



Annual Report 2017





The Desert Tortoise Preserve Committee, Inc.

Founded 1974

Board of Directors

President	Ron Berger
Vice President	Bob Wood
Treasurer	Laura Stockton
Recording Secretary	Rachel Woodard
Board Member	Kristin Berry, Ph.D.
Board Member	Greg Lathrop
Board Member	Larry Nelson
Board Member	Dave Zantiny

Preserve Manager & Conservation Coordinator

Jillian Estrada

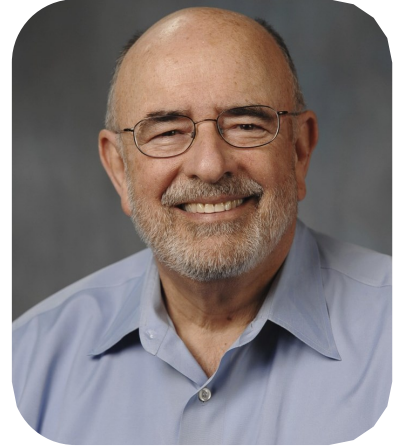
Director of Land Acquisition

Jun Lee

A letter from our President

The Desert Tortoise Preserve Committee was founded in 1974 to:

- a) promote the welfare of the California State Reptile, the Desert Tortoise (*Gopherus agassizii*) in its native wild state;
- b) establish and/or assist in the establishment of preserves for the Desert Tortoise in locations where there are habitats and ecosystems which support it;
- c) provide information, education and research regarding ecosystems critical to the Desert Tortoise and to associated animal and plant species that may occur in these ecosystems, including but not limited to conservation of the Mohave Ground Squirrel, Burrowing Owl, Barstow Woolly Sunflower and desert wash and streambed habitats;
- d) develop and implement management programs for preserves, to protect the Desert Tortoise and the biodiversity of the ecosystems in which it lives;
- e) foster and publicize the uses for these preserves for selected forms of recreation, education, conservation and research.



Supporting that mission, we have developed a set of objectives. These are:

- 1) Keep the Desert Tortoise Research Natural Area (DTRNA) and other DTPC properties pristine and managed to promote recovery of the Desert Tortoise and other sensitive plant and animal species.
- 2) Expand the DTRNA and other DTPC conservation properties.
- 3) Strive to obtain unencumbered deeds and all resource rights and protections possible for all future DTPC property acquisitions.
- 4) Build an unrestricted endowment and cash/contribution flow to finance DTPC activities.
- 5) Reduce raven predation at the DTRNA and other DTPC conservation properties.
- 6) Increase the size, skills and diversity of the DTPC membership and volunteer pool.
- 7) Increase the use of the DTRNA for biological and natural resource management research projects.

Although we are a relatively small organization, we are convinced that our narrowly focused approach yields outsized results. A thorough analysis of those results can, in our view, best be assessed by first looking at what we've accomplished in the forty three years since we were organized. During those years, we purchased or otherwise acquired a total of roughly 8,000 acres, in over 225 transactions, resulting in the creation and expansion of the DTRNA, believed to be the largest, safest preserve dedicated to the protection of the desert tortoise, Desert Kit Fox, American Badger, Mojave Ground Squirrel, Burrowing Owl, the Barstow Woolly Sunflower and more.

The DTRNA contains an incredibly rich and diverse number of species, including nearly 200 species of flowering plants that support 27 species of reptiles, 23 species of mammals, 29 species of breeding birds. The DTRNA has served as the site of over 100 research studies, resulting in numerous important findings. In addition, in conjunction with BLM, we developed and built an interpretive kiosk at the DTRNA, staffed DTRNA with a naturalist each season since 1989, and saw and helped educate more than 10,000 individuals from over 50 countries over the past 38 years. In addition to expanding the DTRNA, we've acquired over 300 parcels totaling close to 8,000 acres, throughout Kern, San Bernardino, and Riverside counties.

With the exception of our Preserve Manager and Naturalist, all of the work that we do is accomplished by volunteers. Our board is comprised entirely of unpaid volunteers, which annually contribute close to 2,000 hours of service to our cause. Thanks to dedicated volunteers, who have monitored hundreds of parcels, tens of thousands of pounds of trash and invasives have been removed over the years.

Naturally, our efforts are primarily focused on improving the health, welfare, and prospects of the desert tortoise. Doing so requires us to assess and deal as best we can with the myriad threats facing the tortoise, from climate change to invasive plants, to the exploding population of ravens, to all sort of human development, to grazing of sheep and cattle, and the off-road OHV vehicles killing tortoises, destroying their burrows and degrading their habitat. In recent years, we have fenced over 17 miles of prime tortoise habitat; have dramatically expanded the DTRNA to acquire and protect areas tortoises might find more hospitable as climate changes and have acquired and protected other properties as well.

We took the initiative to create the Coalition for a Balanced Environment (CBE), which today numbers over 20 coalition members including The Nature Conservancy, The Living Desert, Defenders of Wildlife, Transition Habitat Conservancy, and The Tortoise Conservancy. The CBE's focus is on reducing the raven population in the desert. Politically, we've filed numerous comments, concerns, and objections to all manner of ill-conceived roads, mining and other projects which would lead to a less conducive environment for the tortoise. We've visited with Senators, Representatives, Mayors, City Councils and agencies such as BLM, USF&WS, and Cal. Fish & Wildlife. We've written articles and we've done interviews and contributed to articles, videos, and books, many of which appeared nationally.

We could go on and on, but we hope you recognize that our work is, in fact, never done. We can never have enough volunteers, or enough capital, or enough hours in the day. So, we thank you for reading these words, for thinking about these subjects, and for whatever contributions of time, effort, financial or other support you have provided in the past or can provide in the years ahead.

A handwritten signature in black ink, appearing to read 'Ron Berger', with a stylized, flowing script.

Ron Berger, President
Desert Tortoise Preserve Committee





Community Outreach

Both Naturalists relaxing after a long day

2017 saw many outreach and education opportunities throughout the state. DTPC staff and volunteers reached out to the public across Los Angeles, Riverside, and Kern counties spreading the word about our mission and accomplishments.

During the spring months, a time when desert flora and fauna abound, we hosted one full-time and one part-time naturalist at the Desert Tortoise Research Natural Area. The naturalists lived on site from March 13- June 4 to welcome, educate, and provide tours to incoming visitors. The beautiful spring blooms attracted visitors from all over the United States and 11 different countries. Approximately 917 individuals visited the DTRNA during the spring naturalist season and at least eight individual tortoises were observed by a large number of visitors.

On March 25 we held a welcome event for the DTRNA. The purpose of this event was to encourage local residents to visit the

DTRNA and explore the desert that they call home. This event was well received and hosted more than 50 visitors. Our outreach extended locally to the “Desert Tortoise Days” event held annually in California City. At this event, information about desert tortoises, desert ecology, and the Desert Tortoise Research Natural Area were provided to local residents. California Turtle & Tortoise Club-Ridgecrest provided three species of tortoises and information about captive tortoises.

During the fall season, we attended the Wildlife Conservation Network Expo (WCN) in San Francisco for the second time. This expo gathers dozens of leading conservation organizations to share the important work that they do. Our table gained a lot of traffic and presented us the opportunity to educate residents of the Bay area about the desert tortoise, raven predation, and conservation efforts.

Knowing Our Neighbors

Looking out of the airplane window the Mojave Desert seems boundless; more than enough desert for everyone. If you look closely you can see roads, trails, solar electrical generating fields, wind turbines, colorful rock outcroppings, steep hills, streambeds, active mines, dry lakebeds, military bases, homesteads, small desert communities, and a few larger cities dotting the landscape. The thousands of OHV riders, equestrians, rock hounds, hunters, ranchers, miners, bird watchers, renewable energy producers, military, campers, and wildlife preservationists all have rights to use their private property and to share the use of our public lands.

As a DTPC Board member I attend all the local and regional planning meetings, review and comment on proposed developments and agency plans, participate on several citizen coordination boards, and most importantly I strive to understand the wishes and requirements of each of the desert user groups.

THROUGH DTPC'S MEMBERSHIP AND PARTICIPATION AT THESE PLANNING ACTIVITIES WE HAVE BUILT STRONG PROFESSIONAL RELATIONSHIPS AND MUTUAL TRUST.

Each desert user understands what it takes to have healthy Desert Tortoise, Mohave Ground Squirrel, Burrowing Owl, and bird populations. No one wants to damage the desert environment. Each desert user understands and supports the parts of the desert that are needed for OHV enjoyment, rock hounding, mining, wildlife observation, and safe communities. Problems that arise with sharing the desert are brought to the monthly Public Lands Roundtable and Friends of Jawbone meetings where the facts are presented, and potential solutions are discussed. Agreed to changes are often made to public land use plans, county ordinances, and user responsibilities. Everyone is responsible for sharing and protecting the desert we all enjoy. It all starts with knowing the neighbors.

Robert W. Wood, Vice President

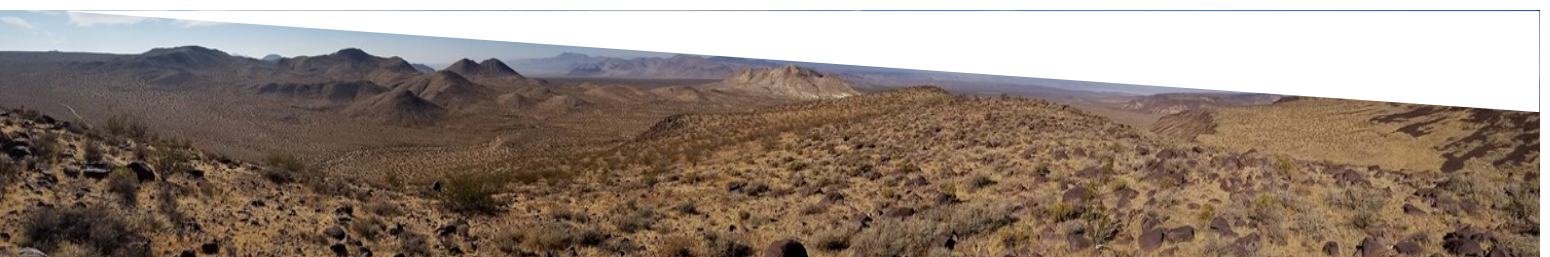
Land Management



In order to protect desert tortoise habitat, the Desert Tortoise Preserve Committee staff and volunteers visit the land we own at least once per year to observe the wildlife that is present and document observations of trespass or illegal activities that might be taking place. Yearly monitoring gives us a snapshot of how our land is doing and allows us to make adaptive management decisions and schedule stewardship activities to remove or mitigate these threats. Monitoring is a growing challenge as we continue to acquire more land, however the dedication of our volunteers allows us the ability to perform these tasks.

Monitoring this year has shown the continued persistence of Off-Highway Vehicle use, livestock grazing, and invasive non-native plant species in some areas. Due to these observations, the Desert Tortoise Preserve Committee has increased the amount of visits to the area and has applied for additional grants to install protective fencing and perform restoration in these affected areas.

A total of 13.5 miles of fencing was installed and restoration was performed in the Eastern and Western Expansion Areas, which now protect 2,700 acres of tortoise habitat.



American Conservation Experience

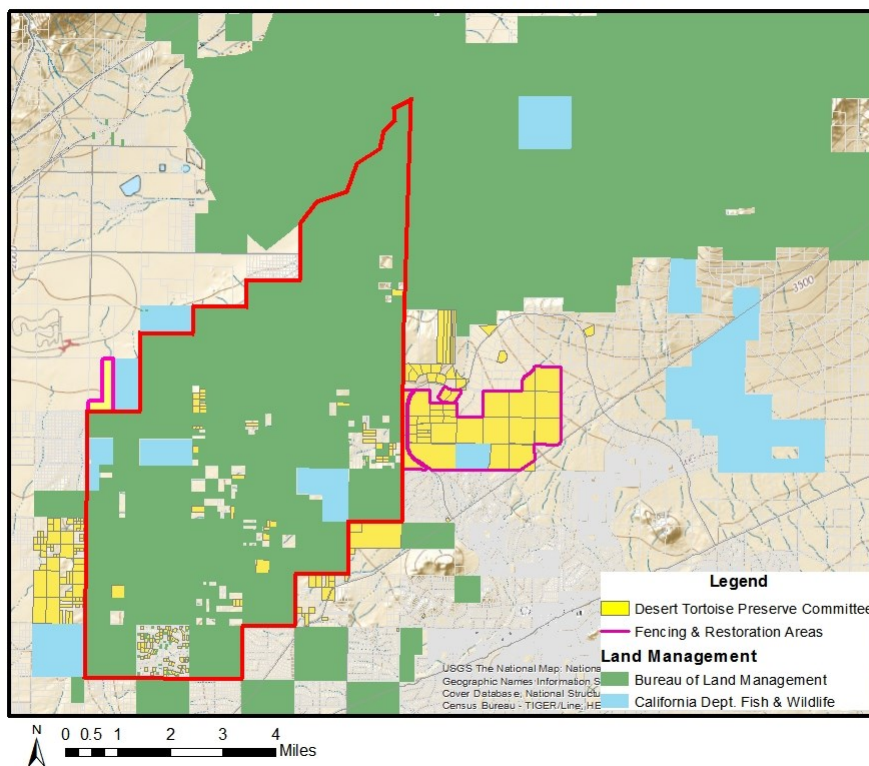


Vertical mulching being planted by American Conservation Experience (Photo provided by ACE)



New protective fencing in the Eastern Expansion Area

Desert Tortoise Research Natural Area

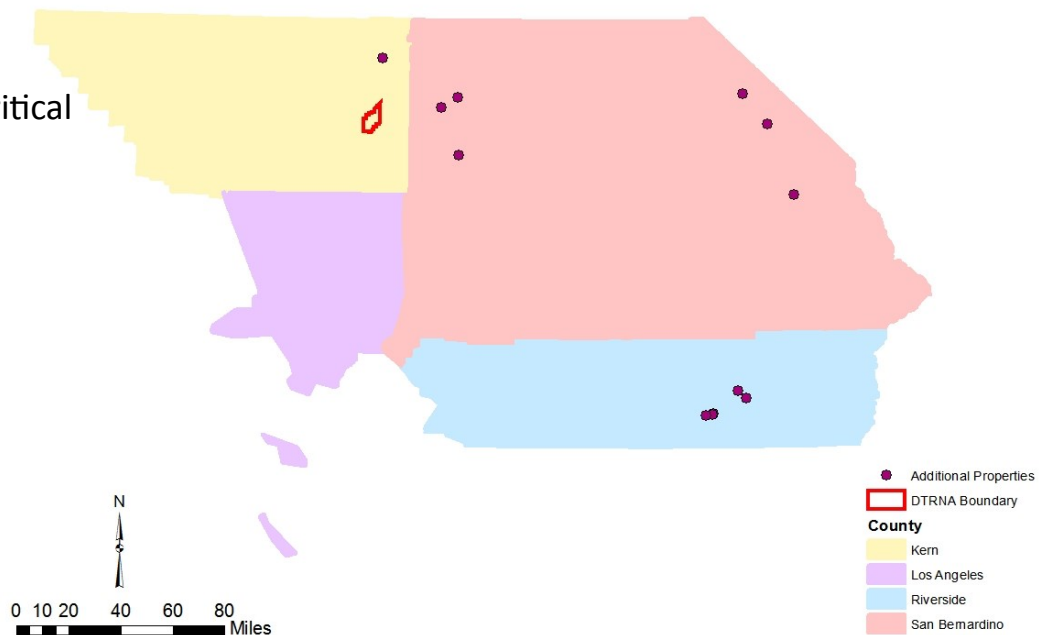


Map of fencing project areas shown in magenta

Where We Work

- **Eastern Kern County**
(Fremont-Kramer Area of Critical Environmental Concern)
- **San Bernardino County**
- **Central Riverside County**
(Chuckwalla Area of Critical Environmental Concern)

Desert Tortoise Preserve Committee Properties
2017



The Desert Tortoise Preserve Committee, Inc. owns and manages more than 7,000 acres of tortoise habitat throughout Kern, San Bernardino, and Riverside counties. Many of these properties were acquired as mitigation lands for various development projects affecting tortoise, Mohave ground squirrel, and other important habitats.



As the Desert Tortoise Preserve Committee works toward expanding the amount of protected tortoise habitat we manage, we regularly acquire land adjacent to the Desert Tortoise Research Natural Area and elsewhere throughout the natural range of the desert tortoise.

Our director of land acquisition works with multi- generational families to

acquire parcels; much of which were originally bought in the 1950's and '60's when California City was advertised as an up-and-coming metropolis. In 2017, we acquired close to 100 acres of private tortoise habitat that will now be protected and managed for the recovery of desert tortoises.

Stewardship Activities

Throughout 2017, we hosted a number of events and activities to help protect tortoise habitat. During the spring months we conducted a Mohave ground squirrel camera trap survey which found 3 individuals living on the Eastern and Western expansion areas of the Desert Tortoise Research Natural Area. An additional plant survey found 29 new sites of Barstow Woolly Sunflower (*Eriophyllum mohavense*), a California rare species, within the DTRNA and Eastern expansion area. Both of these studies highlight the additional rare species that are protected by the Desert Tortoise Preserve Committee.



Two work parties were held in March and October. The spring work party focused on installing signage along the new fencing which had just been installed in the Eastern Expansion Area. The fall work party targeted maintenance of fencing surrounding the DTRNA and hiking trails that are found at the interpretive center.



**“THE DTRNA CONTAINS AN
INCREDIBLY RICH AND DIVERSE
NUMBER OF SPECIES”**

Research

During the late spring of 2017, we performed an annual Mohave ground squirrel camera trap survey which began in 2016. Eighty camera traps were placed on two areas of land in the Eastern and Western Expansion Areas to study the presence or absence of MGS. Three individuals were observed; two in the Western Expansion Area and one in the Eastern Expansion Area. This is an increase from the zero that were found the previous year. In total, eighteen species were observed including desert

kit fox, American badger, LeConte’s thrasher, and desert woodrat.



Mohave ground squirrel caught on camera

Ways to Give

The Desert Tortoise Preserve Committee is a 501(c)(3) non-profit organization which relies on financial donations to fund the critical work involved in protecting and preserving desert tortoise habitat. Donations are used to fund daily operations, acquire more desert tortoise habitat, install protective fencing, and expand our education and outreach program. There are many ways to donate. To learn more or to donate, contact us at 951-683-3872 or www.tortoise-tracks.org.

Outright Gifts

- **Donate a piece of land**
- **Become a member**
- **Become a monthly supporter**
- **Make a charitable gift of stocks, bonds, or mutual funds**
- **Give a gift membership**
- **Make a symbolic animal adoption**

Bequest us in your Will or Trust

You can create a legacy that will reflect the values you hold dear, while serving as an example for younger generations. A well-designated estate plan can result in your estate paying less tax, allowing you to leave more to your beneficiaries. If you wish to name us in your will or estate plan, we should be named as:

Desert Tortoise Preserve Committee, a non-profit corporation, organized and existing under the laws of the State of California, with principal business address of 4067 Mission Inn Avenue, Riverside, CA 92501.

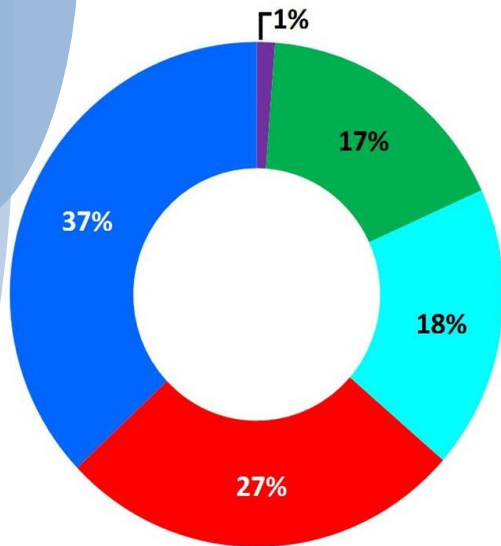
Our tax identification number is 23-7413415.

Join a Workplace Giving Campaign

We are affiliates of EarthShare California, a non-profit federation that allows workers in California to designate a nominal amount per pay period (\$1, \$5, \$10, etc.) to be donated to a charity. We are also affiliates of the Combined Federal Campaign, a similar campaign for federal employees. If you are interested in joining one of these campaigns, visit www.earthshareca.org or www.opm.gov/combined-federal-campaign. Our CFC number is 71985.

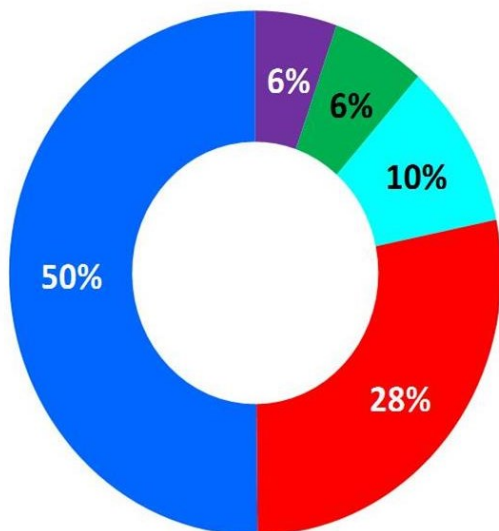
Financials for Fiscal Year

Ending December 31, 2017



Operating Income

Merchandise & Event Sales	\$5,463
Membership & Contributions	\$78,335
Contracts / Grants	\$83,488
Investments	\$122,143
Mitigation	\$170,227
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Total Income	\$459,656



Expenses

Accounting	\$19,238
Administrative	\$22,114
Education & Outreach	\$36,700
Land Acquisition / Planning	\$100,869
Land Management	\$180,005
<hr/>	
Total Expenses ²	\$358,926

¹ Total Revenue does not include restricted income from mitigation accounts and other sources.

² Total Expenses does not include depreciation



Desert Candle (*Caulanthus inflatus*)



Desert Tortoise at Desert Tortoise Research Natural Area



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