

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 23, 2009**.

Committee members present were:

Karl Wilson, Chairman	Mayors Association
Larry Crist	U.S. Fish & Wildlife Service (USFWS)
Jeff Morby	Local Development
Jimmy Tyree	Bureau of Land Management (BLM)
Bob Sandberg	Washington County HCP
Marc Mortensen	Citizen-at-Large

Absent and excused was:

Reed Harris	Utah Dept. of Natural Resources (UDNR)
Chris Blake, Vice Chairman	Environmental Organization

Also present were:

Vicki Tyler	Bureau of Land Management
Paul Briggs	Bureau of Land Management
Bob Douglas	Bureau of Land Management
Tom Webster	Washington County HCP
Marreen Casper	Senator Hatch's office
Mike Empey	Congressman Matheson's office
Alan Gardner	Washington County Commissioner
Steve Meisner	Virgin River Program
Dallin Gardner	ELT Properties
Ann McLuckie	Utah Div. of Wildlife Resources (UDWR)
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 1:00 P.M.

2. CONSENT AGENDA

- a. Approval of the agenda**
- b. Review and approve minutes**
 1. May 26, 2009
- c. Next meeting date**
 1. July 28, 2009

Approved HCAC minutes – June 23, 2009

MOTION by Larry Crist to approve the Consent Agenda.

Seconded by Marc Mortensen.

Discussion: None.

Vote was taken: All voted aye.

Motion passed.

3. **PRESENTATIONS** - None.

4. **UTILITY AND DEVELOPMENT PROJECT REVIEWS** - None.

5. **GENERAL BUSINESS**

a. Habitat Management Plan (HMP) development and scope of work projects.

1. HMP status and update – A. McLuckie

Technical Committee (TC) Chairperson Ann McLuckie distributed Exhibit 5-a-1-a and updated the committee members on each of the action items.

2. Green stripping scope of work – A. McLuckie

3. Fuels reduction – Vicki Tyler, BLM Natural Resource Specialist

Agenda items 5-a-2 and 5-a-3 were combined by Chairman Wilson.

Ann McLuckie distributed Exhibit 5-a-2-a and reviewed the scope of work with the committee members. She emphasized that the document is a draft in progress. Ann also noted that BLM will complete the Environmental Assessment (EA). Larry Crist asked if there was a cost estimate. In response, Vicki Tyler distributed Exhibit 5-a-3-a and explained that rough cost estimates per treated acre are shown on the bottom of the first page of the exhibit. Larry further inquired about the costs and how far the funds will go. There is \$219,000.00 allocated by BLM for fuels reduction within the Red Cliffs Desert Reserve and \$100,000.00 budgeted by HCP for fire restoration and rehabilitation. Vicki explained that the costs are variable depending on the treatment(s) applied. Vicki added that for NEPA purposes, the Beaver Dam Slope and the Red Cliffs Desert Reserve projects are being joined.

Vicki reviewed Exhibit 5-a-3-a with the committee members and added that green stripping is usually joined with some natural geographical feature. She talked specifically about green stripping along Cottonwood Road and that she recommends a 50-foot wide green strip on each side of the road, depending on terrain and existing vegetation. She estimates that there are approximately 17 miles of 50-foot wide green stripping proposed. She also stressed that treating and reseeding undisturbed soil almost always fails. Vicki explained the six photos that are part of Exhibit 5-a-3-a. Photos 1 and 2 show successful fuel breaks in the New Harmony area. Photo 3 shows

the effects of Plateau[®] and the restoration efforts after the Milford Flat fire (2007). Photos 4 and 5 are taken along the Motoqua Road in western Washington County. Lastly, Photo 6 shows the results of drilling.

Paul Briggs talked briefly about establishing initial green stripping footholds and then building on and expanding from there. The objectives of green stripping are to assist firefighters in controlling wildfire and to establish vegetation that can restore itself naturally.

Vicki talked about timing of getting some treatments accomplished. The NEPA may take up to six months to complete. Kochia seeds are harvested in late October and the seeding is usually done in January. Kochia seeds have a very short shelf life. The first actual seeding is most likely going to be in January 2011, but the available funds need to be encumbered by September 30, 2010.

Larry Crist asked about the actual application of Plateau[®]. Paul Briggs told the members that successful use of Plateau[®] depends on timing, application rate and the individual equipment operator.

Jeff Morby asked about the next steps. Vicki said that she'll be working with Ann McLuckie and the Technical Committee and that a draft scope of work is necessary, and then get the NEPA process started. Jimmy Tyree commented that Recovery Act funding will be pushed to the head of the list.

b. Omnibus Public Lands Management Act of 2009

1. Red Cliffs NCA – status and planning
2. Initiatives to acquire ELT properties

Agenda items 5-b-1 and 5-b-2 were discussed simultaneously.

Jimmy Tyree said that a scope of work is being composed to amend the Resource Management Plan and that he is seeking additional funding. Jimmy added that the Saint George Field Office has received approval to hire six new employees that will support the NLCS units. Advertising for those positions should happen in the next two to three weeks. Jimmy further added that Chuck Valentine has accepted the position of Realty Specialist. Chuck is from Wyoming and will begin work on or about July 20th.

Jimmy additionally added that in an effort to improve communications, letters are being sent out to various operators and the hunting community to let them know about the designated wilderness areas.

Jimmy talked briefly about land disposal. He explained that lands are being inventoried for T&E species and the appropriate NEPA processes are being started. Jimmy added that BLM is addressing cadastral concerns on properties being conveyed. Those

properties include the Temple Quarry, property near Hurricane and property adjacent to the Purgatory jail.

Larry Crist asked about how the current Red Cliffs Desert Reserve and the new NCA will interface. Discussion about the plan to interface will occur soon. Those discussions will include BLM, the HCAC and the county commissioners. Jimmy added that BLM is considering the idea of constructing a new building to accommodate the additional NLCS staff, the Saint George Field Office, the Arizona Strip personnel and the Red Cliffs Desert Reserve staff. Jimmy noted that he is not aware of any other instance where an HCP has been converted to an NCA, so creating a management plan to interface is all new.

c. Confluence Park waterline funding

Chairman Karl Wilson talked briefly about the plan to install a 10" irrigation line from the proposed waste water filter (treatment) site to LaVerkin's secondary water system. There is an interlocal agreement that includes Washington County, Toquerville, LaVerkin and Hurricane. He explained that the Confluence Park Committee met recently. The meeting included Rhett Boswell from UDWR and Steve Meisner from the Virgin River Program. The Confluence Park committee members discussed Phase 1 of the plan which is to install the 10" line in the same easement trench as the sewer line. The cost is approximately \$10.00 per foot for materials and \$10.00 per foot for installing in the trench. The length of the line is approximately 6,000 to 8,000 feet. Karl noted that the holder of the original water rights is the owner of the irrigation water coming out of the filter. The Confluence Park committee members are going to compose a plan to manage the irrigation water.

d. Communications facilities removal at Pioneer Park

Marc Mortensen said it is the City of St. George's intent to remove the communications facilities from the top of the rocks to accommodate an overlook/interpretive area. There are cinder block structures and a red and white candy-cane tower to be removed. The City will provide a scope of work to the Technical Committee for the project. The removal work will occur during the inactive season to minimize disturbance. There is a microwave relay belonging to Qwest that is still active and will not be removed.

e. Administrator's Report

1. Budget status report (Exhibits 5-e-1-a, b, c, d and e HCAC – 062309)

Administrator Bob Sandberg referred to Exhibit 5-e-1-a and talked about the lack of revenue – just \$33,469.00 for the first quarter of 2009. Bob explained that approximately \$95,000.00 was removed from this year's revenue and put into the 2008 revenue. The money didn't really go anywhere; it was just credited to 2008 because it was fourth quarter impact fees.

Bob discussed and explained Exhibits 5-e-1-b, c, d and e. Karl Wilson asked about the reserve account balance and how much the HCP may have to withdraw. Depending on revenues during the remainder of the year, it may be as much as \$572,000.00. Bob stressed that HCP staff are conserving wherever possible. Larry Crist noted that the HCAC had recommended the current budget, which was approved by the County Commission, and that the HCAC was willing to support spending the budgeted amount.

Bob explained that the Technical Committee will present their 2010 budget recommendations to the HCAC at the July HCAC meeting. Larry emphasized the importance of fire prevention.

2. SR 18 widening project status

Bob informed the members that there is a preconstruction meeting scheduled for next Thursday (6/25). UDOT has awarded the widening contract to Sunroc. The meeting will be at the Sunroc offices. The project is beginning to move forward.

3. Red Butte – St. George powerline upgrade project status

Bob talked briefly about this project. He emphasized that it is a major project replacing wood power poles with steel ones. The work is scheduled to progress southward from Central beginning soon. Timing of the work is an issue because the Biological Opinion states that the work will be done during the inactive season, but not all of it can be done during the prescribed period. There are on-going discussions with USF&WS regarding this issue.

4. HCP biologist position - status

Bob briefly related to the members that the application period ends June 30th. He has received some applications and more are expected.

The discussion strayed to the new RCDR map. Marc Mortensen said that he understands that there are issues with creating and publishing a new map – specifically with BLM now that the Reserve has been designated a NCA. Marc advocates subsidizing the map and distributing it at no charge. Larry Crist agreed.

Reprinting the current map at a reduced cost and selling it for \$3.00 or at cost (approximately \$1.00 each) was discussed. The committee members agreed that it was preferable to order 2,500 reprints and distribute at no cost. Possible distribution points include the Chamber of Commerce, Dino Tracks and the Dixie Center.

5. Botanical Garden and education/interpretive center

Bob referred to Exhibit 5-e-5-a and talked about the Technical Committee's concerns of the 'natural trails' shown in the southeast portion of the exhibit. The purpose of the trails appears to be to focus hikers on the trails and to provide a loop route to the overlook

and back. But, the use of the trails may have a negative impact on the habitat. Ann McLuckie stressed the necessity to protect tortoise habitat.

Bob briefly talked about a RCDR interpretive center being part of the botanical garden. An area for a building has been reserved and is shown in the southwest portion of the exhibit. Jimmy Tyree noted that the lease on the current BLM office expires in two to three years and the Saint George Field Office and the Arizona Strip Field Office may need new office space. Jimmy talked about a combined building with an interpretive center and space for the Red Cliffs NCA staff.

6. OTHER BUSINESS

a. New RCDR map

See the discussion above under agenda item 5-e-4.

b. Field trips

Members briefly discussed upcoming field trips. There are none scheduled but the members agreed that it is very valuable to get out on the ground and visit sites where there are issues.

There was no other business to discuss.

7. ADJOURN

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

The meeting was adjourned at 2:23 P.M.

Minutes prepared by Brad Young.