

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 **MAY 24, 2011**.

Committee members present were:

Karl Wilson, Chairman	Mayors Association
Larry Crist	U.S. Fish & Wildlife Service (USF&WS)
Chris Hart	Local Development
Bob Sandberg	HCP Administrator
Marc Mortensen	Citizen-at-Large
Jimmy Tyree	Bureau of Land Management (BLM)
Reed Harris	Utah Dept. of Natural Resources (UDNR)

Absent and excused:

Chris Blake, Vice Chairman	Environmental Organization
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Also present were:

Amber Stocks	HCP
Cameron Rognan	HCP
Ann McLuckie	UDWR
Alan Gardner	County Commissioner
Lisa Rutherford	Citizens for Dixie's Future
Mike Empey	Congressman Matheson's Office
Cameron Cutler	St George City

1. CALL TO ORDER

Chairman Wilson noted that a quorum existed and called the meeting to order at 1:00 P.M.

Chairman Wilson turned the time over to Commissioner Gardner who introduced and welcomed Chris Hart as the new HCAC member, replacing Jeff Morby. Member Hart will represent local development.

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**

Approved HCAC meeting minutes – May 24, 2011

1. April 26, 2011
- c. Next meeting date**
1. June 28, 2011

MOTION by Larry Crist to approve the Consent Agenda.
Seconded by Jimmy Tyree.
Discussion: None.
Vote was taken: All voted aye.
Motion passed.

3. PRESENTATIONS

None

4. UTILITY AND DEVELOPMENT PROJECTS

a. Red Hills Parkway Update and Discussion – Cameron Cutler

Cameron Cutler addressed the HCAC and explained that by May 31, 2011 there will be a final 79B meeting. The design engineer for the project will submit his plans to the Utah Department of Transportation for advertising which will allow for contractors to submit bids. The work will be awarded to the contractor with the lowest combination of price and time. Within two months a contractor will be assigned and the project should be underway. It is anticipated the work on Red Hills Parkway will be completed in ten months.

The contract will state that two lanes of traffic will remain open during the entire length of the project. In the Limitation of Operations, the contractor will be made aware of the events in St. George City, especially the 2012 Iron Man. If the project is not completed by the 2012 Iron Man, the contractor will need to have the project cleaned up. Traffic control will be out of the way and the road will be presentable.

The design engineering firm is Creamer and Noble Engineers. St. George City Council approved Horrocks Engineers to be the construction engineering firm. There are two parts to the project. First is the widening of Red Hills Parkway, second is the Bluff Street/Red Hills Parkway intersection improvement.

The widening project will begin at Bluff Street, U-18, follow Red Hills Parkway and end at Industrial Road just East of 1000 East. It will have a trail the whole length from U-18 to Industrial Road. From the 200 East signal to Industrial Road there will be urban sidewalks, curb and gutter, and medians. The remaining road way will not have sidewalks or curb and gutter, however, there will be a median.

It is anticipated that speed posting will remain the same. There are some slopes and cuts which will need excavation. Part of the tortoise fence will be temporarily moved out

and then brought back in, however, the majority of the work will stay within the existing fence. In some areas the tortoise fence will need to be widened and reset. Most of the fence will be replaced and portions not within the standard Fish and Wildlife Service tortoise mesh will be upgraded.

There are three small parcels and one temporary construction easement on the right of way which needs to be purchased. The appraisals have been done and are in the final works of being purchased.

St. George City has the means to make interim improvements to the existing intersection where Bluff Street and Red Hills Parkway intersect. Each corner will be widened out to accommodate the interchange construction in the future. The design for the interchange is not complete at this point and a larger scale revision of the intersection will be completed in the future once funding is acquired.

5. GENERAL BUSINESS

a. Discuss Field Trip and Fuel Reduction Effort

Those who attended the field trip to Cottonwood Road were Bob Sandberg, Karl Wilson, Chris Hart, Reed Harris, and Isaac Ison. Chairman Wilson invited those who attended to report on their findings.

Bob Sandberg explained that the area looked at was in the neighborhood of the Middleton power sub-station. Those in attendance looked at what was attempted a few weeks ago with a goat herd to reduce fire fuel load. They also looked at what has been done in a test plot using a mower, and another test plot using a weed eater. The field trip objective was to see what has been accomplished, and which option to pursue in reducing fire fuel.

The members discussed the high fuel load and the options to create a fire break including use of weed whackers, brown stripping, herbicides, and mowing. The main topic of discussion was using weed whackers in a potentially vulnerable area of large fuel load. Bob shared with the group the ability to use county in-mates to do the weed whacking. The sheriff's office will permit six or seven in-mates to work for two days using weed eaters along Cottonwood Road. It has been determined that one person could complete approximately 100 feet each hour. At that rate, a full work crew would complete about one mile each day.

The committee agreed that right now may be the only opportunity to get in a defensive position in the event of a fire. The committee agreed that this area will be facing a potentially severe fire season. Anything that can be done to prevent one fire from spreading over the road will more than pay for itself. There was a joint consensus to move forward with inmate crews and weed whackers.

The committee looked at Exhibit 5-f-3 which shows guidelines and policies for managing

wildfires in the Mojave Desert. This document has been taken to local fire departments with authority to take immediate action in the event of a fire in the Reserve. The responding fire department will be the incident commander until the BLM or other land owner entity arrives on scene.

b. Review and Discuss 1st Quarter 2011 Report

The committee reviewed the report.

MOTION by Marc Mortensen to accept the 1st Quarter 2011 Report.
Seconded by Larry Crist.
Discussion: None.
Vote was taken: Chris Hart abstained from vote, all voted aye.
Motion passed.

c. Land Acquisition Efforts (HCAC)

Jimmy Tyree spoke to the HCAC with an update on land acquisition efforts. After the last Alternatives Development workshop last month, consultants were to consolidate the different comments and strategies discussed. The next meeting will most likely happen late June or July.

d. Planning Update (J. Tyree)

A Land and Water Conservation Fund application has been submitted. In addition to the 2012 application, work is also being done on the 2013 application submittal. The Trust for Public Lands has been in contact with some property owners to see about purchasing their land parcels.

A proposal has been submitted to the state office which outlines three strategies, including a combination of land exchanges, and cash buyouts. Next month a decision will be made to move forward, identifying land parcels for exchange.

Reed Harris inquired to what happened to the Land and Water Conservation Fund when the budget was reconciled. At the time of reconciliation numerous grant programs were zeroed out or cut drastically. Jimmy commented that in 2011 there was not funding and 2012 will likely be the same, however, it's not just a complete zeroing of the program since there is a lot of support for it.

Larry Crist mentioned that funding and preserving the Land and Water Conservation Fund is a high priority for Secretary Salazar. He wants it restored and has gone on record saying that it is critical to the operation of the Department of The Interior.

Reed reminded the HCAC that a significant amount of land owned by State Institutional Trust Lands Administration (SITLA) needs to be purchased since SITLA is also private

land. SITLA wants settlement sometime as well.

e. Technical Committee Report (C. Rognan)

Cameron Rognan began his report by announcing that the Technical Committee (TC) went on a field trip to see the proposed Ivins detention dam site and Ivins City's proposed upgrade of the Toe Trail. The TC came to a couple of conclusions. One, the HCP will not be able to fund the trail. External funding will need to come from grants through Snow Canyon State Park, Ivins City, or some other source. Second, the proposed trail is Section 6 property and National Environmental Policy Act (NEPA) work will need to be done.

The committee was uncertain about some of the details of an exchange. They determined it would be best to find a way to tie the 7.88 acre donation from Ivins City to the creation of a trail. As it stands, the trail may need to be treated as its own separate project since it is on Section 6 land. The property from the detention dam is already in the Reserve, which disallows its use for mitigation. When further clarification is obtained, the TC will give the HCAC a recommendation.

The committee discussed Section 6 property and mitigation.

f. Administrator's Report (Bob Sandberg)

1. HCP revenues and expenditures report (Exhibit 5-f-1)

The committee reviewed Exhibit 5-f-1. Bob Sandberg told the HCAC that expenses are either within the proposed budget or under. The NAU trail monitoring expense has expended 75%. There are some categories which have high expenditures due to the Confluence Park grant. Money has been expended for upfront costs of a grant for vegetation restoration work in this park; however, the money will be recouped from the grant when completed. Bob mentioned the low amount of impact fees received totaling under \$260,000.00 in 2010. The St. George City impact fees were just over \$118,000.00 and Toquerville was \$40.00. Member Hart inquired about law enforcement contracts. Bob said the HCP pays them to spend extra time. They submit their reports of time spent, location and contacts. A member asked if the fire restoration account will be used with the weed whackers. Bob said yes and mentioned the approved budget was arranged to include the total required to keep the HCP in business, plus a contingency amount.

2. Clearances

Forty-two acres of land was cleared during the Alan Layton property clearance near Tuacahn. Eight tortoises were found and located back into the Red Cliffs Desert Reserve. Two Gila monsters were also found. The developer indicated construction would begin soon.

The committee discussed Gila monsters and the correct protocol to handle them. Ann McLuckie stated that if a Gila monster is found during a clearance outside the Red Cliffs Desert Reserve, assistance is given to guide them back to the Reserve.

3. Mojave Wildfire Management Guidelines (Exhibit 5-f-3)

Exhibit 5-f-3 was discussed earlier in item 5.a.

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. No one came forward and the Chairman moved the agenda.

7. OTHER BUSINESS

Reed Harris inquired on a National Conservation Area (NCA) update along with National Environmental Policy Act (NEPA) compliance and the management plan. Jimmy noted that the two management plans are for the Red Cliffs Desert Reserve NCA and the Beaver Dam NCA. The Alternatives Analysis meeting last month has resulted in four different alternatives. Between January and March of next year a draft of the alternatives will be published.

8. ADJOURN

MOTION by Reed Harris to adjourn.
Seconded by Jimmy Tyree.
Discussion: None.
Vote was taken: All voted aye.
Motion passed.

The meeting was adjourned at 2:00 P.M.
Minutes prepared by Amber Stocks.