

APPENDIX F

Fort Irwin Desert Tortoise Protection Project Report

January 5, 2009

United States
Department of
Agriculture



Animal and
Plant Health
Inspection
Service

Wildlife Services

San Luis District

P.O. Box 957, Taft,
CA 93268-0957

During fiscal year 2008, USDA APHIS Wildlife Services entered into an agreement with Fort Irwin Army National Training Center. The main objective of Wildlife Services efforts was to protect the threatened and endangered desert tortoises from predation by coyotes in the Southern Expansion Area of the Fort Irwin Desert Tortoise Translocation Project.

On May 19, 2008, an initial site visit was made by Wildlife Services employees. Wildlife Services met with Fort Irwin employees to discuss the goals and expectations of the desert tortoise protection project but was denied permission to lethally remove coyotes until further notice. On May 20, 2008, Wildlife Services was given permission to lethally remove coyotes and began setting equipment and spotlighting to initiate tortoise protection from depredating coyotes. Fourteen padded foothold traps were set to target depredating coyotes. On May 21, 2008, an additional seven traps were set. On May 22, 2008, all foothold traps were removed. Due to adverse weather, no coyotes were removed at this time.

On July 29, 2008, Wildlife Services was again contacted by Fort Irwin and requested to submit an estimate for two weeks of predator control. Wildlife Services wrote a cost estimate for a two week time period and filed the appropriate NEPA paperwork to conduct predator control. On August 12, 2008 Wildlife Services met with the Desert Tortoise Recovery group to discuss protection of the species, and it was determined at this time that the recovery group was not ready to initiate predator control.

On August 18, 2008, a second site visit was made and equipment was set. From August 18th through the 26th, twenty-seven padded foothold traps were set. Two coyotes were removed during this two week control effort, one with padded foothold traps and the other by calling and shooting. One bobcat was captured in a padded foothold trap but was released unharmed upon discovery. On August 29, 2008, Wildlife Services completed the two week desert tortoise protection project.

Wildlife Services personnel spent a total of 253 hours conducting predator control efforts and associated administrative duties. A total of 182 trap nights, 10 call stands and three nights of spotlighting were conducted in an effort to remove coyotes in areas in and adjacent to desert tortoise translocation plots. A trap night is defined as one trap set for one night. Two traps set for one night would be considered two trap nights, etc. A call stand is an attempt to lure a predator to a specific location with the use of distress sounds in an attempt to remove an offending animal. Spotlighting is done by shining a spotlight from a vehicle in an attempt to locate the eye shine of a predator and lethally removing that predator once positive identification can be made.

On October 29, 2008, Wildlife Services met with the Desert Tortoise Recovery group and it was determined that a four year agreement be set to protect the desert tortoise.

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from depredating coyotes. Wildlife Services has put together all necessary paperwork and posted the position in order to fulfill this agreement.

During the 2009 fiscal year, Wildlife Services would like Fort Irwin, the Desert Management Group and the BLM Barstow Field Office to continue to monitor and report all depredation losses and coyote activity. Feel free to contact the San Luis District Supervisor, Eric Covington, at (661) 765-2511 with any questions concerning the Fort Irwin Desert Tortoise Protection Project.

Eric Covington
District Supervisor
USDA Wildlife Services
San Luis District, California



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