

TORTOISE T-R-A-C-K-S



THE DESERT TORTOISE PRESERVE COMMITTEE NEWSLETTER +++ SPRING, 1982
P.O.Box 453, Ridgecrest, CA 93555 + Vol. 3, #3 + Gloria Nowak, Editor

A MESSAGE FROM OUR PRESIDENT: The printing of the Spring newsletter has been somewhat delayed in order to discuss the Committee's most recent undertaking in the ongoing battle to maintain the integrity of the Desert Tortoise Natural Area. After careful consideration, having exhausted all administrative avenues, the Committee has found it necessary to file suit against the members of the State Lands Commission (SLC).

Great Western Cities, Inc. (GWC), principal developer of California City, applied to the SLC for the relinquishment of State-held surface entry rights. This was part of the settlement of a 1973 suit against GWC. Following a very incompetently handled environmental impact report (EIR) process, the SLC voted on October 30, 1980 for relinquishment without conditions to protect the habitat or wildlife of the Natural Area. The development site in question, known as the 2nd Community, is immediately adjacent to the eastern border of the Natural Area.

Without a buffer area and barrier fence between the Natural Area and the residential development, pets and children will impact wildlife up to several miles into the Natural Area. Instead of adopting any of the alternative protective measures of a 1-, 2- or 3-mile buffer strip and/or boundary fencing as listed in the EIR and as supported by the Committee, the Desert Tortoise Council, The Nature Conservancy and others, the Commission chose to make an under-the-table agreement with GWC and the Bureau of Land Management. The agreement was a less than token mitigation of GWC deeding to the Bureau a section of land that lies along the common border. The Bureau could then use this to exchange for private holdings within the Natural Area. This alternative was not included in the EIR and was a much weaker one than that which GWC had agreed to in a letter printed in the EIR!

The Commissioners further demonstrated their lack of concern for their duty to the public and the wildlife by the fact that Ken Cory, Mary Ann Graves and Mike Curb each sent a substitute to the decision meeting. Not one official Commissioner was present! Further, the substitutes were supposedly not instructed how to vote. One wonders if they were given any background prior to the decision meeting.

With this suit the Committee seeks to establish the responsibility of public officials to protect California's wildlife and to prevent further SLC action of relinquishment of surface entry rights on the 3rd Community until effective measures have been taken to protect the Natural Area.

The Committee is fortunate to have two outstanding, dedicated attorneys, Joy Lane and Bob Goodrich, donating their time and expertise in handling the suit. The proceedings will be time-consuming and costly.

At this point the most valuable assistance that individuals and groups can provide is in the form of donations to our "legal fund". Please feel free to contact us for more detailed information on the particulars of the suit.

- Laura A. Stockton, President

SOME WORDS OF THANKS: We gratefully acknowledge a contribution of \$150 from the Kern-Kaweah Chapter of the Sierra Club and one for \$100 from

the Pasadena Audubon Society, both for our above-mentioned legal fund; along with some others for a total of \$649 at this writing. Thanks also to those who sent donations to help defray Curt Uptain's research expenses on the Natural Area. Additional thanks to Patrick Doheny, Ron and Mary Ann Henry, and Alan Baldwin for gifts of \$100 each; to an anonymous couple for \$200; to the San Bernardino Chapter, CTTC for \$48; to Louis G. Heinrich of the American River College for \$50; and to the Foothill Chapter, CTTC for a memorial contribution of \$100 in honor of Charles Denny. Thanks also to those who were able to attend our annual banquet-meeting in Lancaster. Again, we regret that space does not permit us to list the names of all donors.

BLM VISITOR REPORT: According to the Ridgecrest office of the Bureau of Land Management, 338 people had signed the guest register at the Interpretive Center on the Natural Area and 457 people either went on guided tours or witnessed the Committee slide program, by the end of March; for a total of 795 since the first of the year till that date.

1982 DTPC OFFICERS: Laura Stockton, President; Elizabeth Forgey, Vice President; Rose Certini, Recording Secretary; Wanda Milliken, Treasurer; Gloria Nowak, Corresponding Secretary.

A WORD FROM OUR PRODUCTS CHAIRMAN: Are you looking for an unusual birthday gift, graduation gift, thank you present? Remember our fund-raising products for those special occasions as well as for yourself. If you plan to visit someone during your vacation trip, our T-shirts or wind chimes can show your appreciation for their hospitality. Also, those shirts belong in your own vacation wardrobe as well. They come in 2 patterns, 4 colors and 7 sizes, so the whole family can wear them. And our postcards and note cards take care of all those thank-you notes nicely. We have handy order blanks for all those items and some others, so let me know what you need.

- Carol Panlaqui

Our next issue will feature a status report on the Natural Area and the various activities taking place in the vicinity. In addition, we will keep you informed of any progress we have made by then toward the protection of the tortoise and its habitat. Best wishes till next time!

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