



Pima Natural Resource Conservation District
NRCS Plant Materials Center
3241 N. Romero Road
Tucson, AZ 85705

July 1, 2017

Resolution 2015-05-26-A

Sonoran Desert Tortoise Protection

Whereas the Sonoran Desert Tortoise (*Gopherus morafkai*) has long been a species of interest to the Pima Natural Resource Conservation District (PNRCD), is widespread throughout the district, and shares its range with our Pima NRCD cooperators' livestock operations; and

Whereas the Meyer Study¹, which was conducted within the lower San Pedro Watershed across three grazing regimes shows that the tortoise population is stable with good recruitment across all grazing regimes; and

Whereas nevertheless, questions are continually asked about the effects of livestock grazing in tortoise habitat; and

Whereas we are aware of no documented evidence of any harm that was ever done to any tortoise by the presence of cattleguards, and perceive a minuscule probability that a cattleguard would ever thwart a desert tortoise from crossing a roadway or fence-line; and

Whereas, attempting to modify or replace existing cattleguards for the purpose of "tortoise-friendliness" may result in minimal if any benefit to the species and may also render cattleguards ineffective for their intended purpose (i.e, cattle might easily cross modified cattleguards or become injured by them),

Be it therefore resolved the Pima Natural Resource Conservation District, being a recognized leader in habitat and species conservation, hereby adopts the *Best Management Practices for Ranching in Sonoran Desert Tortoise (Gopherus morafkai) Habitat in Arizona*,² (BMP) with the exception of recommendations therein for "tortoise-friendly" cattleguards, as a basis for conserving and protecting the Sonoran Desert Tortoise.

It is further resolved that, prior to approving any new Coordinated Resource Management Plan for farming or ranching in known Sonoran Desert Tortoise habitat areas, the Pima NRCD will request the BMP be used in that plan.

¹ Meyer, W.W., Ogden, P.R., Cline, K.E., Smith, E.L., Ruyle, G.B., Meyer, F.K., and J.A. Cordrey. "An Eighteen Year Study of Population Dynamics, Diet and Health of the Sonoran Desert Tortoise (*Gopherus agassizii*) in the San Pedro Valley of Southern Arizona". January 2010. Submitted to the U.S. Fish and Wildlife Service in Response to the 2009 Petition to List the Sonoran Desert Tortoise as an Endangered Species.

² Best Management Practices for Ranching in Sonoran Desert Tortoise (*Gopherus morafkai*) in Arizona. 2014. Ranching and Sonoran Desert Tortoise Working Group. 41 pp. plus appendices.

It is further resolved that all PNRCD cooperators will be encouraged to adopt the BMP and in particular, PNRCD will request that Pima County adopt the BMP and implement it on all the County-owned ranches by way of incorporation of the BMP into the Sonoran Desert Conservation Plan.

It is further resolved that the PNRCD hereby creates a policy that the district shall either conduct or collaborate in offering bi-annual Tortoise Best Management Practices training workshops for our cooperators for a period of no less than two years, and afterward as frequently as is needed or requested.

It is further resolved that the PNRCD will request cooperators voluntarily report to the district in an annual survey (see attached example) of which of the best management practices they have utilized.

It is further resolved that, upon approval, this resolution (or resolution as amended) will be transmitted to the U.S. Fish and Wildlife Service, the Arizona Game and Fish Department, the USDA Natural Resource Conservation Service, the Bureau of Land Management Tucson Field Office, the Pima County Board of Supervisors, the Coronado National Forest, the Arizona State Lands Department, the AZ NRCD State Association, the Arizona Cattlegrowers Association, the Altar Valley Conservation Alliance, and the Public Lands Council.