



# United States Department of the Interior



FISH AND WILDLIFE SERVICE  
Ventura Fish and Wildlife Office  
2493 Portola Road, Suite B  
Ventura, California 93003

IN REPLY REFER TO:  
81440-2011-CPA-0088

June 3, 2011

Dr. Paul M. Delaney, Ph.D.  
Professor, Biology  
Copper Mountain Community College  
6162 Rotary Way, P.O. Box 1398  
Joshua Tree, California 92252

Subject: Minor Amendment to the Habitat Conservation Plan for the Copper Mountain College Expansion Site (TE-143444-0)

Dear Dr. Delaney:

We have received your request, dated March 17, 2011 and received by our office on March 21, 2011, for a minor amendment to the Copper Mountain College Habitat Conservation Plan (HCP). In this plan, Copper Mountain College (College) identified the measures that it will take to minimize and mitigate take of the federally threatened desert tortoise (*Gopherus agassizii*) during expansion of existing campus facilities into adjacent desert tortoise habitat. Based on this HCP, we issued an incidental take permit to the College in August of 2007. You are now requesting to modify this HCP to allow blood testing and telemetry of desert tortoises within the translocation area. Your request and our response are made pursuant to 50 CFR 13.23 (a) and (b).

In the HCP, the College committed to perform monitoring and adaptive management activities for desert tortoises to ensure continued achievement of this HCP's biological objectives. Your request to conduct blood testing of desert tortoises was made because a pet desert tortoise was found within the translocation area while conducting the April 2010 population survey. This pet desert tortoise subsequently tested positive for *Mycoplasma testudineum*, a known respiratory pathogen. You also requested to use telemetry to track individual desert tortoise movements and to statistically describe changing desert tortoise spatial distribution in the translocation area.

As outlined in the HCP, the College must annually assess desert tortoises for symptoms of disease within its translocation area. This condition requires handling to collect measurements and health assessment data. The section 10(a)(1)(B) permit associated with this HCP currently covers take associated with these activities. When using experienced biologists, authorized by the U.S. Fish and Wildlife Service (Service), and approved techniques, drawing blood and

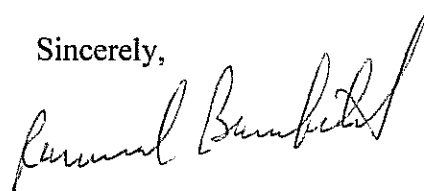
attaching transmitters to desert tortoises constitutes only a minor additional stress, which would not likely result in injury or mortality of individuals. Consequently, we have determined that the effects associated with blood collection and transmitter placement are adequately addressed by our analysis of the effects of handling in the existing HCP.

Blood testing would facilitate a better understanding of the overall disease status within the population and help to better accomplish the biological goals and objectives of the HCP. As stated previously, we have determined that the existing HCP adequately addresses the effects associated with these activities. Therefore, we approve this minor amendment to the Copper Mountain College HCP.

All biologists requesting to draw blood must be certified by the Service prior to undertaking any such activity. All biologists requesting to handle desert tortoises and/or attach or remove transmitters must be authorized by the Service and must follow the guidelines outlined in the 2011 Desert Tortoise Monitoring Handbook ([http://www.fws.gov/nevada/desert\\_tortoise/dt\\_reports.html](http://www.fws.gov/nevada/desert_tortoise/dt_reports.html)).

We appreciate your efforts to coordinate with us regarding this minor amendment. If you have any questions regarding this letter, please contact Amy Torres of the Ventura Fish and Wildlife Office at (909) 382-2654.

Sincerely,

A handwritten signature in black ink, appearing to read "Raymond Bransfield". The signature is written in a cursive style with a large, sweeping initial "R".

Raymond Bransfield  
Senior Biologist