the animals from areas proposed for high and moderate impact by military training, the report suggests.

Based on the monitoring and analysis, the Marine base would devise a strategy to augment the tortoise population, supported by its ongoing tortoise headstart program based at the Tortoise Research and Captive Rearing Site. There, tortoise eggs and hatchlings are protected from predators and studied by biologists.

“Monitoring would occur over 25 years to ascertain the long-term effects of translocation and augmentation upon resident, translocated, control and headstarted tortoises,” the report states.

The environmental statement calls for all personnel who will be on site to be educated about desert tortoises before the beginning of any military training or construction projects.

Information would include the correct procedures when encountering a desert tortoise, including who may move a tortoise and why.

“Desert tortoises would be moved only by an authorized biologist and solely for the purpose of moving the animals out of harm’s way, unless the animal is in imminent danger. In such instances, only units having direct radio or telephone communication with Range Control and appropriately briefed Marines would be authorized to move desert tortoises out of immediate danger. Desert tortoises would be moved the minimum distance to ensure their safety,” the report states.

“Any time a vehicle is parked in desert tortoise habitat, the ground around and underneath the vehicle would be inspected for desert tortoises before moving the vehicle,” it details.

If someone sees a desert tortoise beneath the vehicle, he or she would contact an authorized biologist. If possible, the desert tortoise would be left to move on its own. If not, the biologist could relocate it.

For maintenance or construction in desert tortoise habitat, the Marine Corps would install temporary fencing around work sites to prevent the reptiles from getting inside.

Any desert tortoises within the fenced area would be moved to nearby habitat.

“Desert tortoises are not to be picked up unless it is necessary to save the animal’s life. If a desert tortoise is impeding training, range control must be notified for additional instructions,” the report states.

Click here to see the original article:

http://www.hidesertstar.com/news/article_b7622e06-dddc-11e1-b2a1-001a4bcf887a.html

ROSEMONT WILL BUY LAND TO MAKE UP FOR PLANNED MINE'S HARM TO LAND, WILDLIFE

Biologist Trevor Hare and mining executive Jamie Sturgess both have been studying wildlife corridors southeast of Tucson.

When Hare, who works for two local conservation groups, looks at a two-lane bridge on Arizona 83 that spans a mesquite-lined canyon, he worries that its future value will be jeopardized by plans for a neighboring copper mine.

And when Sturgess, a senior vice president for Rosemont Copper, looks at a hilly expanse of Sonoran Desert along Santa Rita Road east of Sahuarita, he believes its future will be helped by that same mine.

There is no debate that the \$1.2 billion Rosemont Mine would have major environmental impact on nearby water, land and wildlife corridors. The latest draft of the U.S. Forest Service’s environmental impact statements foretells washes buried in waste rock; trees, shrubs, vines and cacti bulldozed; noise from mine blasting; and a constant glow of mine lighting.

As a final decision over whether the mine can be built nears, the main disagreement is over how severe the impacts might be. Rosemont is trying to compensate for the mine’s effects by spending \$25 million on land and development rights to 4,500 undeveloped acres as well as more than 1,700 acre feet of water rights.

That’s almost \$5 million more, Sturgess pointed out, than the \$20.8 million Rosemont Copper’s parent company, Augusta Resource Corp., paid for the 900-plus-acre, privately owned portion of the mine site from a developer back in 2005.

BLM HOLDS PUBLIC MEETINGS ON PROPOSED REGIONAL POWER LINE

The four prime land purchase areas are spread over Pima and Santa Cruz counties:

Fullerton Ranch, 1,780 acres of high desert near the Marley Ranch south and southwest of Tucson.

Helvetia Ranch North, 940 acres of lower-desert grasslands near the Santa Rita experimental range north of the Santa Rita Mountains.

Sonoita Creek Ranch, 1,200 acres where farm fields and ponds are irrigated by a neighboring spring about halfway between Sonoita and Patagonia.

Davidson Canyon and Mulberry Canyon, 383 acres southeast of Tucson and east of the mine site.

If those land holdings were to stay on the open market, they could be sold off and bladed for subdivisions, Sturgess said. Instead, they'll be preserved — and the land used by the mine would be used for 20 to 25 years, then reclaimed, or returned to its natural state, over the next 25 years, he said. Half of the mine site would be reclaimed after 15 years of use because the company plans to start reclamation in its first year of operations.

“Will the land be exactly the same as it is now? No,” said Sturgess, Rosemont Copper’s senior vice president for corporate and government affairs. “Will it be functional and useful? Yes.”

But environmentalists, Pima County and the Arizona Game and Fish Department say Rosemont’s mitigation efforts on 4,500 acres outside the mine site don’t make up for the damage done to up to 5,400 acres that would be disturbed for the mine site in the Santa Rita Mountains southeast of Tucson.

Click here to see the rest of the original article:

http://azstarnet.com/news/local/rosemont-will-buy-land-to-make-up-for-planned-mine/article_af5a117a-e711-5431-a931-3bf747402596.html

Bureau of Land Management officials held a meeting last week in St. George, Utah to hear public input on a Draft Environmental Impact Statement (EIS) regarding a proposal to build a high power transmission line from southwestern Wyoming, through four states, to Eldorado Valley, Nevada near Boulder City.

The proposed line would run just north of Moapa, and on across the Moapa Paiute Indian Reservation on its way south.

The roughly 750-mile power line corridor proposes to pass through portions of Wyoming, Colorado, Utah and Nevada; including 24 separate counties including Clark County. The corridor would be a total of two miles wide; although, once constructed only 250 feet would actually be used for the power line infrastructure.

The transmission line is part of a massive renewable energy project by TransWest Express, LLC (TWE). The estimated cost of the power line is \$3 billion.

The line will be designed to carry 3,000 megawatts of wind-generated energy from Wyoming to be sold on the market in southern California. That is enough power to provide about 1.8 million homes with electricity.

In coordination with the power line project, TransWest is developing a vast wind power generating facility in Wyoming. This facility is planned to be built on 320,000 acres of cattle ranch land and would be the biggest wind farm in the United States. The wind farm is being considered as a completely separate project from the transmission line.

Wyoming is recognized as having the best energy producing winds in the U.S. But the state’s existing export transmission infrastructure is already operating at capacity. This is the reason why the new transmission project is important.

“We have plenty of wind up there and can generate much more energy than we could ever sell in Wyoming,” said Joe Tippetts, TWE Associate General Counsel. “The challenge is to build a long enough extension cord to plug in to the markets where all that clean renewable energy is needed.”

The project is receiving close federal oversight from the BLM and the Western Area Power Administration. The approval process is complex and is involving federal state and local government agencies, Indian tribes and a host of private agencies and stakeholders.

The route proposed by TWE involves about 725 miles of line; 60 percent of that passing over federal land and the other 40% being private or state-owned lands.

The challenge comes where portions of this proposed route pass through sensitive areas. Segments of the line pass through U.S. Forest Service lands including Wilderness Areas. In Wyoming, Colorado and parts of Utah, the line will traverse habitat of the endangered Sage Grouse. The southern Nevada segment passes through Desert Tortoise habitat. And there are other endangered plant species impacted at other points along the way.

There are also cultural sensitivities that must be considered. For example, the proposal passes through a National Historic Landmark, located north of St. George, which commemorates the Mountain Meadows Massacre, a tragic event which occurred in September 1857 when 120 emigrants, passing through the territory, were killed by militiamen associated with the Church of Jesus Christ of Latter-day Saints.

The site was designated in 2011 by U.S. Interior Secretary Ken Salazar. Since that time, the BLM has heard concerns about the proposed power line passing through that land, according to BLM Project Manager Sharon Knowlton.

“The descendants of people involved in the Mountain Meadows incident consider that area as like a sacred burial place for their ancestors,”

Knowlton said. “They have given input that they would prefer the line not go through there.”

The BLM has developed over 2,000 miles of alternative routes across the project to accommodate these types of public concerns as well as various environmental issues, Knowlton said. The BLM-preferred route includes over 750 miles of line and traverses 70 percent public land and only 30 percent state and privately held lands.

In the Mountain Meadows case, the BLM alternative re-routes the line to the west, through Lincoln County, Nevada just south of Pioche. It would then turn south to eventually intersect with, and run parallel to, the existing power line corridor across the Mormon Mesa and on through Moapa.

Alternative routes like this add miles to the line and, thus, increase the expense of the already massive project, Tippetts said. And there will always be someone else who is unhappy with the alternative, he said.

“Our route was chosen because it follows existing roadways and powerlines,” Tippetts said. “Cutting a new right-of-way through somewhere else brings significant new challenges. We have already heard from a few of the ranchers in Nevada who are concerned that if we come through that area it will affect their operations. And if I were a cattle rancher over there I’d be concerned about it too.”

Click here to read the original article:
<http://mvprogress.com/2013/09/11/blm-holds-public-meetings-on-proposed-regional-power-line/>

BLM PUBLISHES FINAL SUPPLEMENTAL EIS ON PROPOSED SILVER STATE SOLAR SOUTH PROJECT NEAR PRIMM

Las Vegas – Reflecting President Obama’s commitment to the responsible development of clean energy resources, the Bureau of Land Management (BLM) today announced its final proposed plan for the Silver State Solar South project on public land near Primm, Nev., calling for

a scaled-down facility to protect environmental values. The final proposal is for a photovoltaic solar facility that will generate 250 megawatts, or enough energy to power approximately 75,000 homes.

The BLM's Las Vegas Field Office released the Final Supplemental Environmental Impact Statement (EIS) and proposed amendment to the Las Vegas Resource Management Plan for the proposed solar development, starting a 30-day protest period and a 60-day Governor's consistency review before a final decision on the project is made.

To improve desert tortoise connectivity within the Ivanpah Valley and lessen reductions to recreational areas in the Jean Lake/Roach Lake Special Recreation Management Area, the proposal recommends a smaller project size, designating 31,859 acres as an Area of Critical Environmental Concern. The changes are the result of extensive public comment periods on the Draft Supplemental EIS as well as discussions with State and Federal agencies. The availability of the Final Supplemental EIS was announced in the Federal Register.

The applicant proposed the construction and operation of a solar energy generating facility that would produce 250-350 megawatts of electricity. The proposal includes the construction of photovoltaic panels, and ancillary facilities, including a substation and switchyard.

The right-of-way application area encompasses about 13,184 acres of BLM-administered public lands. The original proposal, for a 350-megawatt facility on 3,881 acres, has been reduced in the BLM Preferred Alternative to a 250-megawatt facility with a permanent footprint of 2,427 acres. If the project is approved, the right-of-way grant would only be issued for lands needed for project development.

The Silver State South proposal expands on the Silver State North project, a 50-megawatt project that the BLM approved on October 12, 2010. Silver State North began operation in May 2012, making it the first utility-scale solar facility to come online on public lands managed by the BLM.

For more information, please call Nancy Christ at 702-515-5136.

Click here to see the rest of the original article:
http://www.blm.gov/nv/st/en/info/newsroom/2013/september/blm_publishes_final.html

MEETINGS

2013 35th Annual Gopher Tortoise Council Meeting

11–13 October 2013—35th Annual Gopher Tortoise Council meeting

The Gopher Tortoise Council (GTC) was formed in 1978 by a group of biologists and others concerned about the range-wide decline of the gopher tortoise (*Gopherus polyphemus*). The Council offers professional advice for management, conservation, and protection of gopher tortoises; encourages the study of the life history, ecology, and management of gopher tortoises and other upland species; conducts active public information and conservation education programs, and seeks effective protection of the gopher tortoise and other upland species throughout the southeastern United States.

Get information on the upcoming meeting at:
<https://sites.google.com/site/gophertortoiseCouncil/annual-meeting>

DESERT TORTOISE COUNCIL MEMBERSHIP
P.O. Box 1568
Ridgecrest, CA 93556

Check one: _____ MEMBERSHIP APPLICATION/RENEWAL _____ CHANGE OF ADDRESS
DATE: _____ EMAIL ADDRESS: _____
NAME: _____ PHONE: _____
(Please Print) *(Include Area Code)*

ADDRESS: _____

CITY: _____ STATE: _____ ZIP CODE: _____

_____ Regular (**\$30.00** per year) _____ Organization (**\$125.00** per year)
_____ Contributing (**\$100.00** per year) _____ Lifetime (**\$300.00** or more)
_____ Student (**\$20.00** per year- Requires endorsement of student's advisor or Major Professor)

Make check or money order payable to the Desert Tortoise Council
and **send** with this application
to: **Desert Tortoise Council,**
P.O. Box 1568
Ridgecrest, CA 93556

The Desert Tortoise Council does not release its membership list