



# Tortoise Tracks



The Desert Tortoise Preserve Committee, Inc.

Fall 2016 36:3



## LAND MANAGEMENT

### Close to 2,700 Acres of Tortoise Habitat to be Protected—Part 1

- by Jill Estrada

Two restoration projects will be underway this fall to protect and begin the multi-year restoration process for almost 2,700 acres of tortoise habitat adjacent to the Desert Tortoise Research Natural Area.

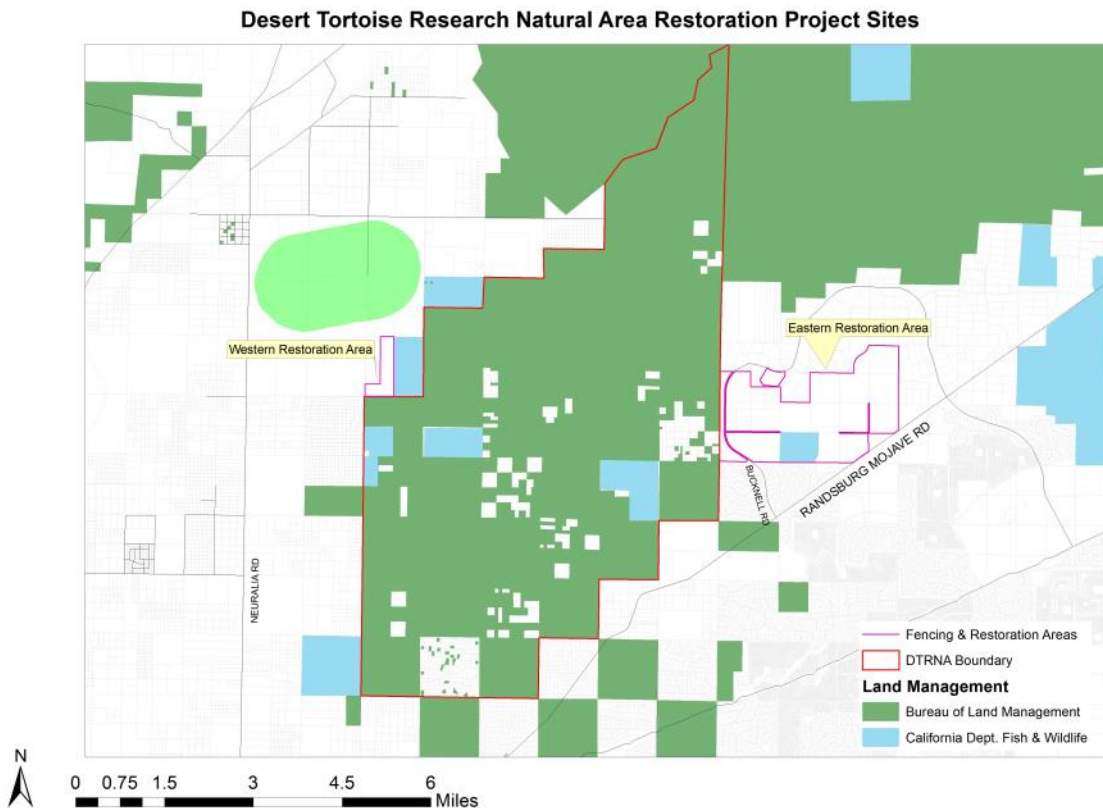
Protective fencing will be installed and activities such as trash removal, non-native plant removal, soil compaction, and vertical mulching will take place.

Two years ago, the Desert Tortoise Preserve Committee took on a mitigation account for the Springbok Solar Farms that were built by 8minutenergy Renewables, next to the DTRNA. Through collaboration with the company, we have been able to acquire more tortoise habitat to be added to the current Eastern and Western boundary lines of the DTRNA, conduct biological surveys that began this past summer, and fund restoration for the acquired properties. In addition, the Desert Tortoise Preserve Committee was recently awarded a restoration grant from the California Parks and Recreation Off-Highway Motor Vehicle Recreation

Division. This grant program uses OHV recreation green sticker money to manage recreational trails, provide education and safety training for OHV users, and restore land that has been negatively affected by unauthorized off-road vehicles.

Approximately 2,500 acres of land East of the DTRNA has been subjected to heavy use by unauthorized off-highway vehicles, camping, and illegal sheep grazing. Decades of these incursions have drastically altered the suitability of this land for wildlife. Due to extensive human use, the land East of the DTRNA is partially denuded (large areas of open dirt where shrubs have been extirpated). Off-road vehicle trails can be seen crossing the land in every direction and sheep scat can be found dispersed throughout the area. In contrast, within the protection of the DTRNA, one will find numerous creosote bushes as well as hundreds of other important plant species that support animal life.

The activities that will occur this fall are the first steps to a lengthy restoration process that will result in reversing the degradation of the area and expanding the protected tortoise habitat of the Desert Tortoise Research Natural Area. With the efforts of keeping out illegal trespassers, removing trash, and restoring the plant life to a more natural species composition, we are confident that populations of desert tortoises, Mojave ground squirrels, kit foxes, badgers, and numerous other species can begin to thrive without these added threats. While these projects bring us one step closer to fulfilling our mission of recovering the desert tortoise and other sensitive species, there remains much work to be done. We must continue the fight to protect desert tortoise habitat and remove as many human-related threats as we can. All of our members and supporters have helped us reach this point in tortoise conservation and we will continue to do our best to protect the Mojave Desert, with your help.



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**Jillian Estrada**

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## The Desert Tortoise Preserve Committee, Inc.

Founded 1974

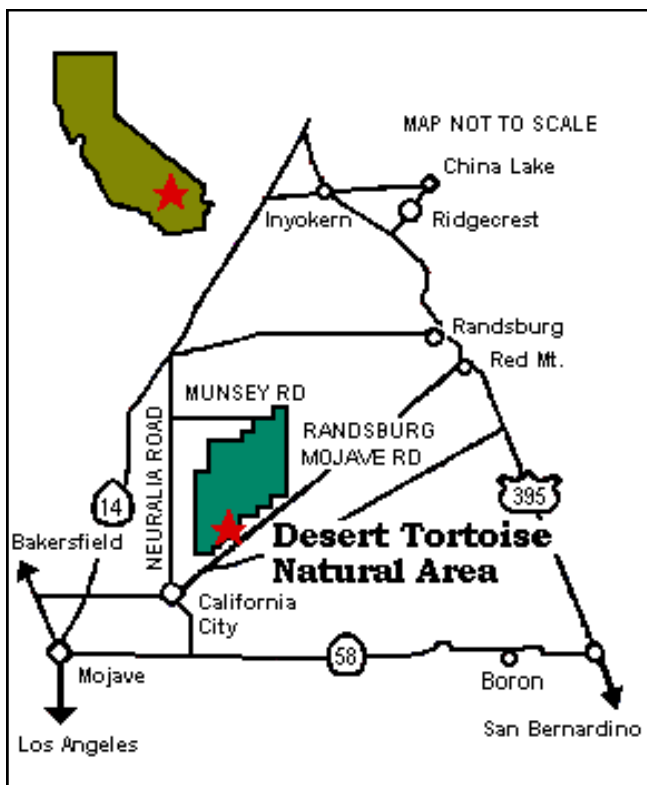
### Board of Trustees

President	Ron Berger
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Board Member	Greg Lathrop
Board Member	Freya Reder
Board Member	Dave Zantiny

Please join us for the  
**Desert Tortoise Preserve Committee  
 Annual Fall Work Party**

**Saturday, October 22  
 from 9am to 2pm to  
 Sunday, October 23  
 from 10am to 3pm at the  
 Desert Tortoise Research  
 Natural Area**

Saturday night will consist of optional camping for those who wish to participate



Help out with valuable stewardship projects, while learning more about the desert ecosystem and enjoying the outdoors!

If you are interested in participating on one or both days, please call (951) 683-3872 or email [dtpc@pacbell.net](mailto:dtpc@pacbell.net)

A lot of the land management we do could not be done without our dedicated volunteers. Tasks such as trash removal, fence surveying and repair, weed control, land monitoring, and outreach event attendance help us manage our land and gain more support. Here are a few upcoming opportunities that are in need of volunteers.

### Upcoming Volunteer Opportunities:

October 8: Wildlife Conservation Network Expo

*Two to three volunteers are needed to assist our table at the annual Conservation Expo held in San Francisco. Volunteers will have the opportunity to visit booths of other conservation organizations and see presentations from some of the world's leading conservationists.*

October 22-23: Fall Work Party

*A large group of volunteers is needed for one of our biggest stewardship events of the year. The work party will take place in and around the Desert Tortoise Research Natural Area and will feature a camp out Saturday night .*

October - November: Land Monitoring

*Every Spring and Fall are land monitoring seasons. In order to manage our land, we must collect annual data on wildlife that inhabit the land as well as monitor for trespass activities and potentially harmful incursions.*

**If you are interested in volunteering your time for any of these events, please email us at [dtpc@pacbell.net](mailto:dtpc@pacbell.net)**

## DTPC Calendar of Events & Volunteer Opportunities

- **September 17, 2016: DTPC Board Meeting**
- **October 8, 2016: Wildlife Conservation Network Expo (San Francisco, CA)**
- **October 22-23, 2016: Fall Work Party (Desert Tortoise Research Natural Area)**
- **November 5-6, 2016: Desert Tortoise Council Mojave Workshop (Ridgecrest, CA)**  
*Registration can be found at <http://www.deserttortoise.org/>*
- **November 12, 2016: DTPC Board Meeting**
- **November 29, 2016: Giving Tuesday**  
*A day of making charitable donations on the Tuesday after Black Friday.*

**The DTPC would like to thank the following people for contributing to our growing endowment fund:**

Barbara Bane	Marilynn Galaway	Walfrid & Margaret Saarni)
Ron & Carol Berger	Bill & Carol Greene	Mary Shepherd
Kristin Berry	Greg Lathrop	Tom & Kathy Stephens
Michael & Janice Carlile	Frank Lopez	Laura Stockton
Nicholas Cates	June & Donald Lord, Jr.	Faith & Piers Strailey
CTTC– Kern County Chapter	Marc Miyashiro	Dave Zantiny
Mark Faull	Barbara Oddone (in memory of	Lewis Zuelow

## RESEARCH

### THREE PROJECTS UNDERTAKEN AT NATURAL AREA IN SPRING

As part of our long-term conservation planning, we established baseline studies of vegetation in the northwestern and northern part of the Natural Area in late winter. We contracted with botanist **Denise LaBerteaux** of EREMICO, Weldon, California, to collect data for this baseline research on perennial and annual vegetation. Forty permanent transect lines for perennial shrubs and grasses were established at five locations, including a recently acquired parcel in the northwestern edge of the Natural Area. The transects were located at five different elevations, from a low point on the Fremont Valley floor to the northern face of the Rand Mountains. Ms. LaBerteaux's team also collected annual plants in paired samples, one under shrubs and another in the open between shrubs because the plants are likely to be different in each of these microhabitats. There were 500 of these paired samples for annuals. All the work was undertaken in April, usually the key time for annual wildflowers to bloom. Spring came early this year, presenting challenges to the field team to gather data before the wildflowers dried up! The project is now completed and we are reviewing the data sets. This was a massive undertaking and we congratulate Denise and EREMICO for an outstanding job.

As part of mitigation agreements on recently acquired parcels of land in the western and eastern expansion areas, the DTPC contracted with Sunrise Consulting of Redlands, California, for camera trapping surveys in spring for the Mohave ground squirrel and other target species. The parcels were in areas with a long history of off-highway vehicle activities and sheep grazing and are in poor condition. They will be fenced this fall to keep out sheep, vehicles, and other disturbing activities so that long-term recovery of vegetation and the fauna can begin. **Lehong Chow** and **Kathy Simon** undertook the project, and we received a detailed report on the results in August. No Mohave ground squirrels were observed in images from the camera traps, but Antelope ground squirrels, black-tailed jackrabbits, a desert iguana, a desert spiny lizard, whiptail lizards, a zebra-tailed lizard, and a leopard lizard were in the frames. Birds captured by cameras included Horned Lark, Dickcissel, LeConte's Thrasher, Sage Sparrow, and White crowned Sparrow. Woodrats were observed, as well as kangaroo rats, pocket mice, and desert kit fox.

The third project, also associated with mitigation agreements in the western and eastern expansion areas, was with Bajada, LLC, with **Tracy Bailey** of Ridgecrest and **Kemp Anderson** of Seal Beach. They surveyed the parcels for desert tortoises and tortoise sign, predators, composition of vegetation and human impacts. While they found signs of tortoises, they observed no live individuals. They recorded abundant evidence of kit foxes, coyotes, and badgers, as well as ravens, however. We look forward to seeing their report also. As more information becomes available, we will share it and photographs with you.



## OUTREACH

### DTPC Names new Vice-President, Bob Wood

Earlier this year, the Desert Tortoise Preserve Committee board of directors nominated and elected board member Bob Wood as our new vice president. Recently retired, Bob was the Director of Environmental Management at Edwards Air Force Base for more than 27 years, after working as an environmental planner for the US Army Corps of Engineers. Bob has been involved with the committee for 3 years and has brought an incredible amount of leadership and knowledge to our organization. He has not only volunteered to represent DTPC at meetings for various conservation organizations, but also acts as our military advisor as well as primary advisor to the Preserve Manager. Bob is helping to improve administrative organization and has helped us create and implement a long-term strategic plan. Our organization is grateful to have him serving us and thanks him for his dedication to protecting the desert tortoise.

### Announcing New DTPC Merchandise!

We are excited to announce new items that we will be selling online and will be selling during the next naturalist season at the Desert Tortoise Research Natural Area.

Additionally, we will be starting a new t-shirt campaign through bonfirefunds.com, featuring our new logo for the DTRNA. The campaign will run from November 3rd to November 24th. Shirts purchased during the campaign would make a great gift and will be shipped in time for the holidays. More information on the campaign will be made available on our website just before the campaign begins.



Desert Tortoise Plush 8" & 11"

### “Adopt-a-Tortoise” Program

Starting in October, you can symbolically adopt a wild tortoise through our adopt-a-tortoise program! For only \$50.00 adopters will receive a small plush tortoise, an adoption certificate, an 8x10 photo of the adopted tortoise, and a subscription to our e-newsletter. Adopting a tortoise is a great way of contributing to tortoise conservation and also makes a great gift for birthdays and holidays.

### Subscribe to our E-Newsletter

Our electronic newsletter is growing in popularity and we want to see it continue to grow! Every three months, the Desert Tortoise Preserve Committee spends approximately \$1,000 on printing and postage fees for hard copies of Tortoise Tracks. Not only could this money be used towards land acquisition and management, the amount of paper that is used is quite daunting. We would like to reduce our carbon footprint while still providing a quality newsletter to our members. One added benefit of receiving the e-newsletter is that it is provided in color and is received sooner than those that are mailed. If you would like to begin receiving the e-newsletter in place of the hard copy of Tortoise Tracks, please email us at [dtpc@pacbell.net](mailto:dtpc@pacbell.net).



## 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"/> \$20 Individual | <input type="checkbox"/> \$75 Benefactor        |
| <input type="checkbox"/> \$30 Family     | <input type="checkbox"/> \$100 Patron/Corporate |
| <input type="checkbox"/> \$50 Sponsor    | <input type="checkbox"/> \$500 Life Membership  |

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

- |                                       |   |  |
|---------------------------------------|---|--|
| <input type="checkbox"/> Fencing      | <input type="checkbox"/> Land Acquisition | <input type="checkbox"/> Where Most Needed |
| <input type="checkbox"/> Other: _____ |   |  |

3. I'd like to help you grow the DTPC endowment. Please accept an additional donation of:

- |  |   |
|--|---|
| <input type="checkbox"/> \$250   | <input type="checkbox"/> \$2,500        |
| <input type="checkbox"/> \$500   | <input type="checkbox"/> \$5,000        |
| <input type="checkbox"/> \$1,000   | <input type="checkbox"/> Other \$ _____ |
| <input type="checkbox"/> Marketable Securities (Stock): Contact DTPC Finance Committee Chairperson, Greg Lathrop at <a href="mailto:2redgrey@gmail.com">2redgrey@gmail.com</a> or (415) 637-7187 for instruction |   |

Let's get the endowment started!

- I would like my contribution to remain anonymous  
 I would like to receive Tortoise Tracks electronically (please provide email address)

Name: \_\_\_\_\_

Address: \_\_\_\_\_

City: \_\_\_\_\_ State: \_\_\_\_\_ Zip: \_\_\_\_\_

Email Address: \_\_\_\_\_

Please make your check payable to DTPC and mail to:

**Desert Tortoise Preserve Committee**  
**4067 Mission Inn Ave.**  
**Riverside, CA 92501.**

Thank you.

\*All contributors receive the Tortoise Tracks newsletter. The Desert Tortoise Preserve Committee is an IRS recognized tax-exempt 501(c)(3) nonprofit corporation. All contributions and/or annual membership dues are fully tax-deductible. Contributor information is kept confidential and is not disclosed to third parties.

If you would like to renew your membership or donate online, please visit \* [www.tortoise-tracks.org](http://www.tortoise-tracks.org) \*



# Tortoise Tracks

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THE DESERT TORTOISE PRESERVE COMMITTEE  
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**Membership expiration date:**



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**When visiting the desert, always remember to  
check under your vehicle for wildlife.**

