

# WASHINGTON COUNTY HABITAT CONSERVATION PLAN TECHNICAL COMMITTEE MEETING

A meeting of the Technical Committee of the HCP was held **JANUARY 7, 2010**, in the conference room at the Washington County Administration Building, 197 E. Tabernacle, Saint George, Utah

**The views expressed at this, or any other, Technical Committee meeting do not necessarily represent the positions or views of any particular federal, state or local governmental agency, division or department. They are solely the opinions of the individual members of this Technical Committee.**

Members present were:

Ann McLuckie, Chairperson	Utah Division of Wildlife Resources (UDWR)
Bob Douglas, Vice Chairperson	Bureau of Land Management (BLM)
Kristen Comella	Snow Canyon State Park (SCSP)
Renee Chi	U.S. Fish and Wildlife Service (USFWS)
Cameron Rognan	Washington County HCP
Marshall Topham	Local biologist

Also present were:

Brad Young	Washington County HCP
Lynne Scott	BLM
Zac Koceja	St. George City Park Planning

## 1. **CALL TO ORDER**

Chairperson Ann McLuckie noted there were at least four voting members present, a quorum existed and the meeting was called to order at 9:30 A.M.

## 2. **APPROVAL OF MINUTES**

- a. November 20, 2009

The following changes were made:

**(page 4, paragraph 6, sentence 5):** changed,

From: "There may be a fourth authorized access point at the borehole gate, depending on development at ~~The Trails~~ subdivision."

To: "There may be a fourth authorized access point at the borehole gate, depending on future area development."

**(page 5, paragraph 1, sentence 4):** changed,

From: “Members discussed allowing horses on the entire route but Member Comella noted that three ~~trail-knowledgeable people~~ have evaluated the trail and all have determined that the terrain is not suitable for horses.”

To: “Members discussed allowing horses on the entire route but Member Comella noted that three recreation planners have evaluated the trail and all have determined that the terrain is not suitable for horses.”

**(page 6, paragraph 2, sentence 3):** changed,

From: “Member McLuckie noted that protecting tortoises and habitat is ~~up to~~ the Technical Committee.”

To: “Member McLuckie noted that protecting tortoises and habitat is the purview of the Technical Committee.”

**(page 8, agenda item 4c):** changed,

From: “c. ~~Rangeland management conference.~~”

To: “c. Landscape planning conference.”

**(page 8, paragraph 2, sentence 3):** changed,

From: “She said that the long-term predictions for ~~rangeland management are depressing.~~”

To: “She said that the long-term predictions for management in the Mojave Desert are sobering due to issues related to cheat grass invasion.”

**(page 8, paragraph 4, sentence 2):** changed,

From: “More product information is ~~necessary, but the members generally do not favor changing the natural characteristics of a trail.~~”

To: “More product information was requested.”

<p><b><u>MOTION</u></b> by Renee Chi to approve the minutes of November 20, 2009, as amended. <u>Seconded</u> by Kristen Comella. <u>Discussion:</u> None. <u>Vote was taken:</u> All voted aye. <u>Motion passed.</u></p>
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### 3. GENERAL BUSINESS

#### a. **Rusty Cliffs trail** evaluation and field trip – Assignment #122909

The members reviewed Assignment #122909. Member McLuckie talked about the Rusty Cliffs trail and the discussion last meeting. She reiterated that it is a redundant north/south trail and seldom used. She suggested evaluating the trail and considering eliminating it or changing it to make more sense.

Lynne Scott questioned why we are dealing with the Rusty Cliffs trail when there are other trails that are more impacted and need more attention. Members McLuckie and Comella talked about why the issue of the Rusty Cliffs trail came up last meeting, and that the trail does go through tortoise habitat.

Member Douglas talked about the Rusty Cliffs trail being established during the Public Use Plan process. He added that the Buckskin trail issue was not resolved and that we were going to revisit this issue in the near future and that the Rusty Cliffs trail would provide access to the Buckskin Wash trail if it were implemented.

Member Chi talked about human impact monitoring and limits of acceptable change. The committee members discussed why the committee is examining the Rusty Cliffs trail, and its redundancy and relation to the Gila Trail extension. Member McLuckie stressed habitat and tortoise protection. Members discussed and debated the merits of examining this trail at this time.

Zac Kocaja noted that the City of St. George has plans to install a paved trail along the south side of the Red Hills Parkway and that providing access through the underpass may allow better access and use. Multiple conversations ensued. The discussions related to both agenda items 3a and 3b.

Zac and the committee members reviewed the preliminary plans for the Red Hills Parkway/SR 18 interchange and trail connections, and the planned pedestrian underpass. The members went on to discuss the northern terminus of the Rusty Cliffs trail. It ends in the planned *Trails* subdivision. The members reviewed a topographic map and an aerial photo showing the Rusty Cliffs trail. These exhibits were provided by Lynne Scott and later labeled Exhibits 3-a-1 and 3-a-2 TC – 010710. Member Douglas talked about BLM's planning process for each NCA, and a Travel Plan.

The committee members re-discussed Assignment #122909 and the task of reviewing all of the trails within the Reserve beginning with those in the vicinity of SR18. Lynne expressed concern about bringing up the Rusty Cliffs Trail when the Human Impact Monitoring study did not show off-trail impacts. Member McLuckie noted that trails have been eliminated or proposed based on two things: first, the human impact monitoring and striving to reduce human impacts and promote habitat and tortoise protection, and second, to reduce redundant trails. Member McLuckie suggested breaking the assignment into regional areas or zones to begin with. Member Douglas suggested taking the human impact monitoring results and evaluating the most impacted 15% or 20% of the trails.

Member Comella talked about managing trails, and the impacts caused by humans, based on the human impact monitoring data and limits of acceptable change. She advocated using the continuum of progressive management actions discussed last September.

The members discussed using the Rusty Cliffs trail as part of a loop with the paved trail on the west side of SR18. The members again referred to Exhibits 3-a-1 and 3-a-2 TC – 010710. The members also discussed the unresolved issue of the proposed Buckskin Wash trail, and the Rusty Cliffs trail connection at *The Trails*. The members agreed that a field trip to the Rusty Cliffs trail was unnecessary. The members also agreed that at the next meeting they will identify and discuss the five (5) most impacted trails according to the human impact monitoring data. To accomplish this, the materials needed are: 1) The map showing the Class 4 & 5 impacts, and 2) the Northern Arizona University Human Impact Monitoring Study data. Note: Brad will try to locate the map as it may have been used as an exhibit, and the members already have the NAU data.

Lynne Scott and the committee members briefly discussed the trail stewards and their trail monitoring reports, and periodic meetings with Jim Crisp – that are not occurring. Member McLuckie and Lynne Scott discussed the proposal of trail management actions based on limits of acceptable change that requires additional feedback before being adopted (a copy of Exhibit 5-d-1 HCAC – 092209 (draft) is attached).

Assignment 122909 and trail management will be continued to the next Technical Committee meeting. Meanwhile Member McLuckie will report to the HCAC that the TC continues to work on this assignment and will be consulting maps and data to address some of the issues.

**b. SR 18 / Red Hills Parkway – interchange and trail connections**

Member McLuckie noted that this agenda item was discussed earlier in the meeting. There were no further comments.

**c. St. George City Yard entrance – field trip**

Exhibit 3-c-1 TC – 010710 was reviewed and the issues of property ownership and the Reserve boundary were discussed. Lynne Scott noted that the property in question may belong to BLM. A survey of the Reserve boundary and determination of property ownership was suggested. The boundary of the NCA was also discussed.

Member Comella recommended that the legal description be acquired, the actual property boundary be surveyed, the property owner be identified and the status of the land determined. The members discussed who should be responsible for accomplishing this. Multiple conversations ensued.

BLM will review their ownership maps to determine if it is Recreation and Public Purpose (R&PP) property. Member Douglas noted that if it is not BLM property then it is

an issue of determining the location of the Reserve boundary and then deciding what to do about the City's request.

The members agreed to make a field trip to the area after this regular meeting.

Note: During the field trip Lynne Scott called one of the TC members and confirmed that the property is not R&PP, but does in fact belong to St. George City.

**d. Trail mats – continued discussion**

Member Rognan reviewed the suggestion to place trail mats in certain areas of the Prospector trail. The members examined the two 24" X 46" samples provided by Member Rognan. A small trial section was proposed but Lynne Scott brought up the point that this is a recreation issue and should be brought to the TC by BLM, not the other way around. It was also noted that the area of the Prospector trail being considered is on SITLA land, then there was a question about who manages the SITLA property. Lynne Scott said that BLM clearly has a stake in this. Member Comella suggested that future suggestions on recreation management be directed to the appropriate land manager. It is appropriate for the Technical Committee to review when it is forwarded by the appropriate land management agency.

The trail mat suggestion was forwarded from an HCP trail steward; and Lynne Scott talked again about the absence of meetings with Jim Crisp for the last six months to discuss trail steward suggestions.

The use of signature fences was briefly discussed. Signature fence could be utilized instead of mats to provide management of these problem trail areas. No further action was taken regarding the trail mat suggestion.

**e. Annual election – chairperson and vice chairperson**

The committee members discussed eligibility for the positions of the chairperson and vice chairperson. Member Douglas noted that he has many assignments and responsibilities that inhibit his ability to be the chairman for the coming year.

This agenda item was tabled until next meeting to allow members the opportunity to review the HCP language on eligibility and to seek comments from their respective supervisors.

**4. OTHER BUSINESS**

**a. Next meeting date**

The members agreed that the next meeting date will be Thursday, February 4, 2010. The meeting will begin at 9:30 AM in the conference room at the Washington County Administration Building.

- b. Tentative meeting dates for 2010:** March 11, April 8, May 13, June 10, July 8, August 12, September 9, October 7, November 18 and December 9.

Members noted the tentative meeting dates and will mark them on their calendars.

- c. Middleton 24** restoration seed mix – Exhibit 4-c-1 TC - 010710

The committee members discussed the proposed seed mix. Member Douglas also noted that the power line alignment is the same as the proposed fuel break.

The members discussed the use of Forage kochia, as it is a non-native species, and the use of Cliff Rose for deer forage. Member Douglas remarked that almost all of the area being revegetated is not tortoise habitat. The members discussed using only Forage kochia in fire breaks.

Members Comella and Chi suggested removing Forage kochia from the proposed seed mix list. The members agreed. Member Douglas said that he will discuss the removal of Forage kochia with Bob Sandberg.

- d. Mojave Desert Initiative** – Environmental Assessment (EA)

Member McLuckie asked about the status of the Mojave Desert Initiative research and restoration plots project. Member Douglas explained that the EA has been completed and covers research plots in Arizona, Nevada and Utah. One or more environmental groups may challenge the decision or provide additional input, but the ARRA funding remains intact.

## **5. ADJOURN**

The meeting was adjourned at 11:18 A.M. for a field trip to 620 E. Waterworks Drive to evaluate St. George City's request to adjust the RCDR boundary line to accommodate ingress and egress of wide-turning trucks.

The Technical Committee members met with Kirk Klotz, the St. George City Water and Irrigation Distribution Manager. The members evaluated the site and agreed that Mr. Klotz and Member Rognan will meet to stake out the area that is needed to accommodate the wide-turning trucks.

This agenda item will be continued to the next Technical Committee meeting.

Minutes prepared by Brad Young.