

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 **JULY 28, 2009**.

Committee members present were:

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

Also present were:

Elaine York	The Nature Conservancy
Brad Young	Washington County HCP
Bob Douglas	Bureau of Land Management
Marreen Casper	Senator Hatch's office
Mike Empey	Congressman Matheson's office
Dallin Gardner	ELT Properties
Allan Carter	Carter Family Trust
Patrice St. Germain	<i>The Spectrum</i>
Roger New	Citizen, Leeds, UT

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 1:02 P.M.

2. **CONSENT AGENDA**

- a. **Approval of the agenda**
- b. **Review and approve minutes**
 1. June 23, 2009
- c. **Next meeting date**
 1. August 25, 2009

MOTION by Chris Blake to approve the Consent Agenda.

Seconded by Jeff Morby.

Discussion: None.

Vote was taken: All voted aye.

Motion passed.

3. PRESENTATIONS

- a. Elaine York – The Nature Conservancy.

Elaine distributed a copy of the proposal to the HCAC members. The proposal consists of a six-page document (Exhibit 3-a-1 HCAC – 072809) and an aerial photo of the White Dome Nature Preserve (Exhibit 3-a-2 HCAC – 072809). Elaine explained that she has worked with several partners for about five years to preserve the habitat of rare plant species in the White Dome area. The plant species include the dwarf bear poppy (endangered) and the Siler pincushion cactus (threatened). Elaine added that the White Dome Nature Preserve contains about 20% of the dwarf bear poppy population – which only grows in Washington County, Utah.

Elaine further explained that there is about 800 acres of protected habitat within the White Dome Nature Preserve, and that through grants, The Nature Conservancy is purchasing the property in phases. The objective is to protect the sensitive habitat by allowing hikers into the area but restrict motorized vehicle access. To accomplish the objective the perimeter of the Preserve must be fenced. Approximately 275 acres has already been fenced but there remains approximately 15,000 linear feet of fencing that must be constructed. The cost is approximately \$3.00 to \$4.00 per foot – \$45,000.00 - \$60,000.00 is needed.

The participants in the project include The Nature Conservancy, USFWS, SITLA, the Federal Highway Administration, UDOT, St. George City and Washington County. The Washington County HCP has previously contributed \$100,000.00 to establish an endowment fund and the proposal is to request an additional \$50,000.00 to complete the necessary fencing.

4. UTILITY AND DEVELOPMENT PROJECT REVIEWS

None.

5. GENERAL BUSINESS

- a. Review and discuss the presentation by Elaine York.

The members discussed the proposal by Elaine York. Jeff Morby asked if SITLA paid for the fencing of the southwest portion of the eastern section of the Preserve. Elaine replied in the affirmative and added that the remainder of the eastern section requires fencing. Reed Harris asked if the Other Species Fund has been indexed (adjusted for inflation) and if there are funds available. Bob Sandberg replied that the Fund has not been completely adjusted for inflation to today's dollars.

MOTION by Chris Blake to direct HCP staff to examine the Other Species Fund and the Fencing budget line item and return with a proposal to accomplish the requested fencing in this year's budget or budget for the requested fencing in the 2010 budget.

Seconded by Larry Crist.

Discussion: None.

Vote was taken: All voted aye.

Motion passed.

After the motion, Larry asked Elaine if she had approached the US Fish and Wildlife Service's Partners Program regarding supplemental funding. Elaine said that she has talked with Karl Fleming and there were some obstacles. She added that once the Preserve is fenced it will be managed by The Nature Conservancy and that UDOT will manage their portion.

- b.** Habitat Management Plan (HMP) development and scope of work projects.

Technical Committee Vice Chairperson Bob Douglas explained that the TC is progressing with the green stripping project, as well as restoring burned areas and establishing islands of vegetation. He added that the TC is working with the Mojave Desert Initiative group, and working on a cooperative agreement with the Utah Division of Wildlife Resources (UDWR), the Agriculture Research Service (ARS), the U.S. Geological Survey (USGS), U.S. Fish and Wildlife Service (USFWS) and the Bureau of Land Management (BLM).

Through the BLM there is \$218,000.00 for green stripping within the Red Cliffs Desert Reserve and \$290,000.00 for both NCAs (Red Cliffs and Beaver Dam Slope). Also, the ARS will be working with the TC on habitat restoration areas with experimental plantings. The BLM state office will contract for the NEPA work. The TC has recommended habitat restoration areas on both BLM and State lands.

The TC has recommended green stripping along portions of the Cottonwood Road, the rim of Broken Mesa, the Middleton Powerline Road, the Red Cliffs Road, the Mill Creek Road and the Babylon Road. The green stripping will be monitored by Color County BLM for three years. The restoration areas will be monitored by USGS.

Bob Sandberg explained to Reed Harris that the federal dollars will not necessarily be spent on private lands or state lands, e.g., Turkey Farm.

- c.** Omnibus Public Lands Management Act of 2009 – Initiatives to acquire ELT properties

Jimmy Tyree said that the new Realty Specialist, Chuck Valentine, came aboard last Tuesday (July 21, 2009) and has hit the ground running. Chuck has begun to create the budget necessary to move forward with the first properties to be sold. Jimmy added that many of the properties may require compliance with NEPA. There was a brief discussion about the current land market conditions.

Allan Carter asked about when the lands may reach the auction block and what will be the approximate value. Jimmy replied that several properties will likely be auctioned at one time and that due to the land market economy, and the steps that must be taken, it is difficult to say exactly when or what the value will be. Jimmy will get back with Allan before the next (HCAC) meeting. Jimmy and Reed talked briefly about the amount of land available for sale.

d. Administrator's Report

1. Submit the preliminary 2010 budget (Exhibits 5-d-1-a and 5-d-1-b)

Administrator Bob Sandberg introduced Exhibits 5-d-1-a and 5-d-1-b and submitted them to the committee members for review and consideration. Bob explained the proposed 2010 budget amounts and the 2004-2009 averages expended.

The members posed a few questions on the budgeted amounts and the actual dollars spent. There will be a work meeting beginning at 10:00 A.M. on Tuesday, August 25, 2009 to consider the proposed 2010 budget.

2. SR 18 widening project status

Bob informed the members that the surveying is in progress and Sunroc expects to be actually moving dirt soon.

3. RCDR Map and Trail Guide – status and update

Each committee member was provided with a new RCDR Map and Trail Guide that has simply been reprinted on a less expensive paper. Bob explained that this is a short term solution until the new map is completed and ready for distribution. Bob added that BLM has some funding for graphic design, cartography and production. The new map will be two-sided, 27" X 36" in full color with more detail and information. BLM is releasing a Request for Proposals (RFP) with responses due by September 30 and design work completed by December.

4. HCP biologist position – status

Bob briefly related to the members that the county is continuing the process for hiring a habitat biologist and that the application period was extended to close of business hours on July 29, 2009. We'll see what applications are submitted soon.

5. Botanical Garden and education/interpretive center

Bob explained that desert garden meetings continue to go forward. St. George City and the Washington County Water Conservancy District (WCWCD) plan to proceed with Phase 1 before the end of the year. Phase 1 is work outside the Reserve on the fish exhibit and desert garden. Phase 2 is work inside the Reserve and the educational/interpretive center.

6. Submit the Quarterly Report – 2nd Quarter 2009

Bob submitted the Quarterly Report for review and consideration for the next regular meeting.

6. **OTHER BUSINESS**

Reed Harris expressed concern about where we're at in relation to the 2016 incidental take permit expiration. He asked staff to determine the total number of acres cleared and the total number of tortoises *taken*.

7. **ADJOURN**

<p><u>MOTION</u> by Chris Blake to adjourn. <u>Seconded</u> by Jimmy Tyree.</p>

The meeting was adjourned at 2:50 P.M.

Minutes prepared by Brad Young.