

DOCKETED

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Project Title:	Compliance - LUZ SEGS IX and X Projects Application for Certification
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Description:	Desert Tortoise fencing maintenance
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**Siting, Transmission
 and Environmental
 Protection Division**

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PROJECT TITLE: SEGS IX-X Harper Dry Lake
 (89-AFC-01C)

Docket: N/A

TECHNICAL AREA: Biological Resources		
<input type="checkbox"/> Telephone	<input checked="" type="checkbox"/> Email	<input type="checkbox"/> Meeting Location:
NAME: Ann Crisp, Planner II	DATE: July 12, 2021	TIME: n/a
WITH: Amanda Johnson, Senior Environmental Planner, LSA		
SUBJECT: SEGS X desert tortoise survey results		

COMMENTS:

On July 12, 2021, Amanda Johnson provided requested information regarding the results of focused desert tortoise surveys conducted at the SEGS X site. The following summary results were provided:

Michael Baker International (Michael Baker) is pleased to submit the following summary to Terra-Gen, LLC (Terra-Gen) documenting the results of focused surveys conducted for tortoise (*Gopherus agassizii*; DETO) in connection with the SEGS X project site (project or project site) located in the former town of Lockhart, San Bernardino County, California. Surveys occurred during the 2020 field season.

Methods

Literature Review

Prior to conducting the focused survey, Michael Baker performed a detailed literature review and record search of the project site, vicinity, and region for DETO records. The literature search included a review of existing biological and focused DETO survey reports from the project vicinity, as well as records reported in the CNDDDB and the USFWS online Critical Habitat Mapper (USFWS 2020).

Reconnaissance Survey/Vegetation Mapping

Michael Baker biologists Tom Millington, Ryan Winkleman, and Stephen Anderson conducted a general reconnaissance survey of the project site on February 27, 2020. The reconnaissance survey allowed Michael Baker to map vegetation within the project site and confirm on-site habitat suitability for DETO.



Focused Surveys

Michael Baker contacted USFWS senior biologist Scott Hoffmann on May 5, 2020 to confirm the site- specific survey methodology for the surveys. Based on guidance from Mr. Hoffmann, it was determined that based on the regional population status and historic data for the project vicinity, focused surveys would only be required within the project site. According to Mr. Hoffmann, the species has undergone severe declines in recent decades in the general project vicinity, and he stated that he did not expect Michael Baker to find any tortoises or sign.

The quantitative survey method was utilized for the focused surveys. DETO focused surveys were conducted in spring 2020 in accordance with the guidelines described in the USFWS protocol *Preparing for Any Action that May Occur within the Range of the Mojave Desert Tortoise (Gopherus agassizii)*, last updated in 2019 (USFWS 2019). All focused surveys were conducted by Michael Baker biologists Tom Millington, Ryan Winkleman, Stephen Anderson, and Ashley Spencer on May 11, 12, 14, and 18, 2020 (refer to Table 1, *Survey Dates, Times, and Weather Conditions*).

Table 1: Survey Dates, Times, and Weather Conditions

Date	Time (start/ finish)	Weather Conditions	
		Temperature (°F)(start/finish)	Wind Speed (average miles per hour)
May 11, 2020	0836 / 1343	77 / 93	9
May 12, 2020	0753 / 1358	64 / 81	12
May 14, 2020	0742 / 1453	63 / 86	10
May 18, 2020	0804 / 1447	68 / 81	10

Based on the guidelines set forth in the 2019 DETO survey protocol (USFWS 2019), Michael Baker biologists walked transects spaced at 10-meter (approximately 33 feet) intervals, with each biologist walking a roughly straight path on the centerline of the transect. Biologists walked at a pace that allowed for careful/detailed observation of the surrounding area to ensure 100 percent visual coverage of all areas that were determined to provide suitable habitat for DETO. Because the survey area is smaller than 3,290 acres, 100 percent coverage of the survey area was provided. Hand-held mirrors and cell phone screens were used to reflect sunlight into burrows that were found in order to search for any DETO or sign inside the burrows. All evidence of DETO presence including live or dead DETO, burrows, or sign, that was observed during the focused survey was recorded on the datasheet provided in the USFWS survey protocol and recorded using a Garmin handheld GPS. Burrows were



categorized according to descriptions provided in the *Desert Tortoise (Mojave Population) Field Manual* (USFWS 2009) and listed below:

Burrow Condition Class:

1. Currently active, with desert tortoise or recent desert tortoise sign
2. Good condition, definitely desert tortoise; no evidence of recent use
3. Deteriorated condition which includes collapsed burrows; definitely desert tortoise (please describe)
4. Good condition; possibly desert tortoise (please describe)
5. Deteriorated condition which includes collapsed burrows; possibly desert tortoise (please describe)

Air temperature was measured with a Kestrel weather meter at the beginning and end of each transect to monitor temperature changes. Per the survey protocol, temperature readings were taken approximately 5 centimeters above the ground surface in an area of full sun but in the shade of the observer. Although previous guidance has stated that the maximum allowable air temperature during surveys is 104 degrees Fahrenheit (°F), the current 2019 survey protocol states that DETO are most active when air temperature is below 95°F. At no point during the focused surveys did the temperature reach 95°F.

Results

No DETO or carapaces were found during the focused surveys (refer to the figure *SEGS X: 2020 Survey Results*). A total of eleven (11) burrows of suitable size for DETO were found dispersed throughout the project site. These burrows were all determined by Michael Baker’s biologists to be Class 5 burrows, “deteriorated condition which includes collapsed burrows; possibly desert tortoise.” In most cases these burrows were surrounded by other burrows of similar size and shape, indicating a likely mammal burrow complex. No DETO sign or carapaces were found at or near any of the burrows, or anywhere in the entire project site. None of these burrows showed any indication that they were currently or historically occupied by DETO.

Conclusions

Based on the results of the DETO focused surveys, DETO was determined to be absent on the project site.

cc: John Heiser- CEC	Signed: <signed>
	Name: Ann Crisp – Staff Biologist