

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 28, 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:

Jeff Gardner	Ironman Competition
Brian Anderson	Hurricane Power Department
Alan Gardner	Washington County Commissioner
Mike Empey	Congressman Matheson's office
Bryan Thiriot	Senator Bennett's office
Marreen Casper	Senator Hatch's office
Ann McLuckie	Utah Div. of Wildlife Resources (UDWR)
Kristen Comella	Snow Canyon State Park
Brad Young	Washington County HCP

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 1:04 P.M.

2. CONSENT AGENDA

- a. Approval of the agenda**
- b. Review and approve minutes**
 1. March 24, 2009
- c. Next meeting date**
 1. May 26, 2009

MOTION by Chris Blake to approve the Consent Agenda with two additions to the Agenda. 1. Add a brief presentation by Commissioner Gardner. 2. Add a brief presentation by Kristen Comella (6-a).

Seconded by Marc Mortensen.

Discussion: None.

Vote was taken: All voted aye.

Motion passed.

3. PRESENTATIONS

Washington County Commissioner Alan Gardner informed the members that Bob Sandberg had been appointed by the county commissioners as the HCP administrator. Commissioner Gardner noted that Bob has done a terrific job for several months as the acting administrator; Commissioner Gardner complimented Bob on the positive feedback that he has received. The appointment was effective April 4, 2009.

- a. **Ironman competition, May 2010** – Jeff Gardner
(Exhibits 3-a-1 and 3-a-2).

Mr. Jeff Gardner presented the proposal and described the competitive event. He described the bike route following the swimming event. The bike route will go from Sand Hollow through Washington City to Bluff St. in Saint George. But it is the running course that will encroach into the Reserve. Jeff said that it is anticipated that there will be approximately 2,000 to 2,500 competitors. It is not anticipated that there will be a lot of spectators, and most of them will be around 200 E. and 1000 E. in Saint George.

Marc Mortensen addressed the portion of the run course that will be inside the Reserve. Marc added that the media will not be allowed to go off-trail inside the Reserve to cover the event.

Bob Sandberg noted that Red Hills Parkway is not a concern, but the loop inside the Reserve at Pioneer Park may be a problem. Bob referred to Exhibits 3-a-3 and 3-a-4 and asked the HCAC members for their input.

Chris Blake asked about the Technical Committee reviewing the proposal and if there is no or minimal impact, then the event may be permitted by a minor amendment.

Chairman Wilson combined agenda items 3-a and 5-a.

Chris Blake made a motion.

MOTION by Chris Blake to approve the event within the Reserve contingent on approval by the Technical Committee; an assignment to the TC is necessary.

Seconded by Marc Mortensen.

Discussion:

Jeff Gardner briefly re-described the event and explained that there is a five-year commitment agreement with the cities and the county. He added that the route may be altered.

Larry Crist said that he does not have much concern with the proposal as is, but is concerned about collateral impact to the Reserve and habitat by the increased number of visitors.

Marc noted that the positive economic impact to the cities and county is significant.

Vote was taken: All voted aye.

Motion passed.

4. UTILITY AND DEVELOPMENT PROJECT REVIEWS

- a. Install power pole guy wires and anchors** – Brian Anderson, Hurricane Power Department.

Chairman Wilson combined agenda items 4-a and 5-b.

Brian Anderson distributed a handout, Exhibit 4-a-1 HCAC – 042809, and explained how the fence may have to be opened to allow access to the anchor locations as shown on the exhibit. The anchors are seven feet deep and require a hole two feet wide and three feet deep.

Larry Crist asked about moving the power line so anchors within the Reserve would not be required. Brian explained that it would be cost-prohibitive. Brian added that Rocky Mountain Power (RMP) will also have to go into the Reserve to set a taller pole, as shown on the exhibit, because their power line will have to go over Hurricane's power line.

MOTION by Chris Blake to assign the TC the task of evaluating the proposal and the potential impact to habitat and tortoises.

Seconded by Jimmy Tyree.

Discussion:

Reed Harris asked why there are so many different power line corridors. Brian explained that this is a distribution line while RMP's is a transmission line. Chris asked if they could be mingled in the same corridor. Brian explained the problems with mingling and that the lines are separate. Brian expressed urgency in getting the anchors installed.

Motion amended to place this issue on the next TC meeting agenda and the next HCAC meeting agenda.

Vote was taken: All voted aye.

Motion passed.

5. **GENERAL BUSINESS**

- a. Review and discuss the Ironman competition proposal (HCAC).

Combined with Item 3-a

- b. Review and discuss the proposed guy wires and anchors (HCAC).

Combined with Item 4-a.

- c. **Red Cliffs NCA** – status and planning (J. Tyree).

Jimmy Tyree took a few minutes to present the 24 slides in the PowerPoint presentation – Exhibit 5-c-1 HCAC – 042809. After the slide presentation Jimmy commented that he is working with the BLM GIS staff to identify BLM parcels for disposal. Jimmy added that he met last week with Dallin Gardner to discuss land disposal. The Realty Specialist position candidate has been accepted by the BLM state office, but Jimmy is waiting for the paperwork before making an actual job offer.

The committee members discussed the NCA and management planning process. Larry Crist said that he'd like to see the HCP remain involved to protect tortoises, after all that's why the HCP was established. Larry added that habitat and tortoise protection must come first when considering recreation management. Jimmy agreed.

Reed asked about the long term vision for managing the Reserve, including management of State lands. The members agreed that the HCP and the permit must remain intact. Reed said that some of the State properties were purchased with (ESA) Section Six funds and the lands must be managed by the State. Jimmy noted that these are all very good points and must be considered and included when planning management of the NCA. Jimmy stressed that it will be a challenge and that there is no intent to disturb something that is working so well.

Alan Gardner pointed out that the bill allows HCP language to be included in the NCA management plan. Jeff Morby asked about the 20-year permit and if it is still in effect. Larry replied that the permit does remain in effect for the 20 years, but these are some of the things that need to be worked out. The status of the SITLA lands within the Reserve was briefly discussed. Lastly, the possibility of future work meetings was also briefly talked about.

- d. **Initiatives to acquire ELT properties** (HCAC).

As noted above, Jimmy commented that he met last week with Dallin Gardner to discuss land disposal and that Dallin's concerns were answered for the time being.

e. Habitat Management Plan development and scope of work projects (TC).

Ann McLuckie provided a brief status of the Technical Committee's progress on polygon restoration monitoring, burned/unburned/invasive plants mapping, and green-stripping.

Bob Sandberg also talked about the on-going TC efforts, and coordinating with BLM's Mojave Desert Initiative. The ultimate goal is fire prevention, restoration and habitat protection.

f. Administrator's Report (Bob Sandberg).

1. Budget report (Exhibit 3-f-1-a HCAC – 042809).

Bob talked about Exhibit 3-f-1-a and the current state of the budget. He talked about the 1st Quarter revenues and how they are down significantly; the members discussed the declining revenues. Bob told the members how HCP is trying to manage spending because future revenues are expected to be poor.

2. Botanical Garden and education/interpretive center – status.

Bob related to the members some of the latest meetings that have been held and how he appreciates the assistance of the Saint George city staff, especially in helping define the overall purpose and objective of an interpretive/educational building.

3. Outreach and education activities.

Bob talked briefly about the outreach and education program. He explained that Tom Webster was not present because he was at Pineview H.S. providing a presentation to four biology classes that have been combined into two presentation sessions.

The recent informational advertisements in *The Spectrum* were briefly talked about.

Bob added that the number of presentations provided has recently gone up dramatically, largely due to the tortoises and other demonstration reptiles coming out of hibernation. Bob added a list of those presentations that have recently been provided.

4. Surveys and clearances.

Bob briefly related to the members that HCP staff has completed three clearances in the Kayenta subdivision. The clearance for the Buena Vista Boulevard extension from Main Street to Exit 13 is in progress, and other clearances planned are for 600 North in Hurricane, the power line in Hurricane that was just talked about and along SR 18 for the widening project. The clearance period closes May 15.

5. Volunteer program – status.

Bob informed the members that the volunteer program coordinated by Jim Crisp is proceeding very well. There are currently 19 volunteers. Two persons have volunteered to assist with presentations and the remaining 17 are qualified trail stewards. Dave Kiel has mentioned that human impact, according to the NAU monitoring, is significant but may be leveling off. Dave attributes this to the efforts of the volunteers.

6. Submit the 1st Quarter – 2009 Report.

The quarterly report was submitted to the committee for their information. The review of the report will be on the agenda for the next HCAC meeting.

6. OTHER BUSINESS

a. Canyoneering in Snow Canyon State Park

Kristen Comella informed the members that she has recently received four proposals for canyoneering in the State Park. Kristen explained that canyoneering is different from hiking. It is a combination of walking, climbing, scrambling, jumping and rappelling. Kristen further explained that canyoneering is not specifically addressed in the Public Use Plan (PUP) and asked the committee for their input because canyoneering permitted in the State Park may spread into other areas of the Reserve.

Reed asked about what kind of impacts are expected. Kristen said there is likely to be minimal impact to tortoises and other reptiles, however there may be some impact to raptors, but that it can be controlled with seasonal closures. Two of the routes clearly have minimal impact for reptiles and sensitive species.

Jimmy asked if the proponents were commercial or non-commercial. Kristen said a little of each; some of the individuals have commercial connections. Jimmy will ask Dave Kiel about any Special Recreation Permit (SRP) requirements.

Larry expressed a desire to have a coordinated approach across the Reserve. Jimmy commented that it must be discussed in the overall management plan and believes that Dave Kiel should be involved.

Kristen talked briefly about technical climbing and the Climbing Advisory Team (CAT), and that the CAT, or something similar, may be useful with regard to canyoneering. Ann pointed out that canyoneering in the upland zone is allowed because off-trail use is permitted, but not in the lowland zone.

Reed favors allowing controlled recreation through education, monitoring and designating open and closed routes. Kristen commented that the high degree of skill required will limit the number of participants to begin with. She reiterated that canyoneering routes are not designated trails.

Kristen advocated a permit system to assure that the proper information, and expectations, is provided to participants; and that this is a privilege not a right.

Jimmy asked about the process for establishing and designating canyoneering routes. Kristen explained that new routes can be established by using the adaptive management process in the PUP and contacting Ann McLuckie and Bob Sandberg directly and bringing a proposal to the HCAC or an assignment to the TC can be made by the HCP administrator.

Bob Sandberg said that some coordinated canyoneering in the State Park, and managed by State Park staff, may provide additional information on how much canyoneering is done and how much impact results from it. He supports coordinated planning and management whether it is in Snow Canyon or throughout the Reserve.

Chris commented that this is a new recreation activity and that a formal process including well-documented discussion, reports and public records will help in future decision-making. Reed noted that each zone has its own management guidelines and that the Park needs to be managed accordingly. Jeff commented that canyoneering is an important element in the scouting program – especially in the 16 – 18-year-old bracket, and that if allowed, it will become even more popular.

Larry suggested that Kristen go ahead and approve what she has the authority for within the State Park and any impacts and potential problems will be evaluated. Kristen will work through the process with Bob Sandberg and will work on documenting that process from the Park level what our approach is. Jeff commented that Zion NP has some canyoneering opportunities. Kristen said that they are in the process of creating a canyoneering plan. Larry said that may be a good resource to look at.

There was no other business to discuss.

7. **ADJOURN**

<p><u>MOTION</u> by Chris Blake to adjourn. <u>Seconded</u> by Jimmy Tyree. <u>Vote was taken</u>: All voted aye. <u>Motion passed</u>.</p>
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The meeting was adjourned at 2:26 P.M.

Minutes prepared by Brad Young.