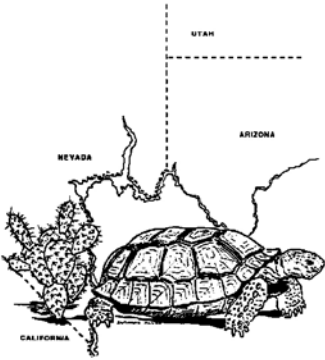


THE DESERT TORTOISE COUNCIL NEWSLETTER

Fall 2010-OUR 35th YEAR

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



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TRACKING A RARE TORTOISE? THERE'S AN APP FOR THAT

Smartphones have increasingly become valuable tools in the conservation of rare species around the world. The latest example is an iPhone app called Mojave Desert Tortoise, which people can use to help researchers preserve the endangered species it is named after.

With the app, visitors to the Mojave Desert (which stretches between California, Nevada, Utah and Arizona) can take photos of any desert tortoises they happen to encounter. The app adds GPS data to the photo and sends it to researchers at the Mojave Desert Ecosystem Program (MDEP) and Desert Managers Group. The information will then be used to track the turtles' movements and habits. The data will also eventually be made public online.

The app also offers users information about the Mojave desert tortoise and warns users that touching the animals or otherwise disturbing them is against the law.

MDEP project manager Fon Duke told California's *Daily Press* that the app will save money compared with the paper surveys previously used.

The Mojave desert tortoise (*Gopherus agassizii*), which is listed as "threatened" under the Endangered Species Act, has been one of the most expensive animals to protect in the U.S. According



Photo: Mojave Desert Turtle app screen shot, courtesy of Mojave Desert Ecosystem Program.

to the Associated Press, \$93 million was spent on Mojave desert tortoise conservation between 1996 and 2006. The species' population has dropped 80 to 90 percent since the 1980s because of urbanization and predation by ravens and coyotes (which have increased in the region because they tend to follow humans coming to the area). They also face a new wave of respiratory diseases that were not seen in desert tortoises before 1980 and were probably brought to the area with people's pet tortoises.

In early October, more than 100 biologists and other contract workers rounded up several desert tortoises whose presence was blocking construction of a massive solar energy plant to be built in California's Ivanpah Valley. The 3,280-acre site was believed to be the home to at least 36 adult tortoises and an unknown number of hatchlings, although only a few adults were located. The captured tortoises will be held for several months until a new, predator- and disease-free habitat is located for them.

See the original post here:
<http://www.scientificamerican.com/blog/post.cfm?id=tracking-a-rare-tortoise-theres-an-2010-11-30>

BOARD OF DIRECTORS

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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, 10 to 20 percent of the e-mail addresses we have are bad.

SAVE THE DATE!!!

We recommend that you register for the Symposium early and take advantage of the lower rates. If your registration is postmarked after January 18, 2011 rates are higher. We also recommend that you reserve your room at Sam's Town Hotel and Casino **before January 17, 2011**. Room rates are: \$34.99 for Thursday (February 17, 2011) and \$69.99 for Friday-Sunday (February 18-20, 2011). Guests should call the **Hotel** Reservations Department office at **the toll-free**

number (877-593-5993), which is open Monday through Friday between the hours of 6:00 a.m. and 12:00 a.m. as well as Saturday and Sunday between the hours of 7:00 a.m. and 12:00 a.m. (Pacific Standard Time) This great, low rate is only available to those who make their reservations directly with the **Hotel** Reservations Department. Callers must identify themselves as attendees of the **Desert Tortoise Council** or with the group code **DESB11A**.

The 36th Annual Symposium will feature sessions on renewable energy (solar) and potential impacts to tortoises, the listing of the desert tortoise in Arizona's Sonoran Desert, and accomplishments during 2010 to recovery the tortoise. Recent decisions promoting solar development are anticipated to be stimulating topics for discussion at the symposium. Speakers are also in the process of preparing papers on numerous topics, including genetics, translocation, epidemiology of diseases, and climate change for the meeting. Please see the Call for Papers, Presentations, and Abstracts in this newsletter and on the website.

2011 SYMPOSIUM PHOTO CONTEST

The Council sponsors the annual Photo Contest to honor and encourage our members to participate in educating the public through photography.

AWARDS: Qualified winners will be awarded first, second, and third place ribbons in each of the eight categories. First Place awards will be \$50.00; second and third place winners will receive ribbons. The Best of Show will receive \$100. Awards will be presented during Saturday evening's program.

CATEGORIES:

Wild Desert Tortoises

Captive (pet) Desert Tortoises

Other Desert Reptiles

Desert Mammals

Other Desert Wildlife

Wild Desert Plants

Desert Scenics

Tortoise Conservation. (This category covers a range of subjects, but must depict activities or subject matter important to the perpetuation of the

species. Examples are research, impacts (i.e. raven predation), improvements (i.e. fencing), and environmental education.)

FORMAT: For 2011, the format is mounted print photographs. Prints may be either in a mat frame, or mounted on cardstock or similar weight paper to enable display. **NO GLASS PLEASE.**

All prints must be labeled with the following information placed on the back:

1. common and scientific names of subject
2. location photo was taken
3. date photo was taken
4. contestant's name, address and phone number
5. entry category

No names on the front, please, but titles are acceptable.

The council also requires contest entrants to provide a digital copy of the Photograph at the time of submittal. If you are submitting more than one photo, you can put multiple files on your fully LABELED disk.

OTHER RULES: The contestant must be a registered attendee of the 2011 symposium. Contestants will be limited to a maximum of three (3) entries each, with no more than one (1) per category. With the exception of Captive (pet) tortoises, all photographs must be taken of WILD (i.e. unrestrained and photographed in its natural habitat) subjects occurring WITHIN THE GEOGRAPHIC RANGE OF THE DESERT TORTOISE. Photographs must have been taken by the contestant.

SUBMISSION OF ENTRIES: PRINTS must be available for viewing no later than 1:30 p.m. Friday, February 18. Please bring the prints (and your electronic disk) to the symposium and turn them in at the registration table.

JUDGING: Prints will be judged at the Symposium by the attendees. Attendees will pick up ballots at the registration table and voting will be from 3 p.m. Friday to 3 p.m. Saturday. Winners will be announced at the Saturday evening program.

PRINTS and DISKS will not be returned and will become the property of the Desert Tortoise Council. The Council will have the right to use these photographs in its publications and educational programs, as well as to assign such permission to others, with full credit given to the photographer. These photographs may also be auctioned off in the auction at the Symposium. Questions and/or concerns may be directed to Ann Bedlion via email: ann.bedlion@gmail.com

ECOSYSTEMS ADVISORY COMMITTEE

Chair, Sid Silliman

The DTC Board of Directors and its Ecosystems Advisory Committee continued to press the Bureau of Land Management and the California Energy Commission to fulfill their responsibilities to protect the Northeastern Mojave Desert Tortoise Recovery Unit in the Ivanpah Valley. On August 26th, the DTC Board filed a formal protest to the BLM's approval of the California Desert Conservation Area Plan amendment for the Ivanpah Solar Electric Generating System. The BLM Director, unfortunately, rejected the DTC protest as well as protests from other organizations concerned with the negative environmental impacts of ISEGS. On October 25, the DTC Board filed with the CEC a letter of support for the Basin and Range Watch petition for reconsideration of the Commission's approval of ISEGS. DTC argued that CEC approval of ISEGS was based on the erroneous conclusion that the genetic uniqueness of the desert tortoises in the Ivanpah Valley and the consequent concern for and the desire to protect these tortoises is "speculative." The CEC rejected the reconsideration petition during its October 26th meeting.

As an "intervenor" in the CEC's processing of the Ridgecrest Solar Power Project application, DTC is participating in the review of a proposed study of the potential negative impacts that RSPP might have on the Mohave Ground Squirrel. The issue is "connectivity", i.e., the possibility that RSPP may disrupt a movement corridor between known core populations of MGS. DTC Board and Ecosystems

Advisory Committee member Glenn Stewart is representing DTC in the review of the study plan.

The Desert Tortoise Council and the Center for Biological Diversity filed a lawsuit in Superior Court on August 26th against the City of Twentynine Palms for approving expansion of a Granite Construction mining project on lands that are home to desert tortoises without requiring that the tortoises be protected and without requiring that permits be obtained before Granite Construction expanded its operation. Both the California Department of Fish and Game and the U.S. Fish and Wildlife Service had informed the City that permits were needed before the expansion could proceed. The case is ongoing.

NEWS

DESERTS AT RISK IN PUSH FOR GREEN ENERGY

What is about to unfold in California's deserts is nothing less than wholesale destruction of the environment. Utility-scale solar energy plants are about to be approved that will erase wildlife habitat over immense areas, consuming thousands or tens of thousands of acres for each project.

It is an unmitigated assault on our public lands. This solar energy development, touted by politicians, environmental organizations and state energy officials as "green energy," a term having benign connotations, is being justified in order to meet California's goals of AB 32 greenhouse gas emissions reduction and a renewable portfolio standard of 33 percent by year 2020. Ultimately, a cumulative area the size of Rhode Island, about 1,200 square miles of desert, could be destroyed in California alone.

The far-reaching and irreversible negative consequences of these projects are now apparent to many environmentalists, scientists, state energy officials and industry representatives, but little is being said publicly. The predicted impacts include

the fragmentation of wildlife habitat and loss of essential habitat corridors. Plant and animal populations will be extirpated as land is scraped bare and rendered biologically sterile. In many cases, localized, threatened and endangered species populations will be further imperiled.

Additionally, desert landscapes will be permanently disfigured, with consequential loss of their intrinsic aesthetic value for tourism and outdoor recreation.

The Chuckwalla Valley west of Blythe, an area rich in biological, archaeological and aesthetic resources and certainly qualifying for national park status, is threatened by dozens of renewable energy projects. There is tremendous pressure to develop the Chuckwalla Valley due to its proximity to transmission lines that feed into Los Angeles and Phoenix, but approval of these projects would be a tragic loss for wildlife conservation. The valley supports an array of unique, rare and sensitive species, including the desert pupfish, Alverson's pincushion cactus and the desert tortoise, a federally threatened species. Chuckwalla Valley supports one of the finest stands of ironwood trees in the entire Sonoran Desert region. Some trees were growing along the McCoy Wash before Christopher Columbus landed in America. They have survived the hottest climatic periods and droughts, but they will not stand against the bulldozer.

In the Imperial Valley, another project will destroy foraging habitat for the peninsular desert bighorn sheep, a federally endangered species, and habitat for the flat-tailed horned lizard, a candidate for threatened species status. Thousands of these lizards, other reptiles and small mammals will be killed or displaced during project construction, including sensitive species such as the kit fox, badger, burrowing owl and golden eagle. The aesthetics of the Anza Trail, managed by the National Park Service, will be impacted, and Native American cultural resources, including sacred sites, will be lost as well.

What is the alternative?

The use of "brownfields" – decommissioned landfills, abandoned mines and other degraded lands – should be the first priority. According to the

Environmental Protection Agency, at least 11,000 suitable sites exist nationwide. There are many such sites in Southern California.

To see the rest of the original article, see:

<http://www.signonsandiego.com/news/2010/sep/02/deserts-at-risk-in-push-for-green-energy/>

BLM RELEASES INTERNAL REPORT ON JOHNSON VALLEY OHV RACE PERMIT

An internal review by the U.S. Bureau of Land Management (BLM) released today found its policies and procedures for permitting off-highway vehicle (OHV) events are sound, but the agency did not adhere to these procedures in permitting Mojave Desert Racing (MDR) Production's California 200, the race that resulted in eight spectator fatalities in a tragic accident in San Bernardino County on August 14, 2010.

In response to the report, BLM National Director Bob Abbey issued instructions to all BLM field offices nationwide that "reinforce the importance of following our procedures aimed at ensuring safety at all these events throughout the West. My clear directive is: if our field offices cannot fulfill or complete all the required steps in authorizing this event, then no permit will be issued." The Director's policy can be viewed at <http://www.blm.gov/>

"This tragic accident was a call for us to take an unvarnished look at what went wrong and what BLM can do to improve safety and oversight of these types of races," Acting BLM State Director Jim Abbott said. "We are cooperating fully with the California Highway Patrol's ongoing investigation into the accident, but our own internal review found we did not follow agency procedures in permitting and overseeing the event. We have swiftly taken corrective action by implementing the recommendations of the review team, raising the bar for oversight and safety at all such events, and moving forward with a sense of shared responsibility and accountability."

Abbott said the internal BLM inquiry he chartered immediately after the accident was prepared by a team of experts from throughout the West and Washington, D.C. Abbott asked that group to review both the MDR permit issuance and review BLM's handling of all SRPs throughout the California Desert, where OHV recreation has long been a highly popular activity.

The inquiry team found BLM's procedures were not carried out in the MDR permit. The report also found that this shortcoming was not limited to this event or BLM field office, but that adherence to these procedures was inconsistent throughout the five BLM field offices in the 11million-acre California Desert.

To see the original article click here:

http://www.blm.gov/or/news/files/OHV_release_no_v19.pdf

COURT STOPS BLM FROM CHANGING GRAZING LAWS

A federal appeals court has barred the Bureau of Land Management from pushing through Bush-era changes in how the government oversees grazing on 160 million acres of public lands throughout the West, including nearly 12 million acres in Arizona.

In a strongly worded decision, a three-judge panel said there is "resounding evidence" that some of the changes in grazing regulations may affect species that are listed as endangered or harm their habitat. Yet the BLM concluded there would be no impact.

The judges also said that the regulations, proposed in 2006, "significantly reduce public oversight of grazing on public land." And Judge Richard Paez, writing for the court, said that fact was pointed out to the BLM by various other agencies, including the Arizona Game and Fish Department, all of which said that reduced oversight would have negative environmental consequences.

"The BLM failed to address concerns raised by its own experts," Paez wrote, as well as those from the

federal Fish and Wildlife Service, the Environmental Protection Agency and various state agencies, the judge wrote.

For example, Paez said, in pushing ahead with the rules, BLM offered no reasoned analysis for its conclusion - contradicted by those other agencies - that there would be no environmental effect caused by both across-the-board reductions in public involvement in management of grazing on public lands and the total elimination of public input into certain management decisions.

The judge also said BLM never seriously considered the concerns of others that the 2006 rules would weaken the ability of the agency to manage rangelands in a timely fashion.

And Paez said the final environmental impact statement doesn't address the consequences of increased construction and private water rights on public lands "despite concerns expressed by its own expert scientists."

Paez also found fault with the effort by the EPA to delay any reductions in grazing under the claim that it could lead to better relations with ranchers.

"While diplomacy with permittees or lessees of public rangelands is certainly a worthy goal, it is no substitute for the BLM's obligations to comply with the National Environmental Policy Act and to conduct a studied review and response to concerns about the environmental implications of major agency action," the judge wrote.

He also said it appears that while BLM met the legal requirement of putting out its proposed rules for comment, the agency all but ignored the responses it got, making the whole exercise "form over substance."

But Roderick Walston, who represents the Public Lands Council, made up of ranchers who graze their cattle on public lands, said the judges got it wrong. He intends to ask the full appellate court to review the decision of its three-judge panel.

To see the full original article, see:

www.deserttortoise.org

SECRETARY SALAZAR APPROVES SEVENTH LARGE-SCALE SOLAR ENERGY PROJECT ON U.S. PUBLIC LANDS

WASHINGTON, DC – Secretary of the Interior Ken Salazar today approved the Genesis Solar Project, a 250 megawatt facility that will use parabolic trough solar thermal technology to produce enough clean energy to power 75,000 – 187,500 homes and generate 1,085 jobs at peak construction and 65 permanent positions.

“The Genesis Solar Project will help stimulate the economy and create more than a thousand new jobs in California,” Secretary Salazar said in signing the Record of Decision. “This is the seventh renewable energy project approved through the fast-track process in less than four weeks -- a giant leap forward in meeting the President's goals for developing domestic energy resources, reducing carbon emissions, promoting energy independence, and enhancing our national security.”

Proposed by Genesis Solar LLC, a subsidiary of NextEra Energy Resources, the facility will be located on nearly 1,950 acres of public land 25 miles west of Blythe, in Riverside County, California. The decision today authorized Interior's Bureau of Land Management (BLM) to offer Genesis Solar a right-of-way grant to use these public lands for 30 years if all rents and other conditions are met.

In October, Salazar approved six other large-scale solar energy projects that combined would produce 2,837 megawatts of electricity, enough to power 851,000 to 2.1 million homes, as well as create 3,700 new construction jobs and more than 600 permanent plant operations jobs.

Salazar commended California Governor Arnold Schwarzenegger and the people of California for their foresight and extraordinary level of cooperation. “This fast-track renewable projects

process clearly demonstrated how separate government processes can be streamlined, without cutting any corners or skipping any environmental checks and balances in the process,” Salazar said.

“Less than a year ago, the BLM committed to helping diversify our country's energy portfolio in an environmentally responsible manner. Today, we are approving our seventh major solar generating project,” said BLM Director Bob Abbey. “This clearly demonstrates our ability to site large-scale renewable energy projects appropriately on public lands.”

The Genesis project has undergone extensive environmental review, starting with public scoping in November 2009, followed by a draft environment impact statement (EIS) with full public involvement in March 2010 and a final EIS August 27, 2010. Genesis Solar is providing funding for more than 2,000 acres of desert tortoise and Mojave fringe-toed lizard habitat to mitigate the project's impacts. Genesis also will employ a dry cooling plan, instead of a wet-cooling alternative, to reduce the project's projected water use from 1,400 acre-feet per year to only 200 acre-feet a year.

Through the American Recovery and Reinvestment Act's payments in lieu of tax credits for specified energy program, Genesis Solar can apply for payments of up to 30 percent of the eligible costs of the Genesis Solar Energy Project—about \$300 million.

On October 12, 2009, the Secretary and the Governor signed an agreement directing Interior agencies and California State agencies to create a federal-state initiative to advance development of environmentally appropriate renewable energy on U.S. lands in California. The Genesis Solar Energy Project is one of the projects jointly processed through the BLM and the California Energy Commission cooperative model. The project was licensed on September 29, 2010 by the California Energy Commission, which regulates all solar thermal projects in California that generate at least 50 megawatts.

The project's parabolic trough technology utilizes rows of parabolic mirrors that focus solar energy on collector tubes. The tubes carry heated oil to a boiler, which sends live steam to a traditional steam turbine generator, which produces electricity. The project will deliver power via a generator that will tie-in to the Blythe Energy 230-kilovolt line, with interconnection to the Devers-Palo Verde #2 500 kilovolt line at the Colorado River substation.

To see the original press release, click here:

http://www.blm.gov/ca/st/en/info/newsroom/2010/november/WO_110410.html

CLARK COUNTY BOARD OF COUNTY COMMISSIONERS PASSES SHORTSIGHTED RESOLUTION ON GROWTH

Center for Biological Diversity

LAS VEGAS— Today the Clark County Board of County Commissioners passed a resolution to support the privatization of 215,000 acres of public land to facilitate their availability to developers for future growth. It did so without a public hearing.

The resolution comes after the board accepted a report from a 21-person committee that was heavily stacked with pro-development interests and municipal employees. The report recommends the addition of 215,000 acres of "take" under the Endangered Species Act — the harm, harassment or killing of endangered species — and, to facilitate it, the transfer of management responsibility of a similar number of acres from the Bureau of Land Management to Clark County to satisfy the "mitigation" normally required of the would-be developers. The report also recommends freezing fees paid by developers for conservation at a rate established in 2001.

Said Rob Mrowka, an ecologist and conservation advocate at the Center for Biological Diversity in Nevada: "The fundamental question that needs to be answered before further growth in Clark County is facilitated is: Does the county have sufficient resources now and in the future to sustain the

growth, particularly water in this time of increasing temperature and drought?"

Clark County and the cities of Boulder City, Henderson, Las Vegas, Mesquite and North Las Vegas currently have an "incidental take permit" under Section 10 of the Endangered Species Act to destroy up to 145,000 acres of desert habitat for development in exchange for a \$550-per-acre fee paid by developers that funds conservation actions of federal lands in Clark County. Under the existing permit, 66,740 acres of "take" remain, according to a county report released Nov. 8.

"The desert tortoise and other imperiled species need this land a lot more than Clark County developers. In fact, the county's rationale for seeking more land to support growth was based on outdated and shortsighted projections, and turns a blind eye to the fact that the population of Clark County is decreasing, not increasing," said Mrowka. "Rather than spending our time divvying up public land for the highest bidder, we should take a go-slow approach that gives the community time to think about the smartest way to grow and the best ways to retain pristine public lands and other natural attributes that contribute to the quality of life."

To see the original press release, see:

http://www.biologicaldiversity.org/news/press_releases/2010/Nevada-growth-11-16-2010.html

PRIMM RACE CANCELED DUE TO CONCERN FOR DESERT TORTOISES

Officials at the U.S. Department of Fish & Wildlife have ordered the SCORE International race for September to be relocated from Primm out of concern for the desert tortoises living there. Now SCORE officials are looking for alternative sites and dates for their 38th annual year of five races.

Las Vegas Events had signed on for the first time to sponsor all five races from the start, Jan. 14 in Laughlin, to the last race of the year, the 1,000 miles in Baja California on Nov. 17. Four of the

five races are now set, but the desert tortoise concerns have shelved the fifth.

SCORE President Sal Fish explained: “We are no longer in a position now to announce final plans for what would have been the August/September dates. The Bureau of Land Management won’t permit desert races in the Primm area. We’re now in a tough situation because we’ve enjoyed that race in the Primm location the past 15 years.

“It’s not our first preference to move to August or to move to another venue for September. We can’t schedule our race to conflict with other promoters’ dates. The government restrictions forbid our go-ahead, so we are now exploring all options and will announce a decision as soon as we can.”

This year’s Baja 1000 race, which attracts many Las Vegas drivers, starts in Ensenada today for the brutal 4-day drive to La Paz at the tip of Baja California.

To see the full brief article, click here:
<http://www.lasvegassun.com/news/2010/nov/16/strip-scribbles-primm-race-canceled-due-concern-de/>

FOR THE DESERT TORTOISE, A THREAT AND AN OPPORTUNITY

In an article in The New York Times on Wednesday, I write about how the fortunes of big solar power plants in the desert Southwest can hinge on the way developers handle imperiled wildlife in the path of their projects.

The protected desert tortoise has become the totemic animal for environmentalists fighting to ensure that the huge solar farms don’t eliminate essential habitat for the long-lived reptile and other wildlife, like the bighorn sheep and flat-tailed horned lizard.

The tortoise has been in decline for decades, and the rampant changing of the desert — including the development of casinos, strip malls and

subdivisions, and designation of off-road recreational vehicle areas — took its toll long before construction began late last month on the Ivanpah solar power plant, the first large-scale solar thermal project to be break ground in the United States in 20 years.

Still, the solar farms will industrialize the desert on an unparalleled scale. The seven projects already licensed in California will cover 42 square miles with immense mirror arrays.

But as much as some biologists fear that the need to generate electricity without carbon dioxide emissions will harm the desert tortoise, the projects offer an opportunity for intensive research on the critter. That’s because regulations require solar developers to monitor tortoises for three years after they are relocated.

“Certainly the monitoring of the translocated desert tortoises will yield useful research information on the ability of desert tortoises to adapt to new surroundings,” Larry LaPré, a wildlife biologist with the United States Bureau of Land Management, said in an e-mail.

Such data is critical. While environmental regulations and efforts by developers like BrightSource Energy, the builder of the Ivanpah project in Southern California, are tailored to remove the tortoise from harm’s way during construction, the survival of the animals depends on how well they adjust to their new homes.

The track record on tortoise relocations is not encouraging. In 2008, more than 700 tortoises were moved from the Fort Irwin military installation in Southern California so the base could expand. Nearly half the relocated tortoises died within two years from, among other things, predation by coyotes and ravens, according to state records.

Biologists I met recently at the Ivanpah power plant site were far more optimistic about the relocation of 23 tortoises found in the project’s first phase.

“The tortoises at Fort Irwin were moved a lot further than these, and there also was a big problem

with predators there,” Peter Woodman, a biologist who worked on the military project, explained as he stood by a holding pen where the Ivanpah tortoises will live until they are moved next spring.

“We’re hoping that by just moving these tortoises less, basically over the fence, that they will know where they are and where to go and they’ll habituate more easily,” he said.

Every tortoise captured at Ivanpah has been outfitted with a radio transmitter and given a health examination. Biologists will also radio-tag tortoises at a control site across a highway from the solar project so they can compare the movements and health of the relocated reptiles to those in a natural setting.

“We’ll learn a lot of things about the animal’s home range, whether the animals are in trouble at all and if there’s issues of the animal trying to get back into the site,” said Mercy Vaughn, the lead biologist on the Ivanpah project.

Dr. LaPré, the government biologist, said, “It may be possible to learn how the translocated tortoises interact with the residents.”

To see the complete original article, click here:
<http://green.blogs.nytimes.com/2010/11/17/for-the-desert-tortoise-a-threat-and-an-opportunity/?partner=rss&emc=rss>

SOME AMERICAN INDIANS OBJECT TO DESERT ENERGY PROJECTS

TRIBAL MEMBERS SAY THEY ARE OVERWHELMED BY THE NUMBER ENERGY PROJECTS

The recent sight of road graders clearing old-growth Mojave Desert shrubs for the nation’s first large-scale solar energy project on public land pained Phil Smith.

“It hurts because it will never be the same again,” said the Chemehuevi elder, who lives near Needles.

The Ivanpah Valley in northeast San Bernardino County holds ancient trails and worship sites, he said. It is home to the desert tortoise and other plants and animals that were important sources of food and medicine to his people.

But state and federal reviews earlier this year found the land for the 5.6-square mile project — being built near the Nevada border by Oakland-based BrightSource Energy Inc. — had no significant cultural resources, such as former village or burial sites. Government officials are allowing the tortoises to be captured and moved.

The project will feature thousands of mirrors focusing heat on towers with steam boilers, turning turbines to generate enough electricity for 140,000 homes.

Smith is among several Native Americans upset with the federal government for rapidly approving large solar projects on public land. They fear the process will obliterate sacred places, landmarks and artifacts.

Tribes say that the BrightSource solar property outside Primm, Nev., has trails and other sites sacred to Native Americans.

Tribal members say they are overwhelmed by the number energy projects. They don’t have time to examine and respond to thousands of pages of environmental documents and arrange site visits with appropriate leaders.

They’re also concerned because, in several cases, the government won’t decide how to deal with lost cultural resources until after projects are approved.

The U.S Bureau of Land Management is “fast-tracking” approvals for 23 solar, wind and geothermal energy projects on 236 square miles of public land in California, Arizona and Nevada. Developments that are construction-ready by the end of 2010 qualify for federal stimulus dollars, according to a BLM website.

Three projects were approved recently: in the Ivanpah Valley, one in Lucerne Valley and another in Imperial County.

“It is a backward process,” said Linda Otero, director of the Aha Makav Cultural Society and a member of the Fort Mojave Tribe. “There are so many projects, it is impossible to juggle them all.” BLM officials said they regularly consult with tribes to avoid harming important sites. Energy officials say applications have been filed for years, giving tribes ample opportunity for input. BLM officials also acknowledged that they expect several large energy projects will be approved before archaeological assessments are complete.

“The project may be approved, but a lot of work still needs to be done,” said Alan Stein, resources manager for BLM’s California Desert District, said during a recent public meeting in Needles.

To see the full article, click here:
<http://www.vvdailypress.com/news/-22829--.html>

JOB OPPORTUNITIES

FORT WORTH ZOO SUPERVISOR OF TERRESTRIAL ECTOTHERMS

The Fort Worth Zoo has an open supervisor position in the Museum of Living Art (MOLA). MOLA is a world-class Herpetarium that opened in 2010 and is staffed by an outstanding team of highly motivated and talented individuals. This position is a full time, salaried position with a competitive benefit package.

The Supervisor of Terrestrial Ectotherms will be responsible for a uniquely diverse collection of more than 160 species of reptiles, turtles, crocodilians, and amphibians, as well as terrestrial invertebrates and fishes. The successful candidate will work with curators co-supervising a staff of 15 keepers and will participate in the daily husbandry of the animal collection, in supervising and training staff, scheduling, insuring safe work practices, monitoring animal health, maintaining life support

systems, keeping accurate records, maintaining cleanliness of animal areas, propagation, interaction with Zoo visitors, exhibit modification and minor maintenance, as well as aid in the development of research and conservation initiatives.

Position requires a high school diploma or equivalent. A college degree in a biological field is preferred. Three years of increasingly responsible professional experience with reptiles, turtles, crocodilians, and amphibians required, including experience with venomous species. Previous leadership and management experience preferred. Good communication and organizational skills needed and the ability to work well with others in a team environment is a must. Candidate should be able to lift 50-75 pounds; this position may require other physical demands such as bending, stretching, climbing, etc; working in extreme weather conditions (heat, cold, rain, etc.) and exposure to potentially hazardous chemicals. The candidate must have valid driver license with acceptable motor vehicle record and the ability to work irregular hours including some evenings, weekends and holidays. Position is open until filled. A background check and drug screen are required of final candidate. Resumes and/or applications should be submitted to:

Human Resources
Fort Worth Zoo
1989 Colonial Parkway
Fort Worth, Texas 76110
817-759-7251 FAX

Apply online at:

<http://www.fortworthzoo.org/>

Field Technicians for desert tortoise monitoring program Institute for Wildlife Studies

Description:

The desert tortoise monitoring program is part of the USFWS initiative for the recovery and monitoring of the endangered desert tortoise. Data collected through distance sampling is used to

estimate population size and density. Field technicians are needed to fill positions related to distance sampling.

Field technicians will work in pairs, walk pre-defined transects to collect information on desert tortoises, and drive long distances through the desert on dirt roads to travel between daily transects. Field training will be provided, but applicants should have previous experience with wilderness field skills and the ability to use a GPS and topographic maps for navigation. Technicians must be able to walk ≥ 12 km per day in challenging and uneven terrain, carrying personal gear and field equipment. Technicians also must be prepared for temperature and weather conditions that can change rapidly and without warning, able to operate a 4WD vehicle, and willing to camp in the desert backcountry for ≥ 3 consecutive nights. Previous tortoise survey experience is a plus.

-Preference will be given to applicants with previous desert tortoise experience.

-Technicians must have a positive attitude and be capable of working closely with others.

-Exact start and end dates are to be determined, but expect to start in early March and work until the middle to end of May.

-Technicians will be expected to work 5 consecutive days per week, with the understanding that 2 days off may vary.

-The position requires long hours, early morning start times, and camping in the field.

-Compensation: Approximately \$2,500/month (based on an hourly wage), plus housing will be provided during the training (2 weeks in March) and available intermittently throughout the field season.

Location:

Mojave Desert, California and Nevada

Qualified applicants should send a cover letter, resume, and contact information for 3 references to: tortoise@iws.org, or Institute for Wildlife Studies, PO Box 1104, Arcata, CA 95518.

Please note the job (Field Technician) you are applying for in the subject line.

Click here for original notice:

<http://www.parcplace.org/2010-11-16a.pdf>

Telemetry Technicians for desert tortoise monitoring program Institute for Wildlife Studies

Description:

The desert tortoise monitoring program is part of the USFWS initiative for the recovery of the endangered desert tortoise. Data collected through distance sampling is used to estimate population size density and locations of tortoises determined by telemetry is used to calibrate sighting probability. Field technicians are needed to fill positions related to radio telemetry monitoring of tortoises.

Telemetry technicians work alone but in coordination with distance sampling technicians. Technicians are expected to listen for previously tagged tortoises and obtain visuals of tagged tortoises. Field training will be provided, but applicants should have previous experience with radio telemetry, wilderness field skills, and GPS and topographic maps for navigation. Technicians will also be trained to conduct distance sampling in order to help with that aspect of the program.

Applicants must be able to walk alone for long distances in challenging and uneven terrain, carrying personal gear and field equipment. Technicians also must be prepared for temperature and weather conditions that can change rapidly and without warning, able to operate a 4WD vehicle, and willing to camp in the desert backcountry for ≥ 3 consecutive nights.

-Preference will be given to applicants with previous desert tortoise experience.

-Technicians must be capable of working alone, but communicate and coordinate activities regularly with others.

-Exact start and end date is to be determined, but expect to start in early March and work through the end of April.

-Technicians will be expected to work 5 consecutive days per week, with the understanding that 2 days off may vary.

www.deserttortoise.org

-The position requires long hours, early morning start times, and camping in the field.

-Compensation: Approximately \$2,500/month (based on an hourly wage), plus housing will be provided during the training (2 weeks in March) and available intermittently throughout the field season.

Location:

Mojave Desert, California and Nevada

Qualified applicants should send a cover letter, resume, and contact information for 3 references to: tortoise@iws.org, or Institute for Wildlife Studies, PO Box 1104, Arcata, CA 95518.

Please note the job (Telemetry technician) you are applying for in the subject line.

Click here for the original posting:

<http://www.parcplace.org/2010-11-16b.pdf>

QAQC Coordinator for desert tortoise monitoring program Institute for Wildlife Studies

Description:

The desert tortoise monitoring program is part of the USFWS initiative for the recovery and monitoring of the endangered desert tortoise. Data collected through distance sampling is used to estimate population size and density. Field technicians obtain data from line distance sampling transects and radio-telemetry that must be centrally collected, checked following defined quality assurance/quality control (QAQC) guidelines, and turned into USFWS weekly.

The QAQC/Project Coordinator will be responsible for:

- (1) Traveling to meet crews at specified locations in the Mojave desert for weekly collection of data;
- (2) weekly delivery of paper and electronic data that have been verified for completeness and correctness (QAQC);
- (3) weekly updates on completion of assigned transects, and timely and appropriate response to feedback from the USFWS to improve patterns in collected data;
- (4) assisting the project lead with creating maps, creating or assisting with reports; and

(5) working with field crews to reduce errors in data entry.

The position requires regular contact with IWS staff in the Arcata office and USFWS project staff, plus interaction with the Crew Leader and field crews.

The QAQC coordinator is expected to have previous knowledge of Microsoft Access and ArcGIS, an understanding of working with large databases, and distance sampling.

The exact start and end date is to be determined, but we anticipate a start in early March, with work through June 8. The coordinator is expected to work 5 consecutive days per week, with the understanding that 2 days off may vary. The position requires long hours, extensive travel, and a willingness to meet with field crews in the Mojave Desert.

Salary: Approximately \$3,000/month (based on an hourly wage), plus housing.

Location:

Las Vegas, Nevada with travel to Barstow, CA and possibly throughout the Mojave Desert.

Qualified applicants should send a cover letter, resume, and contact information for 3 references to: tortoise@iws.org, or Institute for Wildlife Studies, PO Box 1104, Arcata, CA 95518.

Please note the job (QAQC Coordinator) you are applying for in the subject line.

Click here for the original posting:

<http://www.parcplace.org/2010-11-16c.pdf>

CALL FOR PAPERS AND POSTERS
36th ANNUAL MEETING AND SYMPOSIUM
Friday, Saturday, Sunday, and Monday, February 18–20, 2011

The Desert Tortoise Council will host its Thirty-sixth Annual Symposium on Friday, Saturday, and Sunday, February 18–20, 2011 at Sam’s Town in Las Vegas, NV. **Titles and abstracts for sessions or contributed papers and posters are hereby invited.** The Council welcomes pertinent papers on turtle and tortoise biology and conservation, especially regarding the Sonoran Desert and Mexico.

Please return the form below with abstract by **December 20, 2010** (If necessary, abstracts can be submitted by January 1, 2011, but the form below should be submitted by December 20, 2010).

ABSTRACTS

Content: They should be substantive, focused on findings and implications of findings (not methods). Abstracts for 15 minute papers should be limited to 250 to 300 words (body, not title and addresses) and double-spaced. Capitalize and center the title; underneath the title, list and center all authors (include first names) with affiliations and addresses. Italicize all scientific names and statistical notations. Authors need to follow the Guidelines for Authors.

Submission: Send a virus-free file by e-mail (preferred) using Word 2003 for Windows) or on a CD by surface mail. ALL e-mail transmissions must include all the information requested below, including author's address, phone, e-mail address, and fax numbers. E-mail transmissions must include the abstract as an attachment in Word 2003, not in the body of the text. The Program Chair must be informed immediately if a cancellation or substitution is necessary.

PAPERS

Speakers: should be prepared to give professional papers. Most papers will be scheduled at 15-minute intervals (12 minutes for presentation, three minutes for questions), unless other arrangements are made. If the speaker wishes to give a longer paper, then that information should be noted on the form or in an e-mail.

Featured Speakers: The Keynote and Invited or Featured Speakers will be allotted additional time and more lengthy abstracts, which should be arranged with the Program Chair.

POSTERS

Posters will be displayed throughout the meeting. Poster presentations may be offered at specific times. If you have questions about your paper or need assistance, please contact the Program Chair, Dr. Kristin Berry, at the address below.

Information should be exact, because the program copy will be prepared from this sheet. If your title and the speaker list are tentative, say so.

Paper _____ Student Paper _____ Poster _____

Author(s) and Affiliations(s). Indicate speaker with an asterisk _____

Title of Paper _____

Address of Speaker _____

Work phone _____ Home phone _____ E-mail: _____

Special requirements (e.g., AV equipment): _____ Time: _____

SUBMIT TO:

Mail to: Dr. Kristin H. Berry, Program Chair; USGS; 21803 Cactus Avenue, Suite F, Riverside, CA 92518. E-mail to: kristin_berry@usgs.gov.

REGISTRATION FORM

Desert Tortoise Council 36th Annual Meeting and Symposium February 18-20, 2011

Return by mail to: Desert Tortoise Council, c/o Mike Bailey 619 Pinon Ct., Ridgecrest, CA 93555

Return by e-mail to: tracy.bailey@mchsi.com

Please complete a SEPARATE form for each attendee.

Name:

(First, Last) (Name to be used on ID badge)

Organization:

Address:

City: State Zip:

email: Daytime Phone:

Payment Method: Check Online

To make your payment online, visit <http://www.deserttortoise.org/symposium/>
Make checks payable to Desert Tortoise Council

SYMPOSIUM FEES

ENTER AMOUNT

Member Registration	\$150.00 (\$200.00 if postmarked after 1/18/2011)	<input type="text"/>
Student Member Registration	\$60.00 (verification required, (\$85.00 after 1/18/2011))	<input type="text"/>
Non-member Registration	\$200.00 (\$250.00 if postmarked after 1/18/2011)	<input type="text"/>
One-day Registration	\$100.00 (\$140.00 if postmarked after 1/18/2011)	<input type="text"/>
Spouse (inc. breakfasts/socials)	\$50.00	<input type="text"/>
Regular Membership Dues	\$30.00	<input type="text"/>
Raffle Ticket(s)	@ \$1.00 each	<input type="text"/>

TOTAL ENCLOSED

DESERT TORTOISE COUNCIL MEMBERSHIP
619 Pinon Ct.
Ridgecrest, CA 93555

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)
NEWSLETTER FORMAT:
_____ Pdf file via e-mail _____ E-mail notice for web page viewing _____ Hardcopy

Make check or money order payable to the Desert Tortoise Council
and **send** with this application
to: **Desert Tortoise Council, P.O. Box 3273**
Beaumont, CA 92223
The Desert Tortoise Council does not release its membership list