

WASHINGTON COUNTY HABITAT CONSERVATION PLAN TECHNICAL COMMITTEE MEETING

A meeting of the Technical Committee of the HCP was held **MAY 6, 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:

Renee Chi, Chairperson	U.S. Fish and Wildlife Service (USF&WS)
Marshall Topham	Local biologist
Tim Croissant	Bureau of Land Management (BLM)
Ann McLuckie	Utah Division of Wildlife Resources (UDWR)
Kristen Comella	Snow Canyon State Park (SCSP)
Bob Sandberg	Washington County HCP

Absent and excused:

Cameron Rognan, Vice Chairperson	Washington County HCP
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Also present were:

Brad Young	Washington County HCP
Lynne Scott	Bureau of Land Management (BLM)
Stacy Young	QRS Development

1. **CALL TO ORDER**

Chairperson Renee Chi noted there were at least four voting members present, a quorum existed and the meeting was called to order at 12:38 P.M.

2. **APPROVAL OF MINUTES**

a. April 8, 2010

The following changes were made:

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

From: "Members discussed ~~the absence of a clear correlation.~~"

To: "Members discussed a correlation, but no cause could be definitely determined."

MOTION by Ann McLuckie to approve the minutes of April 8, 2010, as amended.
Seconded by Tim Croissant.
Discussion: None.
Vote was taken: All voted aye.
Motion passed.

3. GENERAL BUSINESS

a. Trail evaluation – Assignment #122909

1. Discuss the results of the field trip to the Dino cliffs and Grapevine trails (Exhibit 3-a-1-a)

The members began the meeting day by assembling at 9:30 A.M. at the Grapevine trailhead immediately north of I-15 Exit 13. The field trip included the Dino Cliffs and Grapevine trails. Attending the field trip were Lynne Scott, Bob Sandberg, Tim Croissant, Renee Chi, Marshall Topham, and Ann McLuckie.

Chairperson Chi asked for a quick summary of the field trip. Member McLuckie made two observations. First, she noted that the trail is not as impacted as the trails in the area of The Gap – probably because of the nearby houses and the ease of use by local residents. Second, she noted that this is a good opportunity to sign the trail and clearly identify places to stay on the trail. Lynne Scott suggested a full information kiosk with all of the decals. Lynne also suggested additional revegetation in progress signs and removing the 30” signs and replacing them with better signs.

The members discussed removing the four or five steel ‘T’ posts, and they also talked about old use on the trail and that the trail actually looked pretty good. The members also discussed the Northern Arizona University human impact monitoring data that shows red dots, but there really does not seem to be significant impacts. The members talked about other users – mountain bikers and horseback riders.

2. Plan the next field trip

The next field trip will be to the Prospector trail. This trail was selected because Lynne Scott indicated that there were things that the TC should see; Lynne did not elaborate. The field trip will commence from the Cottonwood trailhead at 8:30 A.M. on June 10, 2010.

Kristen Comella joined the meeting at 12:53 P.M.

b. Discuss limits of acceptable change (Exhibit 3-b-1)

Chairperson Chi suggested that they go around the table and have each member relate what they have learned from the research that they’d done on limits of acceptable change.

Member Ann McLuckie began by saying that she'd like to be able to spend more time doing the research and that she would like to contact Elaine York at The Nature Conservancy (TNC) because Elaine may have some valuable information. Member McLuckie added that she had done some Internet research and learned that the Bob (Marshall) Wilderness in Montana made it a public process. Member McLuckie said that it may be more effective to start with the public rather than end with the public.

Member Tim Croissant talked about his experience with the National Park Service, and he suggested tying the impacts with the number of users rather than just relying on the conditions of the natural resource.

Lynne Scott said ditto to Member Croissant's suggestion. Lynne added that in the 1970's limits of acceptable change dealt with carrying capacity. Lynne stressed that it is not just the number of users but the behavior of the users. Lynne talked about the processes that she has reviewed – all of which involve the public. She added that it makes sense to tie the biology and the recreation use together.

Member Marshall Topham added that there are so many variables – it's not just the number of people and it's not just how they're behaving, and then there are the underlying climatic conditions that are always changing. Member Topham advocates involving the public.

Bob Sandberg said that limits of acceptable change tries to get at the social aspect of what experience does the user expect. The processes try to balance the expectations and the human impact. Bob talked about the challenging and difficult process of deducing a correlation or direct cause from a specific impact or classification of impacts. The correlations must be clear and presented to the public in a comprehensible and understandable manner. Bob supports fully involving the public.

Member Kristen Comella reiterated what Lynne Scott had said. Member Comella added that there is a lot of information out there that can be used to guide the process.

The members discussed how the public process could work. They generally agreed that workshops may be the best method. Lynne Scott added that she has talked with Dawna Ferris-Rowley about how this could interface with BLM's management plan development, and if the TC does not wish to tackle the whole public process, then it may somehow be included in the management plan development process.

Member McLuckie advocated using that idea. Chairperson Chi added that the public process is going to happen anyway so it would be good to use the management plan development process. Lynne Scott said that she hoped the details do not get lost in the larger management plan.

Member McLuckie commented that management actions should be based on changes to the habitat. She explained that adult tortoises are monitored and juveniles are not, so management actions must be habitat-based rather than population-based. Bob Sandberg added that it is important to be able to articulate the changes in the habitat,

and to be able to distinguish habitat changes inside the Reserve from habitat changes outside the Reserve. Member Comella talked about protecting habitat over recreation. She supports habitat-based management actions. Chairperson Chi added that the Recovery Unit people said that recovery efforts should be done every day and that no impacts should be allowed. Furthermore, the species cannot be delisted if one recovery unit is lagging behind the others.

The committee members discussed the recovery efforts and agreed that the efforts must be progressive and proactive and not just holding the line. The members also discussed the issues of habitat impacts, public support for the Reserve, support for the habitat, and recovery of the tortoise population.

The committee members agreed that the current habitat level is the limit – it cannot be allowed to get any worse and that actually, the first year of the human impact monitoring set the baseline.

Chairperson Chi noted that she did find a study that assigns a rating to impacted areas so the public can see why and how management actions are necessary.

Member Comella asked the group about the process of involving the public and how to proceed if BLM is not able to take the lead on involving the public concerning trail management during the management plan development process. Lynne Scott suggested keeping limits of acceptable change as an on-going agenda item and keep striving for progress until BLM takes over the public involvement process.

Chairperson Chi continued to discuss the study that she found. The study relates to Resource Sensitivity Analysis scoring and assigns values to impacts and what kind of things may impact the habitat. Lynne Scott suggested keeping all areas under one sensitivity level. There was some agreement but not a consensus.

The members discussed the recovery efforts and progress made since 1985. There have actually been significant improvements. Unrestricted shooting, parties, fires, dumping, and habitat degradation have all been dramatically changed. Junk removal and implementation of a trail system has improved the habitat appreciably. The members voiced continued public involvement and stressed habitat protection and improvement.

Lynne Scott commented that the NCA management plan will look beyond a sensitive wildlife species and include considerations for cultural resources, sensitive plant species, and recreation management. Member Comella posed the idea of hiring or funding a facilitator. Lynne said that is a call for Dawna Ferris-Rowley. Member McLuckie suggested inviting her to the next TC meeting.

The members asked about the Public Use Plan (PUP). Lynne said that the concepts can be adopted into the NCA management plan, but in the end there will be only one plan. The members talked about what may or could happen to the PUP, the HCP and the current BLM Resource Management Plan (RMP). They also discussed the

expiration of the incidental take permit in 2016 and possible outcomes and the future existence of the Reserve. Lynne explained that the RMP is being amended to include the management plan for the NCAs as well as wilderness areas, and a travel plan.

Chairperson Chi asked that Dawna Ferris-Rowley be invited to the next TC meeting. She also asked that each individual TC member continue to research limits of acceptable change and look for processes to share with the other members at the next meeting. The Daniel Boone process was briefly discussed.

c. Gila monster update and sightings information form (Exhibit 3-c-1)

Member McLuckie began the discussion by saying that the current Gila monster pamphlet (*Gila Monsters in Our Midst: Living With an Ancient Native of St. George*) is outdated and will be updated with a sticker showing new UDWR contact numbers. She also suggested that a 1/3-sized insert be added to the pamphlet asking for Gila monster sighting information, but she does not want to somehow encourage off-trail use or handling Gila monsters.

The members discussed the best way to gather Gila monster sighting information, and the best way to ask for the information. Member McLuckie will talk with Member Rognan about revising the sightings form. A single repository for the sighting information was discussed and the members agreed that it will be UDWR. Member McLuckie will contact Bob Douglas and acquire the sightings information that he has.

This topic will be placed on the agenda for the next TC meeting.

d. 2011 budget planning (Exhibits 3-d-1, 3-d-2 and 3-d-3)

The members discussed the timing of the TC review of the budget and getting a recommendation to the HCAC in July.

Member Comella asked Bob Sandberg about his latitude in making in-year budget adjustments. Bob said that he can make line item to line item changes but that it is difficult to add monies to the overall budget amount.

This topic will also be placed on the agenda for the next TC meeting.

Member Topham left the meeting at 1:57 P.M.

e. The Trails subdivision boundary line discrepancy (Exhibit 3-e-1-a)

There was no one present from *The Trails* subdivision to discuss this item and the Chairperson continued the item until later in the meeting.

4. OTHER BUSINESS

a. Red Butte to Middleton power line upgrade – reclamation/reseeding Fall 2010

Bob Sandberg reported that the power line upgrade is completed inside the Reserve, except for the reseeding which will be done in the fall.

b. Grapevine trailhead – update

Bob Sandberg informed the members that a decision was made to submit a grant application to Utah Parks and Recreation for funding a portion of the Confluence Park trailhead and parking development. He explained that only one application should be submitted because otherwise we'd be competing against ourselves. HCP chose Confluence Park over the Grapevine TH because there is some parking available at Grapevine and because the Confluence Park application may have a better chance in succeeding.

c. Systematic clearances – update

Member McLuckie reported that the clearance of the northern portion of the Washington City take area (Take Area #5) is nearly complete and will be mopped up next week. She will complete a field report with information on time spent, tortoise sign found, and area cleared. This report will be included in the UDWR quarterly report due to the HCAC in July.

d. Cottonwood Road fencing

Member Croissant reported that BLM is proposing to extend the fencing northwards from the water tank to the National Forest boundary. The proposed fence will be range fence with tortoise mesh. Lynne Scott asked the TC members if fencing Cottonwood Road was a higher priority than Red Cliffs Road or anywhere else. Member McLuckie said that she felt that fencing Cottonwood Road was a high priority, and that there were sections of existing fence that should be upgraded. Member McLuckie will send the USF&WS tortoise mesh fence specifications to Lynne.

Bob Sandberg noted that BLM may have the ability to write the bid request in such a manner that will allow for adding new fence, upgrading existing fence and perhaps fencing some of the west side of the road. As much as possible will be done as funding permits.

The members also discussed moving the gate on the old turkey farm road south to the intersection of the Cottonwood Road. The members agreed that this would be beneficial.

Bob Sandberg left the meeting at 2:05 P.M.

e. Snow Canyon State Park fencing

Member Comella reported that the eastern boundary fencing has been completed. A section of approximately ¼ mile was completed up to the southern boundary of *The Ledges*.

f. Toe trail maintenance

Member Comella reported that she has arranged for a prison crew to come sometime during May to work on the Toe trail. She'll have the crew for one day and maybe a second day. They will focus on the trail westerly from Snow Canyon Drive to Tuacahn Drive to begin with.

3. e. **The Trails subdivision** boundary line discrepancy (Exhibit 3-e-1-a)

Stacy Young had joined the meeting. This item is on the agenda because last month Member Comella noted that *The Trails* subdivision was for sale and that it is important that any new owners be aware of the property ownership and Red Cliffs Desert Reserve boundary issues.

The members discussed Exhibit 3-e-1-a and the 3.3 acres shown. The members also talked about another exhibit that they recall from earlier meetings that showed additional small areas that are owned by *The Trails* but is within the Reserve. Chairperson Chi recalled that the HCP states the Red Cliffs Desert Reserve boundary is an uncertain number of meters west of the west rim of Buckskin Gulch. (Note: See Section 4.3.3 of the HCP: “. . . 20 feet west of the west rim of Buckskin Canyon . . .”)

Chairperson Chi asked Stacy Young about the status of *The Trails* subdivision. He said, like everything, it is for sale. He added that the 3.3 acre piece shown in the exhibit is also for sale to the Reserve – for the right price. Chairperson Chi suggested that the HCAC evaluate the pieces of the Reserve that are within *The Trails* and determine if the purchase is a high priority. And, if it is, then proceed with a survey and an appraisal. This includes the property that crosses Buckskin Wash.

Chairperson Chi suggested that HCP administration determine the exact location of the western boundary of the Reserve, where that boundary overlaps on private property within *The Trails* subdivision, evaluate it for desirable tortoise habitat and then ask the HCAC to compare its possible purchase in relation to other priorities. Chairperson Chi noted that it is a good time to get this accomplished. Member McLuckie volunteered to discuss the issue with Bob Sandberg.

4. g. Next meeting date – June 10, 2010

Meet at the Cottonwood trailhead at 8:30 A.M. for a hike on the Prospector trail. Regular meeting will follow the field trip. Chairperson Chi will be unable to attend either event.

5. **ADJOURN**

<p><u>MOTION</u> by Kristen Comella to adjourn. <u>Vote was taken:</u> All voted aye.</p>	<p><u>Discussion:</u> None. <u>Motion passed.</u></p>
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The meeting adjourned at 2:16 P.M.

Minutes prepared by Brad Young.