

HABITAT CONSERVATION ADVISORY COMMITTEE

for the Washington County Habitat Conservation Plan (HCP)

A **regular meeting** of the Habitat Conservation Advisory Committee (HCAC) was held at the Washington City Council Chambers on **APRIL 26, 2011**.

Committee members present were:

Karl Wilson, Chairman	Mayors Association
Chris Blake, Vice Chairman	Environmental Organization
Larry Crist	U.S. Fish & Wildlife Service (USF&WS)
Jeff Morby	Local Development
Bob Sandberg	HCP Administrator
Marc Mortensen	Citizen-at-Large
Jimmy Tyree	Bureau of Land Management (BLM)

Absent and excused:

Reed Harris	Utah Dept. of Natural Resources (UDNR)
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Also present were:

Amber Stocks	HCP
Cameron Rognan	HCP
Ann McLuckie	UDWR
Alan Gardner	County Commissioner
Dawna Ferris-Rowley	BLM
Isaac Ison	D'Goat Ranch
Marreen Casper	Senator Hatch's Office
Lisa Rutherford	Citizens for Dixie's Future
Paul Van Dam	Citizens for Dixie's Future

1. CALL TO ORDER

Chairman Wilson noted that a quorum existed and called the meeting to order at 1:05 P.M. Member Harris was excused.

Chairman Wilson announced that member Jeff Morby has resigned his position due to acceptance of a LDS mission call and expressed appreciation for his service. On behalf of the county, Bob Sandberg expressed appreciation to Jeff.

2. CONSENT AGENDA

The Consent Agenda is a means of expediting routine matters which come before the committee for approval. The consent portion of the agenda is approved by one (1) non-debatable motion. If any member wishes to remove an item from the consent portion of the agenda, then that item becomes the first order of business on the regular agenda.

- a. **Approval of the agenda**
- b. **Review and approve minutes**
 - 1. March 22, 2011
- c. **Next meeting date**
 - 1. May 24, 2011

MOTION by Chris Blake to approve the Consent Agenda.

Seconded by Jeff Morby.

Discussion: None.

Vote was taken: All voted aye.

Motion passed.

3. **PRESENTATIONS**

a. **D'Goat Ranch**

Isaac Ison began with a PowerPoint presentation (Exhibit 3-a-1). Isaac emphasized how the D'Goat Ranch focuses on target grazing. They select plants of concern, and then allow the goats to be taken into the area to eat that plant down. The focus for the Red Cliffs Desert Reserve is cheat grass.

Precipitation in 2011 is about 163% above normal. Pine Valley watershed is currently ranked 11th for all time highest moisture received in this area, producing further growth of cheat grass.

Cottonwood Road is the area of focus for fuel reduction in the Red Cliffs Desert Reserve. The majority of wildfires are started by humans, mainly along roads. If the right of way along Cottonwood Road is protected by reducing the fuel load, the summer and fall will be a lot safer.

Approximately fifty feet along each side of Cottonwood Road will be grazed. D'Goat Ranch will maintain their goats with an electric fence in a fairly tight area. The goats have learned to respect the electric fence. Having the goats in a tight area encourages them to compete to eat. The vegetation is consumed down deeper and quicker when they are competing with other goats. A shepherd will remain with the goats 24 hours each day to keep the goats safe and within the specified area.

Having the goats along the road brings fire safety awareness to the community. The public becomes interested in watching the goats, thus recognizing fire hazards in Southern Utah. The goats also help the public become more aware of measures to help protect habitat.

b. **Confluence Park Restoration Project**

Bob Sandberg noted that a presentation was made to the Tree City Utah Convention in

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early April regarding Confluence Park. In November 2009 the HCAC approved a budget to hire a grant writer who would look for funds to do work at Confluence Park. The park received grants for a parking lot and restoration work. The following partners worked together on the restoration project: Water Conservancy District, Virgin River Program, Division of Wildlife Resources, Forestry Fire and State Lands, Hurricane Valley Fire Department, and Virgin River Land Preservation Association.

Together, restoration work has been done to benefit other species of federally listed fish and birds. Funds for this work came from the "Other Species" account. Bob felt it was of value to the HCAC to see what has been accomplished with the funding.

Bob showed through Exhibit 3-b-1 some before and after photos of the work which has been accomplished. Invasive species have been removed, allowing native species to propagate and do what they do normally. Russian olive and tamarisk were removed; cottonwood, willows, and other species which are native to the riparian system remain. New cottonwood and willow were planted with intent to plant additional trees and other desert riparian species. The Virgin River program is working to do demonstration training on stream bank revegetation and protection.

The first and second phases of restoration are next to LaVerkin Creek. There remains some work which can be done; however, the work which was accomplished is a good leverage to the funding HCAC appropriated into the grant and into getting help from partners, especially Forestry Fire & State Lands, and the Hurricane Valley Fire Department. A contract was put together with the company that did a lot of the cutting and chipping. Crews were brought in after the cutting and chipping to burn piles. Since then some of the cuttings have sprouted, hopefully they will take.

4. UTILITY AND DEVELOPMENT PROJECTS

None

5. GENERAL BUSINESS

a. Discuss D'Goat Ranch Presentation

Members of the HCAC discussed where the goats reside, the area of fencing capability, time frame to complete the job, distance on the shoulder of the road, cost, monitoring effects on vegetation, and effect to the desert tortoise.

Isaac Ison responded to questions with the following specifics.

- Currently the goats are kept in Northern Utah. The D'Goat Ranch would like more jobs here to help them winter their goats in Southern Utah.
- The D'Goat Ranch has approximately 1,300 goats. Three-hundred will be used on Cottonwood Road.
- The fence will be approximately 50 feet wide and 1,000 feet long. The exact distance depends on the size of the right of way and forage density.

- The job is projected to take two weeks.
- Cost is \$650 per mile; this includes both sides of the road.
- Weed control next year is highly dependent on precipitation. In many cases weed growth will increase from goats stirring up seeds currently in the soil. Fecal matter also adds to an increase of weeds. However, many of the seeds are unable to germinate after being through the goat's digestive tract, and after a few years of using the goats, weed production may actually decrease.

Bob Sandberg mentioned that the BLM has completed an environmental assessment. The record of decision is signed and Isaac will bring goats by this weekend.

b. Discuss Confluence Park Restoration Project

After cutting, tree stumps were treated within 15 minutes with the chemical Garlon 4. In some cases the tree would be high stumped, and then later re-cut and treated. St. George City has accomplished a lot of work in the area, and has given suggestions and ideas to further the work. Effort to obtain another grant is being done to carry on this work. The Department of Wildlife Resources is also putting forth effort to find funding.

The restoration area is about 15 acres along LaVerkin Creek. The restoration project has been divided into four phases. The original plan was to complete phase one. In-mate crews were able to help with piling, allowing work to go well into phase two.

Chairman Wilson noted how Confluence Park is a good example of state owners and partnerships coming together after many years of trying to get things done. Now there will be a new parking lot with a trailhead. The public is hiking the area more and staying on the trails better.

c. Field Trip Possibilities

The HCAC made a decision to drive up Cottonwood Road to see how effective the goats from D' Goat Ranch are at creating a fire break.

d. Land Acquisition Efforts (HCAC)

Member Jimmy Tyree explained that a lot has been accomplished in the last eight weeks. Bob Sandberg, Dawna Ferris-Rowley, and some others met with the Trust For Public Lands and The Nature Conservancy. Strategies for land acquisition were discussed and a plan formulated to propose to the BLM State Leadership Team. A Land and Water Fund application has been submitted. Senator Lee's office will provide a letter in support of the application; in addition, what Senator Hatch and Washington County has accomplished in the past will be sent. A proposal has been made to the state office in regards to the different options and strategies which will be used. Lands identified in the 1999 RMP for disposal will be looked at.

Jimmy further explained the effort to get funding for competitive sales along with potential exchanges and purchases through Land and Water Conservation funds. More information will be available in a month.

e. Planning Update (J. Tyree)

Member Tyree said the BLM recently held an alternatives development workshop. Another workshop will happen soon. For the next couple of months an alternative development process will be evaluated and provided to the ID team and to the Utah Department of Wildlife Resources, U.S. Fish and Wildlife Service, and Washington County.

f. Request from the Nature Conservancy

None - this was an item on the old agenda and accidentally placed on this one as well. The request was already reviewed in the last HCAC meeting.

g. Technical Committee Report (C. Rognan)

Cameron Rognan, chairman of the TC covered two main issues. The first being the Detention Dam, with Ivins City presenting their proposal. Questions were asked, discussions happened, and realizations were made. There remain more questions and concerns to be resolved. Over the next month the TC will visit the site, both the Detention dam and the Toe Trail. More information will be gathered and the TC will make a recommendation to the HCAC next month.

The second item covered by the TC was a continued analysis of the NAU trail monitoring data. The TC is tweaking the analysis method of data collection and looking at the variables which give the best indication of what is occurring. The TC is determining how to focus on key variables in order to make decisions. NAU finished their trail monitoring a few weeks ago and will send a new set of data. The TC will continue to work on the data and make any necessary changes in the future.

h. Administrator's Report (B. Sandberg)

1. HCP revenues and expenditures (Exhibit 5-h-1)

Exhibit 5-h-1 shows the revenues and expenditures report. Member Chris Blake commended Bob Sandberg for doing a good job. The HCP will continue to work within the budget. Chris made mention of the good job Tom Webster is doing with the Outreach Program, as observed at the Zion Earth Day Celebration.

2. Fire fuel reduction update

The plan is to have the goats come in and see what they can do. The EA also allows for weed-whackers as a follow up if needed.

3. Submission of 1st Quarter Report

Review the 1st Quarter Report shown as Exhibit 5-h-3. The HCAC will review and consider for acceptance at next month's meeting.

4. Status of Layton Property Clearance

The clearance is actively engaged with six tortoises found so far. Procedure and protocol will be followed resulting in additional passes to make sure all tortoises on the property are removed.

The Layton property is fenced with no trespassing signs. This has created contention with some because it prevents access to a popular section of trail that went through the Layton property. Mr. Layton has fenced the property with access to the Gunsight trail but there are some areas that have been fenced off and excluded until further notice.

Kent Byland, the representative of the Layton property, said they're interested in allowing and planning trails and trailheads into the development.

Cameron Rognan found part of the barbed-wire fence cut to allow use of the trail. Justin Neighbor has already fixed the fence. The tortoise mesh remained intact so there were no issues with tortoises going in and out of the cut fence, just people because it was an interior fence.

6. PUBLIC COMMENT & REQUEST FOR FUTURE AGENDA ITEMS

This item is reserved for items not listed on this agenda. No action may be taken on a matter raised under this agenda item. (Three minutes per person.)

Chairman Wilson invited the public to comment or request future agenda items.

Lisa Rutherford addressed the HCAC in request of the quarterly report. Explanation was made that once the HCAC reviews and approves it, the report will be available to the public.

Lisa also pointed out that she has noticed trash in the Reserve and inquired how the Reserve is maintained. Marc Mortensen mentioned that St George City will be cleaning from Bluff Street and East along Red Hills Parkway on Friday April 29th for 1 ½ hours. There will be 50-60 employees in the cleanup crew in preparation for the Iron Man on May 6th.

Bob Sandberg explained the volunteer trail stewards program, along with cleanup work done in the past. Bob said that he would see what can be done about having the volunteers help clean up.

Chairman moved the agenda.

7. OTHER BUSINESS

Jeff Morby inquired to what is happening with the Red Hills Parkway expansion project. Marc Mortensen explained that St George City is close to finishing the design on the road. The plan is to have it out for bid by the end of May or first of June. Within 2-3 weeks from the open bid period, construction will begin. The goal is to have the road substantially complete before the first Saturday in May 2012, including four lanes and a center median.

8. ADJOURN

MOTION by Chris Blake to adjourn.

Seconded by Jimmy Tyree.

Discussion: None.

Vote was taken: All voted aye.

Motion passed.

The meeting was adjourned at 1:55 P.M.
Minutes prepared by Amber Stocks.