



**DESERT TORTOISE COUNCIL**

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**Via email only**

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On Behalf of: Superior Cronese Coordinated Recovery (SCCORE) Project Team

RE: RE: Letter of Support for the Superior Cronese COordinated REcovery (SCCORE) Project

Dear SCCORE Project Team,

The Desert Tortoise Council (Council) is a non-profit organization comprising hundreds of professionals and laypersons who share a common concern for wild desert tortoises and a commitment to advancing the public's understanding of desert tortoise species. Established in 1975 to promote conservation of tortoises in the deserts of the southwestern United States and northern Mexico, the Council routinely provides information and other forms of assistance to individuals, organizations, and regulatory agencies on matters potentially affecting desert tortoises within their geographic ranges.

Both our physical and email addresses are provided above in our letterhead for your use when providing future correspondence to us. When given a choice, we prefer to receive emails for future correspondence, as mail delivered via the U.S. Postal Service may take several days to be delivered. Email is an "environmentally friendlier way" of receiving correspondence and documents rather than "snail mail."

The Superior Cronese COordinated REcovery (SCCORE) Project is a group of agencies and organizations (U.S. Geological Survey, San Diego Zoo Wildlife Alliance, Preservation Ranch, and U.S. Fish and Wildlife Service) working collaboratively to apply their areas of expertise and marshal resources to address and reduce many of the threats that impact the desert tortoise and its habitat. The group has developed integrated proposals that comprise the SCCORE Project that focus on threats from unauthorized travel routes, habitat fragmentation, mapping of non-native invasive annual plants, raven predation, and the decline in tortoise numbers and recruitment. Their

coordination and integration of data, on-the-ground management actions, and science-based monitoring focus on many of the major threats to the tortoise in a targeted area of the western Superior-Cronese Tortoise Conservation Area (TCA), and one of the USFWS's priority draft augmentation areas. Collaboratively developed proposals include:

- a. USFWS/USGS: Superior-Cronese COordinated REcovery Project (SCCORE): "A Spatially Explicit Integrated Approach to Monitoring Desert Tortoise Population Trends and Demographics in Coordination with On-the-Ground Recovery Actions"
- b. SDZWA: Superior-Cronese COordinated REcovery Project (SCCORE): "Targeted Monitoring to Evaluate Juvenile-to-Adult Transition Probability in Restored Landscapes"
- c. Preservation Ranch: Superior-Cronese COordinated REcovery project (SCCORE): "Black Mountain Route Restoration and Stewardship"

Because of the many threats that the tortoise faces from anthropogenic sources, including in the Superior-Cronese TCA, these impacts are interactive and synergistic to the tortoise and its habitat (Tracy et al. 2004). "Focusing on individual threats has resulted in little positive change for desert tortoise populations." "By focusing on and removing only the one or two threats considered the most important, no response may be realized because the next most important threat becomes the limiting factor for population recovery" (Tracy et al. 2004). Thus, an integrated approach that substantially reduces several threats to the tortoise at targeted locations and applies science-based monitoring is needed to halt the ongoing decline of tortoise densities and numbers, manage for recruitment, increase tortoise population numbers, and provide the quality and connectivity of habitat the tortoise needs to survive and achieve recovery.

The Council strongly encourages and supports the collaborative effort of the SCCORE Project to integrate management actions to assist with the survival and recovery of the tortoise and focus on one geographic area identified for tortoise recovery. This type of action is needed to effectively tackle the interactive and synergistic impacts from anthropogenic threats to the tortoise and its habitat in a targeted area of the Superior-Cronese TCA.

We have not been able to review these proposals because they have been in development for submission to the National Fish and Wildlife Foundation's (NFWF) Recovery and Sustainment Partnership. When they are finalized we request the opportunity to review them.

Respectfully,



Mari Quillman  
Chairperson, Desert Tortoise Council

### Literature Cited

Tracy, C.R., R. Averill-Murray, W. I. Boarman, D. Delehanty, J. Heaton, E. McCoy, D. Morafka, K. Nussear, B. Hagerty, and P. Medica. 2004. Desert Tortoise Recovery Plan Assessment. Technical Report. Prepared for USFWS. January 2004.  
[https://www.researchgate.net/publication/241835929\\_Desert\\_Tortoise\\_Recovery\\_Plan\\_Assessment](https://www.researchgate.net/publication/241835929_Desert_Tortoise_Recovery_Plan_Assessment)