

TC Assignment 6/10/2026

Consider conservation options for habitat islands and fragmented tortoise populations

Background:

In recent weeks, HCP staff reported that a portion of tortoise fence at Long Valley was non-functional due to shifting sand dunes and that tortoise tracks were observed entering the adjacent private property. Since that time, the BLM has repaired the damaged fence and HCP and UDWR have been removing tortoises from the private property which is in the process of being developed. The developers expressed frustration at the need for an additional tortoise removal and requested other solutions that will prevent tortoises from entering their property again. This area, and others like it, present conservation challenges due to the fragmented nature of the remaining habitat and unknown number of tortoises they might be harboring.

Assignment:

Review the primary tortoise habitat islands throughout the County's take permit area (Figure 1). Consider best management practices for each location that is fragmented from larger tracts of habitat. If necessary, consider specific thresholds (ie # of tortoises or acres) that should be needed to maintain a viable tortoise population. For areas that do not meet the desired thresholds, consider management options to remove and translocate these tortoises. Identify steps to implement a conservation strategy for each of these locations, such as additional study, culverts or fencing, and additional permitting or authorizations.

Figure 1. Fragmented tortoise populations in the Upper Virgin River Recovery Unit.





