

WASHINGTON COUNTY HABITAT CONSERVATION PLAN TECHNICAL COMMITTEE MEETING

A meeting of the Technical Committee of the HCP was held **August 18, 2011** in the Public Works conference room at the Washington County Administration Building, 197 E. Tabernacle, Saint George, Utah

Members present were:

Cameron Rognan, Chairperson	Wash Co. Habitat Conservation Plan (HCP)
Ann McLuckie	Utah Division of Wildlife Resources (UDWR)
Kristen Comella	Snow Canyon State Park (SCSP)
Tim Croissant, Vice Chairperson	Bureau of Land Management (BLM)

Absent and excused was:

Renee Chi	U.S. Fish and Wildlife Service (USF&WS)
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Also present were:

Bob Sandberg	HCP
Amber Stocks	HCP
Robert Roush	Citizen

1. **CALL TO ORDER**

Chairperson Cameron Rognan noted there were at least four voting members present, a quorum existed and the meeting was called to order at 9:03 A.M. Renee Chi with the USF&WS was excused.

2. **APPROVAL OF MINUTES**

a. **July 14, 2011**

The following changes were made:

Page 3, paragraph 3, sentence 5: changed,

From: "Kristen also stated the following: 1) the idea of the proposed trail ties in nicely since it ~~deters users from~~ going down the road and up around."

To: "Kristen also stated the following: 1) the idea of the proposed trail ties in nicely since it is more convenient than going down the road and up around."

Page 4, paragraph 4, last sentence: changed,

From: "Ann answered that the BLM ~~can't put it~~ this portion of trail on a public map document; however, it's still a trail that has been identified in the Public Use Plan."

To: "Ann answered that the BLM might not be able to put a portion of trail on a public map document; however, it's still a trail that has been identified in the Public Use Plan."

Page 4, paragraph 7, last sentence: deleted,

From: “If the property issue ~~never~~ gets resolved it could be an issue to deal with later.”

To: “If the property issue ever gets resolved it could be an issue to deal with later.”

MOTION by Kristen Comella to approve the minutes as amended.

Seconded by Tim Croissant.

Discussion: None.

Vote was taken: All voted aye.

Motion passed.

a. Status Report on Toe Trail Recommendation

Kristen Comella distributed Exhibit 3-a-1 TC081811. She reported an engineer prepared a cost estimate of the Toe Trail construction. Kristen walked on site with the engineer and discussed locations of stepovers, wheelchair access, and other user access issues. The engineer created a general cost analysis for the trail including two 30 foot bridges over the main washes. The biggest wash may require a 50 foot bridge.

A ten foot trex boardwalk estimate is over \$414, 500; an eight foot asphalt trail estimate is over \$183,450. Kristen reported the following from time spent with the engineers:

1. In regards to the trex bridge, Kristen asked if it needs to be a steel bridge structure. Engineers responded that it would be challenging to support the trex no matter what materials are used. In the end it might end up being as expensive as pre-fabricated bridges. Kristen reported there could be other alternatives in trail design and cost, however, these are the estimates which have been done so far.
2. Kristen inquired about the concrete expenses in the first trex option (Exhibit 3-a-1 TC 081811). She was told the higher expense is for the foundation holding the trex in place. When speaking with Howard on the phone he made assumptions that the concrete expenses are for small round foundation tubes and estimated a maximum 15 inch diameter foundation.
3. Kristen also asked if the engineer saw anything that would prohibit the trail from moving as close to the boundary fence as possible. He didn't recall anything that would prevent that trail alignment. Kristen felt they would need to look more closely at the grades in the nursery area before a final decision could be made.

Kristen felt there needs to be more discussion of the “take” issue and factor in the cost of land for habitat replacement. Regardless of whether an asphalt trail is eight or ten feet wide, it should be considered “take of habitat”. She wondered if a boardwalk with one to three feet of elevation underneath would be considered “take of habitat”. On the surface option A is more expensive than option B; however, option B with a paved trail

could become more expensive once cost of habitat is considered.

Bob Sandberg mentioned during the previous HCAC meeting he was asked to find out the value of the detention dam property and so far is unable to locate an appraisal. Bob talked with assessors about the Ivins detention dam property who gave a rough value of \$20,000 per acre with most of the property in a wash which cannot be developed.

Cameron mentioned if the value is \$20,000 for eight acres then \$160,000 for the whole detention property is less than either of the two options given by the engineer for the trail. Even though all amounts are estimates discussions ensued about the possibility of purchasing portions of property from Ivins then allow Ivins to build the trail. The committee agreed there is a need to obtain more detailed information on the property value and grants.

The committee felt it would be good to visit with the HCAC and have Cameron give a report of the cost estimate. Cameron added it would be nice to share with the HCAC how much “take” would be involved. Kristen cautioned the HCAC shouldn’t dictate the type of trail to be constructed since it is state park property. Bob stated at the last HCAC meeting Ivins said they’re ok with the criteria and requirements from the TC except they didn’t feel they should pay anything for the trail.

Kristen said Ivins City had alluded to the idea they might be willing to offset “take of habitat” with other property originally set aside for mitigation to offset the impacts of the detention dam.

The committee discussed the existing trail and the width desired. They discussed linear feet being removed, “partial take”, and “permanent take” of 1.86 acres. Ann McLuckie expressed the need to make sure the boardwalk is high enough for animals to pass underneath. If the sand builds up underneath and prevents passage of animals or access of areas south of boardwalk then the boardwalk becomes “take”. If the trail is placed adjacent to the fence there will be at least two 90 degree turns, affecting bicyclists and pedestrians.

Ann made a drawing to illustrate how a combination of trex and asphalt could be used. Ann commented that sharp turns could be reduced if there is a boardwalk on the trail. She asked if the trail could be extended along Tuacahn Drive to Abigail Park, showing how it would cut off some distance on the proposed Toe Trail. The committee agreed the connectivity is there and a trail along the road is worth asking about. It would give the public great encouragement to use the park.

b. Reclamation Monitoring Results

Cameron explained to the TC after the fires of 2005 a three year contract was put in place to monitor the revegetation success. Recently, the HCP received a report from the final year of monitoring. Bob added that he talked with the contractor who is willing to come to report to the TC in September and allow an opportunity for the TC to ask

questions. The committee felt it would be most valuable to have the contractor present results to the HCAC with the TC in attendance.

Cameron stated from the report it seems as though not much has changed from last year. Measurements can be made to see that there is some regrowth; however, it is difficult to determine if the regrowth is from seeds that were originally there versus what has been put in. The only noticeable difference in the test plots vs. the control is desert marigold. Bob added the marigold is in a very small percentage of the plots and is not uniform throughout the plots. Based on Bob's discussions with the contractor, there was very little success. Whether it was because of timing or dryness, or whether the seeds were eaten by rodents and birds, or whether it was dry and lost its viability, it didn't get us where we want to be.

c. Discuss Areas and Projects for Red Hills Parkway Mitigation

Cameron asked what ideas the committee has been thinking about for Red Hills Parkway mitigation. The committee came up with the following options:

1. Acquisition of the triangular piece of property along The Trails Development in zone three.
2. Culvert monitoring along Red Hills Parkway and/or culvert installation along Cottonwood Road.
3. Acquisition of the property north of 1000 East by Industrial Park. Currently the property is not designated as part of the Reserve; however, tortoises have been observed there. If acquired, it could most likely be included in the Reserve with St. George City continuing to own it. If it is against BLM land then the boundary is pretty well set by the NCA. If it is adjacent to St. George City land it could be included in the Reserve but would probably not be included in the NCA. Tim will follow up with the BLM to see about this piece of property.
4. Fencing existing gaps in Pioneer Park. Bob explained how part of the area has cattle guards in the loop and how the fence abruptly ends. Should the parking lots be fenced or should there be a fence behind the area so tortoises can't get out? Currently the fence comes west from the Water Conservancy District, then there's a gap at the loop road. The fence continues to the parking lot. After that point toward the pavilion there is no fence and another large gap exists around the west parking lot by the Sugar Loaf. Should a fence be put in behind all the people traffic? Perhaps there is another option to prevent tortoises from getting out.

The committee liked the Pioneer Park fencing idea and talked about how the city of St. George could be a challenge. In the past when approaching St. George City with the idea of fencing in the park there has been resistance because they want a seamless transition between the park and the Reserve. Ann reminded the committee that whatever mitigation project is decided on should be above and beyond what would

normally be done. The fencing in Pioneer Park is important but should be a part of what is normally done. Bob added that if cattle guards are part of mitigation then the completion of the fence should be in the same category.

Ann stated as part of mitigation for the Red Hills Parkway expansion project, all fencing is being reconstructed along the road and it does make sense to include Pioneer Park. The committee decided to have a fieldtrip next month to Pioneer Park in order to identify potential issues and solutions before the subject is taken before St. George City.

4. OTHER BUSINESS

a. BLM and Red Cliffs Desert Reserve Staff

Tim Croissant informed the committee that the BLM Range Specialist will retire by the end of August. The BLM has hired a new archeologist who started two weeks ago and there is a new GIS specialist who is very good with GIS and data management. She wants to compare and contrast GIS data individually with members of the TC to share information back and forth. Lastly, Tim reported next week will be another three day TNC workshop.

Cameron informed the committee that the HCP office hired a new Outreach Coordinator who will start September 12th part-time. Bob added that down the road if the HCP builds a building by the Red Hills Garden then it would change the way the HCP is currently being run due to higher visitations.

Bob explained that the Red Hills Garden is broken into phases. St. George and the Water Conservancy District are pushing ahead with the fish stream as of this fall and winter. There is a spot reserved for the HCP to put a building if funding becomes available in the future. The county commission has been reluctant to commit the money for a new building with the slow economy.

b. Trails

Kristen informed the group that she met with the Backcountry Horsemen Association regarding the Gila Trail future stepover. The stepover will be put in place sometime this fall. After looking at property owners, Kristen realized that coming up with something long term is somewhat impossible. Putting a stepover in now and working with those who come in to develop down the road might be a better approach.

The Backcountry Horsemen Association is willing to assist with the construction of a wood design which is a little wider than a steel design and will accommodate horses better.

c. BLM Phone and Email Systems

Next week the BLM will be switching to a new phone system. In the next month the BLM

will be switching from Lotus to Microsoft Outlook for email.

d. Robert Roush

Mr. Roush addressed the committee regarding Reserve signage near his home in Ivins. He reported that once in awhile people are spotted off the trail wandering around. He stated that if people aren't educated about what the Reserve is, they don't realize they're doing anything wrong. He suggested having a sign such as, "Go back to designated trail, restricted area." Mr. Roush talked with some people who were off trail and asked if they knew they weren't supposed to be there and they said no.

Kristen addressed Mr. Roush and said Snow Canyon State Park has some carsonite sign stickers for that particular area. She said the labor to place the signs with stickers is a challenge. She mentioned Snow Canyon's assistant park manager will be working during a morning on trail projects and invited Mr. Roush to help. The area is south and west of Tuacahn Drive, leading up onto the dike.

e. Fence along Turkey Farm Road

Tim said that Lynne expects to award a contract for fencing along Turkey Farm Road in the next week or two. The bids came in from \$40,000-\$400,000. The low bid is from someone who has done fencing projects for the BLM in the past and seems to understand what he is doing. Lynne is a little hesitant with the low amount but doesn't have a strong enough case not to go with the low bid. They will upgrade the tortoise mesh and range fencing.

5. NEXT MEETING DATES

a. Thursday September 15, 2011

6. ADJOURN

MOTION by Tim Croissant to adjourn the meeting.

Seconded by Ann McLuckie.

Discussion: None.

Vote was taken: All voted aye.

Motion passed.

The meeting was adjourned at 10:32 A.M.
Minutes prepared by Amber Stocks.