

HABITAT CONSERVATION ADVISORY COMMITTEE

for Washington County Habitat Conservation Plan (HCP)

The regular meeting of the Habitat Conservation Advisory Committee (HCAC) was held at the Washington City Council Chambers on February 24, 2009.

Committee members present were:

Karl Wilson, Chairman	Mayors Association
Chris Blake, Vice Chairman	Environmental Organization
Jeff Morby	Local Development
Larry Crist	U.S. Fish & Wildlife Service (USFWS)
Reed Harris	Utah Dept. of Natural Resources (UDNR)
Marc Mortensen	Citizen-at-Large
Jimmy Tyree	Bureau of Land Management (BLM)
Bob Sandberg	Washington County HCP

Also present were:

Dallin Gardner	ELT Properties
Alan Gardner	Washington County Commissioner
Mike Empey	Congressman Matheson's office
Tom Webster	Washington County HCP
Lauren Hunt	Washington County HCP
Brad Young	Washington County HCP
Jerick Godfrey	BSA Troop #382
Three unnamed scouts and their den mother	BSA Troop #1792

1. CALL TO ORDER

Chairman Karl Wilson noted that at least five committee members were present and a quorum existed. The meeting was called to order at 1:01 P.M.

2. CONSENT AGENDA

- a. Approval of the agenda**
- b. Review and approve minutes**
 1. January 27, 2009
- c. Next meeting date(s)**
 1. March 24, 2009

Bob Sandberg announced that Chuck Gillette from Ivins City had called and asked that item 5-c be removed from the agenda.

MOTION by Chris Blake to continue agenda item 5-b, remove item 5-c, and approve the Consent Agenda .

Seconded by Larry Crist.

Discussion: None.

Vote was taken: All voted aye.

Motion passed.

3. PRESENTATIONS

None.

4. UTILITY AND DEVELOPMENT PROJECT REVIEWS

None.

5. GENERAL BUSINESS

a. Initiatives to acquire ELT properties (HCAC).

Jimmy Tyree informed the group that the job announcement for the Realty Specialist position closes on March 5th. He will receive the applications a short time later and begin the review process. The hiring for this position will continue to be expedited. Clarification - Rather than state on page 2, section 5-a of the January 27, 2009, minutes that there were no qualified candidates, it is more accurate to state that there were fewer than expected qualified candidates. The position was upgraded and republicized in an effort to attract more qualified and experienced candidates.

b. Ivins Detention Dam mitigation – revised Memorandum of Agreement.

Continued to next meeting.

c. Ivins City – Request to consider a boundary adjustment - TC recommendation (Exhibit 5-c-1 HCAC – 022409).

Removed at the request of Chuck Gillette.

d. The Omnibus Public Lands Management Act of 2009 – status.

Mike Empey announced that the bill has passed the Senate and that it may be on the House agenda next week. He explained that it may go onto the House Suspension Calendar, but that it must pass by a 2/3 majority vote. There are other issues within the omnibus bill that may prevent it from being on the Suspension Calendar. If it does not get onto the Suspension Calendar then it will move to the House floor where amendments may be added. If the amendments are significant the bill must go back to the Senate for reconsideration – which may delay or impede its passage.

e. HCAC annual elections.

Chairman Wilson opened the floor for nominations.

MOTION by Chris Blake to re-elect the current Chairman and Vice Chairman.
Seconded by Marc Mortensen.
Discussion: None
Vote was taken: All voted aye.
Motion passed.

f. Turkey Farm Road gate closure - TC recommendation (Exhibit 5-f-1 HCAC – 022409).

Bob Sandberg explained that UDWR has completed 95%+ removal of the structures at the old turkey farm, and they have completed some reseeding and habitat restoration. Bob further explained that OHV traffic in the area has increased dramatically resulting in some damage and an apprehension about additional negative impact to habitat and wildlife. UDWR has proposed closing the road to unauthorized vehicle traffic to protect habitat and wildlife. Bob noted that the Public Use Plan (PUP) discourages public use of this road (pg. 39).

Bob explained the two options shown on the Exhibit. Option 1 is to install and lock a gate at the UDWR property boundary. But this option still permits the unauthorized use of the road and trail system south and east of the old turkey farm. Option 2 is to lock an existing gate. But this may have problems because it is on BLM property and would restrict access to public lands. Bob said that he has met and discussed the issues with BLM, St. George City, Rocky Mountain Power, and Sandra Call (daughter to Norm Blake). No one was in disagreement as long as they have a key to access the area behind the gate for their purposes. The Technical Committee has recommended Option 2 with a temporary closure to unauthorized motor vehicles until the restored and reseeded areas take hold.

Jimmy Tyree noted that BLM is in the process of verifying property boundaries in the vicinity. Bob Sandberg reiterated that Option 2 is preferred because it restricts access to the road and trail system southeast of the old turkey farm. Reed clarified that Option 2 is more restrictive than Option 1, and Option 2 is what the TC recommends. Chris asked that a sign be posted at the closure to notify the public that the closure is necessary for habitat rehabilitation. Bob agreed with that idea.

MOTION by Chris Blake to adopt Option 2 for a temporary closure to restrict unauthorized motor vehicle access to protect habitat rehabilitation and wildlife, and that an appropriate sign be posted explaining the reason for the closure.
Seconded by Larry Crist.
Discussion: Commissioner Gardner commented that No Trespassing signs had been typically posted and had only recently been removed.
Vote was taken: All voted aye.
Motion passed.

g. Scope of work projects
1. Red Cliffs Botanical Garden

Marc Mortensen told the members about a recent St. George City Council meeting in which the botanical garden was discussed (February 12, 2009). He said the meeting included Ron Thompson (WCWCD) and Bob Sandberg and Tom Webster from the HCP. Various options regarding a Red Cliffs Desert Reserve interpretive center were discussed at that meeting. Marc emphasized that there needs to be a serious discussion between HCP staff and the City of St. George regarding an interpretive center. Marc said that the City really needs to know if and how much land to set aside for an interpretive center. There had been discussion about setting aside space for a 7,500 sq. ft. building and parking lot. There may be a city council field trip to the area on February 26, 2009.

Jeff Morby expressed concern about the cost of a building. He said that a 10,000 sq. ft. building at \$160.00/sq. ft. would cost \$1.6 million – without the cost of the land. Marc suggested negotiating with the St. George City Manager on the land cost. Chris commented that the amount of parking required for a 7,500 sq. ft. building is different than that for a 10,000 sq. ft. building. Jeff suggested that the Water Conservancy District may contribute to the project. Marc clarified that the District is a partner in the garden, but not in an interpretive center building.

The future of the current HCP building was discussed. It is only known that someday it will be demolished, but there are no firm plans or timelines at this time. Jeff talked about an interpretive/education center with HCP administrative offices. Bob noted that the HCP is not able to staff two separate buildings. Bob also talked about monies for design concept work within the Education Outreach line item (\$50,000.00 total for both). Jeff sees that the biggest issue is financing and operating the building – partnerships and size will determine costs.

Larry Crist talked about the overall scope and objective of an interpretive center/ administration office. The reason that he asked was that it may be easier to get partners if we can clearly define the objective of the building.

Chris asked Marc what the City of St. George expects. Marc said, that within the next 60 – 90 days the city needs to know if and how much land to set aside. Marc added that the St. George City Council may have field trip to the site on Thursday to see where a building and the garden may be laid out.

Reed went back to Larry's question – what do we want for a building, what do we want it to accomplish, and what would its design be like? Reed talked about an education center designed for Snow Canyon about 10 years ago. Jeff commented that a concept plan could be acquired from an architect for considerably less than \$50,000.00. Jimmy asked about maintenance and operating costs of a new building. It is assumed that all operating and maintenance costs would be the responsibility of the HCP.

MOTION by Chris Blake to approve the HCP Administrator begin the request for proposal (RFP) process for a conceptual design of a building that will meet current and future educational and administrative requirements.

Seconded by Jeff Morby.

Discussion: None.

Vote was taken: All voted aye.

Motion passed.

2. Fencing and clearances

Bob Sandberg described the on-going fencing projects near Leeds (Robert Stirling agreement), *The Ledges*, and *The Trails* (Gardner/Buckskin fence project).

3. New reserve map

Tom Webster began by reminding the members that the previous prediction of having a new map ready for free distribution in March was too optimistic. Tom explained that he has been coordinating with subject matter experts (Sandy Bell) and Lynne Scott. Sandy Bell will coordinate with cartographers and publishers if she is contracted to do so. Lynne Scott will prepare a mockup once she is provided with the materials for the back of the map. Lauren Hunt is preparing those materials.

Tom further explained that the goal is to keep costs minimized for free distribution of the map. Tom added that Lynne Scott is waiting to see the status of the land bill – whether or not it passes; although the trails and trailhead remain the same either way. Jimmy will discuss this with Lynne. Printing costs in relation to copies ordered were further discussed.

Marc commented that more maps in more hands benefits education of the Reserve and tortoise habitat.

h. Status of the Fire Management Plan development and scope of work projects (TC).

Bob Sandberg provided an update on the Technical Committee's progress in developing a fire management plan. He said that the TC has had one special meeting (February 18, 2009) and has another planned (March 11, 2009) in addition to the regular meetings. He added that he sees that the TC must stay under the BLM umbrella because BLM has NEPA-compliant work proposed for green strips, herbicide strips, rehabilitation work, and monitoring reseeded areas.

Larry asked what this fire season is shaping up to. Bob talked about mild temperatures and recent precipitation and benefit to native vegetation. He added that he believes that we are ahead of last year in fire fuel load. Bob explained that, unfortunately, red brome is doing well and that he's concerned.

i. Quarterly Report – 2008 4th Qtr Report – Review and accept (HCAC).

Bob Sandberg explained that the quarterly report for the fourth quarter of 2008 was submitted on January 27th and that he will entertain any questions. The comments moved onto the annual report.

j. Annual Report – 2008 – Review and accept (HCAC).

Larry Crist complimented Acting Administrator Bob Sandberg and HCP staff on taking on and submitting an annual report. This was the first annual summary that has been submitted since 2005. Larry added that the report has so much value that it should be continued annually.

MOTION by Chris Blake to accept the Quarterly Report and the Annual Report, and to reinstate annual report requirement.

Seconded by Larry Crist.

Discussion: None

Vote was taken: All voted.

Motion passed.

k. Winchester South trailhead location (Exhibit 5-k-1 HCAC - 022409).

Bob Sandberg talked about a problem on the current map because of a stepover location. He explained that the current stepover location does not have, nor will have, public access. The stepover needs to be relocated to a place where there will be public access. Bob used the exhibit to show where a future public road is planned.

Commissioner Gardner explained where the current stepover is and where a more appropriate site is planned – see the exhibit. Mr. Gardner added that the current stepover doesn't need to be moved now, just planned for in the future.

MOTION by Chris Blake to relocate the Winchester South stepover as necessary.

Seconded by Larry Crist.

Discussion: Clarification by Larry that there will be a clearly defined trail beginning at the new stepover location.

Vote was taken: All voted.

Motion passed.

l. Administrator's Report (Bob Sandberg).

1. SR 18 widening project – status.

Bob informed the members that all breaches in the right of way fence, however small, have been completely repaired either by HCP or UDOT. HCP staff is waiting on warmer weather before conducting a clearance within the right of way. The contractor is about a month away from beginning work. Tortoise Awareness Training will be provided for all personnel involved in the construction process.

2. Technical Committee – annual elections results.

Bob announced that the Technical Committee held annual elections at their last regular meeting. Ann McLuckie was elected chairperson and Bob Douglas was elected vice chairman. The positions will become effective the next regular TC meeting.

3. Assignment to the TC to recommend a zone designation for the White Reef (Harrisburg) addition (Exhibit 5-l-3-a HCAC – 022409).

Bob referred to the exhibit and explained that he has been in consultation with BLM and that a zone designation is necessary for the White Reef (Harrisburg) addition in order that appropriate management principles can be applied.

MOTION by Chris Blake to present Assignment #021209 to the Technical Committee.
Seconded by Marc Mortensen.
Discussion: None.
Vote was taken: All voted aye.
Motion passed.

6. **OTHER BUSINESS**

None.

There was no other business to discuss.

7. **ADJOURN**

MOTION by Reed Harris to adjourn.
Seconded by Marc Mortensen.
Vote was taken: All voted aye.
Motion passed.

The meeting was adjourned at 2:06 P.M.

Minutes prepared by Brad Young.