

# **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 **JUNE 28, 2011**.

Committee members present were:

Karl Wilson, Chairman	Mayors Association
Larry Crist – through conference call	U.S. Fish & Wildlife Service (USF&WS)
Chris Hart	Local Development
Bob Sandberg	HCP Administrator
Marc Mortensen	Citizen-at-Large
Dawna Ferris-Rowley	Bureau of Land Management (BLM)
Reed Harris	Utah Dept. of Natural Resources (UDNR)
Chris Blake, Vice Chairman	Environmental Organization

Absent and Excused:

Jimmy Tyree	Bureau of Land Management (BLM)
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Also present were:

Amber Stocks	HCP
Cameron Rognan	HCP
Tom Webster	HCP
Austin Davis	HCP Intern
Ann McLuckie	UDWR
Mike Empey	Congressman Matheson's Office
Adam Heyder	Washington County Fire
Marreen Casper	Senator Orrin Hatch's Office

**1. CALL TO ORDER**

Chairman Wilson noted that a quorum existed with Larry Crist attending via conference call and called the meeting to order at 1:06 P.M.

**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. May 24, 2011
- c. Next meeting date**

Approved HCAC meeting minutes – June 28, 2011

1. July 26, 2011

Upon approval of the agenda Chairman Wilson recommended switching the presentation order of items 3.a. and 3.b.

**MOTION** by Chris Hart to approve the Consent Agenda with the exception of changing items 3.a. and 3.b. on the agenda.

Seconded by Chris Blake

Discussion: None.

Vote was taken: All voted aye.

Motion passed.

3. **PRESENTATIONS**

a. **Fire Preparations**

Outlook preparations and trainings were explained by Adam Heyder, the Washington County Fire Warden. There has been work and training with inter-agencies such as the BLM, Forest Service, Bureau of Indian Affairs (BIA), National Park Service, and County Fire Departments. There have been budget restraints with the same job required and fewer resources available. Training has been crucial since the above average rainfall this past winter has resulted in extreme grass crop, especially within the Reserve. Fire is difficult to fight in the Reserve because of the lack of accessible routes.

Fire mitigation has been done in Confluence Park along with removing invasive species such as Tamarisk and Russian Olive. With resources available, a fireman was able to spend three months working in Confluence Park throughout the year and a lot was accomplished.

There was a prescribed burn with the Utah Division of Wildlife Resources (UDWR) at Turkey Farm to get rid of Russian Thistle. The fire crew was able to burn off what Russian Thistle was present from last fall, but new growth has emerged this year due to the high rainfall.

Sunday morning there was a fire in the Reserve; 64 acres burned, 44 acres on private incorporated land in St. George City and 20 acres on BLM land. The fire was human caused; the suspect turned himself in and is cooperating with officials. Bob expressed appreciation for the effort on the Sunday fire. The agencies involved worked together and kept the fire within 64 acres when it could have easily spread over 640 acres. Adam expressed appreciation for the quick response from resource advisors. Bob Sandberg, Justin Neighbor and Tim Croissant's advice helped with fire suppression tactics and planning for what could and could not be done in the Reserve.

Committee members discussed with Adam what immediate action can take place along with restrictions in the event of a fire. The St. George police have been active in helping protect from transients, which in some cases can trigger fires.

### **b. Education and Outreach (Tom Webster)**

Bob Sandberg introduced and expressed appreciation to Tom Webster, the Outreach Coordinator for the Red Cliffs Desert Reserve (RCDR). Tom will be moving in July and has come before the HCAC to give an update on the outreach program.

Tom began by explaining how the program uses several devices and methods to reach the public. The live presentations with animals have brought the biggest feedback and reward. The animals are the star of the show and provide a wonderful means to convey a message to the public. Every presentation is used as a teaching opportunity, no matter the age of the listeners. The program is working and the Motto "Have Animals, Will Travel" has worked very well.

As of May 28, 2011 there have been 69 presentations reaching around 3,000 people in a wide range of audiences. In 2010 there were 70 presentations reaching 4,000 people. Tom said that the total number of presentations doesn't tell the story of the effectiveness of the program. Tom asked, "Are you getting to the target audiences that you want to get to?" The answer he gave was "yes!"

Audiences are being reached through the following:

#### **#1- Presentations in 2011**

- Mixed audiences (kids, teenagers, & adults)
  - 15 presentations
- Adults (primarily adults in audience)
  - 20 presentations included Citadel HOA & Paradise Canyon HOA (both border the Reserve), Outback Hiking Club, Backcountry Horsemen, 4H Leadermete, Zion National Park Staff, and more.
- Kids (preschool-young adult)
  - 34 presentations - 2 Preschools, 14 Elementary Schools, 5 Middle Schools, 5 High Schools, 3 Universities.

#2- Website, the RCDR website helps to reach a wide variety of people, especially those in Generation X. Each year the website is improved. Tom invited the HCAC to visit the website found at [www.redcliffsdesertreserve.com](http://www.redcliffsdesertreserve.com). It is informative, fun, and includes good information and videos.

#3- Trail Map & Kiosk, RCDR is working closely with partners to create a better map and kiosks. When the final product is released it will be very professional.

#4- Media, years ago a survey was given to find out how much the public knew about the Reserve, how the public gets exercise, and where the public goes for recreation information. The results showed people felt good about the Reserve. The positive

reviews show how much good has been done by the HCP and other partners. Results from the survey showed most people get their information from The Spectrum. Because of these results, in 2009 the RCDR posted advertorials in The Spectrum which was very effective.

#5- Literature, handing out literature is a big part of the outreach program. The current design targets all age groups but there is more work to do with literature. Tom would like to see something glossier that will fit in hotel racks.

#6- Volunteer, the outreach program works closely with Jim Crisp the Volunteer Coordinator. The outreach program helps train trail stewards who in turn help determine how far education efforts are effective within the Reserve and on the trails.

Marc Mortensen expressed appreciation to Tom for helping the program get ages ahead in just a few years. Tom has gone through a number of agencies both public and private and has extended himself in getting the word out about the Reserve. Marc also feels that a free hard copy map and also an online map with links and PDF copies would be effective education tools. He inquired about the new map and how it's coming along. Dawna Ferris-Rowley spoke for the BLM in regards to the new map creation. They recently canceled a contract to get the map created and instead decided that they will create the map in-house. The BLM is focused on a GIS driven map with trails accurately plotted. The new map will also include rules within the Reserve and other educational information.

#### **4. UTILITY AND DEVELOPMENT PROJECTS**

None

#### **5. GENERAL BUSINESS**

##### **a. Fuel Reduction Efforts**

Chairman Wilson turned the time over to Bob to explain what the members saw from the field trip earlier in the morning. Bob said they went up Cottonwood Road to see the effect from the goat effort and from the four day inmate effort with weed whackers. Both attempts to reduce fire fuel have helped; there are still things that need to be done and these tools can be used in the future. Bob will follow up with the inmate crew to see if they can work any more days. The committee also talked about the Sunday fire. Turkey Farm road is the best viewing area to see the fire damage.

The members who went on the field trip felt that with limited options, the weed-whacking work was impressive and cost effective. Obviously a fire can still burn in the area, but it may be slowed down by this fire break to where it can be dealt with. Given limited options, the group should think about reducing fire fuel earlier next year and possibly work around transmission lines too. The HCAC can do better if planning is made earlier

in the year.

Bob mentioned there will be some follow up action. As talked about in the past, the BLM has an environmental assessment (EA) in place to help earlier next year with either goats, weed-whackers, or a combination of both. The BLM plans to look at other options and tools which can be added to broaden the EA. This will allow for other actions to be taken, reducing fire fuel load.

**b. Land Acquisition Efforts (HCAC)**

Dawna Ferris-Rowley reported that BLM has submitted a Land and Water Conservation Fund application and are now working on a second application that is focused on Washington County from a regional approach.

Bob added that the County has been approached by Mr. Doyle and has been providing requested documentation referred to as the "Super Exchange". It appears Mr. Doyle is trying to take the issue to court before a judge from a "takings" standpoint.

**c. Planning Update (Dawna Ferris-Rowley)**

The BLM is working on internal documents that go into the effective environment section of the plans and Environmental Impact Studies (EIS). At this point the BLM is reviewing the product with contractors and will be for several more weeks.

**d. Technical Committee Report (C. Rognan)**

**1. Ivins Detention Basin Dam (Exhibit 5-d-1)**

Cameron began by showing the committee the formal recommendation from the Technical Committee (TC) (Exhibit 5-d-1). The committee reviewed the document, specifically the stipulations.

Chris Hart, mayor of Ivins City reminded the HCAC of when he addressed the committee along with Judy Gubler in March 2011. They had clearly expressed to the HCAC their desire for an exchange and appeared on their own, without city council approval. Now with a formal recommendation from the TC, Chris Hart as Mayor of Ivins can address the city council to discuss the recommendation. Chris explained, before a city relinquishes property there is a process it has to go through to justify an action. There is paperwork and calculations required to justify to the city council and community how relinquishing property can be a good thing. If Ivins City wants to pursue the exchange they will need to come before the HCAC with a formal proposal.

The HCAC discussed where HCP funds can be used along with feedback from FWS. Chairman Wilson asked if the Public Use Plan (PUP) was used to help make the second stipulation. It was explained this stipulation was not a TC decision; it was one that the FWS solicitor had come up with when talking to Renee Chi.

The committee felt that Ivins City should be given a valid opportunity to pursue the exchange and that it would be extremely beneficial to prevent the take of tortoise associated with the detention dam. Appreciation was given to the TC for looking at the proposal and for giving the recommendation. Thanks was given to the TC for looking at numerous options and for looking into how impactful each option would be to habitat.

## **2. Budget**

The TC reviewed the budget and didn't have any alterations. There was one recommendation to make sure there will be enough funds for the outreach program and for purchase of stickers. The TC is ready to approve the budget next month and send it on to the HCAC.

### **e. Administrator's Report (Bob Sandberg)**

#### **1. HCP revenues and expenditures report (Exhibit 5-e-1)**

The committee reviewed Exhibit 5-e-1. Bob explained the expenditures are under the budget amount. A lot of that is because of the way the budget was set up last year with the contingency amount. There was no discussion and the agenda moved forward.

#### **2. Local Biologist resignation from Technical Committee**

Although a formal letter of resignation has not been written, Marshall Topham has talked with Bob and expressed his need to resign from the TC. He feels badly about resigning but because of personal reasons he is unable to continue serving on the committee.

In the HCP it says that various entities will nominate a person to the County Commission. However, there isn't an entity like DWR, FWS or BLM to nominate a person. Bob suggested the need to solicit ideas from HCAC and TC and others who might know of someone who would be qualified to serve in that capacity. Qualifications include being a biologist, having a biological background, experience and training.

**MOTION** by Chris Blake to accept Marshall's request to resign from the Technical Committee with a commendation for the work that he has done and done very well.

**Seconded** by Mark Mortensen.

**Discussion:** None.

**Vote was taken:** All voted aye.

**Motion passed.**

Bob mentioned that he will also seek a replacement that can help with the outreach program after Tom Webster leaves. A temporary employee, Austin Davis was hired as an intern from Color Country Natural Resource Camp. The Washington County School

District will refund the compensation for Austin.

**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**

FWS released their 90 day finding in the Federal Register with the finding that the Gila Monster did not warrant listing. The request was to list the Gila Monster as endangered in Washington County only. FWS did not feel the Gila Monsters in Washington County are a genetically distinct population. Gila Monsters have habitat throughout the County and still need to be protected. The RCDR has been identified as having prime habitat, although some other prime habitat has been identified out of the Reserve.

**8. ADJOURN**

**MOTION** by Chris Blake to adjourn.  
Seconded by Chris Hart.  
Discussion: None.  
Vote was taken: All voted aye.  
Motion passed.

The meeting was adjourned at 2:12 P.M.  
Minutes prepared by Amber Stocks.