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Bureau of Land Management
News Release

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BLM Offers Reward for Information About Death of Desert Tortoise Mascot

The Bureau of Land Management's (BLM) Needles Field Office is offering a reward for information leading to the conviction of the individual(s) responsible for the death of Scarface, a desert tortoise who was found dead in his enclosure at the BLM field office in Needles on Wednesday, August 4th.

A State and Federally listed threatened species, the desert tortoise is protected by California law and the Endangered Species Act (ESA). Under the provisions of the ESA, anyone who "takes" a desert tortoise is subject to civil and/or criminal penalties of up to a \$100,000 fine or one year in jail, or both. The law defines "taking" as harassing, pursuing, hunting, shooting, wounding, killing, trapping, capturing, or collecting, or attempting to engage in such activities.

Scarface became well-known after making many appearances at the Needles Health Fair, summer library programs, and classroom presentations as an educational tool for people to learn about and interact with a desert tortoise. Thousands of local children and adults had the opportunity to see and touch Scarface at outreach programs throughout the tri-state area.

The tortoise received his name a few years ago when he was brought to the Needles BLM field office by a motorist who found him on the roadside. He had been struck by a car in the face, and hence was named "Scarface" for his lop-sided nose. BLM biologists estimated he was about 50 years old.

"Scarface was a unique tortoise in that he was very friendly and enjoyed attention from people," said Larry Morgan, BLM Manager for the Needles Field Office. "He served as a mascot and ambassador for the desert tortoise, and we are all truly saddened by his cruel and senseless death."

BLM is asking anyone with any information about the death of Scarface to contact BLM law enforcement officers John Bierk at (760) 326-7028 or Kurt Schmidt (760) 326-7010.

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