

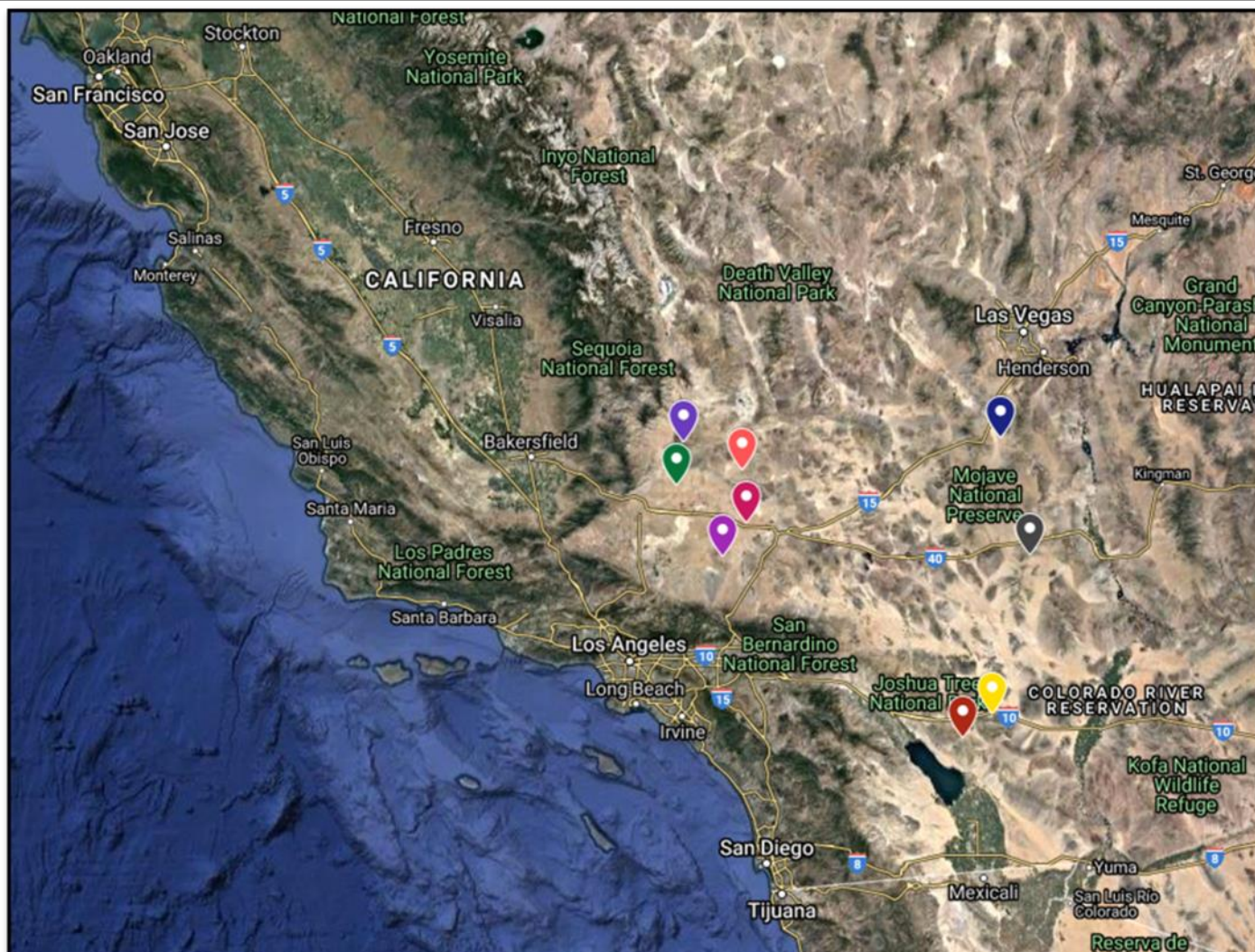


Fall/Winter  
2021  
Edition 41:3-4

# Tortoise Tracks

Newsletter

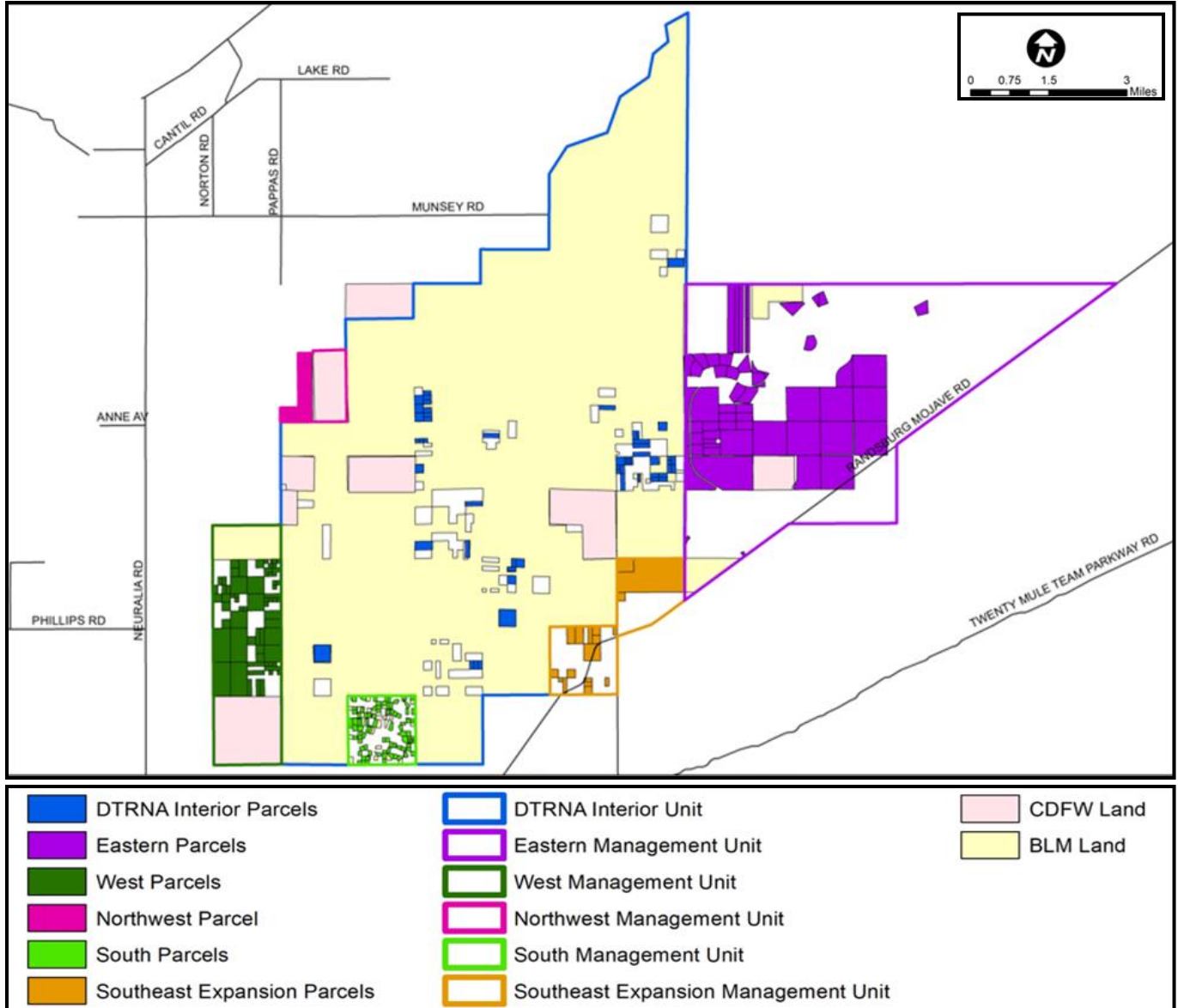
## Annual Land Monitoring



- Desert Tortoise Natural Area
- El Paso Mountains Wilderness
- Alligator Rock ACEC
- Chuckwalla DMWA Parcels
- Pilot Knob Allotment
- Harper Dry Lake Parcels
- Ivanpah Valley parcels
- Piute Mountains Wilderness ...
- Shadow Mountain

The Desert Tortoise Preserve Committee has made strategic land acquisitions over the years in a variety of habitats ensuring our conservation efforts expand beyond the Desert Tortoise Research Natural Area. Did you know the DTPC owns, and annually monitors, 326 parcels of property totaling 7,135 acres? The map above illustrates the diverse locations of our parcels. If you were to leave our office in Ridgecrest, driving to each parcel and returning, you would have traveled over 834 miles. Land monitoring entails hiking to the parcels four corners, taking a picture of the North, South, East, and West at each point, before moving on to the center point where additional pictures are taken. Our Citizen Scientists document wildlife sightings,

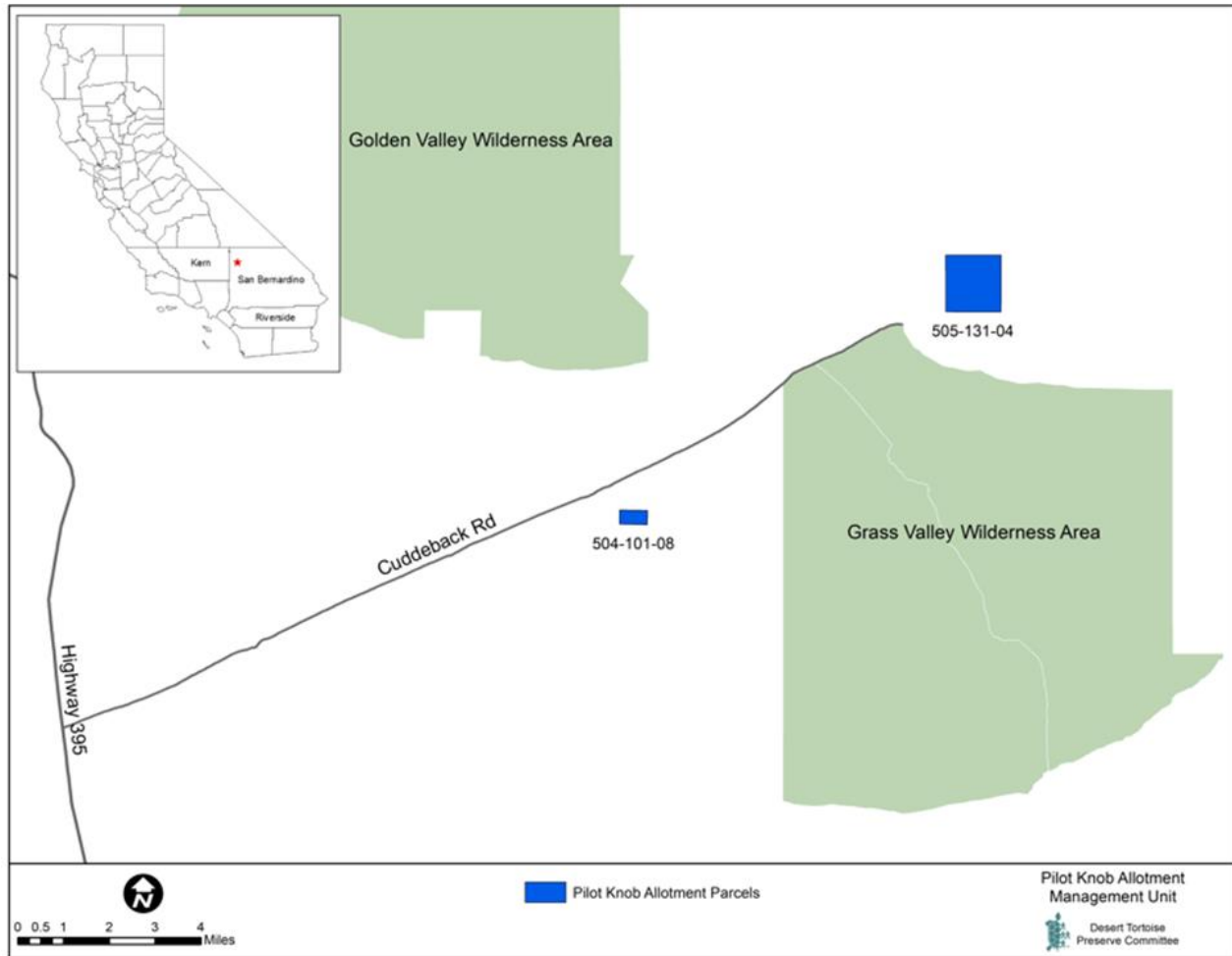
## Annual Land Monitoring (continued)



*This map shows the complexity we face in land monitoring the DTRNA that is made up of both DTPC and BLM conservation land as well as parcels we own outright, and some we have yet to acquire.*

burrows, weather, invasive species, and any illegal incursions that may have damaged fencing or signs. This year marked a significant milestone for the organization as Steve Ishii, Map Guru and Friend of the Desert Tortoise, launched cutting edge software called Survey 123 to collect all of our monitoring data. This allows monitoring to be completed on a simple app that can be downloaded to the volunteers phone and printed into reports we use to guide grant proposals and land management plans. Like many non-profits, we have a small staff to accomplish all of our goals with land management being entirely the responsibility of the Preserve Manager & Preserve Coordinator, Ellie Baker. How does she manage to monitor all 326 parcels in 365 days? VOLUNTEERS! We rely on volunteers to help with land monitoring and citizen science. This year we had an outpouring of support from superstar volunteers Bonny Ahern and Craig Bansmer who generously drove 1,200

## Annual Meeting - January 29, 2022



miles and volunteered 37 hours to monitor our wilderness parcels in Harper Dry Lake, Ivanpah Valley, and the Piute Mountains. Rachel Woodard, Secretary and Vice President of the DTPC Board of Directors trekked into the most remote interior parcels of the DTRNA volunteering 50 hours and often hiking in excess of 10 miles a day. Rachel's extensive hiking within the DTRNA highlights just how large the Natural Area truly is. Rachel, an experienced, no-nonsense hiker, moving as quickly as any human being could, in 50 + hours of hiking, still couldn't cover the entire expanse. It is both awesome and awe inspiring. Kathy Simon, DTPC Board member, volunteered 40+ hours of her time to monitor rural parcels. New to land monitoring volunteerism this year, Maribel Lopez spent 7 hours exploring our Shadow Mountain parcels. In addition to creating maps for our G-19 restoration, and the annual land monitoring, Steve Ishii donated 470 hours of his time to building new software, creating maps (included in this report), and processing reports. Gratitude to Mary Logan for her 40 + hours of volunteering. Why become a land monitoring volunteer? If you enjoy driving into the wilderness and hiking through a variety of mountain and desert ranges, then this is the perfect fit for you. You can make a difference in the future of the tortoise by volunteering to maintain their protected lands. Many of our volunteers send pictures of the amazing territories and wildlife they have access to on these expeditions. 2022 land monitoring projects are being planned now, please contact Ellie Baker at [dtpc.preserve.manager@tortoise-tracks.org](mailto:dtpc.preserve.manager@tortoise-tracks.org) for more information.



# January 29, 2022



We invite you to attend our Annual Meeting, which this year will be held on Zoom, at 10am Pacific time on Saturday morning, January 29<sup>th</sup> 2022. For those who have not joined us in the past, or are new members, our Annual Membership meeting is an invitation for you to have a front row seat in a review of our organization's work in 2021 hosted by your President, Ron Berger. Guest speakers include: Mary Logan, our G-19 grant Project Manager, providing a report on our multi-year restoration project, Sophia Osho, Executive Administrator, providing insight in our day to day operations, and special projects, Jun Lee, Director of Land Acquisition, outlining the strategies and outcomes of 2021, Eleanor Baker, Preserve Manager and Conservation Coordinator, outlining her 2022 plan for the Naturalist season and beyond, our featured speaker Steve Ishii, Map Guru and Friend of the Desert Tortoise, has new technology advancements to present that we are excited for you to see. Developments in Raven Control and Road Mortality will be discussed by Kerry Holcomb, Fish & Wildlife Biologist with the United States Fish and Wildlife Service. Carl Symons, Field Manager of the Bureau of Land Management (BLM), Ridgecrest Field Office, partner to the DTPC, will describe what comes next in 2022. To participate, we will need your email address. Please be sure to provide it to Sophia Osho at [dtpc@tortoise-tracks.org](mailto:dtpc@tortoise-tracks.org) or mail your information to us with the form below. Once you have signed up you will be emailed your Zoom invitation on Friday, January 28<sup>th</sup>. As an integral part of this organization, we would love for you to join us in celebrating all that we have accomplished together and all that we continue to work towards.

## ANNUAL MEETING REGISTRATION

Email \_\_\_\_\_ Name \_\_\_\_\_

**Our Mailing Address:** PO Box 940, Ridgecrest, CA 93556



Dedicated to the recovery and conservation of the Desert Tortoise (*Gopherus agassizii*) and other rare and endangered species inhabiting the Mojave and western Sonoran deserts.

**The Desert Tortoise  
Preserve Committee, Inc.**  
Founded 1974

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Tortoise Tracks is published  
four times a year.

## Rhubarb & Mike, A Very Special Friendship

Over 70 years ago, a seven year old boy was riding his bicycle in a Hollywood, CA neighborhood when he saw someone get out of a car and toss a rock into the bushes next to the parking lot. Curious, he walked over and saw that the 'rock' was moving. It was, in fact, an apparently unwanted pet desert tortoise. Concerned that the tortoise would find its way on to the parking lot and be run over, our boy walled the tortoise in with garbage cans, and raced to his grandparents' home, where he begged his grandmother to drive back with him to save the tortoise. She agreed, and they brought it home. There, his grandfather placed the tortoise in his fenced back yard. The next morning, the grandfather was quite angry, as apparently the tortoise ate the rhubarb he had painstakingly been growing. The tortoise hereafter was named 'Rhubarb.' Mike, Rhubarb's savior, is a few years older now but he never forgot being a witness to such cruelty, and the joy of having saved Rhubarb. Thank you, Mike.

*\*DTPC does not condone removing tortoises from the wild and opposes re-introducing pet tortoises into the wild. However, saving a pet tortoise such as Rhubarb is wonderful!*

## Introducing Ellie Baker - Preserve Manager

Eleanor Baker (Ellie) joins us in the new year all the way from North Carolina, and is excited to be the newest member of the DTPC team! She earned her Bachelors and Masters in Biology from East Carolina University in North Carolina, and her background is in ecological research and conducting field work studying larval treefrog species. Ellie is passionate about protecting habitat and educating the public on the importance of preserving natural landscapes and the numerous species that call them home, especially threatened species of amphibians and reptiles. She is thrilled to have the opportunity to help further desert tortoise conservation efforts, and hopes to contribute toward new research and management goals in a significant way.



Ellie Baker



Ellie Baker & Sophia Osho in the Ridgcrest Office



## Spiritual Creature

While driving to a friend's home in rural Placerville, CA, Christine and Bob saw Webster walking across the dirt road near the home of their friend. Worrying that this roaming tortoise might get run over, they stopped to move him away from the road to safety. They immediately noticed that his shell had been cracked, but also very expertly repaired with some stainless-steel wire on his right side, and he had a USFWS tag on his shell as well.

Clearly, they recognized, the tortoise was someone's pet that had gotten loose. They put Webster in the back of their Jeep in hopes of locating his local home. Unfortunately, the tag was mostly illegible, so finding his owner through the USFWS was simply impossible. Undaunted, Christine and Bob went from house to house in the farm and ranch area inquiring, trying to locate Webster's owner. They covered a broad area. But to no avail. Concerned that left on or near the road he would ultimately be run over, they brought him to their home in the San Francisco Bay Area and fed and watered him. Then, they took him to see a vet – who fortunately is also a herpetologist and specializes in desert tortoises - in the area where they live. They also registered him with the USFWS themselves. As of



Webster

2021, they've now happily been Webster's guardians for 33 years. He's estimated to be around 75 years old and gets a comprehensive pre- and post-brumation check-up each year. But Webster once managed to escape the safety of Christine and Bob's backyard. (A Placerville replay.) Turns out, Webster walked across their front yard and up the front step to the next-door neighbor's home, and scratched on the door. The neighbors are Chinese. And the Chinese view turtles as spiritual creatures. Curious upon hearing the scratching noises, the lady of the house opened the door. And, knowing that an old Chinese proverb dictated that if a turtle came to your door, you must let it in, for its arrival will channel positive energy to your home, and bring good luck and longevity, she let Webster in. He, in turn, walked straight across the house to the sliding glass doors leading to their back yard. She opened the door, and out went Webster into her backyard. Frantically searching for Webster, Christine and Bob rang their neighbor's doorbell, asking if she had seen a tortoise. She excitedly showed them to her back yard, and told them the story of how Webster came to be there. And as for that good luck that arrives at your home when you let the turtle in: On that day, the neighbor's husband was unemployed. Two weeks later, he landed a great new job.

## Hiring for the 2022 Naturalist Season

Through our generous partnership with the BLM spring at the Desert Research Natural Area is a special time of year, not only for the Desert Tortoise who is out enjoying the seasons flowers, but also our visitors who tour with our onsite Naturalist. The Naturalist season runs from early March thru the first week of June. Temporary Being the Naturalist requires a love of nature & helping our guest explore and learn about the complex ecosystems of the desert. If you, or someone you know, would like to join our team please follow this link to our website for additional details: [Naturalist Position](#)



## Tortoise Photographed in the Wild



Photo by Daniel Akela Aruthur

### Receive the *Tortoise Tracks* Newsletter Electronically



Sign up to receive the *Tortoise Tracks* newsletter electronically! Recipients will obtain the newsletter immediately after publication and will be able view the beautiful pictures in each edition in **COLOR**. This method reduces paper usage, reduces our costs, is better for our environment, and allows us to better spend our limited capital on tortoise recovery.

To receive electronic copies of the newsletter, please notify us by email at [dtpc@tortoise-tracks.org](mailto:dtpc@tortoise-tracks.org).

**GO GREEN**

### Special Update:

The Tortoise Tracks Newsletters are now available online! To view current, and past year publications, go to our website [www.tortoise-tracks.org](http://www.tortoise-tracks.org) select the “What’s New” tab and navigate to [Tortoise Tracks Newsletter](#).



# Tortoise Tracks

THE DESERT TORTOISE PRESERVE COMMITTEE  
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## DTPC MEMBERSHIP/CONTRIBUTION FORM

1. YES, I want to help save the threatened desert tortoise and its habitat! Here is my tax-deductible membership contribution of:

- |  |   |   |
|--|---|---|
| <input type="checkbox"/> \$25 Individual | <input type="checkbox"/> \$75 Sponsor     | <input type="checkbox"/> \$200 Patron/Corporate |
| <input type="checkbox"/> \$40 Family     | <input type="checkbox"/> \$100 Benefactor | <input type="checkbox"/> \$1000 Life Membership |

2. My membership is current but here is an additional donation of \$\_\_\_\_\_. Please use it for:

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|---------------------------------------|---|--|
| <input type="checkbox"/> Fencing      | <input type="checkbox"/> Land Acquisition | <input type="checkbox"/> Where Most Needed |
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3. I'd like to help you grow the DTPC Permanent Endowment. Please accept an additional donation of:

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☐ Marketable Securities (Stock): Contact DTPC Finance Committee Chairperson, Greg Lathrop at [2redgrey@gmail.com](mailto:2redgrey@gmail.com) or (415) 637-7187 for assistance

Let's grow the Permanent Endowment!

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Thank you.

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