

## WASHINGTON COUNTY HABITAT CONSERVATION PLAN TECHNICAL COMMITTEE MEETING

A meeting of the Technical Committee of the HCP was held **FEBRUARY 10, 2011**, in the conference room of the Washington County Administration Building, 197 East Tabernacle, St. 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:

Cameron Rognan, Chairperson	Washington County HCP
Tim Croissant, Vice-Chairperson	Bureau of Land Management (BLM)
Ann McLuckie	Utah Division of Wildlife Resources (UDWR)
Kristen Comella	Snow Canyon State Park (SCSP)
*Renee Chi	U.S. Fish and Wildlife Service (USFWS)

**\*Note: Renee Chi participated in the meeting via teleconference.**

Absent and excused was:

Marshall Topham	Local biologist
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Also present:

Bob Sandberg	Washington County HCP
Iris Picat	BLM
Dawna Ferris-Rowley	BLM
Scott Hansen	RCDR Volunteer
Christi Biniarz	Citizens for Dixie's Future
Kaye Reese	Temporary Meeting Minute Preparation

### 1. **CALL TO ORDER**

Chairperson Rognan noted there were at least four (4) voting members present, a quorum existed and the meeting was called to order at 9:40 a.m.

### 2. **APPROVAL OF MINUTES**

a. January 13, 2011

The following changes were made:

**Page 3, paragraph 6, line 4:** the word “removed” at the end of the sentence was changed to “released”.

**Page 5, paragraph 4, line 3:** the word “particularly” was changed to “exclusively”.

**MOTION** by Member Chi to approve the minutes of January 13, 2011, as amended.

**Seconded** by Member Croissant.

**Discussion:** None.

**Vote was taken:** All voted aye.

**Motion passed.**

### **3. GENERAL BUSINESS**

#### **a. Paradise Canyon Trail Proposal**

Chairperson Rognan provided maps showing the proposed Paradise Canyon Trail. Bob Sandberg had informally brought this proposal to the Technical Committee in July 2010. A portion of the minutes of that meeting reads as follows:

“Member Comella said that the process should have begun with Snow Canyon State Park because the trail is within the park. She added that the Technical Committee has already reviewed and rejected this proposed trail.”

Scott Hansen thanked the Committee for their time and left the meeting at 9:55 a.m. The Committee expressed continued support of their 2008 decision to not authorize the proposed trail.

#### **b. Adjusting Take Area Boundaries**

Chairperson Rognan, using a large map, showed the Committee the proposed modified take areas. He pointed out the various areas on the map which have been modified, including: the buffer around the Reserve, new take areas, new protection areas and existing take areas.

He went on to say that there are approximately 32,000 acres of potential habitat outside the Reserve, with take area of approximately 12,000 acres. These numbers are from the original HCP. The proposed revisions will not substantially alter those figures. He spoke about distinguishing between take or protection areas at Hurricane Cliffs and near Gunlock. There are known tortoise populations in these areas. Regardless of whether tortoises are removed in take areas, protection areas or potential habitat, they will be counted as “take” against the county permit. HCP staff will meet with the county commissioners to discuss modifying the take areas. Chairperson Rognan will also meet with Member Chi when she is in town regarding this issue.

#### **c. Marking HIM Trail Intervals**

Chairperson Rognan met with Pam Foti to discuss this issue. The trail intervals are not consistent. Emphasis will be made to the students working on this project to be more consistent on the location of trail intervals. The suggestion was made to use a six (6) inch piece of rebar as a marker. Member Comella has spoken against the use of rebar in the past.

The Committee discussed the following: one-half (1/2) mile marker intervals; average trail length is two (2) to three (3) miles; vandalism is an issue; nothing else is practical on a wide scale; the necessity of markers for reliable data collection; using rebar showing two (2) inches above the ground off the trail; ground conditions which would not allow the insertion of rebar; BLM would like to talk to others regarding the use of rebar; different types of marking systems; UTM coordinates; the necessity of a new GPS reading when placing new rebar; the use of an informational piece on each half mile marker delineating the mileage position on the trail; a marking that could be used for both information and survey purposes

Conclusion: using carsonite markers with an information sticker at one-half (1/2) mile intervals; GPS when installing, modifying the locations as necessary.

The Committee agreed to table a final decision on this issue until their next meeting in March, 2011.

#### **d. Translocation Protocols at Tuacahn**

Member Comella arrived at the meeting at 10:10 a.m.

Chairperson Rognan has been approached by a Master Planner for the area south of Tuacahn. There are tortoise in the area. He showed the Committee the area in question on a map.

This is a Division of Wildlife issue and not a Technical Committee decision. Moving of the affected tortoise will happen this spring. There are forty two (42) acres involved. The proposed development will be a resort complex.

The developer would like to maintain the existing trail in the area which connects the Toe Trail to the Padre Canyon Trail. He spoke about possibly funding a kiosk and trailheads to be located within the development. The plans may have to go to the HCAC and the Technical Committee. Chairperson Rognan and Bob Sandberg or Justin Neighbor are planning to meet with the developer and Member Comella on Tuesday, February 15, 2011 at 9:30 a.m.

Everything that the developer is proposing will be on his property except a small portion of the trail which winds around a huge rock which goes into Snow Canyon State Park.

#### **4. OTHER BUSINESS**

##### **a. Possible Fire Prevention Alternatives & HCAC Conference Call**

Bob Sandberg told the Committee that he has gathered some preliminary information regarding this issue. The first alternative presented was a bid from D'Goat Ranch which offers targeted grazing services by a herd of goats, complete with 24/7 supervision by a Western Range Association herder and the use of electric fence where needed for Cottonwood Road. A copy of that bid is attached to these minutes. A side note is that goats don't eat creosote except in December.

The BLM representative commented that at 50 and 100 feet that NEPA would likely have to be done and couldn't be done in time for this spring.

The second alternative is an agreement with the Washington County Sheriff's Office for inmate labor. The cost is \$300 per day for a crew of four (4) to eight (8), usually six (6).

The question of the availability of a roadside mowing machine was raised. The original intent of the use of inmate labor would be with weed whackers rather than a mower.

Use of an herbicide again raises the NEPA nexus.

The discussion continued and covered: who holds the right-of-way along Cottonwood Road – St. George City in places and Washington County in the balance; are any of the cities and towns or the county going to be removing fuels along rights-of-way or major highways; Member Chi offered to check with UDOT regarding I-15 along the Reserve area; vegetation manipulation as it applies to fire prevention -- not in a position to do anything timely this year; BLM spoke in support of the inmate proposal.

Member Croissant told the Committee of his experience with the Park Service where a crew with weed whackers cleared 500 acres in four (4) weeks in uphill, rough terrain.

BLM representative, Dawna Ferris-Rowley mentioned Youth Corp crews from SUU with equipment, such as weed whackers and possible funding from other sources. Steve McCarthy is the contact person at SUU.

The discussion continued: the focus needs to be on fuel reduction at the lowest cost; the need to identify actual right-of-way parameters and get revised estimates based on those parameters for the goats; inmates only require "specialized equipment" which in this case would be weed whackers. All other items such as porta potties, lunch, gloves, transportation to the work site, their supervisor, etc. are included in the agreement. The possible investment in weed whackers for a long term approach to fire prevention.

The target timeline for fire fuel removal along roadways is late April, depending on weather conditions.

Chairperson Rognan was asked to report to the HCAC regarding this discussion, eliminating the need for a conference call. He will review the proposals for this year with them.

**b. Red Hills Parkway Tortoise Crossings**

Member McLuckie presented drawings of a box cement culvert, a squash pipe which is five (5) feet wide and six (6) feet high and a pipe culvert which is six (6) feet wide and three (3) feet high. Each type of culvert is equipped with a skylight feature. She provided the locations for each type of culvert. The project goes out to bid next week.

**c. Request by Disney**

Chairperson Rognan said that Disney wants to shoot a movie at the Reserve in the Pioneer Park area. His meeting with them was on a very preliminary basis and Disney is still in location scouting mode. He will be meeting with them tomorrow.

He read from the Red Cliffs Desert Reserve Public Use Plan as follows:

“Commercial uses within the Reserve, such as guided activities, instructional programs, or commercial film making, require a commercial use permit issued by the BLM or State Parks in coordination with the HCP Administrator. Application forms and other information are available through the Bureau of Land Management, St. George Field Office, located at 345 E. Riverside Drive, St. George, Utah.

With the exception of the Education Center in Snow Canyon, commercial uses requiring on-site facilities within the Reserve are not permitted.”

Disney would have to go through the St. George City permit process for Pioneer Park and Snow Canyon State Park for West Canyon Road.

Disney will provide a letter of intent and a more detailed proposal. These types of requests are best dealt with on a case by case basis. No decisions will be made by the Committee until a firm proposal is received.

**5. NEXT MEETING DATES**

**a. Next meeting date – March 3, 2011**

**6. ADJOURN**

With no further business to discuss, a motion to adjourn was made by Member McLuckie and seconded by Member Comella. The motion was carried by unanimous vote.

The meeting was adjourned at 11:00 a.m.

Minutes prepared by Kaye Reese