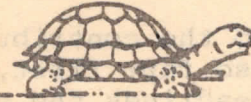


TORTOISE T-R-A-C-K-S



THE DESERT TORTOISE PRESERVE COMMITTEE NEWSLETTER +++ FALL, 1983
P.O. Box 453, Ridgecrest, CA 93555 + Vol. 5, #1 + Gloria Nowak, Editor

From the President's desk: _____

DESERT PLAN AMENDMENT PROCESS--1983 AMENDMENTS

The BLM has proposed 14 amendments to the 1980 Desert Plan and has prepared a draft Environmental Impact Statement. Some of these amendments affect desert tortoise habitat. Our recommendations and rationale for these particular amendments are as follows:

Amendment 7. Support Alternative A, which would designate a new Area of Critical Environmental Concern for the Mojave Fishhook Cactus near Helendale. Tortoise populations and habitat would receive protection in a small area.

Amendment 8. Support Alternative A, which would designate a new Area of Critical Environmental Concern--Alligator Rock--near Desert Center. Although this is an ACEC for cultural and botanical resources, tortoise populations occur here and will receive some protection.

Amendment 9. Support Alternative C, which would reject this amendment. This amendment would establish a year-long ephemeral/perennial cattle grazing allotment (Pilot Knob) in an area with both highly crucial and crucial habitat in the western Mojave Desert. The tortoise would be negatively impacted as a result of overutilization of forage and cover, as well as trampling.

Amendment 10. Support Alternative D, rejection of this amendment. This amendment would expand the Cronese grazing allotment into tortoise habitat where densities are 20-50/sq. mile. Adverse impacts are anticipated to tortoise populations and habitat from loss of forage and cover, as well as trampling.

Amendment 11. Support Alternative C, rejection of this amendment. This amendment would expand the Ord grazing allotment into tortoise habitat with densities of 50-100/sq. mile. Adverse impacts are similar to those described for Amendment 10.

Please write your comments to the BLM before December 9. Send your letters to: California Desert District, Bureau of Land Management, ATTN.: Plan Amendments. 1695 Spruce Street, Riverside, CA 92507.

LAND ACQUISITION UPDATE: The Nature Conservancy has picked up option on 40 acres of private land in the central region of the Desert Tortoise Natural Area. The \$13,000 purchase has been made possible by the many generous donors who have contributed to the Committee's land purchase fund, and by Steve McCormick, California Field Representative, The Nature Conservancy, who arranged for the purchase. Steve will continue to negotiate further land purchases within the limits of monies available in the Committee's fund. This project is of critical concern to the Committee for 3 reasons: 1. There are still almost 11 sections to be acquired; 2. Any private land owner has the right to develop this land at any time; and 3. The BLM has currently backed off from its commitment to negotiate land exchanges.

As to the contributors whose generosity is responsible for the progress achieved so far: first, the editor sincerely regrets that due to the pressure of deadlines the names of Norman Edmonston, Mrs. Rosemary Krabbe, Mr. & Mrs. Dan Milne and Janetta M. Young were inadvertently omitted from the list which was published in the last issue. We now add the following names to that list: Mrs. Jerry Silbertrust, Patrick Schiller, Therese L. Christenson, Joan Beitzel, Karen Skolnik, George & Pat Machado, Mr. & Mrs. J. S. Palmisano, Mrs. Louis M. Robin, Ruby & Bill Jenkins, Jill Robison, Kay A. Booth, Felice Rood, Lori Humphreys, Rex & Betty Mason, Richard L. Penk, Kathryn J. Anderson, Alan M. McCready, Ceroma Ballsun, Mrs. M. A. Machris, Elisabeth Zall, Ginger Cullen, Patrick A. Doheny, Dianne Dickover, Muriel E. Manhart and Dorothy D. Elm. The Committee is deeply grateful for their donations, in amounts ranging from \$5.00 to \$500.00. In addition, we have recently received contributions of \$2,000 each from the Orange County and Westchester Chapters of the California Turtle & Tortoise Clubs; and \$250 from the Foothill Chapter. There are no adequate words to express our appreciation for all the help and support that has come from the CTTC Chapters.

COMMITTEE LAWSUIT AGAINST STATE LANDS COMMISSION: One of our able attorneys, who is donating her time and talents the cause, has submitted this latest update on the Committee's ongoing legal action to protect the DTNA from encroachment by the expansion of California City:

THE TORTOISE WON AGAIN IN COURT! The Court of Appeal in Fresno agreed with Judge Bowles of Kern County Superior Court by upholding his ruling in favor of the Desert Tortoise Preserve Committee. The Committee went to court to force the State to answer questions and admit certain facts in connection with our lawsuit against the State Lands Commission for their failure to protect the Natural Area in their dealings with California City. The State tried to thwart the Committee's efforts, but the courts would not sanction their refusal to reply. The State is now under order from both the local and appellate court to respond to our requests.

The legal victories of the tortoise have received regular news coverage over Channel 3 in Bakersfield (KERO-TV). The station has excellent film footage of the Natural Area, including a close-up of a very dignified shell-clad resident contentedly munching his greenery while the legal battles swirl around him.

We are now waiting for the State's replies, to continue prosecution of the lawsuit.
- Joy Lane

Once again, our gratitude for all the encouragement and financial help we have received, and a reminder that copies of previous issues of the newsletter explaining the background of all this will be sent on request.

ANNUAL BANQUET PREVIEW: Our banquet-meeting this year will be on Saturday, January 28th, in the San Fernando Valley. Further information, directions and a reservation blank will appear in the winter issue. Our dinner speaker will be E. Philip (Phil) Pister of Bishop. He will give an illustrated program entitled "Freeway to Extinction: Man's Earthly Dominion in the 1980's." Phil is noted nationally for his work with the Desert Fishes Council. He is a graduate of the University of California at Berkeley and is a Fishery Biologist with the California Department of Fish & Game. In 1978, Phil received an American Motors Award for his conservation efforts. This will be a fascinating program, so plan now to attend!

Please plan also to remember our fund-raising products when you make out your Christmas list, and order early! BEST HOLIDAY WISHES!!!