

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 25, 2010**.

Committee members present were:

Karl Wilson, Chairman	Mayors Association
Chris Blake, Vice Chairman	Environmental Organization
Bob Sandberg	Washington County HCP Administrator
Larry Crist	U.S. Fish & Wildlife Service (USF&WS)
Jeff Morby	Local Development
Jimmy Tyree	Bureau of Land Management (BLM)
Chris Keleher	Utah Dept. of Natural Resources (UDNR)

Absent and excused was:

Marc Mortensen	Citizen-at-Large
Reed Harris	Utah Dept. of Natural Resources (UDNR)

Also present were:

Brad Young	HCP
Jim Crisp	HCP
Cameron Rognan	HCP
Tom Webster	HCP
Rhett Boswell	Utah Div. of Wildlife Resources (UDWR)
Ann McLuckie	Utah Div. of Wildlife Resources (UDWR)
Mike Empey	Congressman Matheson's office
Marreen Casper	Senator Hatch's office
Eric Holt	JBR Environmental
Paul Van Dam	Citizens for Dixie's Future
Lisa Rutherford	Citizens for Dixie's Future
Waid Reynolds	Interested citizen
Dallin Gardner	ELT Properties

1. CALL TO ORDER

Chairman Wilson noted that at least five committee members were present and a quorum existed. The meeting was called to order at 1:00 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.

Approved HCAC meeting minutes – May 25, 2010

- a. **Approval of the agenda**
- b. **Review and approve minutes**
 1. April 27, 2010
- c. **Next meeting date**
 1. June 22, 2010

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

3. **PRESENTATIONS**

- a. **Volunteer Trail Steward update** (J. Crisp) (Exhibits 3-a-1, 2 and 3)

Jim Crisp began his presentation by providing a brief history of the HCP volunteer program. Jim noted that in 2004 Lori Rose had organized a few volunteers to do a little trail work and provide some assistance in the visitor's center. Jim said he joined the HCP staff in April 2008 as a volunteer trail steward coordinator. His purpose was to help recruit volunteers and establish a volunteer trail steward program for the Red Cliffs Desert Reserve, and to improve the documentation of the stewards' activities. He worked with Tom Webster and other HCP staff to recruit, select and train capable and competent volunteer stewards.

Jim informed the committee that the primary goals were to create a volunteer program that would:

- Establish an on-the-ground presence,
- Educate visitors to the Reserve,
- Report problems, and
- Encourage compliance to the rules established for the Reserve.

Jim's first priority was to develop a training program and improve the documentation of the stewards' activities. The first two training sessions were conducted in the summer and fall of 2008. In those training sessions there were a total of 12 stewards, three or four of which were current HCP volunteers. Two more training sessions were conducted in early 2009 bringing the volunteer staff to the set goal of 20. By that time the training program and the activities reporting system had been significantly refined.

Jim introduced Exhibits 3-a-1, 3-a-2 and 3-a-3. Jim noted that for 2009 there were a total of 1,086 hours donated by the volunteer staff. Based on the federal compensation rate for a Recreation Field Technician, the value is approximately \$22,000. This data can now serve as an in-kind match for grant applications.

In May 2010, another trail steward training session was conducted for five new additional stewards. They have already submitted eight trail visit reports.

Jim referred to Exhibit 3-a-2 and noted that trail visits to Zones 2, 3 and 4 were emphasized. This addresses the greatest need for visitor education and steward presence. Jim discussed the total visits and the value of those visits and contacts in 2009. Jim added that additional information is available by subzones. He explained that each zone is subdivided into smaller subzones enabling Reserve managers to pull up reports by those specific areas.

Jim continued by explaining that very little recruitment for trail stewards is necessary because they come to us by way of word-of-mouth, they've seen other trail stewards, or they are a frequent Reserve visitor. The number of active stewards is currently capped at 25. Jim talked briefly about the broad scope of backgrounds possessed by the trail stewards.

Jim discussed the training provided to the stewards. This includes four hours of classroom instruction that covers the history of the Reserve, an overview of the HCP and PUP, and familiarization with the NCA, plant life and wildlife biology, field safety, and visitor communications. Jim stressed that the stewards are educators not enforcers. The classroom training is supplemented by a three-hour field trip and orientation. Following the training and orientation the stewards are issued apparel, accessories and equipment – stewards are highly recognizable. The stewards are considered county volunteers, and rosters are regularly submitted to Snow Canyon State Park and to BLM. Steward activities are reported in the quarterly reports to the HCAC and reflect their accomplishments, hours spent, and equivalent value. Furthermore, there are quarterly meetings to provide updated information, with an occasional guest speaker. In addition, monthly work parties are held that include fence patrols and litter removal.

Jim added that litter on the trails has been virtually eliminated. The exception is occasional trash blown in by wind storms and recent parties. Trailheads are a different story. Trailheads are periodically used by overnight campers and for beer parties.

Jim further explained that visitors easily recognize the trail stewards. The stewards report that about 50% of the dogs seen are off leash, and many times a visitor will see a trail steward coming, put the dog on leash and take it off again after the steward has passed. Off-trail use by mountain bikers and equestrians appears to have more impact than off-trail use by hikers. The stewards actively eradicate social trails by placing – or replacing – barriers and rocks. Vandalism reported to HCP administration is usually repaired in one to three days. Lisa Rutherford asked if the trail stewards educate the off-leash dog owners about the requirements to keep dogs on a leash. Mr. Crisp reiterated that the stewards are educators and not enforcers and then explained how the stewards do contact the dog owners and explain the reasons for the leash requirements. Jim added that about 2/3 of the dog owners know about the requirements, but return to non-compliance shortly after the contact. Jim further added that coyotes and rattlesnakes are the primary hazards to dogs off leash. Jim also explained that the stewards are instructed to make the non-compliance contact if they are comfortable with it and not to make the contact if they are uncomfortable doing so.

The HCAC members were highly complementary of the work that Mr. Crisp and the trail stewards have accomplished.

There were no other questions or comments and the Chairman moved the agenda.

b. Old Moroni Turkey Farm restoration (Rhett Boswell – UDWR)

Rhett Boswell used a PowerPoint presentation to facilitate his discussion about the restoration efforts at the old turkey farm. The PowerPoint presentation was later designated Exhibit 3-b-1 HCAC – 052510.

Rhett began by showing a slide of where the property is and what it looked like before restoration efforts began. He noted that as soon as the old buildings and structures were removed, the invasive grasses and vegetation began to encroach. Rhett explained that UDWR set goals and objectives before starting the restoration. Those goals and objectives are:

- Reclaim to a more natural state,
- Stabilize soil,
- Control invasive annual plants,
- Plant native species, and
- Become self-sustaining over time.

Rhett explained that the methods and actions used included:

- Seeding,
- Herbicide application,
- Soil disturbance,
- Fill and re-contour,
- Demolition,
- Shrub planting, and
- Restoration company contracted that specializes in Mojave desert restoration.

Rhett described the soil treatments applied during the restoration efforts, they include:

- July 2007: Pits filled and soil contoured, 22 acres treated with Plateau® and drill seeded,
- January 2009: Buildings removed and area graded,
- February 2009: 57 acres treated with Plateau® and drill seeded,
- March 2010: Great Basin Research Center (GBRC) forb experiment (an accelerated germination experiment using forbs and fabric), and
- April 2010: Test plot for shrubs from Northern Arizona University (NAU), including Desert almond, Sand sage and Creosote. Rhett added that due to the wet spring that we are continuing to have, shrubs were brought in from NAU.

Rhett explained the seed mix that UDWR is using. These typically heat-tolerant species include:

<u>Seed</u>	<u>Variety/source</u>	<u>lbs in mix</u>
Sideoats Gramma	pierre	50
Galleta	viva	85
Indian Ricegrass	Rimrock	50
Sandberg Bluegrass	Toole MT	25
Sand Dropseed		3
Blue Flax Appar		50
Palmer Penstemon	Washington	25
Goosberryleaf Globemallow	Iron	18
Fourwing Saltbrush	Lincoln NV	50
Winterfat	Iron	50

Rhett added that Plateau[®] is the reason why the restored area looks the way that it does. Approximately 16 ounces per acre of Plateau[®] was applied. This keeps the plants from germinating, and specifically targets annuals, including cheatgrass. A variety of treatments and methods of application were tried in 2007 and 2009. The results are about the same regardless of the application method. Prior to the Plateau[®] treatment the majority of the area was covered in Russian thistle and Filaree.

Rhett discussed the seeding methods and added that they applied 15-16 pounds of seed per acre. He showed a *before* photo taken in 2007 and then *after* photos showing some of the plant success. He noted that Sand sage was unaffected by the Plateau[®] application.

Rhett displayed photos showing the structures remaining at the old turkey farm in January 2009 and then the area after the structures were removed in February 2009.

Rhett next discussed an experimental area where burlap was used as a ground cover that resulted in good germination. Rhett also discussed a 2010 GBRC experimental area where ground cover was used and the germination was not as successful as hoped for. Rhett further explained that a spring season with above average precipitation, like 2010, shows that soil stabilization and revegetation can be successful.

Rhett talked about the shrub trials that began in April 2010. He explained that approximately 200 plants were planted, and they are being watered weekly by a dedicated hunter from Dammeron Valley who is bringing in his water truck.

Lastly, Rhett talked about their future plans which include additional shrubs, a variety of seeding mixes and techniques, and possibly using an experimental ground cover.

Larry Crist asked about the supplemental watering of the shrubs. Rhett explained that this is the first opportunity to try the watering because of the water truck availability and because the shrubs are greenhouse plants. Larry also asked about using the experimental *tackifier* (fiber mulch). Rhett explained that the restoration area is a challenge but is hopeful the soil stabilizer will succeed.

There were no other questions or comments and the Chairman moved the agenda.

4. UTILITY AND DEVELOPMENT PROJECT REVIEWS

None.

5. GENERAL BUSINESS

a. Review and discuss the turkey farm restoration (HCAC)

Bob Sandberg commented that there appears to be a fair amount of Indian Rice grass germination. Bob added that soil movement, wind and heat will largely determine success, and that the use of burlap and the winter wheat appear to be candidates for success. Rhett said that he's open to suggestions.

b. Land acquisition efforts (HCAC)

Jimmy Tyree said that, as reported last month, BLM has submitted an application for funds from the Land and Water Conservation Fund. BLM's hope is to get funds in FY 2012 for the 1,350 acres (ELT properties).

Jimmy added that BLM has progressed far enough towards the objectives of the Land Bill (Omnibus Public Lands Management Act of 2009) that they can't go any further without additional funding. They are getting everything 'shovel ready' to auction the 600+ acres when funding does become available. Jimmy further added that some of the remaining preparations, such as cultural clearances, NEPA and the parcel appraisal have a shelf-life so BLM can only do so much until additional funding is available.

Bob Sandberg suggested continuing to explore all of the options, seek out new ideas, and investigate alternate funding sources to supplement BLM's efforts. Larry Crist briefly mentioned the meeting the day before concerning land acquisition (in-holdings within the Reserve).

There were no other questions or comments and the Chairman moved the agenda.

c. Trail assessment

1. Review the field trip taken this morning to the Toe trail (Exhibit 5-c-1-a)

Chairman Wilson called on Cameron Rognan to provide a brief summary of the field trip. Participating in the field trip were: Larry Crist, Chris Keleher, Chris Blake, Jimmy Tyree, Bob Sandberg, Cameron Rognan and Ann McLuckie.

Cameron informed everyone that the hike began at the Johnson Canyon trailhead and proceeded westerly from Snow Canyon Drive. Not far from the beginning the hikers found two tortoises. The objective of the field trip was to assess human impacts, e.g., unlawful access points and social trails. The field trip continued westerly towards the Tuacahn area where off-trail use and additional illegal trails were observed. The hikers saw significant off-trail impact caused by mountain bikers.

Cameron said that in all, six different tortoises were observed in the course of the field trip; which highlights the importance of area and the habitat.

The Gunsight route was also observed and discussed. The route is exceptionally steep and dangerous, and some on the field trip discussed possibly removing it from the map due to potential liabilities.

Larry Crist noted the lack of adequate signage that would be helpful in keeping users on the right trail. Bob Sandberg commented that HCP can see the need to upgrade and improve the signage. HCP will work with their partners in accomplishing this.

There were no other questions or comments and the Chairman moved the agenda.

d. Visitor map update (J. Tyree)

Jimmy reiterated some of what was said last month about the changes in the map. He clarified that the purpose is to accurately reflect what is actually on the ground, to correct any inaccuracies, and to not show trails on private property.

Bob Sandberg reassured the committee members that the intent is to not lose sight of what was done in the Public Use Plan (PUP) or what is envisioned on the existing map but rather to accurately depict what is actually on the ground. Bob referred to the field trip taken earlier today and the discussion regarding the Gunsight route. What is shown on the existing map is not accurate. An accurate map will help users stay on the correct trails and reduce use and creation of social trails, and it is important to remain consistent with what was developed and approved in the PUP. Bob added that the existing guide shows current trailheads and trails and those envisioned for eventual build-out.

Jimmy further added that in no way is there an intent to change policy without the public process, but we also have an obligation to the public to provide an accurate map.

Jimmy explained that the primary purpose of the HCP is to protect tortoises, and recreation should be incorporated but only to the extent that there is minimal impact to the tortoises and the habitat.

Larry Crist expressed hesitancy about putting *routes*, as opposed to *trails*, on the map because routes may be misleading, result in cross-country travel, and because there may be liability issues. Larry said that he'd prefer to stick to the established trails.

There were no other questions or comments and the Chairman moved the agenda.

e. HCP review update (L. Crist)

Larry began by saying that Renee Chi is working hard on the review.

Larry was interrupted by Dallin Gardner who spoke from the audience asking when they (HCAC) were going to talk about the ELT properties. He added that he has information that the HCAC should know. The committee members began discussing how to get back to agenda item 5-b. They decided to finish the current agenda item and then return to 5-b – Land acquisition efforts. Before Chairman Wilson could announce the decision Mr. Gardner left the room, obviously unsatisfied and disturbed.

Larry Crist finished by explaining that Renee has been working on a Freedom of Information Act (FOIA) request for everything to do with the Washington County HCP.

There were no other questions or comments and the Chairman moved the agenda.

f. Cottonwood Road fencing (J. Tyree)

Jimmy said that additional funding has provided an opportunity to replace and restore fencing along Cottonwood Road. The bids may allow up to five miles of fencing to be completed.

Bob Sandberg added that he has met with BLM staff and identified the most important areas to be worked on.

g. Review and discuss the 2010 1st Quarter Report (HCAC)

Chairman Wilson asked if there were any questions or comments about the quarterly report. There were none.

MOTION by Chris Blake to accept the 2010 1st Quarter Report.

Seconded by Jeff Morby.

Discussion: None.

Vote was taken: All voted aye.

Motion passed.

h. Administrator's Report – Bob Sandberg

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

Bob Sandberg introduced Exhibit 5-h-1-a and noted that according to the report 33% of the year has elapsed and HCP has spent, or has encumbered, 25% of the budget. Bob explained that the encumbered funds include things like the UDWR tortoise monitoring (23-4149-313), the Southwestern Willow Flycatcher nesting success survey (23-4149-319) and the fencing gap closures and systematic clearances (23-4149-435).

Jeff Morby asked about the \$665,000 shown under Contributions/Transfers. Bob explained that it is the difference between the anticipated revenues and the budget expenditures. It is the amount to be transferred from the reserve account if the entire budgeted amount is spent and revenues of \$450,000 are received. The amount of the transfer is likely to be considerably less than \$665,000 because we are not likely to spend the entire budget. It all depends on spending and the amount of revenues received.

The members discussed revenue from impact fees and possible future revenue depending on the overall economic conditions.

2. Technical Committee developing a budget recommendation

Bob told the members that the TC is beginning the process of formulating a recommendation on the 2011 budget. Their recommendation is due to the HCAC in July.

3. Systematic clearances

Bob informed the members that the area between Green Springs over to Exit 13 has been finished; one tortoise was found. This tortoise has tested positive for URTD and has been transferred to the TCF. Ann McLuckie added that a full report on the clearance will be included in the 2010 2nd Quarter Report. She also added that the perimeter fencing appears intact.

4. Washington City wells

Bob told the members that repair work on Well #3 has been completed but work continues on Grapevine Well #2 and Mill Creek Well #2. The Grapevine Well #2 has more problems than anticipated so Washington City is going to wait until the inactive season to go back in and work on it.

5. Tortoises processed

Bob provided a brief report on the tortoises processed by HCP since the first of the year. There have been 16 tortoises processed, not including the one being cared for

that was seized by UDWR law enforcement. Of the 16, nine are considered *take* and of those three have tested negative and have been translocated to Zone 4. The other six have been transferred to the TCF. The remaining seven are *captives*, and three of those are housed at the visitors center for educational and outreach purposes. The other four are awaiting adoption.

6. OTHER BUSINESS

a. Future agenda item

Chairman Wilson noted that since he has been chairman, he's on his third term as such, he has asked staff to include a Land Acquisition Efforts agenda item at all times – which includes the ELT properties. This is where (Item 5-b) Mr. Dallin Gardner should have made his comments. To avoid any future problems and allow the greatest opportunity for public input, Chairman Wilson asked for a new agenda section at the end of General Business and before Other Business for public comment and to request future agenda items. A brief disclaimer is necessary to clarify that the purpose of the new agenda section will be to receive comments and suggestions on future agenda items, and that no action may be taken on a matter raised under this agenda item at that time.

The committee members concurred.

7. ADJOURN

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

The meeting was adjourned at 2:10 P.M.

Minutes prepared by Brad Young.