

WASHINGTON COUNTY HABITAT CONSERVATION PLAN TECHNICAL COMMITTEE MEETING

A meeting of the Technical Committee of the HCP was held **FEBRUARY 4, 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)
Cameron Rognan	Washington County HCP
Renee Chi	U.S. Fish and Wildlife Service (USFWS) via speaker phone

Absent and excused:

Kristen Comella	Snow Canyon State Park (SCSP)
Marshall Topham	Local biologist

Also present were:

Bob Sandberg	Washington County HCP
Brad Young	Washington County HCP
Lynne Scott	Bureau of Land Management (BLM)
Alan Gardner	Washington County Commissioner

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 9:35 A.M.

2. **APPROVAL OF MINUTES**

a. January 7, 2010

The following changes were made:

(page 3, paragraph 7, sentence 2): add a new sentence,

New: “Lynne expressed concern about bringing up the Rusty Cliffs Trail when the Human Impact Monitoring study did not show off-trail impacts.”

(page 3, paragraph 7, sentence 2): changed,

From: “Member McLuckie noted that ~~a review must be driven by~~ two things; first, ~~consider~~ the human impact monitoring and striving to reduce human impacts and promote habitat and tortoise protection, and second, to reduce redundant trails.”

To: “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.”

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

From: “He ~~also mentioned the proposed Buckskin Wash trail and possible future development.~~”

To: “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.”

(page 4, paragraph 2, sentence 3): deleted,

Deleted: “~~Lynne also expressed a concern that actions, such as closing a trail, be based on research and biological data.~~”

(page 5, paragraph 4, sentence 2): add a new sentence,

New: “Signature fence could be utilized instead of mats to provide management of these problem trail areas.”

(page 5, paragraph 2, sentence 7): add a new sentence,

New: “It is appropriate for the Technical Committee to review when it is forwarded by the appropriate land management agency.”

(page 6, paragraph 3, sentence 1): changed,

From: “Member Comella suggested removing Forage kochia from the proposed seed mix list.”

To: “Members Comella and Chi suggested removing Forage kochia from the proposed seed mix list.”

MOTION by Bob Douglas to approve the minutes of January 7, 2010 as amended.

Seconded by Renee Chi.

Discussion: None.

Vote was taken: All voted aye.

Motion passed.

3. GENERAL BUSINESS

a. Trail evaluation – Assignment #122909

Member McLuckie read Assignment #122909 to re-familiarize everyone with it. She then explained that today's task was to identify the five most impacted trails using the human impact monitoring data and a map showing the Class 4 & 5 impacts. Lynne Scott asked to regress for a minute to discuss limits of acceptable change, and referred to the draft document composed by Member McLuckie following the TC meeting of September 10, 2009 and later presented to the HCAC (Exhibit 5-d-1 HCAC – 092209). Member McLuckie explained that the draft document was distributed with a request for comments but that no comments were ever received. Lynne said the document should work in guiding recommendations to the HCAC. Furthermore, the Limits of Acceptable Change outline may have to be modified as it is put to use and the impacted trails evaluated.

Member McLuckie reviewed the September 10, 2009 TC meeting and reiterated the discussion by Dr. Pam Foti and the level 4 & 5 impacts. She stressed that if the impacts are in tortoise habitat then it rates a higher level of concern. Habitat at elevations less than 1200 meters is considered tortoise habitat. Member McLuckie explained how the flow chart is designed to work – with emphasis on resolving issues in tortoise habitat.

Members discussed applying the management actions – Tier 1-4, and that the actions may not necessarily be applied progressively. Members also discussed making the flow chart easily understandable by the public and the HCAC. The committee members further discussed the problems with the Johnson Canyon trail and the difficulties in applying severe management actions. They noted that once a trail is open it becomes very difficult to close it, even though there is clear habitat degradation. The members went on to discuss the method of making recommendations on trail management to agencies and land managers.

Bob Sandberg clarified the assignment to the Technical Committee members. The intent of the assignment is to utilize the available data to make reasonable recommendations to the HCAC and/or the applicable land managers regarding trail and recreational use. Member Douglas noted that the key is to determine if the trail impacts are in tortoise habitat, and in which zone. The members discussed the merits of this and protecting other species, e.g. Gila monsters.

Lynne Scott reiterated that the flow chart may have to be modified as it is used in trail assessments. Lynne also expressed dissatisfaction with the data organization and presentation by NAU. She prefers the way the recreational monitoring is conducted on the Arizona Strip. She explained that the class 4 & 5 impacts do not adequately show which variable(s) caused the impact so it is difficult to apply a management action. Only when the impact variable is clearly identified can a clear management action be recommended. The question became, do we keep the format in the flow chart?

Member Douglas suggested having Lynne Scott work with Dr. Foti on modifying the database to make it more accessible and provide the data in a more usable structure. Lynne stressed that the HCP needs to remain fully involved. Bob Sandberg asked if the

correct data was being collected for us, and in a usable manner. The answer is unclear because before now the data has not been applied to trail management decision-making.

Lynne distributed a map handout later designated Exhibit 3-a-1 TC – 020410. The members discussed the red dots on the exhibit which represents the class 4 & 5 impacts – although the actual type of impact is unknown. Lynne explained that the exhibit does not include the 2009 data from NAU but clearly shows the highest impact areas. Lynne listed them as: all trails in the Paradise Canyon area, Johnson Canyon, Toe trail, Pioneer Park and Pioneer Hills, Bone Wash, Elephant Arch, Dino Cliffs, and a few impacted areas on Prospector and lower Cottonwood. The members re-discussed making recommendations based on incomplete data – namely the type of trail impact.

Member Douglas suggested that the TC may have to revisit some of the impacted areas to determine the type of impact. Lynne argued that this would amount to re-monitoring what has already been monitored; the solution is more detail in the data reporting.

The members discussed a strategy to obtain the necessary data detail. They talked about approaching Dr. Foti and resolving the data detail issue. This would be up to the HCP administration. Member Rognan clarified what specifically is needed – detail on the type of impact. A subcommittee was formed to acquire the necessary detail. The subcommittee members are HCP administration and Lynne Scott.

The members talked about the two highest impacted areas – Paradise Canyon and the Bone Wash/Dino Cliffs area. They discussed emphasizing the Tier 1 Management Action – outreach and education. But, more specific data is necessary before a sound recommendation can be made. Member Douglas suggested using the flow chart, and revisiting the impacted trails as a control. Member McLuckie noted that the TC has learned the hard way that field trips are invaluable.

The committee members further discussed getting access to the database. Lynne Scott suggested that the subcommittee gain access to the database and then create a table for each trail showing the impacts. Lynne distributed a hand-drawn sample of what an individual trail table would look like. This sample was later designated Exhibit 3-a-2 TC – 020410. The subcommittee will acquire access to the data and create the table for each trail. Meanwhile, the TC is unable to move forward with the assignment until the detailed information is available.

Member Chi added that recommended management actions may be based on the level of impact to tortoise habitat. She explained that there may be differing degrees of tortoise habitat that require different management actions. Member McLuckie said that all of the highly impacted trails are in the Lowland Zone, all which is considered tortoise habitat.

The members agreed that the subcommittee will acquire access to the data and create the table for each trail. Then the TC can make a field trip to specific areas to evaluate the impacts and form a recommendation.

The committee discussed trails that have shown improvement and the possible reasons for the improvement. There was a brief discussion about Pioneer Park, the impacts there, and the proposed desert garden, and adequate trailheads and signage.

Member Rognan suggested a field trip each month to selected areas to identify problems. Member Douglas suggested Bone Wash and Dino Cliffs in March and Paradise Canyon in April. The members agreed to conduct a field trip to the Dino Cliffs area in March and to plan other field trips each month. The members also talked about involving the HCAC on selected field trips.

b. St. George City Yard entrance – boundary adjustment

Member Rogan informed the members that the expanded area for wide-turning trucks has been flagged. The members reviewed and discussed Exhibits 3-b-1 and 3-b-2 TC – 020410. Member Rognan said he has surveyed the area and found no obvious signs of tortoises, although there may be juvenile or sub-adult tortoises or Gila monsters under large rocks.

The members agreed on a field trip to the site after the regular meeting and then reconvene to discuss their findings.

c. Annual election – chairperson and vice chairperson

Bob Sandberg informed the members that there are no provisions in the HCP limiting any member of the Technical Committee from being chairperson or vice chairperson, and there is no prohibition on the HCP biologist holding either position.

Member McLuckie opened the nominations. She nominated Member Chi as chairperson and Member Rognan as vice chairperson. Member Douglas seconded the nominations. The nominations were closed. A vote was taken and all members voted for Member Chi for chairperson and Member Rognan for vice chairperson.

Chairperson-elect Chi will represent the TC at the February HCAC meeting and will provide an update on the trail assessment assignment.

4. OTHER BUSINESS

a. Middleton 24 project – update

Bob Sandberg informed the members that weather has caused intermittent interruptions to the work. Rocky Mountain Power (RMP) hoped to have all of the work completed by February 15th, but now due to weather, they may not make it. Bob further explained that

the work is totally in the Upland Zone and that no tortoise sign has been seen by JBR. Bob added that a full-time monitor may not be necessary after February 15th because all of the work is in the Upland Zone. Bob further added that the most of the power poles are in and that RMP is working on the north end that slopes towards Diamond Valley.

Member Douglas talked briefly about the process of amending the Biological Opinion (BO) if RMP does have to go beyond February 15th. Member Chi said that a small and simple amendment may be necessary. Member Douglas said that he's comfortable with making a minor amendment because the power poles are in on the east side and the activities are in the Upland Zone. Member Chi said that she will check the BO for what it says about work in the active season verses work in the inactive season.

b. Red Butte to Middleton power line upgrade - update

Bob Sandberg confirmed with Member Chi that she'd been contacted by JBR regarding amending the BO because PacifiCorp (RMP) has encountered archaeological issues. Bob added that the lines are in and clipped from the north Reserve boundary down to the Cottonwood Road. RMP is currently pulling the line northward from the power substation to the turkey farm area where the work has stopped. There are two remaining poles that need to be installed north of the old turkey farm that they cannot access because of the archaeological site. All of the work is going to be done by February 15th, except for the two remaining poles.

Member Chi and Bob Sandberg talked about amending the BO. RMP is uncertain if they'll be able to get all of the reclamation re-contouring completed by February 15th or not. Member Chi talked about being contacted by Greg Brown and discussed when to do the reseedling. Member Chi and Bob Sandberg favor reclamation seeding in the fall rather than now. Bob Sandberg talked about PacifiCorp's progress in getting the heavy work done, including removing the old wood poles. Installation of the two remaining poles near the archaeological site is necessary to complete pulling the conductor.

Member Chi said that she'll contact Greg Brown and ask for a biologist to be present while RMP is working in the area of the old turkey farm after February 15th.

c. St. George Middleton water line break – update

Member Rognan referred to Exhibits 4-c-1 & 4-c-2 TC – 020410 and summarized the incident and all of the ongoing efforts to repair the water line. He added that the City of St. George workers also plan on installing berms to redirect any future flooding. The City's intention is to be completed by the end of next week.

d. Washington City Well #3 – update

Member Rognan informed the committee that the well has been cleaned out and new filter material installed. The test pumping has resulted in about 140 gpm flow and that Washington City is hoping for up to 200 gpm. The test pumping water is being directed

into Bone Wash. Member Rognan explained that there is no damage being done by the test water as it is only flowing for about 200 meters before soaking in; in fact, recent rains caused quite a bit more disturbance than the test water.

e. Next meeting date

The members agreed that the next meeting date will be Thursday, March 4, 2010. The meeting will begin at 9:30 A.M. in the conference room at the Washington County Administration Building. A field trip to the Bone Wash/Dino Cliffs area is planned. April 8, 2010 was chosen as a tentative date for the April meeting.

The regular meeting recessed at 11:36 A.M. for the field trip to the St. George City utility yard located at approximately 620 E. Waterworks Drive.

Member McLuckie reconvened the meeting at 1:00 P.M.

Attending the field trip was: Ann McLuckie, Bob Douglas, Cameron Rognan and Bob Sandberg.

Attending the reconvened regular meeting was: Ann McLuckie, Bob Douglas, Cameron Rognan, Bob Sandberg, Brad Young, and Renee Chi via speaker phone.

b. St. George City Yard entrance – continued

Member McLuckie noted that the area involved is larger than first anticipated. She further noted that the field trip participants talked about moving the fence to the flagged line, limiting disturbance to the vegetation, preserving the mesquite and creosote, following the Utility Development Protocols (UDP) and officially changing the Reserve boundary to compensate for the adjustment.

Member McLuckie referred to Exhibit 3-b-1 TC – 020410 and described the areas where the official boundary will be changed. The green RCDR boundary line shown on the exhibit will be modified to match the RCDR boundary created by the fence along the northeastern portion of the Washington County Water Conservancy District property, and westerly, northerly and easterly of the St. George City animal shelter property. A new map showing the adjustment will be created.

Member Chi asked specifically to avoid disturbing any shelter sites or burrows in the area being relinquished. Member Rognan said that he would be present while city workers move the rocks in the course of moving the fence. The culvert will also be checked by member Rognan. Member Rognan also noted that 250 square meters of relinquished area is considerably less than what will be gained by officially moving the boundary.

Lastly, Member McLuckie said that she will write up a commentary for the HCAC and distribute to the TC members for comment.

5. **ADJOURN**

The meeting adjourned at 1:12 P.M.

Minutes prepared by Brad Young.