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## 2005-2007 Final Project Report

### **LEAD AGENCY**

**National Park Service**



### **Project Type, Title and Number**

**Law Enforcement Project 495**

### **Species Addressed**

The primary species being monitored under this program is the desert tortoise as identified in the 1994 Desert Tortoise Recovery Plan. However, numerous other covered, threatened, watch list, or evaluation species were monitored and protected.

### **Summary Project Description**

Lake Mead Rangers performed law enforcement and resource protection activities within their jurisdiction in Clark County, Nevada. Patrols focused on areas of significant tortoise habitat, Desert Wildlife Management Areas and lands designated as Intensely Managed (IMA's). The purpose of these patrol efforts was to educate the public, detect illegal activities, investigate crimes on public lands and provide a safe experience for the visiting public. Additionally, rangers took proactive steps to curb and deter further resource damage through signing, barrier construction and focused, multi-ranger patrols.

### **Project Status**

Two permanent, full-time law enforcement ranger positions were funded, hired, trained, equipped and patrolled the Lake Mead NRA DWMA and IMA's during this contract period. These two positions will be lost at the end of this contract term. All equipment purchased will become part of Lake Mead's property system. This project ended on June 30, 2007.

## **Project Accomplishments**

During this and previously funded bienniums, Lake Mead saw a significant reduction in the numbers of destructive off-road activities. Rangers were able to apprehend several violators in the act and recoup actual damage amounts in court. Rangers also wrote many resource theft citations for cactus, mesquite, rocks, and reptile species along with successfully investigating commercial dumping and illegal commercial guiding within the Management Areas. In addition, thousands of feet of illegal vehicle tracks were removed and hundreds of barriers were installed to keep additional resource damage from occurring in high use areas. Finally, numerous tortoises were prevented from being killed or injured on both paved and unpaved roads through actions taken by rangers.



Reproduction in the River Mountains April 2006

## **Partners and/or Subcontractors**

US Forest Service, Bureau of Land Management

## **Agency Project Contact**

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## **Funding Amount Awarded**

\$416,530.00

## **Funding amount Spent**

\$366,530.00 as of June 1, 2007

## **Contract Term**

07/01/2005 through 06/30/2007



Foot patrol of Rattlesnake Spring in Newberry Mountains 3/07.

## **Introduction**

### **Project Description**

Resource patrols and public education contacts utilizing traditional law enforcement patrol methods, investigative techniques and proactive interactions with visitors.

### **Project Background and Need**

Law enforcement was identified as crucial in 1994 and again in 2004 as part of the habitat conservation and recovery plans involving the desert tortoise within Clark County. Law enforcement was further identified as an essential management tool in the MSHCP to ensure that implemented management actions were protected and enforced.

Due to explosive growth in the Las Vegas Valley and surrounding areas, impacts to habitat have been expanding, jeopardizing the viability of threatened and listed species. Impacts include, but are not limited to: dumping, litter, off-highway vehicle tracks and trails, commercial collection and large numbers of visitors.

Through this project's funding and the field work of law enforcement rangers under this program, monitoring, protection and public education duties were to be carried-out.

### **Management Actions Addressed**

NPS(22)-Prohibit destructive collecting techniques

NPS(25)-Prohibit commercial collection

NPS(27)-Prohibit recreational shooting

NPS(29)-Prohibit woodcutting and shrub clearing

NPS(30)-Remove feral animals

NPS(32)-Ensure that adequate law enforcement is implemented

NPS(33)-Protect existing stands of mesquite and catclaw

NPS(35)-Manage rock climbing

NPS(36)-Enforce existing prohibition of collecting and deter poaching

NPS(39)-Monitor and protect water sources

NPS(42)-Prohibit commercial ATV tours

NPS(51)-Assure full and continuing implementation of existing management policies and actions

### **Goals and Objectives**

Through a combination of traditional techniques, law enforcement rangers will increase the public's knowledge of responsible and appropriate use in the managed areas within the park.

Six goals were identified for this project:

- #1. Park rangers will document illegal activities and take appropriate enforcement actions
- #2. Park rangers will assist with conservation projects and monitor effectiveness
- #3. Park rangers will educate the public on appropriate and responsible use
- #4. Install, replace and increase the numbers of barriers, signs and public education information in key locations
- #5. Park rangers will deter illegal activities that disturb or degrade sensitive species and habitat through traditional law enforcement techniques
- #6. Park rangers will pursue restitution and penalties by utilizing our Resource staff and Law Enforcement Specialist

### **Methods and Materials**

The two law enforcement rangers utilized traditional law enforcement techniques to patrol sensitive lands on foot, by four-wheel drive vehicle, boat or motorcycle. Rangers also paired-up on patrols to focus efforts in targeted areas.

Documentation of work performed was captured on agency report forms and input into a central database. These reports also included public contacts, violations, damage assessments and off-highway vehicle contacts. Rangers also worked closely with resource staff to restore identified lands and install barriers and signs.

Where necessary, appropriate law enforcement actions were taken, damage assessments were conducted and/or public education contacts were made to assure proper use of the resource.

### **Results and Evidence of the Results**

#### **Objectives Completed**

Rangers conducted at least 951 patrols for over 3,009 hours spent in resource protection duties during the 2005-2007 Biennium. More than 5,000 visitors were contacted in backcountry areas during this time period that are now more aware of issues regarding protection of the fragile desert landscape and species that inhabit it.

Through the application of MSHCP funds, there was an increased law enforcement presence in areas that may not have otherwise seen a high number of ranger patrols. Presence of law enforcement serves as a major deterrent to illegal activities and helps the public identify with the lands they are using for their recreational pursuits.

Please see the following Tables:

**Table I-Resource Related Incidents on IMA lands within LMNRA**

Destruction/Damage/Vandalism:	
-Cultural	10
-Natural	30
-Government property	52
-Private property	73
Sensitive animals	4
Sensitive plants	14
Arson-wildland	1
Off-road travel	275
Camping violations	233
Metal detectors	42
Dumping/Litter	226
Illegal hunting activities	2
Illegal Grazing	6

**Table II-Misc. Public-use Incidents on IMA lands within LMNRA**

Alcohol violations (incl. Under the Influence)	160
Drug violations (possession, use, paraphernalia)	88
Fireworks	42
Disorderly conduct	33
Speeding	401
Weapons	46
Commercial Use violations	23
Assaults	21

**Table III-Public Contacts**

Informational contacts	5,000+
Verbal warnings	>800
Citations	301

**Table IV-Miscellaneous Management Actions**

Signs installed or replaced	>100
“No Motor Vehicle” <i>carsonites</i>	>100
Misc. barriers*	>1,400+
Unlawful off-road tracks raked-out	>3,900 ft.
Saturation Patrols (6 or more Rangers)	14

**\*Joint effort with resource staff**

*Totals represent period July 1, 2005 to June 30, 2007*

## **Evaluation/Discussion of Results**

These charts show that law enforcement rangers were visible and engaging with the public. Increases in some areas over the last biennium show that rangers are being more visible and engaging in problem areas within the IMA's.

It can also be said that after several biennium's, rangers have learned to concentrate and shape their patrols to be more effective during the times they are out in the field. This is particularly true of areas outside of Boulder City, the Henderson side of the River Mountains and backcountry areas south of SR165, the Nelson Road. These are all high density tortoise habitats.

Table II. is shown because these types of incidents are indirect causes of habitat destruction and lead to other resource incidents such as off-road travel, theft of resources, hazardous material dumping, etc. When we can address the root causes of habitat destruction, we prevent the loss.

Benefits not shown by these tables include a close working relationship between the resource management division restoration crew and field staff, so that resource incidents can be dealt with effectively and in a timely manner. This prevents further incidents from occurring. Rangers and resource staff work side by side on protection and restoration projects which encourages rangers to take a stake in protecting park resources.

Two years ago we began tracking OHV (off-highway vehicle) contacts and recorded more than 130 during the contract term. Most of these contacts were people operating on the road system within the park, but who were uniformed of park regulations. These types of contacts, which emphasize the protection ethic and tread lightly principles, have long-term positive benefits for the desert ecosystem.

Three significant resource destruction cases were made during the biennium which resulted in more than \$3,000 in total assessments to responsible individuals. These cases are extremely hard to make. The ranger must be in the right place at the right time; perform a proper investigation; coordinate efforts with a resource person to complete a timely damage evaluation; write a good report and testify credibly in court.

## **Conclusion**

Fewer field staff from the loss of this funding mean less frequent patrols in the IMA's and reduced ability to enforce and protect management actions taken on behalf of the tortoise and other species.

## **Recommendations**

Restore the contract under a different funding source to maintain the field level protection activities that were called for under the Desert Tortoise Recovery Plan.

## **Literature Cited**

None.

## Project Review

*What measurable goals were set for this project and what indicators did you use to measure your performance? To what extent has your project achieved these goals and levels of performance?*

There were six goals for this period that focused on resource protection. All six goals were achieved. The goals were measured through completion of agency reports, forms, court testimony, successful prosecutions, numbers of patrols, patrol hours, visitor contacts made and resource work projects.

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Seven Milestones were identified that related mainly to the hiring, training and productivity of the rangers paid for under this contract. There was an additional Milestone which addressed partnering with officers/rangers from the other federal land management agencies and developing an operations manual for this effort. All eight Milestones were accomplished.

The biggest success from partnering with other land management agencies was the performance of saturation and joint patrols among field officers within Lake Mead NRA. This brought large numbers of officers to the park to address resource protection problems that also became safety issues for visitors. Joint patrols were two man units that allowed rangers/officers to learn each others areas of concern, resource issues and protection measures taken. They also served to form bonds between officers, agencies and missions and had the added benefit of getting officers familiar with large areas outside their normal patrol routine. Information obtained from officers was shared among agency personnel and relayed to appropriate levels of responsibility. This interagency teamwork brought attention from the Federal Law Enforcement Training Center which has used our model to enhance their learning objectives and reinforce the resource protection component of training.

*Did the project encounter internal or external challenges? How were they addressed? Was there something Clark County could have done to assist you?*

The biggest challenge encountered was the reconfiguration of the IMC during the middle of the biennium and the role of the science team in assisting us with our project.

The IMC issue was not something we had control to change. The science team began working more closely with us during this biennium to develop better methods of data collection. However, due to changes in the IMC structure, the science team had to terminate their work with us on the project.

The second issue that seemed to have an impact on the project was the disagreement between agencies and the County over the Data Collection Guide and what information was to be delivered. This issue was, again, beyond the control of individuals under this contract. Possibly tied to this same issue was the request by multiple individuals within the County for documents and information not within the contract requirements.

In this regard, it seemed the County administration was not communicating effectively internally on these matters. Possibly the County could reduce the number of oversight layers dealing with each project. It would also help to have project leads meet with the County personnel responsible for processing information. This always helps to establish a positive work relationship and build trust.

*What lessons were learned from the project?*

In looking back, there was a disadvantage to law enforcement in not having personal representation on the IMC, or on the AMST. Law enforcement is not a discipline that is easily measurable in a resource protection context. I think all too often it was being weighed in the same model as traditional scientific studies. Some type of adjustment or model must be developed to accommodate and then record law enforcement successes and failures in resource protection. It would be interesting to measure what changes occur to habitat from the point at which this contract has ended, due to the lesser presence of law enforcement protection staff in the field.

*What impact do you think the project has had to date?*

The most important impact our project has had over a ten year period is the prevention or mitigation of resource destruction within the park. The presence of rangers in the field and their dedication to resource work has reduced the amount and severity of habitat damage through both public education efforts and proactive law enforcement actions.

*Are there any additional research or efforts that would complement or add to your project that could be conducted?*

If someone were to undertake a masters or doctorate, it would be helpful to the program to develop a resource law enforcement thesis that measures how law enforcement practices are improving habitat protection. A field study might be developed using a control area and some scientifically verifiable data.