Desert Tortoise Recovery Partnership- RASP

NFWF CONTACT

Kirstin Neff
Program Director,
Southwest
kirstin.neff@nfwf.org
303-222-6485

Emma Wigger
Manager,
Rocky Mountain Regional
Programs
emma.wigger@nfwf.org
202-888-1680

Trevor Davis
Coordinator,
Regional Programs
trevor.davis@nfwf.org
202-595-2442

FUNDING PARTNERS

- U.S. Marine Corps
- U.S. Department of Navy

ABOUT NFWF

The National Fish and Wildlife Foundation (NFWF) works with partners to foster sustainable and impactful conservation solutions so that people and nature thrive together. Chartered by Congress in 1984, NFWF has grown to become the nation's largest conservation foundation. Since its founding, NFWF has funded more than 23,900 projects that have generated a total conservation impact of more than $12 billion.

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NATIONAL HEADQUARTERS
1625 Eye Street, NW
Suite 300
Washington, D.C., 20006
202-857-0166



Desert tortoise

OVERVIEW

The Desert Tortoise Recovery Partnership (DTRP) was formed in 2022 through partnerships between the National Fish and Wildlife Foundation (NFWF), U.S. Marines Corps, U.S. Army, Department of the Navy, U.S. Fish and Wildlife Service (USFWS) and the U.S. Bureau of Land Management (BLM) to address pressing conservation needs for the Mojave desert tortoise (*Gopherus agassizii*) in California's West Mojave Desert. The DTRP was established as an effort of the Recovery and Sustainment Partnership (RASP), a joint initiative of the Department of War and the Department of the Interior to develop threatened and endangered species conservation and recovery programs while maintaining military readiness.

To date, the Desert Tortoise Recovery Partnership program has awarded 19 grants across five slates, investing more than $10.6 million and leveraging nearly $8.2 million in matching contributions to generate a total, on-the-ground impact of roughly $18.8 million.

The National Fish and Wildlife Foundation (NFWF) and partners announced a 2026 round of funding for Desert Tortoise Recovery Partnership projects. Five new tortoise conservation grants totaling over $2.2 million were awarded. The five awards announced were leveraged by nearly $500,000 in grantee-provided matching contributions, for a total conservation impact of nearly $2.7 million.

GOALS AND OBJECTIVES

Desert Tortoise Recovery and Sustainment Partnership (RASP) projects will produce measurable outcomes for threatened Mojave desert tortoises in California's western Mojave Desert. The projects address the leading factors in Mojave desert tortoise decline such as habitat alteration and fragmentation, environmental change, and tortoise mortality. The primary goal of this category is to marshal resources in a coordinated manner to work to recover the species by protecting Mojave desert tortoises from threats and restoring critical habitat. The goals of the DTRP are laid out in the Mojave Desert Tortoise Recovery Implementation Plan and include closure of unauthorized OHV routes and habitat restoration, installation of tortoise exclusion fencing along highways and improvement of road crossing structures, species monitoring and land acquisition for habitat protection.

(continued)

PROGRAM OUTCOMES TO DATE

Collectively, the 19 DTRP projects aim to accomplish the following outcomes:

- Establish 22 defensible polygons of tortoise habitat
- Protect over 50,000 acres of habitat within defensible polygons
- Restore or enhance 9 acres of tortoise habitat
- Conduct vertical mulching and/or install physical barriers across 74 sites to discourage use of unauthorized OHV routes
- Engage over 200,000 public land users regarding tortoise conservation needs
- Monitor 663 sites for Mojave desert tortoise population
- Produce and enter 53 datasets or monitoring reports into relevant databases to inform management
- Acquire 1,480 acres in fee for habitat protection
- Harvest 3 pounds of native seed for habitat restoration
- Propagate 2,000 seedlings for habitat restoration
- Rear 160 tortoises in headstarting programs
- Improve 5 miles of existing highway exclusion fencing
- Install 16 miles of new highway exclusion fencing
- Install or improve three highway underpasses to facilitate tortoise road crossing

2026 GRANTS

Conserving Mojave Desert Tortoise Habitat in the West Mojave (CA)

Grantee: Mojave Desert Land Trust
Grant Amount:. $374,600
Matching Funds:. $0
Total Project Amount:. $374,600
Acquire strategically located private inholdings within the Superior-Cronese and Ord-Rodman focal areas of the western Mojave Desert in California to support Mojave desert tortoise habitat connectivity and management. Project will reduce habitat fragmentation, strengthen existing conserved lands, and reinforce recent tortoise augmentation efforts to improve long-term recovery in the region.



Joshua Tree National Park

Estimating Desert Tortoise Density and Demographics in the Superior-Cronese Area (CA)

Grantee: U.S. Fish and Wildlife Service - Desert Tortoise Recovery Office
Grant Amount:. $347,600
Matching Funds:. $22,500
Total Project Amount:. $370,100
Estimate population density, abundance and demographic structure of the threatened Mojave desert tortoise in the western Superior-Cronese area of the Western Mojave Recovery Unit in California using a new survey and monitoring method developed for the species. Project will establish baseline data to evaluate population trends and measure the effectiveness of coordinated recovery actions, guiding improved management and conservation of the species.

Expanding Highway Exclusion Fencing to Reduce Mojave Desert Tortoise Mortality (CA)

Grantee: Desert Tortoise Council
Grant Amount:. $688,300
Matching Funds:. $0
Total Project Amount:. $688,300
Install wildlife exclusion fencing along a high-priority segment of Interstate 40 in the Western Mojave Recovery Unit in California to reduce Mojave desert tortoise highway mortality. Project will reduce tortoise-vehicle collisions, improve habitat connectivity and protect critical habitat along a priority fencing segment identified for desert tortoise recovery.

Monitoring Juvenile Desert Tortoise Growth and Survival in Restored Habitat (CA)

Grantee: Zoological Society of San Diego
Grant Amount:. $389,400
Matching Funds:. $446,600
Total Project Amount:. $836,000
Release and monitor the growth and survival of juvenile Mojave desert tortoises at two restored sites in the Superior-Cronese area of the western Mojave Desert in California, in coordination with habitat restoration and invasive plant management. Project will measure juvenile growth and survival to assess whether restored habitat can support the transition of juveniles to breeding adults and advance tortoise recovery.

Restoring Unauthorized Routes to Conserve Desert Tortoise Habitat in the West Mojave (CA)

Grantee: Preservation Ranch
Grant Amount:. $429,000
Matching Funds:. $0
Total Project Amount:. $429,000
Rehabilitate unauthorized off-highway vehicle routes across 286 acres of Mojave desert tortoise critical habitat in the Superior-Cronese West Focal Area, and promote responsible recreation through an interpretive kiosk and field outreach. Project will restore habitat, ensure long-term site protection, and secure a monitored 490-acre block of defensible desert tortoise habitat in the West Mojave.