

Component 3: Restoration Plan

Restoration plan for site within the Eastern Expansion Area of Desert Tortoise Research Natural Area



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1. Abstract

The Restoration Plan (RP) is a site-specific restoration plan for three contiguous parcels within the EEA of the DTRNA. The RP encompasses a variety of restoration actions based on the best management practices available for desert tortoise recovery and habitat restoration. The ultimate purpose of the RP is to improve and ultimately restore degraded or disturbed habitat to meet the cover, forage and soil needs of the desert tortoise. To achieve this purpose, the RP utilizes the two structures defined in the Guidance Document by organizing the elements into intended goals, restoration actions, and expected outcomes through demonstrating the form, function, stability, and feasibility of restoration at this location. This RP embodies a complete example of how strategic restoration may be completed in the western Mojave Desert, and includes descriptions of actions, monitoring and maintenance efforts, and a breakdown of supply costs which land managers may find helpful.

2. Purpose

The Agassiz's desert tortoise (*Gopherus agassizii*) ('desert tortoise' or 'tortoise') has experienced populations decline an average of 51% in the past ten years (USFWS 2015). Desert tortoise experts are concerned about the feasibility of species recovery if populations continue to decline. Two groups, the Desert Tortoise Council (Council) and the Desert Tortoise Preserve Committee, Inc. (DTPC), seek to increase the viability of desert tortoise populations within the Western Mojave Desert through a combination of science-motivated conservation and restoration actions. Our client, the Council, has requested the development of a restoration plan that focuses on restoration of habitat specifically for the desert tortoise. To this end, three parcels within the Eastern Expansion Area (EEA) of the Desert Tortoise Research Natural Area (DTRNA) were selected for restoration. Due to their highly visible levels of soil and vegetative degradation, proximity to existing habitat (the DTRNA), and potential for partnership with the DTPC, these parcels provide a unique opportunity for tortoise habitat recovery. Additionally, with Randsburg Mojave road crossing through southeastern corners of the restoration site, this area is a potential access point for many disturbances into the rest of the EEA. Restoration efforts at this site could therefore expand potential tortoise habitat, with this restoration site serving as a catalyst for future restoration efforts within the EEA. This restoration plan lays out a framework of goals, actions, and expected outcomes for beginning restoration for approximately 460 acres at this site, as well as the costs of implementing these actions. A copy of this restoration plan may be found on an accompanied CD version and is held by the Council.

3. Significance

The greatest threat to the desert tortoise is habitat loss and degradation from increased human activities, including urbanization, agricultural development, military training, recreation, mining, livestock grazing, and a lack of enforcement of existing regulatory mechanisms (Boarman and Coe 2002, USFWS 2011). Research shows that even after these land-disturbing activities have ceased, their impacts on landscape hydrology, soil and vegetation can persist for many decades (Carpenter et al. 1986, Abella 2010, Berry et al. 2015, 2016). As such, on-the-ground efforts to

preserve and restore habitat are critical for tortoise recovery. Restoration actions have been implemented to restore vegetation in the Mojave Desert region (e.g. Wallace et al. 1980, Abella and Newton 2009, Scoles-Sciulla et al. 2015), but these efforts have not specifically focused on the needs of the desert tortoise (Abella and Berry 2016). This restoration plan is designed specifically to address these needs with habitat considerations of the desert tortoise as the primary targets.

4. Involved Parties

4.1 Desert Tortoise Council

“The Desert Tortoise Council (Council) was established in 1975 to promote conservation of the desert tortoise in the deserts of the southwestern United States and Mexico. The Council is a non-profit organization comprised of hundreds of professionals and laypersons who share a common concern for desert tortoises in the wild and a commitment to advancing the public’s understanding of the species” (deserttortoise.org). The Council is responsible for generating this restoration plan and for partially raising the necessary funds to support its implementation.

4.2 Desert Tortoise Preserve Committee, Inc.

“The Desert Tortoise Preserve Committee, Inc. (DTPC) is a non-profit organization formed in 1974 to promote the welfare of the desert tortoise (*Gopherus agassizii*) in its native wild state. Committee members share a deep concern for the continued preservation of the tortoise and its habitat in the southwestern deserts” (www.tortoise-tracks.org). The DTPC is the owner of land on which this restoration plan is designed for and will be working with the Council to implement the restoration plan.

4.3 Bren School of Environmental Science and Management Master’s Group

The Bren School Master’s Group is working with the Council and DTPC to design a restoration plan for the eastern expansion parcels of the DTRNA. Through the restoration plan, the Group seeks to improve the quality of existing habitat for the desert tortoise and lay the groundwork for future research opportunities with the Council and DTPC.

5. Site Background

The three parcels that comprise the site for this restoration project are under the ownership and management of the DTPC. The site is within the confines of the EEA of the DTRNA, located in the Western Mojave Desert north of California City, California (Figure 1), and consists of three parcels that are approximately 160 acres each. As shown in Figure 2, the parcels can be identified by the following Assessor parcel numbers (APNs): 269-170-06, 269-170-11, and 269-170-12, hereafter referenced as 06, 11, and 12, respectively.

The restoration site consists of three of the four parcels that form Section 16 in the EEA (Figure 2). Two active county roads run partially within the boundaries of the restoration site. Vassar Avenue runs east-west, separating parcels 11 and 12, while Santa Clara Street runs north-south along the boundary between parcels 06 and 11, and Mojave Randsburg Road crosses through the southeastern corners of parcels 06 and 12 (Figure 2). The entire EEA has recently been fenced and all three parcels are within this fence line boundary. Small portions of Parcels 06 and 12 are outside of the established fence line because the fence line does not cross Mojave Randsburg Road. Due to this separation, the actual acreage of these two parcels inside the fence line total 158.9 and 142.75, respectively. For the purpose of this project, the restoration plan will only consider the acreage of the parcels within the fence line, approximately 461.65 acres.

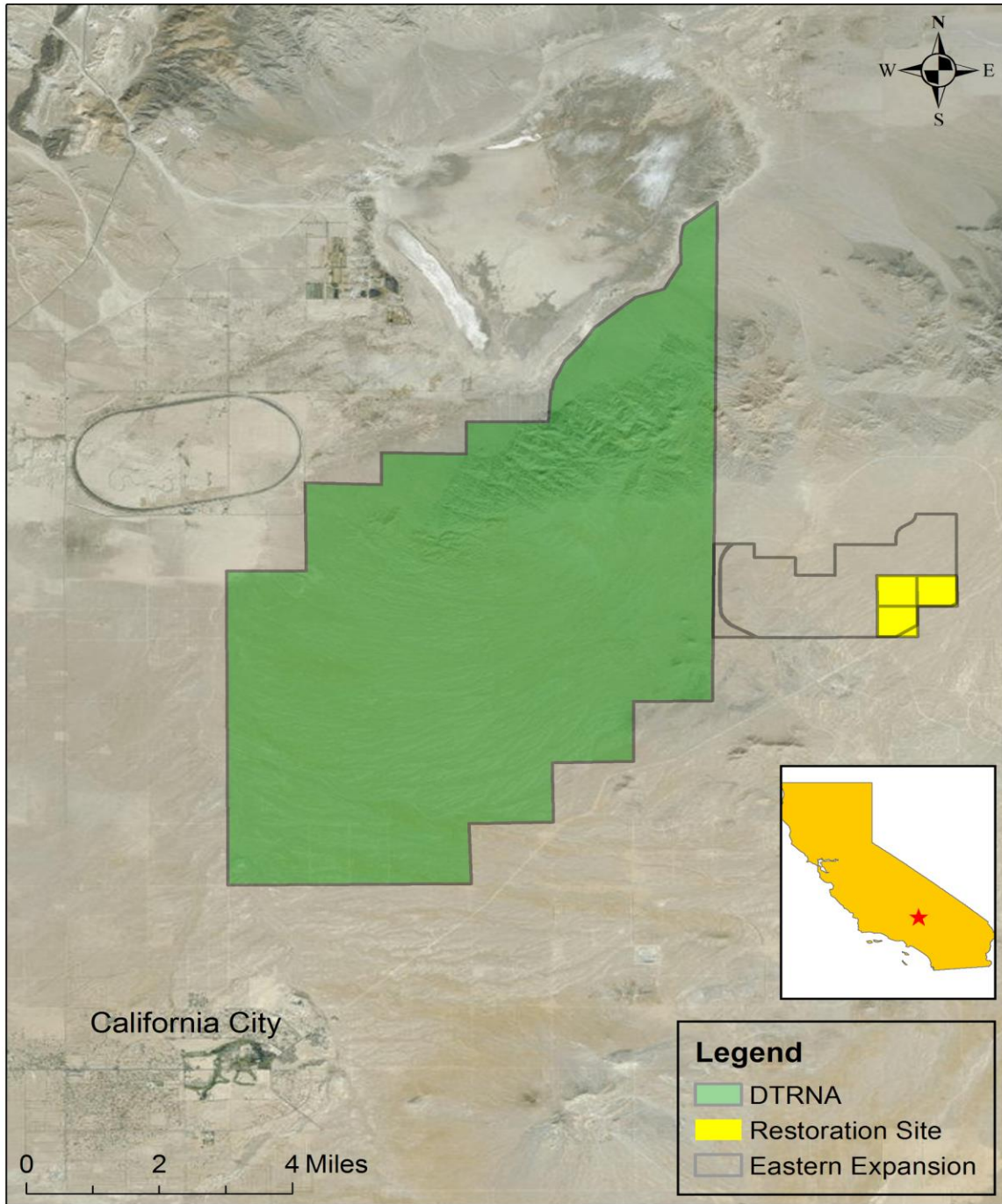


Figure 1. Regional map of the restoration site (yellow) in relation to the EEA (gray outline) and the DTRNA (green), north of California City, CA.

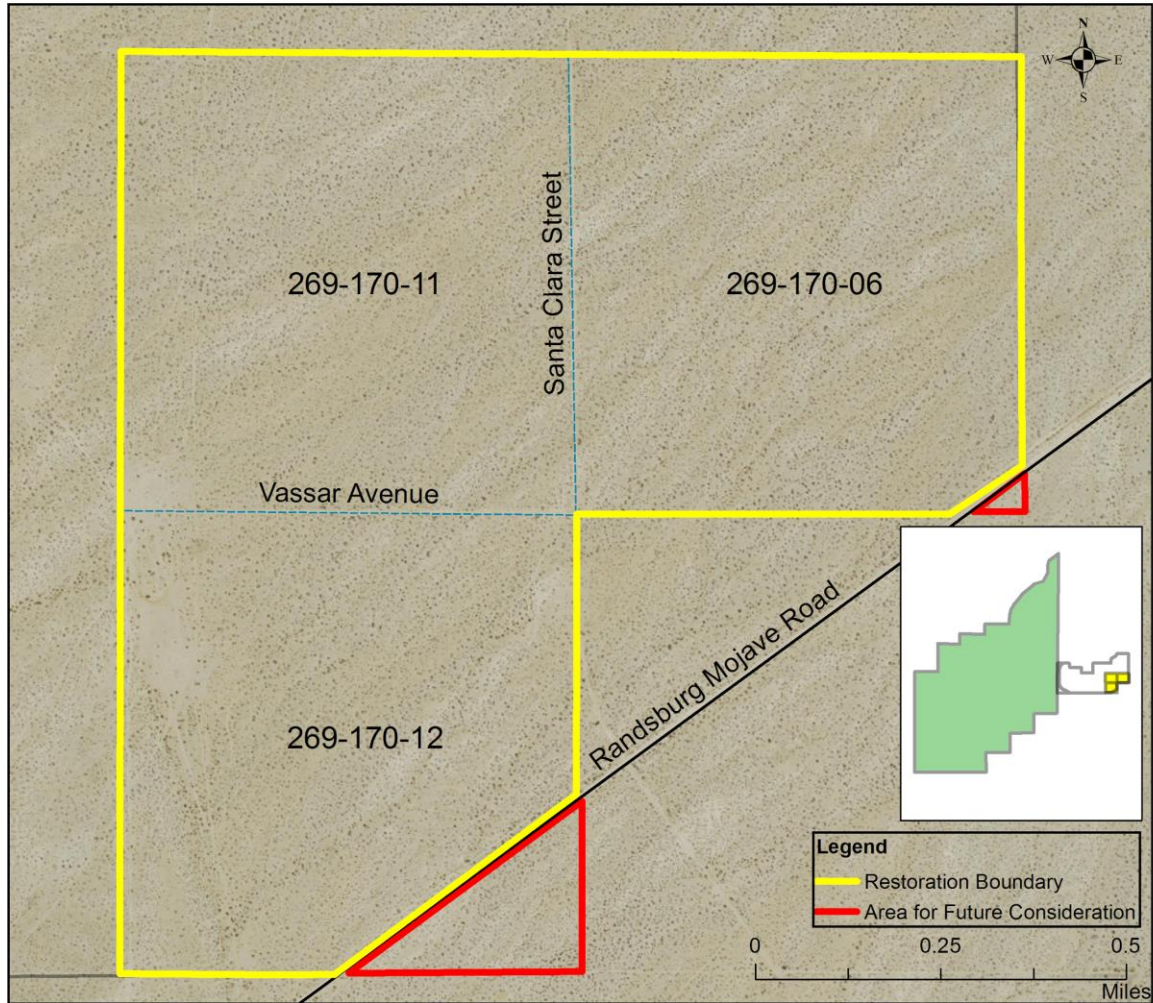


Figure 2. Targeted restoration site (yellow) with parcel labels. Areas outlined in red represent portions of parcels owned by Desert Tortoise Preserve Committee, Inc. that will not be included in the restoration plan. The inset map shows the restoration site (yellow) in relation to the EEA (gray outline) and the DTRNA (green).

5.1 Site Selection

Site selection was based on expert recommendations, levels of current and historic degradation, and proximity to threats. Initial consideration of the DTRNA expansion areas was based on the expert opinion and guidance of Dr. Kristin Berry, Council board member, and Ms. Jillian Estrada, DTPC's Conservation Coordinator and DTRNA Preserve Manager. The site within Section 16 of the EEA was recommended by Ms. Jillian Estrada due to the need for restoration with high densities of off-highway vehicle (OHV) traffic and severe denudation, in addition to the site's unique location at the eastern edge of the EEA.

This site in particular is distinct because of its proximity to Randsburg Mojave Road and the presence of Vassar Avenue and Santa Clara Street running through the parcels. Parcels 06 and 12 have the boundaries of their fence line directly adjacent to Randsburg Mojave Road, which means these parcels have had increased contact with access threats, specifically with OHV users. The presence of the road so close to the site may have led to increased disturbance of soils and spread of nonnative plant species into the site and the rest of the EEA. Restoring this site will allow for a more stable native plant community to better resist future disturbances and stressors.

This site is also a good candidate for habitat restoration because the existing vegetation alliances, although sparse and degraded, are preferred by the desert tortoise. A survey conducted by the DTPC in 2015 found that creosote and white bursage were common throughout the site. In addition, the survey found tortoise sign in Parcels 06 and 11, therefore, highlighting the potential for the site to be restored for tortoise (DTPC 2015). Through restoration, this site's viability for desert tortoise habitat should be increased.

5.2 Historical Land Use

Starting in the mid-1800s, the regions now known as the DTRNA and EEA were heavily used for grazing by sheep, cattle, horses and burros that were used to support mining exploration and ranching (Lovich and Bainbridge 1999). Following the 1950s, the Mojave and Colorado Deserts experienced an increase in off-highway vehicle (OHV) recreation (Brooks and Esque 2002), further altering the plant communities found in the area. It was not until the 1970s that efforts to limit the use of recreational vehicles began and initial boundaries for the DTRNA were considered in a management plan (BLM 1973). In 1974, the DTPC was created to assist with the establishment of the DTRNA to promote the welfare of the desert tortoise (BLM 1980, Berry et al. 2014). The area was withdrawn from mining and livestock grazing by the U.S. Congress in 1980, and the Bureau of Land Management (BLM) formally designated the land as both a research natural area and an Area of Critical Environmental Concern (ACEC). In the same year, the DTRNA was completely fenced to exclude recreational vehicles and sheep (BLM 1980)

Land acquisition efforts to increase the DTRNA began in 1978 and continued in the 1990s with the purchase of inholdings both in and outside of the DTRNA boundaries by the BLM, DTPC and California Department of Fish and Game (CDFG) (BLM and CDFG 1988). The land adjacent to the area comprised a few large and many small parcels of private land that were intended for a housing development project. The development project fell through and these

parcels were left under the ownership of absentee landowners who were often unaware of their location, leaving the area open to unauthorized grazing and intense OHV recreation (Berry et al. 2014). From 1995 to 2011, the DTPC and the CDFG successfully acquired some of these private parcels, including the restoration site, and added them to the DTRNA. In 2011, these parcels remained unfenced, but contained protective signage to help deter unauthorized use (Berry et al. 2014). The EEA was fenced in January 2017.

5.3 Anthropogenic Disturbances

The site contains a total of 42 identified OHV trails (Figure 4) that will be addressed later in the restoration plan. Twenty-one of these intersect the EEA fence line, thirteen of which intersect the fence line twice. These OHV trails are a direct result of OHV use throughout the site as can be seen by the repeated tire markings and tread. Severe denudation in several areas of the site are clearly visible as a result from OHV and recreational use. These types of human disturbance may have also contributed to soil compaction and invasive species introduction on the site.

Trash may also be found scattered throughout the site. In addition to its environmental health impacts, trash can have a detrimental effect on desert tortoises because they can choke from attempting to consume it (Boarman 2002). Trash is most likely a result from human recreation and camping within the site, although some items, such as balloons, found on site could have been blown onto a site after accidentally being released.

5.4 Existing Physical Resources

An accurate analysis of the existing physical resources, specifically the soil and hydrological conditions at the restoration site is necessary for a successful restoration project. This section describes the existing soil properties and hydrologic conditions based on recent literature and available data.

5.4.1 Soil Properties

The restoration site is predominantly Cajon loamy sand [0-5% slope] combined with Neuralia sandy loam [2-5% slope] (USDA 2013). Mixed in with the Cajon loamy sand and Neuralia sandy loam is a small amount of Alko-Neuralia sandy loam [0-9% slope] and Muroc-Randsburg sandy loam [5-9% slope] (USDA 2013).

Because nonnative species rapidly establish in a nitrogen rich environments, nonnative species have an advantage that allows them to outcompete native species (DeFalco et al. 2001, Brooks and Berry 2006). It can be assumed that the location of the restoration site near Randsburg Mojave Road makes the soil more susceptible to nitrogen loading, helping explain the abundance of nonnative plant species throughout the site. In addition, the disturbance of soils through events such as livestock grazing or OHV use also facilitate the spread of nonnative species throughout the site.

5.4.2 Hydrology

Desert washes are present within the restoration site and the greater EEA. There are 4.198 acres (34,491 linear feet) of State-jurisdictional waters that cross through the restoration site (DTPC 2015). Two ephemeral (currently dry) streambeds cross through parcels 06 and 11, running northeast to southwest across the parcels (USDA 2013). This information only accounts for two of the three parcels on site, additional surveys should be done on parcel 12.

5.5 Existing Biological Resources

The list of existing biological species on the site was compiled from two sources: (1) a biological assessment conducted by the DTPC, and (2) observations of plant abundance from a vegetation survey conducted on three management areas in the Western Mojave. Appendix A - Table 1 shows plant species observed in a survey conducted in March 2015 on parcels 11 and 06 through funding from the DTPC. Wildlife observations listed in Appendix A - Table 2 are also based on the survey conducted by the DTPC.

Additional existing resources such as observed abundant species were identified in a survey conducted by Berry et al. (2014) in a study area that encompasses three types of managed lands: the DTRNA, USFWS-designated critical habitat for desert tortoise, and private land, which comprise the restoration site. The survey was conducted by establishing 240 1-ha plots using random sampling with each of the management areas containing 80 plots (Berry et al. 2014). For this study, four main types of vegetation associations were identified: (1) creosote bush/white bursage (creosote); (2) creosote bush/white bursage/Anderson box-thorn (box-thorn); (3) creosote bush/white bursage/Mojave indigo bush (indigo bush); and (4) creosote-bush/white bursage/Nevada ephedra (Nevada ephedra). The Nevada ephedra vegetation association had the highest diversity with 11 abundant species, indigo bush had 9 abundant species, box-thorn had 5 and the creosote bush association was the least diverse with only 2 abundant species (Berry et al. 2014). Within the private lands, including the location of our restoration site, the creosote bush vegetation association dominated, demonstrating that the restoration site has less diversity. Because Berry et al.'s (2014) survey was based on random sampling, it is safe to assume that the species list in Appendix A - Table 3 is representative of the region, including the restoration site.

5.6 Reference Site

A reference site is used in ecological restoration to evaluate whether restoration has been successful at a targeted site by acting as a good comparison of soil and vegetation composition, and various ecosystem functions.

A good reference site should identify a region where healthy soil and vegetation are present. The southeast region of the DTRNA will act as a suitable reference site for the purposes of this restoration plan because of its high diversity and density of vegetation. The reference site and restoration site both are dominated by the creosote-white bursage vegetation association, but the reference site has a greater diversity of annual and perennial forbs that are preferred by the desert

tortoise and a higher density of creosote-white bursage cover species (Berry et al. 2014). Therefore, it will be a primary goal of Phase 1 in this restoration plan to increase the abundance and diversity of native forage and cover for desert tortoises, particularly in areas where denudation is high.

6. Phase 1

6.1 Goals and Objectives

Goal 1 - Maintain exclusion of anthropogenic activities that contribute to habitat disturbances.

Objectives

- Maintain fence integrity.
- Maintain current signs along fence line boundary.
- Decommission Vassar Avenue and Santa Clara Street.
- Decrease the visibility of the OHV trails within the restoration site from the fence line up to 100 meters.

Goal 2 - Promote healthier habitat.

Objectives

- Decrease the amount of unwanted and unnatural debris by 100%.

Goal 3 - Remove or reduce target nonnative plant species.

Objectives

- Decrease targeted nonnative annual forbs (Table 2) by 100%.
- Thin nonnative grasses by a minimum of 50%.
- Maintain reduction throughout maintenance and monitoring periods.

Goal 4 - Improve soil retention for water and nutrients.

Objectives

- Perform vertical mulching on OHV trails up to 100 meters from EEA fence line.
- Ensure minimal to no reestablishment of nonnative plants occurs through the process of vertical mulching.

Goal 5 - Promote native plant species preferred by the tortoise for cover and forage.

Objectives

- Plant native annual and perennial species on 28 acres of denuded habitat.
- Augment planting with seeding after plants are established.
- Increase diversity of vegetation on aforementioned 28 acres.

Goal 6 - Monitor inhabitancy by Agassiz's desert tortoises.

- Perform annual surveys to assess the return of desert tortoises to restored areas.

6.2 Success Criteria

The following success criteria is broken down by how the goals and their objectives can be measured and met throughout the length of the restoration plan.

Goal 1

Visibility of OHV trails from the fence line should be minimal for road camouflage techniques to be deemed successful. There should be no visible signs of trespassing or new OHV trails within the site. Maintaining the fence line's integrity will be considered successful given no signs of trespass are found within the restoration site. This may be demonstrated by no cut fences, no signs of continued OHV use through fresh tracks or trails, and minimal to no disturbance to the soon-to-be decommissioned roads, Vassar Avenue and Santa Clara Street. Current signs along the fence line will be deemed effective for the same reasons of the fence line integrity. Perimeter checks and surveying of the site should be able to demonstrate that these objectives are being met and the goal achieved.

Goal 2

The absence of all trash and debris from within the restoration site will suitably demonstrate that this goal and objective are being met.

Goal 3

Restoration efforts at the site will be considered successful when the targeted nonnative species are 100% absent from the identified areas requiring nonnative species reduction or removal. Observations after grass thinning should be compared to initial site surveys to determine whether a 50% reduction has taken place. If seasonal removal and reduction of nonnative species and monitoring occur throughout all five years of the restoration plan, then the objectives of this goal will be met.

Goal 4

Water retention can be measured through measuring soil moisture or observing an increase in vegetation where the method occurred.

Goal 5

This goal and its objectives will be successfully achieved if the prescribed planting and seeding actions result in less than 20% failure. Because the planting and seeding actions seek to increase the diversity of the existing vegetation, increased diversity of the site would occur if plantings becomes sustainably established (i.e. they are able to persist on their own without aid).

Goal 6

Success may be appropriately defined as observing an increase in tortoises, or tortoise sign within the restoration site as tortoise sign is positively correlated to tortoise densities (Krzysik 2002). This would require establishing a more robust baseline for the current tortoise sign at the site through annual biological surveys.

6.3 Actions

This section will include a brief description of each restoration action (Section 6.3.1) followed by the implementation plan (Section 6.3.2) that identifies the location of where each action will be performed.

The actions recommended in this restoration plan are scheduled to occur seasonally (i.e. winter, spring, summer, fall). Fall season will be defined as October through December, winter will be January through March, spring will be termed April through June, and finally summer begets July through September. These season definitions coincide with the expectation that fall-winter rainfall is commonly known to be October 1st through March 31st with these months marking a significant time as they determine production of annual and perennial flora.

Table 1. Restoration action schedule beginning the month of January of Year 1. (W = Winter, S = Spring, S = Summer, F = Fall, respectively).

Restoration Actions	Year 1				Year 2				Year 3				Year 4				Year 5				Notes
	W	S	S	F	W	S	S	F	W	S	S	F	W	S	S	F	W	S	S	F	
Site Preparation																					
Site Survey	x				x				x				x				x			x	Should be done initially, and then annually. Site is fenced by the EEA fence line. Signs are already in place by DTTC. In progress action by DTTC.
Fencing	x																				
Signs	x																				
Decommissioning of Roads	x																				
Removal																					
Trash Removal	x				x				x				x				x				Primary removal should be done Year 1.
Nonnative Species Removal																					
Removal of Nonnative Forbs	x	x		x	x	x		x	x	x		x	x	x		x	x	x		x	Should occur in primary bloom seasons. Multiple applications will be necessary.
Reduction of Nonnative Grasses	x	x		x	x	x		x	x	x		x	x	x		x	x	x		x	
Road Camouflage																					
Vertical Mulching	x	x	x		x				x				x				x				Maintain annually if needed.
Horizontal Mulching	x	x			x				x				x				x				Maintain annually if needed.
Rock Scattering	x	x																			Should not require maintenance.
Soil Remediation																					
Vertical Mulching	x	x	x		x				x				x				x				Highly recommended. Maintain annually if needed.
Ripping																					Not recommended.
Imprinting																					Not recommended.

6.3.1 Site Preparation

Site preparation will include the following actions: site surveying, preliminary fencing, posting of appropriate signs and the recommendation of decommissioning any roads. These actions should have already been completed by Year 1 of the restoration plan's action schedule (refer to Table 1 above).

Site Survey

The site survey can take place after the site preparation measures but must be conducted prior to the implementation of all other actions to ensure the most current and accurate information is used as a baseline for the plan. The site survey should include a brief overview of the existing physical and biological characteristics, particularly focusing on the abundance and diversity of native species, the abundance and diversity of nonnative species, the presence of anthropogenic threats, and the presence of desert tortoises and their sign.

Fencing

Soil and vegetation disturbance can have long lasting detrimental effects on desert tortoise populations. Eliminating future disturbance is critical to support future populations. Fencing is a common method used to remove stressors from a site. Fencing enables land managers to keep out unwanted OHVs, recreational users, and sheep grazing, and still allow for flow of wildlife species through its boundaries because of inclusion fencing (Ruby et al. 1994, Brooks 1995, USFWS 2011). Inclusion fencing consists of field fencing that has a gap typically 9-12 inches between the fence and the ground surface to allow for passage of wildlife (Ruby et al. 1994). Although fencing does not stop nonnative plant species from existing on the landscape, studies have shown that disturbances from OHV and grazing promote the spread of nonnative species, and removing these stressors may limit the spread of nonnative species (Hobbs 1989, Brooks and Berry 2006, Grime 2006). This allows greater opportunity for native species to recolonize the restoration site while requiring minimal effort on the part of land managers.

The DTPC began fencing on the EEA in 2016, and fencing of the southern and eastern boundaries of parcels 12 and 06 has occurred as of January of 2017. Best management practices suggest that fencing should consist of field fencing that is wildlife inclusionary (Ruby et al. 1994). This means that wildlife can pass through the bottom portion (typically 9-12 inches) or jump over fences, but that livestock and OHV use will be excluded (Ruby et al. 1994, USFWS 2011). Inclusionary fencing would be important if this area was known to be free. The DTPC used exclusionary field fencing for the EEA boundary fence line, and this is key because it will not allow the movement of wildlife through the bottom portion of the fence, thus keeping tortoises safe from being run over by passing cars on Randsburg Mojave Road. Maintenance of the existing fence line boundary is crucial to minimizing common anthropogenic threats and maintaining a rehabilitated soil and plant communities.

Signs

Current signage at the site includes signs identifying the land as private property owned by the DTRNA (Figure 3). Use of these signs, in addition to newly installed fencing, will serve as a reminder to OHV users and recreational visitors that the land is off limits to certain activities,

and help prevent further unauthorized access. No additional signs are recommended in this restoration plan.



Figure 3. Signs from the Desert Tortoise Research Natural Area, December 2016.

Decommission Roads

There are currently two existing public roads that intersect the restoration site. Vassar Avenue acts as the boundary to parcels 11 and 12, running east and west, and Santa Clara Street serves as the boundary to 11 and 06, travelling north and south. Decommissioning these roads is imperative to creating a contiguous habitat for the desert tortoise and other species. The roads currently fragment the landscape and create unfavorable conditions for the foraging and cover species that are important to the desert (Brooks and Lair 2005, Brooks and Berry 2006). Through Kern County, the DTPC is currently in the process of officially decommissioning, or vacating, these roads and expects the process to move forward in the near future.

These roads are considered public, but because the roads dead-end into the privately owned parcels, the DTPC does not have to provide public access to them. These roads have been removed from public use through a locked gate placed at the convergence of the roads, but legally decommissioning them will result in increased protection from any future disturbances.

Trash Removal

All trash and debris shall be removed from the site prior to implementation of any restoration measures. Trash removal will occur during an initial site cleanup in the early spring of Year 1, and all trash will be disposed of properly.

6.3.2 Nonnative Species Removal

Nonnative species (invasive species, weeds) have the ability to negatively influence the diets of desert tortoises (Nagy et al. 1998, Jennings 2002, Hazard et al. 2009, 2010) and outcompete native plants for resources (Berry et al. 2014). Thus, nonnative plant species should be immediately managed through reduction or removal. Removal of nonnative species can have a variety of benefits including: reducing the size and frequency of fires (Brooks and Berry 2006), reducing the use of herbicides, and protecting existing habitat by reducing competition with natives (Berry et al. 2014).

Table 2 lists nonnative species that may be found within the restoration site that should be targeted for reduction or removal. These species should be reduced or removed throughout the duration of the restoration efforts as nonnative seeds may persist in the soil's seed bank for many years (DeFalco et al. 2001). Nonnative seeds may lie dormant in the existing seed bank until circumstance enables them to sprout, and thus removal of nonnative species needs to occur throughout the duration of site restoration to lessen the amount of seed that may persist in the seed bank (DeFalco et al. 2001). Removal of nonnative species such as those that are suggested in Table 2 is not possible through a onetime removal event, but rather seasonal removal and hypervigilance for new stands of nonnative species should occur to truly eradicate these species.

Nonnative species removal and reduction will occur on all acres associated with Phase 1 of the restoration plan. Removal should occur primarily in the late winter and spring months as nonnative species tend to emerge with the winter rains. Removal should also be considered for late fall nonnative species may still be visible during these seasons (refer to Table 1 above). Removal should begin immediately in Year 1, and continue through Year 5 on a seasonal basis, especially prior to any planting and seeding efforts.

Table 2. High-priority nonnative species in the Desert Tortoise Research Natural Area to reduce or remove within the restoration site.

Common Name	Scientific Name	Type	Bloom Period	% Reduction	Removal Method
Mediterranean Grass	<i>Schismus spp.</i>	<i>Grass</i>	March - May	50%	Could consider thinning rather than eradication (Brooks 2000)
Red Brome	<i>Bromus rubens</i>	<i>Grass</i>	April - May	50%	Could consider thinning rather than eradication (Brooks 2000).
Saharan Mustard	<i>Brassica tournefortii</i>	<i>Annual forb</i>	February - April	100%	Hand-pulling, potential use of herbicide, Glyphosate (Abella et al. 2015).
Russian Thistle	<i>Salsola tragus</i>	<i>Annual forb</i>	July - October	100%	Manual removal
Saltcedar (Tamarisk)	<i>Tamarix ramosissima</i>	<i>Annual forb</i>	June - August	100%	Manual removal

Best Management Practices for Nonnative Species Removal

All best management practices designed and recommended by the California Invasive Plant Council (Cal IPC 2012) should be followed to the best of abilities in order to prevent the spread of invasive species within and outside of the restoration site. Adaptation from these practices may be necessary if certain situations are not applicable to removing invasive species from the restoration site.

Reduction of Nonnative Grasses

Reduction of nonnative grass species is especially important to encouraging native species establishment at the restoration site. Thinning of Mediterranean grasses (*Schismus spp.*) and red brome (*Bromus rubens*) in particular have resulted in significant increases in diversity and abundance of native annuals (Brooks 2000). Thinning may be done manually or through mechanical measures, but mechanical removal in a sensitive area such as the desert is not recommended as it will cause increased soil disturbance and degradation that may reintroduce nonnative species to the site. Fire is not a recommended tool in removing nonnative grasses as recolonization of the site by nonnative annuals increases with fire (Brooks and Esque 2002).

Herbicide treatments may be used in cases where traditional methods have failed and no viable alternatives exist. Herbicides are not explicitly recommended due to unclear effects on desert tortoises (Abella and Berry 2016), but they may be an effective strategy for reducing alien grasses if applied early in the growing season (Marushia et al. 2010), and when tortoises are most inactive (Esque et al. 2014). Careful planning, observation of the site, and implementation will be conducted with extreme attention to detail. More research should be undertaken to determine the necessity of herbicidal treatments at this site. The safest herbicide should be selected based on existing literature and studies looking at the effects to the tortoise, other wildlife species, and effectiveness at reducing invasive grasses. If herbicide is applied, a nontoxic dye should be added to the herbicide solution prior to spraying on the ground to be able to observe where and how thick the herbicide is being applied.

Removal of Nonnative Annual Forbs

It is imperative to remove as much of the existing nonnative annual species as possible from the restoration site because they compete with the same resources as native annuals (DeFalco et al. 2001). Removal of nonnative forbs should be done prior to their blooming season, as this is the time the seeds are dispersed. For the nonnative species listed in Table 2, this means removal should occur during winter-spring seasons. Removal should occur primarily at the sites where road camouflage techniques are planned. This means the first 100-200 m of each OHV trail from where it intersects with the EEA fence line should be cleared of nonnative annuals. Typical methods of removal include manual methods, such as hand pulling. Although Glyphosate has been proven effective at removing certain annual forbs (Brooks 2000), manual methods are preferred to chemical as to minimize any impacts to the desert tortoise and other native species.

6.3.3 Road Camouflage

Road camouflage is important for reducing the threat of OHV trespasses at the restoration site. Roads are a source of mortality for tortoises, both directly and indirectly, as they contribute to mortality from vehicle traffic and they subsidize the prey of common ravens, a known predator

of the desert tortoise (Boarman 2002). Furthermore, roads that continue to be used after being decommissioned will further degrade habitat quality by denuding native vegetation, altering patterns of surface water flow and negatively impacting plant productivity, limiting dispersal and movements of desert tortoises, and facilitating access that may lead to additional human disturbances (Brooks and Lair 2005, Brooks and Berry 2006). With the goal of reducing the impacts of roads in mind, the actions associated with road camouflage should limit future disturbance.

Road camouflage will occur in Year 1 between the seasons of winter and spring. It is integral to the condition of the site that the existing OHV trails are hidden as soon as weather permits to prevent potential illegal trespassing from OHV and recreational visitors.

Vertical Mulching

Vertical mulching refers to the creation of false cover plants on vacated roads, OHV trails, and other disturbed areas. This technique involves first collecting dead creosote plant material and later “planting” or establishing the material in a vertical orientation, buried upright in the soil, to resemble a live creosote plant and disguise the areas.

Horizontal Mulching

Similar to vertical mulching, horizontal mulching refers to the creation of false ground cover on vacated roads, OHV trails, and other disturbed areas. This technique involves first collecting dead plant material and later dispersing the material in a horizontal orientation, to resemble native ground cover and disguise the areas.

Rock Scattering

Rock scattering refers to dispersing rocks in a random pattern on and around vacated roads, OHV trails, and other disturbed areas to help camouflage these areas. Rocks are typically collected onsite.

6.3.4 Soil Remediation

Highly compacted soils and soils without sufficient seed banks may revegetate very slowly (Ghose 2001, Gibson et al. 2004, Abella et al. 2015). Establishment of mature native vegetation can be greatly accelerated through the use of proper soil remediation techniques such as ripping, vertical mulching, imprinting, re-contouring berms and topsoil salvage.

Ripping

Ripping refers to the process of decompacting the surface soil. Common tools for this technique include a subsoiler or rock ripper. When considering ripping, it is best practice to focus on the surface soil, represented by the upper 15 cm, to avoid disrupting the subsoil and potentially changing the soil properties (DTC 2015a). In general, ripping can be used to roughen compacted soil and promote plant recruitment, but this action can also promote nonnative plant recruitment. Because the location of our site is sensitive to nonnative species invasions, and the fact that a rock ripper is fairly ineffective in desert conditions, ripping is not a recommended action.

Vertical Mulching

Vertical mulching serves a dual purpose of camouflaging the road from passersby and decompacting the soil. The soil is loosened through the insertion of the dead creosote material, thus breaking up compacted soils to allow for better nutrient and water retention. As a result of vertical mulching, fertile islands of native plant communities can be established that aid abundance of annual forbs (DTC 2015a).

Imprinting

Imprinting refers to the creation indentation of soil in a pattern which can be used to enhance water retention, decompact soil and promote plant establishment on a decommissioned road, OHV trail, or other area severely damaged by grazing and/or OHV use (DTC 2015a). The most common tool for this technique is a machine known as an Imprinter. Due to the expense, and the amount of disturbance an Imprinter would cause, this action is not recommended for use on this site because we believe the benefits of increased water retention would not outweigh the environmental and economic costs.

Re-contouring Berms

Re-contouring berms refers to the reshaping of contour lines along slopes or road sides. The most common tool for this technique is a dozer. This method can be used to re-connect washes and reestablish drainage patterns (Abella and Berry 2016). Because this action is expensive, requires the use of heavy machinery like a bulldozer or tractor, and we are trying to work in an area that is very sensitive to disturbance, we are not recommending berms be re-contoured.

Topsoil Salvage

Topsoil in the Mojave Desert contains much of the available soil organic matter as well as the viable seed bank (Scoles-Sciulla and DeFalco 2009). Sites with disturbed topsoil may lack these important features and could benefit from the salvaging of topsoil from other areas (Ghose 2001, Abella et al. 2015). Any topsoil for salvaging should be carefully sourced from a nearby area in the summer to capture a portion of the seedbank which can help the vegetation reestablish in the restoration site. Only the top few (5-10) cm of soil should be collected to avoid diluting the soil with deeper subsoils (Scoles-Sciulla and DeFalco 2009). Care must also be taken to salvage topsoil from a site without nonnative plants which could become established in the restoration site. Because our site contains high potential for nonnative species occurrence, topsoil salvage may not be an effective action to take in this restoration plan. In addition, the costs to retrieving, storing, and spreading the topsoil do not outweigh the benefits the action has to revegetated areas, especially as other preparation actions to the planting and seeding areas may yield similar results.

6.3.5 Planting

To restore the selected site to contain vegetation useful to the desert tortoise, priority native perennial and annual plant species were identified (refer to Table 3 below). These species were identified by using bite count studies (Jennings 2002, Jennings and Berry 2015, Abella and Berry 2016) within the DTRNA and a site survey conducted by the DTPC. The priority plant species were also vetted for soil draining requirements (i.e. fast to very fast drainage). These species will help increase native plant forage and shrub cover beneficial for the desert tortoise. Additionally,

the planting of shrub species will help create vegetation patches that can help jumpstart natural processes by increasing soil stabilization and the establishment of native forage species.

Native seed for each of the identified priority plant species should be obtained as locally as possible. Several of the native plants required are not readily available at nurseries, therefore S&S Seeds is recommended for the collection of seeds. S&S Seeds will collect appropriate seeds from the area near the restoration site, some from other appropriate areas in the Mojave, and will provide commercial seeds for one plant species (*Plantago ovata*). Once all seeds are collected, they should be used to produce greenhouse grown seedlings. The first round of seedlings should focus on perennial shrub species such as white bursage (*Ambrosia dumosa*), fourwing saltbush (*Atriplex canescens*), Nevada jointfir (*Ephedra nevadensis*), creosote bush (*Larrea tridentata*), and Anderson thornscrub (*Lycium andersonii*) which are the best performing perennial species planted from nurseries (Abella and Berry 2016). These perennial species are medium to large shrubs that can provide the protective cover necessary for the annual forage species and the desert tortoise to thrive. Post disturbance colonizers such as desert globemallow (*Sphaeralcea ambigua*) and desert dandelion (*Malacothrix glabrata*) should also be considered for outplanting since they are able to compete with non-native annuals and can serve as cover and forage (Abella and Berry 2016). Other annual and perennial species that can be planted after cover is established in year one are desert calico (*Loeseliastrum matthewsii*), desert plantain (*Plantago ovata*) and rattlesnake sandmat (*Euphorbia albomarginata*). Table 4 provides a list of additional annual and perennial species that can be considered for planting given their presence in the DTRNA and their relationship with the creosote and white bursage vegetation association.

Because plant biomass is heavily influenced by winter rainfall, the best time for planting is prior to desert winter rains as the water will help the plants establish (Brooks 2002, Longshore et al. 2003, Berry et al. 2006, Medica et al. 2012). Therefore, planting should start no later than November of Year 1 of implementation before rainfall reaches its highest levels in December (Brooks 2002). It is recommended that all seedlings be grown in containers using a partner such as Antelope Valley Resource Conservation District's Conservation Nursery, given their experience and capacity to produce nursery grown native plants (Contact: Tom Florence, (661) 942-7306; Website: www.avrcd.org).

All containerized plants should be planted in a hole that is seven to eight inches deep and twice the width of the rootball. The lower part of the roots should be loosened before the plant is placed into the hole with the top of the rootball being at or slightly below ground level. All plants should receive one liter of water before the hole is backfilled with soil. In order to provide protection from herbivory, each plant should be surrounded by a chicken wire cage (1 in hex mesh) of about two feet in diameter (~112-inch length double wrapped) that is staked into the ground using garden staples. Protective chicken wire fencing is the more cost effective option when compared to establishing temporary fencing around planting plots and is listed as a best management practice essential to avoid planting failure (DTC 2015b).

Table 3. Priority plant species for seeding and planting at the restoration site at the expansion area of the DTRNA. Sources: Jennings 2002, Jennings and Berry 2015, Abella and Berry 2016, Berry et al. 2014

Common Name	Scientific Name	Type	Bloom Period
Anderson thornscrub	<i>Lycium andersonii</i>	<i>Perennial Shrub</i>	March-May
Creosote bush	<i>Larrea tridentata</i>	<i>Perennial Shrub</i>	April-May
Desert calico	<i>Loeseliastrum matthewsii</i>	<i>Annual Herb</i>	March-July
Desert dandelion	<i>Malacothrix glabrata</i>	<i>Annual Herb</i>	March-June
Desert globemallow	<i>Sphaeralcea ambigua</i>	<i>Perennial Herb</i>	February-March
Desert plantain	<i>Plantago ovata</i>	<i>Annual Herb</i>	January-April
Fourwing saltbush	<i>Atriplex canescens</i>	<i>Perennial Shrub</i>	May-June
Nevada jointfir	<i>Ephedra nevadensis</i>	<i>Perennial Shrub</i>	March-April-May
Rattlesnake sandmat	<i>Euphorbia albomarginata</i>	<i>Perennial Herb</i>	April-November
White bursage	<i>Ambrosia dumosa</i>	<i>Perennial Shrub</i>	January-February

6.3.6 Seeding

As mentioned before, S&S Seeds will collect seeds as locally as possible and run seeds through state of the art cleaning equipment to process seeds. After cleaning, they will also test for purity, germination and pure live seed counts using a certified seed laboratory. Compared to planting, seeding does not have very high long term success rates, but has produced short term success in some experiments (Abella and Newton 2009, Abella et al. 2015, Abella and Berry 2016).

When conducting seeding practices, seeding treatments such as pelletizing, using protective coatings and using germination stimulants to increase germination are an option, but are not very well studied (Abella and Berry 2016). They can produce varying results and can increase restoration costs (Kay et al. 1977, Abella et al. 2015, Abella and Berry 2016). For this reason, seeding bare seeds may be the best practice for this restoration plan since it is only secondary measure for augmenting annual and perennial plant species. If treatments are desired, then each treatment should be tailored for each individual plant species to increase possible success rate (Abella and Berry 2016). However, this will increase initial project costs.

Species considered for seeding can be found on Table 4 below. These annual and perennial species are forbs that are favored by the desert tortoise have the potential to grow within our restoration site. These species are plants that have been found within the DTRNA (Jennings and Berry 2015) and may have the potential to grow within our site once conditions are made more favorable (i.e. reduction of nonnative species, creation of fertile islands and exclusion of OHV access).

When seeding, soil preparation should only occur around planted bushes to minimize soil disturbance and the creation of a nonnative seedbed given that the success of soil preparation

methods are not well established (Abella and Newton 2009). Once soil is loosened, seeds should be planted one centimeter in depth to optimize emergence (Kay et al. 1977). Seeding should occur between November and December to ensure that seeds get exposed to fall/winter rainfall that could help trigger germination. However, seeding this early will increase the susceptibility of seeds to granivory (Abella et al. 2015).

Table 4. Additional annual and perennial species to be considered for seeding. Source: Jennings 2002, Jennings and Berry 2015, Abella and Berry 2016, Berry et al. 2014

Common Name	Scientific Name	Type	Bloom Period
Foothill deervetch	<i>Acmispon brachycarpus</i>	Annual Herb	March-June
Stiff-haired lotus	<i>Acmispon strigosus</i>	Annual Herb	February-June
Two-seeded milkvetch	<i>Astragalus didymocarpus</i>	Annual Herb	March-June
Layne locoweed	<i>Astragalus layneae</i>	Perennial Herb	March-June
Booth's evening primrose	<i>Eremothera boothii</i>	Annual Herb	June-August
Browneyes	<i>Chylismia claviformis</i>	Annual Herb	February-May
Brittle spineflower	<i>Chorizanthe brevicornu</i>	Annual Herb	February-July
Mojave lupine	<i>Lupinus odoratus</i>	Annual Herb	April-May
Four o'clock	<i>Mirabilis laevis</i>	Perennial herb	February-March
Lacy phacelia	<i>Phacelia tanacetifolia</i>	Annual Herb	March-May
Bright white	<i>Prenanthes exigu</i>	Annual Herb	March-June

6.3.7 Irrigation

Irrigation should occur between planting and seeding seasons, typically late fall through winter on an as needed basis. Generally, irrigation is applied twice per month during the first year of planting and seeding during the growing season (Ann McLuckie, pers. comm. 2017). Due to the precipitation patterns within the Mojave Desert, rain occurs during the fall and winter months. Thus planting and seeding should occur at the start of these rains to capture the most of the natural precipitation regime, thus lessening the need for irrigation. If irrigation is needed to supplement lack of rainfall, it should occur via distribution from a water truck. Irrigation equipment such as a water truck may be rented from United Rentals (Website: <https://www.unitedrentals.com>) and distributed using backpack sprayers purchased from Gempler's, an online vendor (Website: <http://www.gemplers.com>). Monitoring of soil moisture should be considered after the initial application to ensure irrigation is effectively supporting the native or restored vegetation. If changes in the number of applications or the length of application need to be made, adaptive management considerations should be consulted.

6.4 Implementation

Implementation of the aforementioned actions are critical to successful restoration. This section will explain in detail how the actions described above will be applied to each area of Phase 1.

Figure 4 demonstrates all of the areas that will be restored through the actions taken in Phase 1. Descriptions of each of the locations and how the actions will be applied to the site are supplied herein.

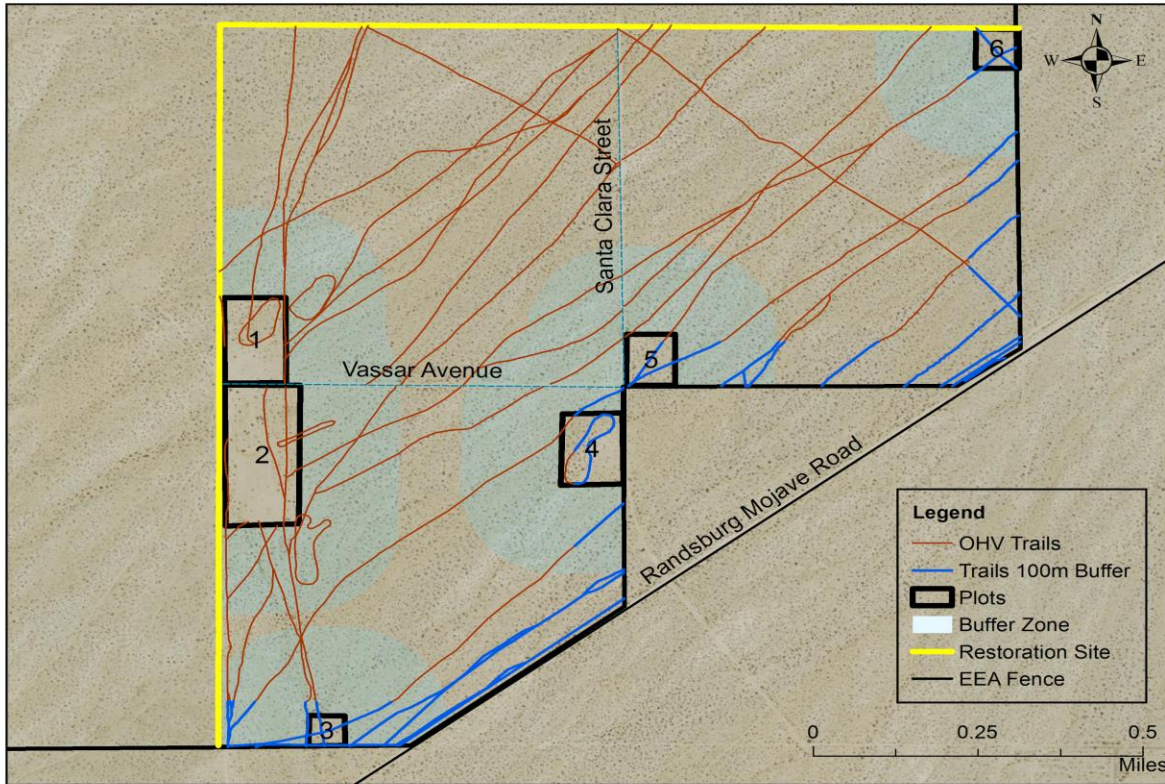


Figure 4. Locations of restoration areas for Phase 1 at site. Location divided into three categories: OHV trails (brown and blue lines), buffer zones (light blue) and plots (outlined in black).

6.4.1 OHV Trails

There are a total of 42 OHV trails that have been identified through aerial survey within the boundaries of the restoration site (Figure 4). Twenty-one of these trails intersect the EEA fence line and will be the focus of road camouflage and soil remediation actions. Thirteen of these OHV trails intersect the fence line twice, and one of them intersects the fence line three times. A distance of 100 meters was calculated from the EEA fence line on the assumption that this distance is the maximum perceived line of sight passerby can see along the OHV trail from the road. From the centerline of the OHV trail, road camouflage should occur up to two meters on either side as this will cover all variations of OHV trail widths. Road camouflage such as vertical and horizontal mulching, and rock scattering should occur within Year 1 of the restoration plan, preferably beginning by early spring (i.e. April), weather permitting.

This restoration plan seeks to calculate the maximum restored acreage that could be possible, and thus the actual restored acreage from road camouflage may be less if the road does not require restoration up to the full 100 meters from the EEA fence line. The resources available to conduct

vertical and horizontal mulching (i.e. dead creosote sticks and other organic material) may also limit the amount of road camouflage that can occur in these areas. If road camouflage occurs up to the full 100 x 4 meters for each of the 21 OHV trails, approximately nine acres will be restored through natural succession. Five acres of which are already within the buffer zone areas around each of the six plots. To avoid double-counting, only four acres of remediated habitat will be counted based on road camouflage and soil remediation techniques. The other five acres will be totaled as a result of the buffer zones' restoration actions.

6.4.2 Buffer Zones

There are six buffer zones designed around the highly denuded areas within the restoration site (Figure 4). These buffer zones, not including the six plots, account for the majority of the restoration efforts, and if successful, 141.5 acres will be partially restored through primarily nonnative species removal actions. Soil remediation and road camouflage through vertical mulching will occur in buffer zones that contain OHV trails 100 meters from the EEA fence line. These areas are represented in Figure 4 by the dark blue lines within the light blue shaded buffers.

6.4.3 Plots

There are a total of six plots within our restoration site that will be targeted for planting and seeding actions using priority annual and perennial species identified in Table 3. Before planting begins, each plot will contain site preparation actions such as nonnative species removal and trash removal. In Year 1, trash removal will occur in the spring season whereas the first round of nonnative species removal should occur within the winter and spring. Another round of nonnative species removal should occur late fall or early winter prior to any planting or seeding of plots to reduce competition. Following Year 1, surveying to assess the necessity of trash removal should be conducted for Years 2, 3, 4 and 5 during the spring season while nonnative species removal should occur in the fall, winter or spring season of each year (refer to Table 1 above). Additionally, road camouflage should be performed in plots 3, 4, 5 and 6 since they all include OHV trails within their boundaries.

Once all plots have been prepared, planting should occur between late fall and early winter (November) of Year 1 to ensure plant exposure to winter rain. Each plot will be planted using 10x10 meter grid using perennial shrub species identified in Table 3. Each plant should be protected by a chicken wire mesh cage to protect from herbivory. Cages should be in place for the first one to two years depending on the plant's growth, intensity of herbivory in the plot, and condition of the plant.

In Year 2, additional planting of perennial shrubs may occur to replace any failed plantings. During this time, annual and perennial herb species could be planted as well near the established shrub species to create vegetation islands and ensure species diversity. Additionally, seeding using bare seeds should be implemented around the established shrub species. This will involve conducting soil ripping around the shade radius of each bush's canopy. Once the soil is loosened, seeds should be planted no deeper than one centimeter in depth.

Year 3, 4 and 5 will include monitoring and maintenance of all planted species. Irrigation should be applied as described in Section 5.3.1.

Below, each plot includes a description of the total number of plant to be planted, the total number of each shrub species: white bursage, fourwing saltbush, Nevada jointfir, creosote bush, and Anderson thornscrub and the total acres restored.

Plot 1

Plot 1 will include 330 plant individuals: 66 of white bursage, 66 of fourwing saltbush, 66 of Nevada jointfir, 66 of creosote bush and 66 of Anderson thornscrub. Planting will occur in the approximate locations of the 10x10 meter grid intersections. If all plantings are successful, about 5.80 acres of denuded habitat will be restored (Figure 5).

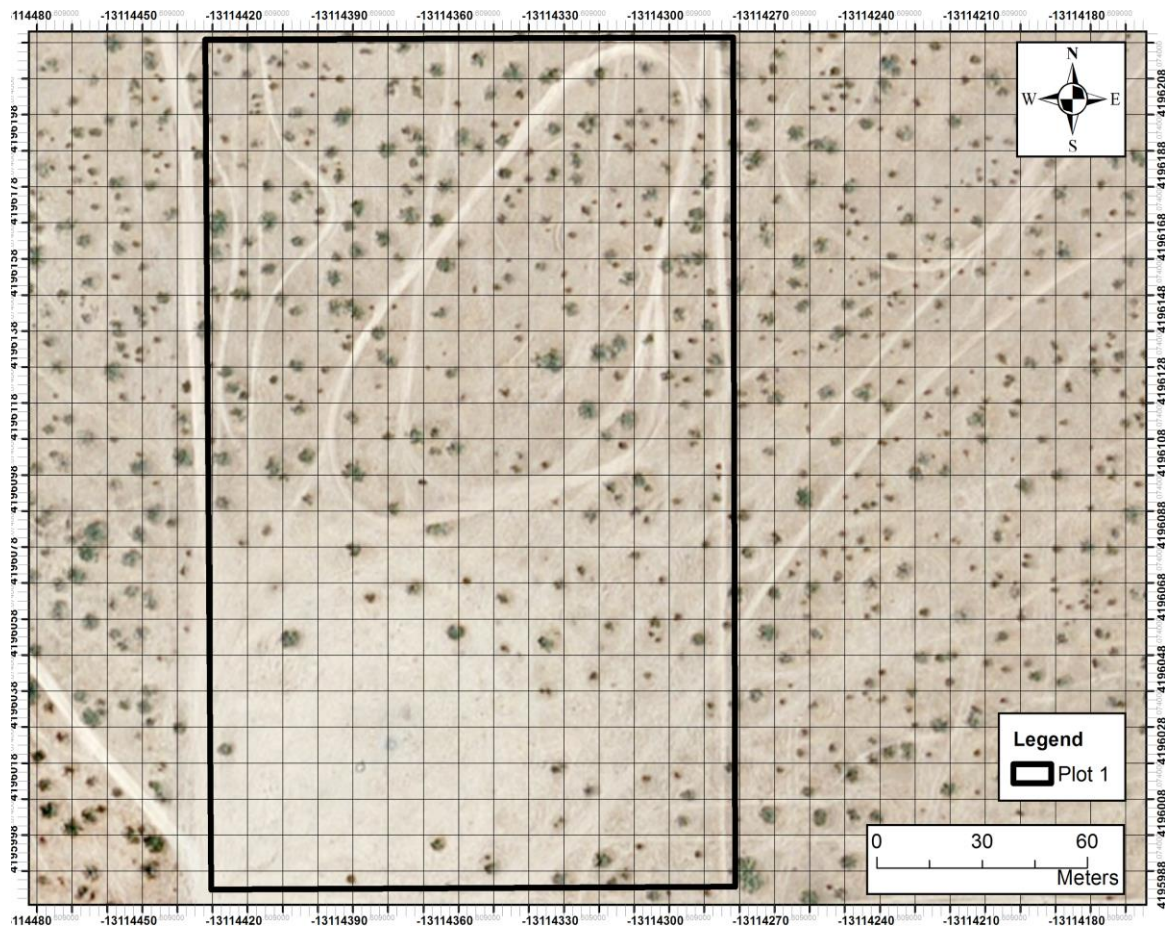


Figure 5. Plot 1 within restoration site with a 10x10 meter grid marking the location of each planting.

Plot 2

Plot 2 will include 650 plant individuals: 130 of white bursage, 130 of fourwing saltbush, 130 of Nevada jointfir, 130 of creosote bush and 130 of Anderson thornscrub. Planting will occur in the approximate locations of the 10x10 meter grid intersections. If all plantings are successful, about 11.60 acres of denuded habitat will be restored (Figure 6).

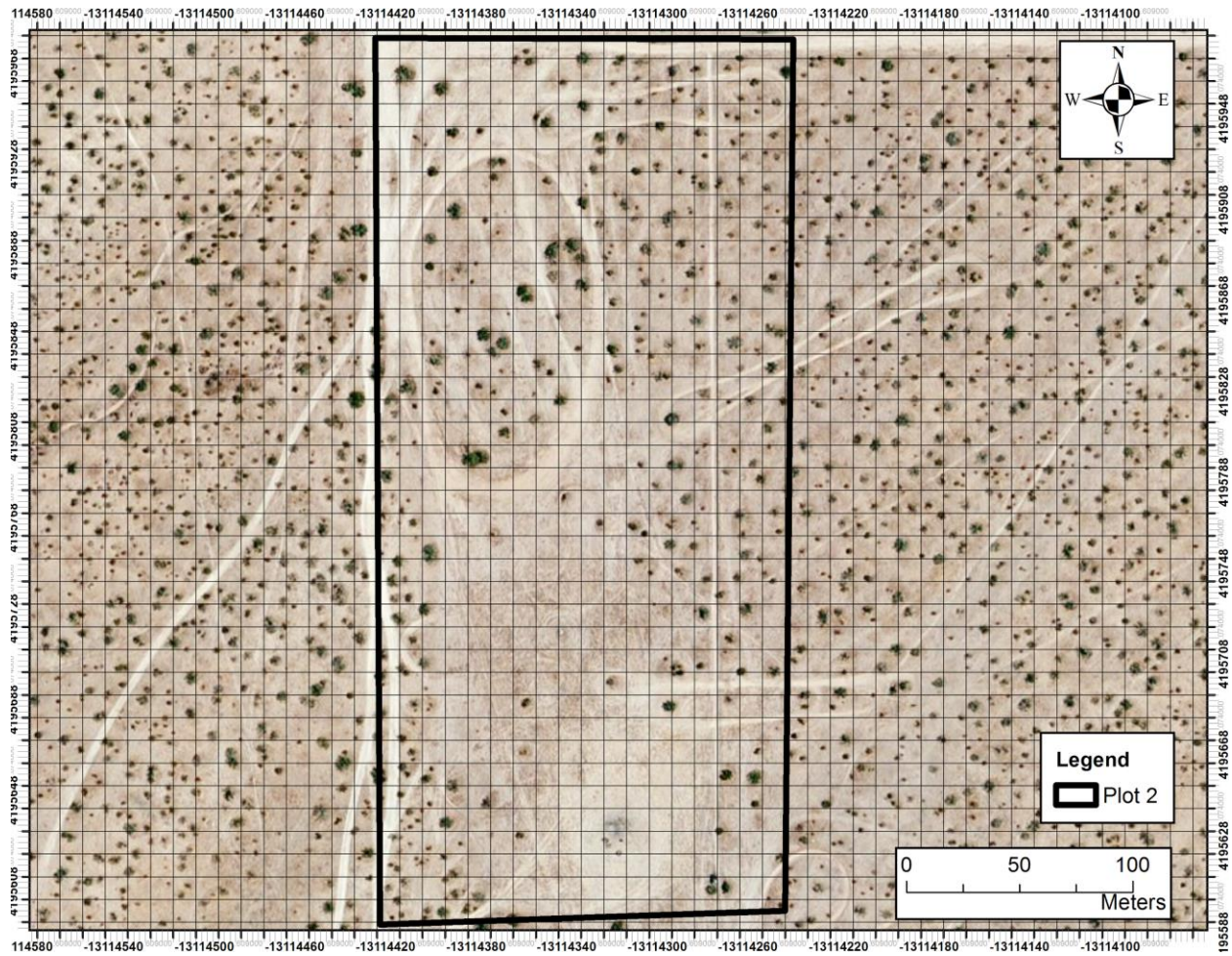


Figure 6. Plot 2 within restoration site with a 10x10 meter grid marking the location of each planting.

Plot 3

Plot 3 will include 65 plant individuals: 13 of white bursage, 13 of fourwing saltbush, 13 of Nevada jointfir, 13 of creosote bush and 13 of Anderson thornscrub. Planting will occur in the approximate locations of the 10x10 meter grid intersections. If all plantings are successful, about 1.20 acres of denuded habitat will be restored (Figure 7).

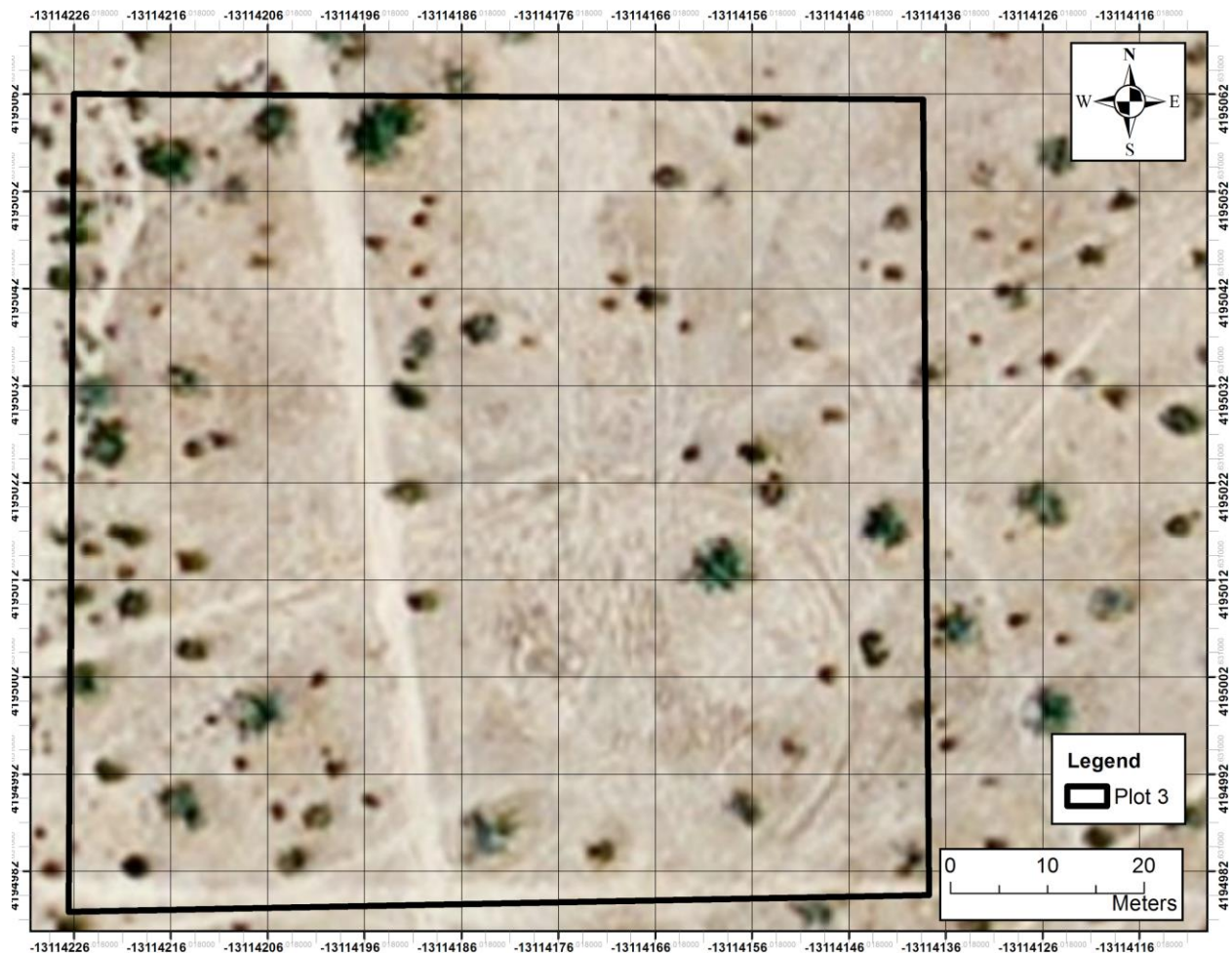


Figure 7. Plot 3 within restoration site with a 10x10 meter grid marking the location of each planting.

Plot 4

Plot 4 will include 265 plant individuals: 53 of white bursage, 53 of fourwing saltbush, 53 of Nevada jointfir, 53 of creosote bush and 53 of Anderson thornscrub. Planting will occur in the approximate locations of the 10x10 meter grid intersections. If all plantings are successful, about 5 acres of denuded habitat will be restored (Figure 8).

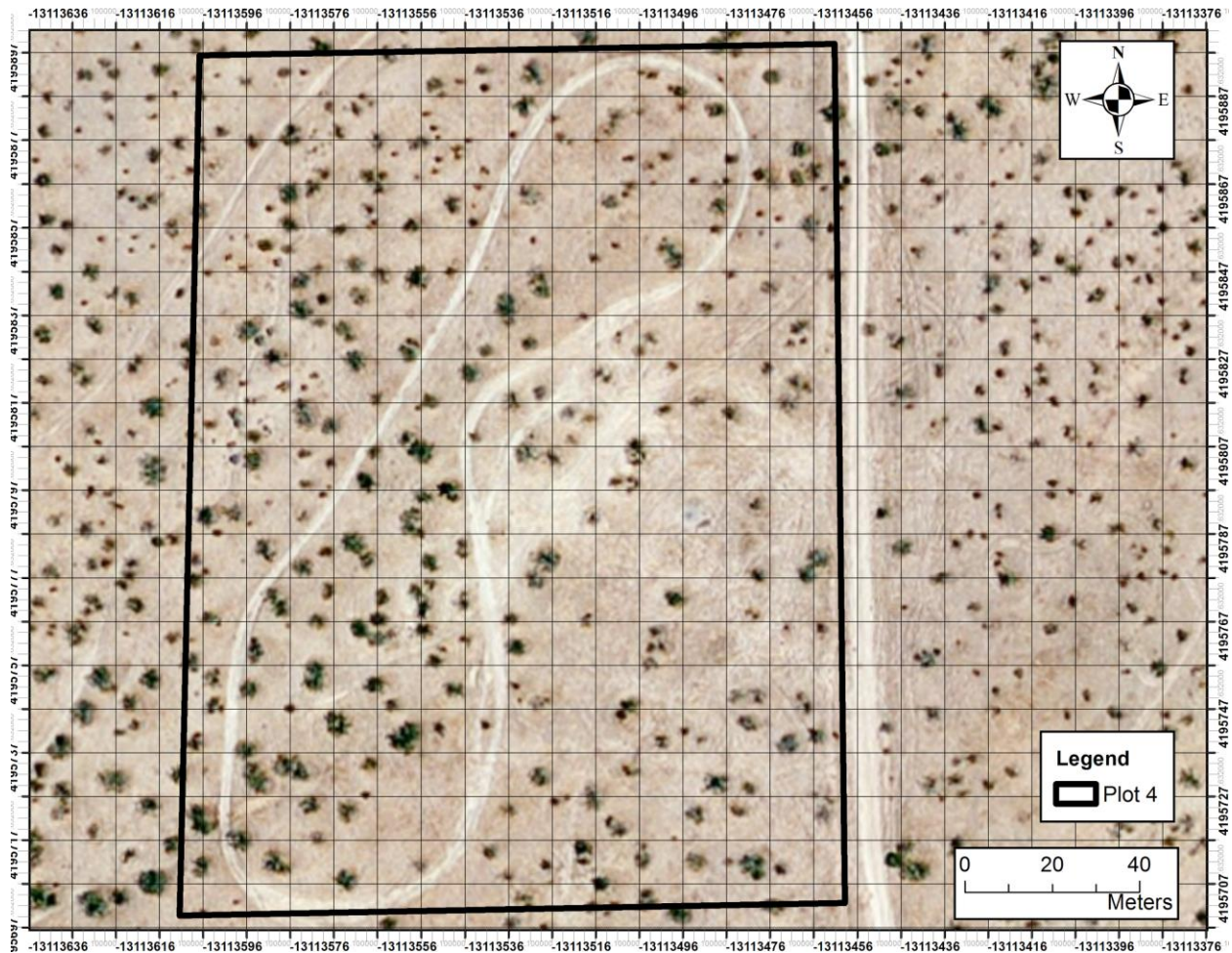


Figure 8. Plot 4 within restoration site with a 10x10 meter grid marking the location of each planting.

Plot 5

Plot 5 will include 145 plant individuals: 29 of white bursage, 29 of fourwing saltbush, 29 of Nevada jointfir, 29 of creosote bush and 29 of Anderson thornscrub. Planting will occur in the approximate locations of the 10x10 meter grid intersections. If all plantings are successful, about 2.70 acres of denuded habitat will be restored (Figure 9).

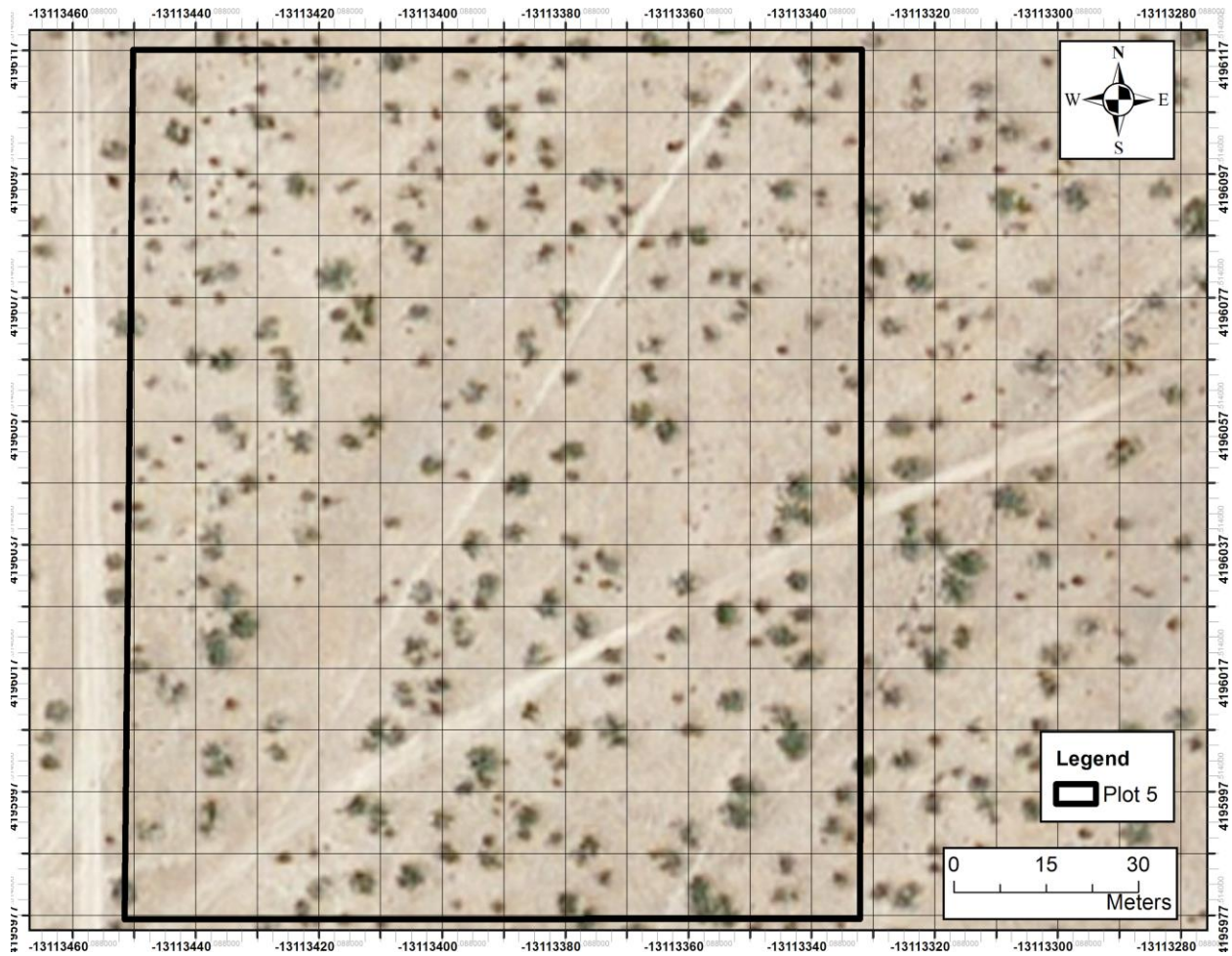


Figure 9. Plot 5 within restoration site with a 10x10 meter grid marking the location of each planting.

Plot 6

Plot 6 will include 100 plant individuals: 20 of white bursage, 20 of fourwing saltbush, 20 of Nevada jointfir, 20 of creosote bush and 20 of Anderson thornscrub. Planting will occur in the approximate locations of the 10x10 meter grid intersections. If all plantings are successful, about 2.70 acres of denuded habitat will be restored (Figure 10).

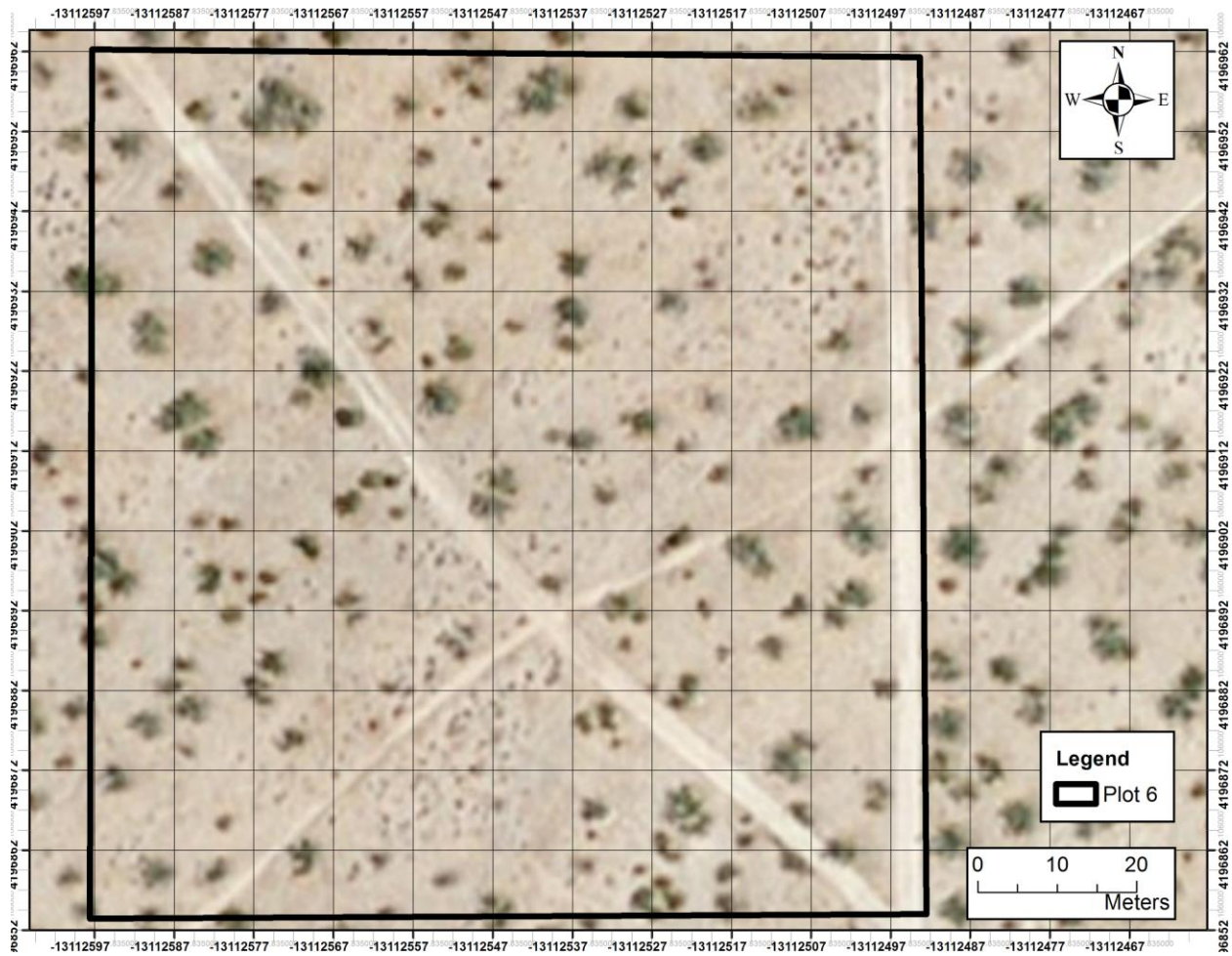


Figure 10. Plot 6 within restoration site with a 10x10 meter grid marking the location of each planting.

6.5 Maintenance

6.5.1 Site Preparation

The current fence line boundary of the site should be regularly checked for breaks and deficiencies. Without interference, the fence should last approximately 40 years; therefore, replacement costs for repairs would ideally be minimal (Jared Queen, pers. comm. 2017). Fence lines should be checked based on visible observations made from vehicles along the main road or walking the fence line boundary on the outside of the restoration site, preferably from a distance because continuous checking of outside the fence line disturbs the space inside the fence line due to the potential for edge effects.

According to the DTRNA Land Manager and Conservation Coordinator, Ms. Jillian Estrada, a non-profit corporation called Friends of Jawbone, which is dedicated to promoting OHV recreation in tandem with education and cooperation between all public land users, has begun voluntarily patrolling the fence lines of the DTRNA using OHVs. Although helpful in checking for breaks in the fence or illegal activities, the use of OHVs continuously along the fence lines is not recommended and should be discouraged as this action creates edge effects that negatively impact the desert tortoise and its habitat (Webb and Wilshire 1983).

Signs within the confines of the restoration site should only need replacing if they become altered beyond recognition, including but not limited to the effects of graffiti, bullet punctures, broken posts, and/or mangled signs. Decommissioned roads will be watched to ensure that these areas are not being illegally used. The locked access gate should be checked and the roads should be cleared of nonnative species along the roads. It is the hope that natural succession will occur on these roads given time. No restoration actions should occur or be considered until Kern County has officially decommissioned these roads.

6.5.2 Nonnative Species Removal

Maintenance will include constant vigilance against nonnative species reintroduction. Nonnative species should be removed upon observation, and areas where restoration actions are occurring should be free of all listed nonnative species. Weeding is a necessary part of maintaining the integrity of the site, and should occur as needed, at least once a month.

6.5.3 Road Camouflage

Maintenance will include ensuring the road camouflage techniques are functional and effective. If human disturbance has recently occurred through camouflaged areas, alternative methods of road camouflage may need to occur.

6.5.4 Soil Remediation

Maintenance of vertical mulch piles should be minimal. Maintenance may occur through removal of any nonnative plant species around the base of these piles, and re-planting any fallen dead creosote branches to better break up the compacted soil.

6.5.5 Planting and Seeding

Maintenance of planting and seeding actions includes checking the intactness of chicken wire cages to ensure no herbivory is occurring within the confines of the cage. Stakes should be checked to make sure they are secured firmly in the ground. Nonnative species should be removed from within the cage radius of the plants and the seeded areas. Cages should be removed 1-2 years following planting once plants have successfully established.

6.5.6 Irrigation

Irrigation should only occur on an as needed basis. If plants or seeds require additional measures to help their establishment, then additional irrigation may be considered. Supplemental irrigation by hand should be conducted on an as needed basis with irrigation ending by Year 2 for individuals planted in Year 1, and Year 3 by individuals planted in Year 2.

6.6 Monitoring

Monitoring will be completed by a qualified Biologist for a minimum of five years following the implementation of the action measures. A monitoring report should be submitted annually.

6.6.1 Site Preparation

Monitoring for passive restoration will include checking the fence line boundary monthly to ensure there are no breaks or repairs needed. Any damages will be noted and the cause of the damage, if possible, should be determined and included in the annual monitoring report.

Posted signs will be monitored to ensure intactness. Any vandalism and/or damaged signs will be noted for future replacement depending on severity.

Upon success of decommissioning Vassar Avenue and Santa Clara Street, the roads should be monitored to ensure no trespassing has occurred on site. In addition, the roads should be monitored for signs of natural succession of native plant species and decreased presence of nonnative species.

6.6.2 Nonnative Species Removal

Monitoring of nonnative species will occur during multiple growing seasons, but especially during germination and flowering periods (Cal-IPC Council 2012). Monitoring will look for signs of nonnative species spreading to new areas of the restoration site, and will examine the effectiveness of the selected techniques for removal. Densities of nonnative species should be compared to densities of native species within the site to detect any potential changes in population abundances.

6.6.3 Road Camouflage

Monitoring of areas within the restoration site where road camouflage has occurred will occur at a minimum of twice a year. Monitoring efforts will focus on the effectiveness and completeness of the road camouflage methods, and will monitor the densities of new native plant populations that may result from these efforts. Alterations to the position of one or more mulching piles may occur if human-related disturbances persist and the road remains visible from the fence line

boundary. Evidence of trespass, such as new OHV tracks, should be evaluated to examine the effectiveness of camouflage actions.

6.6.4 Soil Remediation

Monitoring of soil remediated areas will occur at a minimum of twice a year for the first year, and annually for every consecutive year. Monitoring of soil remediation should evaluate whether there has been an observed increase in water retention or nutrients. This may include visually assessing changes to vegetation abundance compared to baseline surveys.

6.6.5 Planting and Seeding

Monitoring should occur monthly during the first winter season as the newly planted and seeded areas will be especially vulnerable to their environment, and thus the health of the plants should be carefully evaluated. Monitoring will examine whether the planted native species are fully establishing. Survivorship within the first month of planting should be assessed. Monitoring should specifically observe species composition and abundance of plants resulting from the implemented seeding and planting. Furthermore, monitoring should include observing and responding to the presence of any nonnative species present at newly seeded or planted sites within the plots.

6.6.6 Irrigation

Monitoring of irrigation should begin during implementation. Observations of the condition of the planted and seeded areas should occur, and adjustments should be made to improve the condition of planted and seeded areas. Time constraints permitting, the health of individual plants should be monitored and irrigation requirements should be adjusted as needed. Irrigation should be concluded 1-2 years after implementation, but given desert habitat and drought, the usefulness of irrigation should be assessed during monitoring visits, and irrigation should conclude as soon as realistically possible.

6.6.7 Rare and Sensitive Species

Monitoring of the restoration site should include watching for sign or presence of rare and sensitive plant and wildlife species. If any are observed, the restoration plan should be adapted to factor in the presence of these rare and sensitive species.

6.6.8 Monitoring Reports

Monitoring reports should be submitted annually by January 1 of every year beginning on the first year following the start of the implementation measures. Monitoring reports should be submitted to the DTPC Conservation Coordinator or project manager.

6.7 Costs

The costs calculated in this restoration plan are only taking into consideration the costs associated with supplies needed for the recommended restoration actions. Labor costs are difficult to assess at this stage of planning due to our inexperience with labor contracts and the potential variability of using paid versus volunteer labor throughout this project. An initial estimate of \$10,000 for labor in Year 1 was provided to the Council. This estimate stems from personal communication with Dr. Ann McLuckie, who shared that her desert tortoise habitat restoration project spent approximately 400 hours on plant delivery, cage construction, and plantings of 1008 plants (Ann McLuckie, pers. comm. 2017). Because we are proposing to plant 1555 plants, we are estimating it will take approximately 600 hours over the course of a week to complete the initial planting proposed in Year 1. At \$15 an hour, which is the hourly wage paid by the Desert Tortoise Preserve Committee for contracted work (Jillian Estrada, pers. comm. 2016), this comes out to a total initial labor cost of \$9000. We would propose an extra \$1000 be added to this labor budget to account for any delays that may increase additional costs.

In order to keep initial labor costs low, it is recommended that the Council contract volunteer labor from restoration organizations such as American Conservation Experience. Another labor cost that is not factored into this analysis is the salary of a qualified biologist to monitor and maintain the restoration site throughout the length of its proposed five-year schedule. This cost estimate varies greatly and would best be determined by the Council and/or the DTTC when the hiring of the qualified biologist becomes necessary to moving forward in the project.

Table 5. Summary of costs for restoration actions based on supplies only.

Actions	Cost
Trash Removal (Supplies only)	\$ 379.70
Nonnative Species Removal (Supplies only)	\$ 499.86
Road Camouflage	\$ -
Soil Remediation	\$ -
Planting in all Plots	\$ 31,843.97
Seeding	\$ 1,518.00
Irrigation Supplies	\$ 3,197.40
Overall Total	\$ 37,438.93

6.8 Adaptive Management

Phase 1 has tremendous potential to improve current conditions within the restoration site because it combines careful site preparation with strong management actions. The restoration plan applies actions that have been proven effective within desert ecosystem restoration by researchers, land managers, and experimental research. However, there are special circumstances and uncertainties associated within the restoration plan that will need to be continually monitored

and evaluated. These circumstances can impact the outcomes of these actions and the projected amount of acreage associated with them.

6.8.1 Unexpected Increases in Restoration Costs

This restoration plan has carefully considered and budgeted for all currently known costs associated with Phase 1 actions. This includes site preparation methods, planting, seeding, irrigating, maintenance, and human capacity. To mitigate any potential price increases, we are proposing to utilize multiple sources for restoration (local native farm, contract farming, and local seed collection) and implementation tasks (DTPC volunteer labor, paid DTPC staff, and contracted non-profits such as American Conservation Experience or Great Basin Institute). If, for example, any one of the seed sources is insufficient in one year, the plan as it is now will compensate by utilizing one of the other sources. In terms of additional materials, road camouflage methods will mostly involve collection of materials from within the restoration site, and possibly surrounding parcels that are also owned by the DTPC. Equipment for soil remediation, ripping and imprinting is costly and should be avoided because of the severe disturbance this would cause to the site's habitat.

6.8.2 Occurrence of Fire

Given that fires can occur within desert ecosystems, there is the potential for fire to impact the progress of the restoration site. The above actions involve altering the landscape in a multitude of ways to promote natural and planned recovery, and as such, fire may still severely set back the success of native plant species that have been seeded or planted at the site. This is because after fire nonnative species reestablish quicker than native species (D'Antonio and Vitousek 1992, Brooks and Esque 2002, Brooks and Berry 2006). Strong site preparation and quick re-seeding or planting may give natives a solid foothold to bounce back after the occurrence of fire. Fire will delay the success of the project, and it may also affect the overall budget in that additional seed or grown plants may need to be redone. Road camouflage techniques may also have to be redone and/or increased as fire will make OHV trails more visible from outside of the fence line.

6.8.3 Ongoing Site Disturbance

With these actions, there is a focus on securing the landscape with fencing and signs, and then conducting all of the necessary steps to restore the site for use by the desert tortoise. Adjustment or expansion of these options may be required in the future if current methods of reducing disturbance variables and seeding or planting fail. Signs may need adjustment if OHV users and recreational visitors do not respect the no trespassing signs currently in place. Responses to these signs will need to be monitored with adjustments or stricter enforcing measures put into place if necessary. It is recommended that local authorities be contacted and utilized by the DTPC in the event of continued trespassing problems.

Road camouflage may need to occur beyond the proposed 100 meters (line of sight) as the length of trail visible from the fence line will actually vary, and it may be deemed critical to extend that range in certain instances. This would require more organic material, but would not be an added

expense as the dead creosote branches are abundant on the ground of the parcels. Additional seeding and planting may need to occur in the event the first round does not take or establishment rates remain low. Irrigation considerations may also impact the budget if water is required more than estimated.

6.8.4 Rare and Sensitive Species Provision

This restoration project will benefit the desert tortoise, and it has the potential to benefit other rare and sensitive species that may coexist within the desert tortoise’s habitat. Appendix B – Table 1 identifies rare and sensitive species that may be found within the targeted restoration site based on an analysis of existing rare and sensitive desert species and their known habitats. If these species are found within the site, extreme care should be taken to ensure the safety and continued survival of these species throughout the restoration project. This may mean altering where restoration occurs within the restoration site to mitigate any potential impacts to the species.

6.9 Outcomes

Phase 1 of the restoration plan seeks to restore a starting total of 173.5 acres of highly degraded habitat. As is shown in Table 6, restoration of the identified six plots will restore a total of 28 acres through revegetation in Years 1 and 2, while restored OHV trails through road camouflage and soil remediation will contribute a total of 4 acres. The buffer zones are areas where site preparation will take place, restoring a total of 141.5 acres.

Table 6. Summary of restoration areas in Phase 1, including their associated actions, expected restored acreage and total cost.

Restoration Area	Actions	Restored Acreage
OHV Trails	Road camouflage; Soil remediation; Trash removal; Nonnative species removal	4*
Buffer Zones	Road camouflage on first 100 meters of OHV trails within buffer zones; Nonnative species removal; Trash removal	141.5
Plot 1	Soil remediation; Irrigation; Planting 330 cover species plants; Seeding of forage species plants; Nonnative species removal; Trash removal	5.8
Plot 2	Soil remediation; Irrigation; Planting 650 cover species plants; Seeding of forage species; Nonnative species removal; Trash removal	11.6

Plot 3	Road camouflage; Soil remediation; Irrigation; Planting 65 cover species plants; Seeding of forage species; Nonnative species removal; Trash removal	1.2
Plot 4	Soil remediation; Irrigation; Planting 265 cover species plants; Seeding of forage species; Nonnative species removal; Trash removal	5
Plot 5	Soil remediation; Irrigation; Planting 145 cover species plants; Seeding of forage species; Nonnative species removal; Trash removal	2.7
Plot 6	Road camouflage; Soil remediation; Irrigation; Planting 100 cover species plants; Seeding of forage species; Nonnative species removal; Trash removal	1.7
Total Acreage Restored		173.5
Total Cost for Restoration**		\$37,438.93

*OHV trail restoration actions restore nine acres, but five of those are accounted for in the buffer zones restored acreage. ** Cost is based on supplies only.

7. Phase 2

Following the successful completion of Phase 1, the next steps would to consider a Phase 2 in which the rest of the approximately 285 acres would be restored. These areas were less prioritized than those identified in Phase 1 because they are in fair condition with the exception of the OHV trails traversing the site. Approximately 35 OHV trails would still need to be remediated throughout the site. While road camouflage plays less of a role in these areas, soil remediation may still be required to help return these trails to a more natural state. Nonnative species removal will be necessary throughout the restoration areas, but no other planting and seeding plots were identified beyond Phase 1 plots.

8. Conclusions

Using strategic restoration in the format of goals, actions and outcomes as supplied in the Guidance Document (*presented in section 2.2.1*), this restoration plan can serve as an example of how restoration actions can be applied for the recovery of desert tortoise habitat. The actions proposed in this plan are based off of best management practices and studies that have demonstrated the success of each action. To increase the probability of this restoration plan, actions were combined to increase their effectiveness. If all recommendations are followed, a total of 173.5 acres will be restored for the benefit of the desert tortoise, jump starting natural succession within the area.

8.1 Future Research

Opportunities for future research within the context of this restoration project include:

1. Post-restoration surveying for mammalian species other than the desert tortoise to examine the effects of habitat restoration in which the restoration is focused solely on the recovery of a single species.
 - a. For example, increases in kangaroo rat density levels may indicate successful restoration.
2. Comparisons of the effectiveness of using a multi-pronged restoration approach (i.e. combinations of partial and full restoration) to restore desert tortoise habitat.
3. Pursuing further research on the soil compaction across roads.
4. Agassiz's desert tortoise abundance densities following the conclusion of this restoration plan. Determinations will need to be made to evaluate the effectiveness of this plan for future tortoise populations.
5. Conduct studies on soil compaction across OHV trails.
6. Conduct studies to test blood of tortoises at the restoration site before and after restoration to examine how their blood chemistry, shell thickness, etc., change as a result of the restoration.

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Appendix A – Existing Biological Resources

Table 1. Plant Species Observations from March 17, 2015 from the DTPC’s Biological Assessment of DTRNA EEA parcels.

Source: DTPC, 2015

Common Name	Scientific Name
Creosote bush	<i>Larrea tridentata</i>
White bursage	<i>Ambrosia dumosa</i>
Anderson thorn bush	<i>Lycium andersonii</i>
Spiny hopsage	<i>Grayia spinosa</i>
Winterfat	<i>Krascheninnikovia lanata</i>
Cheesebush	<i>Ambrosia salsola</i>
Indigo bush	<i>Psorothamnus arborescens</i>
Mojave horsebrush	<i>Tetradymia stenolepis</i>
Cooper’s goldenbush	<i>Ericameria cooperi</i>
Goldfields	<i>Lasthenia ssp.</i>
Checker fiddleneck	<i>Amsinckia tessellata</i>
Rayless goldenhead	<i>Acamptopappus sphaerocephalus</i>
Saharan mustard	<i>Brassica tournefortii</i>
Rattlesnake weed	<i>Chamaesyce albomarginata</i>
Paper bag bush	<i>Scutellaria mexicana</i>
Nonnative dried grass	<i>Schismus sp.</i>
Golden cholla	<i>Cylindropuntia echinocarpa</i>
Green rabbitbrush	<i>Ericameria teretifolia</i>
California buckwheat	<i>Eriogonum fasciculatum</i>
Peach thorn	<i>Lycium cooperi</i>
Dried perennial bunch grass	<i>Stipa sp.</i>
Mojave aster	<i>Xylorhiza tortifolia</i>

Mojave rabbitbrush	<i>Ericameria nauseosa</i>
Desert candle	<i>Caulanthus inflatus</i>
Desert trumpet	<i>Eriogonum inflatum</i>
Dried exotic annual grass	<i>Bromus sp.</i>
Slender-stemmed buckwheat	<i>Eriogonum gracillimum</i>

Table 2. Wildlife Observations from March 17, 2015 DTTC Biological Assessment of DTRNA EEA parcels. *Source: DTTC, 2015.*

Common Name	Scientific Name	Type of Observation
Western whiptail lizard	<i>Aspidoscelis tigris</i>	Animal sign
Coyote	<i>Canis latrans</i>	Scat
Desert kit fox	<i>Vulpes macrotis arsipus</i>	Scat and burrows
Black-tailed jackrabbit	<i>Lepus californicus</i>	Scat
Agassiz's desert tortoise	<i>Gopherus agassizii</i>	Burrows and shell
Lesser nighthawk	<i>Chordeiles acutipennis</i>	Visual observation, flying east to west
Common raven	<i>Corvus corax</i>	Visual observation
Sheep	<i>Ovis aries</i>	Scat

Table 3. Compilation of abundant species observed in a survey conducted by Dr. Kristin Berry, Lisa M. Lyren, Julie L. Yee and Tracy Y. Bailey in a study area that encompasses three types of managed lands: the DTRNA, critical habitat and private land, which includes the restoration site. (Berry et al. 2014)

Common Name	Scientific Name
Creosote bush	<i>Larrea tridentata</i>
White bursage	<i>Ambrosia dumosa</i>
Anderson boxthorn	<i>Lycium andersonii</i>
Cheesebush	<i>Ambrosia salsola</i>
Goldenhead	<i>Acamptopappus sphaerocephalus</i>
Mojave indigo bush	<i>Psoralea arborescens</i>
Desert trumpet	<i>Eriogonum inflatum</i>
Hop-sage	<i>Grayia spinosa</i>
Mojave aster	<i>Xylorhiza tortifolia</i>
Nevada ephedra	<i>Ephedra nevadensis</i>
Mojave California buckwheat	<i>Eriogonum fasciculatum</i>

Winter fat

Krascheninnikovia lanata

Appendix B – Rare and Sensitive Species

Table 1. Rare and sensitive wildlife and plant species that may exist within the restoration site. Sources: DTPC website, IUCN Redlist

Wildlife Species			
Common Name	Scientific Name	Listing Status	Presence Observed Onsite?
Agassiz's desert tortoise	<i>Gopherus agassizii</i>	Threatened	Burrows and shells
Mohave ground squirrel	<i>Xerospermophilus mohavensis</i>	State Threatened	
Desert kit fox	<i>Vulpes macrotis arsipus</i>	Rare, State Threatened	Scat & burrows observed
Black-tailed jackrabbit	<i>Lepus californicus deserticola</i>	Least Concern	Scat
Coyote	<i>Canis latrans</i>	Least Concern	Scat presence
Badger	<i>Taxidea taxus</i>	Least Concern	
Desert woodrat	<i>Neotoma lepida</i>	Least Concern	
Kangaroo rat	<i>Dipodomys deserti</i>	Least Concern	
Collared lizard	<i>Crotaphytus collaris</i>	Least Concern	
Side-blotched lizard	<i>Uta stansburiana</i>	Least Concern	
Leopard lizard	<i>Gamelia wislizenii</i>	Least Concern	
Chuckwalla	<i>Sauromalus ater</i>	Least Concern	
Western whiptail	<i>Aspidoscelis tigris</i>	Least Concern	Presence of individual
Cactus wren	<i>Campylorhynchus brunneicapillus</i>	Least Concern	
LeConte's thrasher	<i>Toxostoma lecontei</i>	Least Concern	
Ash-throated flycatcher	<i>Myiarchus cinerascens</i>	Least Concern	
Red-tailed hawk	<i>Buteo jamaicensis</i>	Least Concern	
Lesser nighthawk	<i>Chordeiles acutipennis</i>	Least Concern	Individual spotted
Ladderback woodpecker	<i>Dryobates scalaris</i>	Least Concern	
Coachwhip snake	<i>Masticophis flagellum</i>	Least Concern	

Gopher snake	<i>Pituophis melanoleucus</i>	Least Concern
Sidewinder	<i>Crotalus cerastes</i>	Least Concern
Mojave rattlesnake	<i>Crotalus scutulatus</i>	Least Concern

Plant Species

Species Common Name	Scientific Name	Listing Status	Presence Observed Onsite?
Barstow woolly sunflower	<i>Eriophyllum mohavense</i>	Rare and Endangered	
Desert cymopterus	<i>Cymopterus deserticola</i>	Rare and Endangered	

Appendix C – Phase 1 Supply Budget

Table 1. Itemized budget for restorations actions based on supplies only.

Year	Actions	Units	Cost/Unit	Total Cost
1	Trash Removal (All Locations)			
	10 Gallon Commercial Trash Container	10	17.99	179.90
	EZ Reach and Grab Pickup Tool	20	9.99	199.80
	Total cost for Trash Removal (Supplies only)			379.70
1 - 5	Nonnative Species Removal (All Locations)			
	Ace Steel Wheelbarrel	4	79.99	319.96
	Long Handle Round Point Shovel	10	17.99	179.90
	Total Cost for Nonnative Species Removal (Supplies only)			499.86
1	Road Camouflage			
	Vertical Mulching	0	0	0
	Horizontal Mulching	0	0	0
	Rock Scattering	0	0	0
	Total for Road Camouflage			0
1 & 2	Soil Remediation			
	Vertical Mulching	0	0	0
	Ripping	0	0	0
	Imprinting	0	0	0
	Recontouring Berms	0	0	0
	Topsoil Salvage	0	0	0
	Total for Soil Remediation			0
1 & 2	Planting			
	Plot 1	330	10	3300.00
	Plot 2	650	10	6500.00
	Plot 3	65	10	650.00
	Plot 4	265	10	2650.00

	Plot 5	145	10	1450.00
	Plot 6	100	10	1000.00
	150 ft Poultry Netting, 1in Hex Mesh (2ft diameter/plant)	103	139.99	14418.97
	Heavy Duty Steel Garden Staples (50 pack; 4/cage)	125	15	1875.00
	Total for Planting in all Plots			31843.97
2	Seeding (Cost/bulk lb)			
	<i>Ambrosia dumosa</i>	1	40	40.00
	<i>Atriplex canescens</i>	1	18	18.00
	<i>Chamaesyce albomarginata</i>	1	500	500.00
	<i>Ephedra nevadensis</i>	1	36	36.00
	<i>Larrea tridentata</i>	1	30	30.00
	<i>Loeseliastrum matthewsii</i>	1	240	240.00
	<i>Lycium andersonii</i>	1	500	500.00
	<i>Malacothrix glabrata</i>	1	120	120.00
	<i>Plantago ovata</i>	1	2	2.00
	<i>Sphaeralcea ambigua</i>	1	32	32.00
	Total for Seeding			1518.00
1 & 2	Irrigation			
	Trailer Water Tank 1,000 Gallon (Weekly rental price)	2	1343	2686.00
	Solo Deluxe Shoulder Saver Sprayer Harness	4	31	124.00
	Solo 4-Gal. Standard Backpack Sprayer w/ Diaphragm Pump	4	96.85	387.40
	Total for Irrigation Supplies			3197.40
Total				\$37,438.93

*Actions are not recommended in Phase 1 of this plan and have an associated cost of \$0 as costs were not collected.

3. Conclusion

The goal of this analysis was to provide land managers with a framework that would streamline efforts for desert tortoise habitat restoration. This framework includes a guidance document that defines the restoration principles for the desert tortoise, a case study that serves as an example of strategic restoration for desert tortoise habitat, and an assessment tool that helps evaluate sites for habitat restoration potential. Overall, this framework can serve as a decision support tool for land managers to use when deciding where and how to allocate limited resources.

Each component of the framework was developed to incorporate the use of strategic restoration to identify restoration actions that would help in the recovery of desert tortoise populations. Actions were structured in a “goals, actions, outcomes” fashion to provide a clear thought process and structure that could be easily replicated across the documents to target the four categories of form, function, stability and feasibility defined in the guidance document. In response to future environmental changes, adaptive management was incorporated into the restoration plan to improve the success potential of restoration actions.

Should all actions be implemented in the restoration plan, 173.5 acres could be restored to serve as suitable habitat for the desert tortoise. However, because desert recovery can take decades to recover natural processes after disturbances, habitation of these recovered areas by desert tortoises may not occur for at least 50 years (Lovich and Bainbridge 1999). Successful restoration would support about 10 desert tortoises per square km (USFWS 2011). Therefore, it is recommended the DTPC and the Council implement restoration actions as soon as resources become available.

In its current state, the assessment tool can evaluate sites within Western Mojave Recovery Unit for restoration potential. Each category and feature was derived using information specifically for the Western Mojave Desert, and should not be used for other areas as habitat requirements may change based on geographic location. To expand the use of the tool, land managers are encouraged to adapt and expand the tool based on information available for their area.

Below is a list of assumptions, limitation and future research areas that should be taken into consideration when using this report.

3.1 Assumptions

The following assumptions have been identified throughout the course of designing this research project:

1. This framework is meant for land managers who have the prerequisite knowledge and ability to accurately assess their site in terms of potential desert tortoise habitat.
2. The framework assumes the restoration efforts will be focused within the Western Mojave Recovery Unit.
3. The projected effectiveness of the restoration plan within the framework assumes that each of the steps listed in the restoration plan are fully implemented, including all actions, maintenance and monitoring of the site.

3.2 Limitations

The following limitations have been identified throughout the course of creating this research project:

1. Reliance on funding is a large limitation in that it will dictate the ability for this framework to be fully implemented, especially considering the ability to conduct restoration such as described in the restoration plan.
2. This framework is focused specifically on the Western Mojave Recovery Unit, and therefore other parts of the desert tortoise's range is outside of the scope of the assessment tool and site specific restoration plan.
3. Feasibility was the main focus of this framework, despite its incredible importance.

3.3 Future Research

This research project seeks to define, evaluate, and restore habitat for the Agassiz's Desert Tortoise, but due to its assumptions and possible limitations, additional research should be conducted on various topics to ensure the framework is reaching its full potential. Future research should be considered to assess the following:

1. Considerations for how this framework could be expanded to include other recovery units.
2. Prioritizing regional assessments.
3. How to prioritize costs of restoration efforts in a more systematic way.
4. Applying strategic restoration to other types of habitat restoration.
5. As stated in *The Revised Recovery Plan for the Mojave Desert Tortoise*, research related to the effectiveness of management actions is a high priority.

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