

Summary of the Proposed Revisions to the Gopher Tortoise Permitting Guidelines
FWC Commission meeting
4 February 2015
AGENDA ITEM 6B

Clarifications and Improvements

- Revised definition for “abandoned burrow”
- Added new definition for “improved pasture”
- Clarified the refund request timeframe (60 days) also applies to withdrawn or voided permits
- Updated permits mitigation according to 2013 Consumer Price Index (CPI) adjustments
- Clarified acceptable forms of local government approvals required to commence relocation activities
- Added that qualifications met as experience to obtain an Authorized Gopher Tortoise Agent permit must have been obtained after April 2009
- Added a 2-year time limit for training courses used to satisfy Authorized Gopher Tortoise Agent qualifications
- Added a maximum percentage (40%) of improved pasture on a recipient site or unit as part of the overall gopher tortoise habitat
- Added a minimum shade/shelter requirement (10%) for improved pasture on recipient sites
- Removed eligibility for “stocking density bonuses” for improved pasture areas on recipient sites
- Added guidance and criteria for grazing livestock on recipient sites
- Added a mortality checklist and protocol for recipient sites (and reporting requirements)
- Added a requirement that recipient site follow-up surveys to include burrow size and class
- Clarified cause and result of administrative infractions that put tortoises at risk

Added flexibility

- Extended duration of 10 or Fewer Burrow permits from 6 months to 1 year
- Exempted from permitting the perceived need/concern for county animal control officers to safely remove domesticated animals from burrows
- Eliminated mitigation requirements for hatchlings ≤ 60 mm; will be authorized for relocation via permit condition
- Reduced requirements to qualify for some capture methods as an authorized agent
- Eliminated the maximum acreage for each recipient site applications (previous 1,000 acre-limit was for ease of FWC review)
- Eliminated the distance limitation for relocating gopher tortoises from public projects adjacent to public lands
- Clarified financial assurance requirements for trusts to increase certainty on part of the landowner
- Added language recognizing the implementation of Wildlife BMPs and continuation of the Gopher Tortoise Enforcement Policy