

## WASHINGTON COUNTY HABITAT CONSERVATION PLAN TECHNICAL COMMITTEE MEETING

A meeting of the Technical Committee of the HCP was held May 8, 2008, at 9:30 a.m. in the conference room at the Washington County Office, 197 E. Tabernacle St.

**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:

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

Absent was:

Todd Esque	USGS Biological Resources Division
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Others present were:

Bill Mader	Washington County HCP
Lynne Scott	Bureau of Land Management (BLM)
Stacy Young	<i>The Trails</i> developer (SCAT Ltd.)
Brad Young, Recorder	Washington County HCP

### **(1) CALL TO ORDER**

It was noted there were at least four voting members present, a quorum existed and the meeting was called to order at 9:33 a.m.

### **(2) APPROVAL OF MINUTES**

a. Minutes from the meeting of April 10, 2008, were reviewed and the following changes or corrections were made:

**(page 5, paragraph 2, sentence 2):** changed,

**From:** "Renee said that there wasn't much temporary disturbance, and the mitigation exercise really can't be done yet because the biological assessment hasn't been completed and submitted."

To: “Renee said that there wasn’t much temporary disturbance, and the final mitigation acreages haven’t been determined yet because the biological assessment hasn’t been completed and submitted.”

**(page 5, paragraph 3, sentence 2):** changed,

From: “It was agreed that Mill Creek and Grapevine each need trailhead and parking areas – probably less than two acres for each.”

To: “It was discussed that Mill Creek and Grapevine each need trailhead and parking areas – probably less than two acres for each.”

**(page 5, paragraph 6, sentence 10) :** changed,

From: “Ann added that she wants to take a look at the EA because there is State land involved at the old turkey farm.”

To: “Ann added that she needs to send the EA to the State right-of-way officer in Salt Lake City so they can process their paperwork.”

There were no further changes or corrections.

**MOTION** by Renee Chi, second by Bob Douglas, to approve the minutes of the meeting of April 10, 2008, as corrected. There was no discussion. A vote was taken and the motion was unanimously passed.

### **(3) GENERAL BUSINESS**

#### **a. Assignment #010407 – Buckskin Wash Trail – Recommendation**

The committee members briefly discussed the field trip to Buckskin Wash on April 10, 2008. Renee said that she was surprised at how sensitive the area is and how much tortoise habitat there is above Buckskin Wash. She added that it raises some red flags for her as far as adding a trail in the area. Bob Douglas and Kristen agreed. Kristen said that basically, the committee is back at square one and needs to make a recommendation about fencing the boundary and allowing or not allowing a trail.

Ann McLuckie distributed Exhibit 3-a-1 TC 050808 to all of the committee members. Ann read paragraphs two, three and four of the abstract. Her point of the research is that once an area is opened to recreation the turtle population began to decline. Bob Douglas asked about the type of recreation that was allowed – controlled or uncontrolled. Ann said that the recreation was by permit, but once the permit is issued, then access to the property was unlimited. Bob asked about centralized trails. Ann said that the trails were centralized, but was uncertain about monitoring.

Kristen referred to page 1154 of the Exhibit. She read paragraph three, sentences three, four, five and seven. Kristen said the key question before the committee is to make a recommendation, for or against, a hiking only trail. She added the questions, is

it a suitable area for recreation, are we ready for it, can the recreation be controlled and can the recreation impacts to the habitat be held in check?

Bob Douglas and Ann discussed and compared the tortoise populations in Paradise Canyon and Buckskin Wash. Ann talked about the tortoise populations and declines in 2005. Ann emphasized that all of the Buckskin Wash area is considered to be in the Lowland Zone and added that tortoises use all of the area, and they use Buckskin Wash as a movement corridor. Ann talked about the die-offs that occurred in Twist Hollow and the City Creek area, but not in Buckskin Wash.

Ann suggested upgrading the existing trails that connect to *The Trails* subdivision, such as the Rusty Cliffs Trail. She proposed a trailhead with informational signs and a kiosk, and upgrading the Rusty Cliffs trail south out of *The Trails*. Ann is not in favor of a northern trail out of the subdivision because of impact to the habitat and because of the tortoise population density, instead she advocated upgrading the Rusty Cliffs Trail.

Bob Douglas talked about trails in the Bloomington area where there are Dwarf Bear Paw Poppies. Bob talked about how centralizing the recreation has been successful and that trail 'braiding' has been kept to a minimum. Bob explained how development and population growth near Buckskin Wash has the potential for significant impact. He proposed getting ahead of the recreation rather than behind it. Bob further explained that he feels that a northerly trail is warranted and that by centralizing the use there will be less negative impact. He added that a trail on the talus slope will be easier to hike so the hikers will stay on it, and down in the narrow wash, hikers will likewise be confined.

Ann said Buckskin Wash was identified as a core area in the PUP and was intended to be without recreation use.

Kristen emphasized how this assignment has been painful and how it has been discussed from every aspect. She cited Pam Foti's data that clearly shows that recreation is not being well-managed. Kristen summarized that, based on this she cannot support a trail out of the north end.

Ann asked, what is the benefit to the tortoises? She explained how, if the Rusty Cliffs Trail were upgraded, a resident in *The Trails* could use that trail. Kristen added that the Rusty Cliffs Trail could connect to the Gila Trail when the overpass is completed. Kristen asked, why add a new trail when we can't manage the trails we have now?

Marshall said the issue is, if you cannot manage a trail, then you certainly cannot manage no trail. Kristen said that fencing can be managed. Marshall said that a trail could be used as a management tool. He added that what he is hearing is that a trail is an opportunity to mismanage. Marshall, Kristen and Ann debated trail management, the impact of recreation and keeping people on the trails.

Bob Sandberg said that he has walked the area and he has reviewed past meeting minutes. He proposed moving the fence to the top of the rim in an effort to preserve the habitat. Bob mentioned the 23 acres that had been discussed in previous meetings. Kristen said that the 23-acre issue has been removed. She said that instead, there was discussion about purchasing some property in the southeast corner of the development and cost-sharing for moving the fence. Stacy said the he is unclear about what was and what wasn't agreed to. He explained that so many things have changed that he'll have to see what trails are or are not approved, then he'll figure it all out.

Bob Sandberg said that a trail five feet wide and two and a half miles long would amount to one and a half acres of impacted habitat. He added that there would be peripheral impacts and leakage to consider as well.

Renee said that Lynne Scott had brought up a good point when she asked if we are ready to manage a new trail, especially when it may have restrictions where no other trails do. Renee said that we're really not ready to manage a new trail with special seasonal conditions. She added that other problem areas need to be addressed before adding new ones.

Bob Douglas said that he believes that most recreationists want to comply, but a few rogues can intentionally put in new trails. Bob favors putting in a trail to prepare for the impending growth.

Lynne Scott asked Stacy Young about the timeline for development of *The Trails*. Stacy replied that there isn't a specific timeline. He explained that the development is market-driven. Kristen explained that Stacy had indicated that ground-breaking was about a year out and the first home completed in about a year and a half.

Marshall Topham questioned the urgency of coming to a decision. Renee summarized some of the history about how the Technical Committee has evaluated the habitat and discussed the issues.

Kristen refocused the discussion. She explained that the Technical Committee needs to a) Examine alternatives and, b) Set standards for future field trips. She added we need to learn from this assignment and develop a process to make informed recommendations. Ann said that the Technical Committee shouldn't be forced into making hasty decisions.

Ann and Bob Douglas discussed the problems of off-trail habitat degradation in the Paradise Canyon area. Ann explained that Paradise Canyon used to have an abundance of Gila monsters and tortoises, but declines have been observed.

Bill and Kristen agreed to bring the issue to a vote and present a recommendation to the HCAC – with a minority opinion if necessary.

Stacy said that perhaps recreation doesn't belong everywhere, but feels that any impact will be minimal – especially in the bottom of the wash. Stacy explained that he's willing to abide by the decision of the Technical Committee and the HCAC. He added that he was encouraged by the HCAC field trip and that they realized the trade-off between fencing the wash and allowing a hiking-only trail in the bottom of the wash.

Kristen listed the alternatives on the white board. They are shown in table form below.

Alternatives		
1	North trail (Wash likely fenced)	Seasonal closure – March 15 through June 30.
2	“Wash” trail (Wash not fenced)	Seasonal closure – March 15 through June 30 and access would need to be developed.
3	No trail (Wash likely fenced)	
All options – SE corner gains ≈ 5 acres (cost-sharing)		

Considerations:

- 1) Fencing along northern boundary of development (type, cost, who pays?)
- 2) Upgrade Rusty Cliffs trail/trailhead

Kristen summarized the agreements as she recalls them. They are: Fence to the ‘no-disturbance’ line along the southeast corner, with cost-sharing, and fence along the boundary through Buckskin Wash, or slightly west depending on fence maintenance issues.

There was discussion between Kristen, Bob Douglas and Stacy about the boundary issue. It is understood that the property boundary is the development line, but the question is whether or not there is a portion of their property in the Reserve.

Bob Douglas asked about the northern boundary of *The Trails* subdivision and the area north of that up to the south edge of *The Ledges* subdivision. Ann talked about gaps in fences in this area, and other areas and how that discussion ties into the next item on the agenda.

Kristen called for a vote on the three alternatives. Bob Douglas and Bob Sandberg voted for Alternative #2. Ann, Kristen and Renee voted for Alternative #3. Marshall abstained and explained that he has come into the middle of this and is unclear on the issues. The recommendation to the HCAC will be Alternative #3 – no trail.

Kristen emphasized the need to learn from the process of this assignment and apply that to future experiences. Renee and Ann emphasized the necessity of data collection before brainstorming and discussion.

**b. Recommend priorities to the 2008 fencing budget**

Bill started off by updating the committee members on the Red Cliffs NE fencing project.

He said that the boundary has been surveyed and HCP is in the process of taking bids for the fencing. Bill said this fencing project will be very expensive, and there isn't an estimate on it yet. Lynne told Bill that Dawna believes there should be a cultural clearance and NEPA analysis completed for the fence line.

Bill talked about the Green Springs North and Green Springs South fences, the Sandstone Mountain North, and the gap in the fence at Entrada. Bill is going to have that area surveyed to verify the Reserve boundary. Bill and Kristen talked about fencing the missing area behind the Castle Rock subdivision. Ann talked about fencing the gaps identified by UDWR employee Melissa Reitz. Melissa had discovered many gaps in the fencing throughout the Reserve. Specifics for getting that done will be discussed at future meetings. Exhibit 3-b-1 TC 050808 was distributed and discussed.

#### **(4) OTHER BUSINESS**

##### **a. Annual Wash Co/UDWR MOU**

Bill informed Ann that the annual MOU between Washington County and UDWR was on the County Commissioner's agenda on May 6. Both signed original documents were given to Ann to be forwarded to Salt Lake City for the necessary signatures.

##### **b. The Ledges clearance**

Bill related to Ann that the HCP is in the process of doing a clearance at *The Ledges*. Bill clarified that HCP is doing a Presence/Absence survey and are not finding any sign. He invited Kristen or Ann to join if they wanted to. Bill also asked Ann about getting an extension to continue this clearance. She agreed and explained that if the clearance was started before May 15<sup>th</sup>, then it could continue until May 30<sup>th</sup>. She added that the cooler temperatures this spring supports the extension.

##### **c. Translocation**

Bill said that one tortoise will be translocated on Friday morning (5/7/08). Ann will tag the tortoise this afternoon.

##### **d. Trailhead meeting**

Bill provided a brief summary of a trailheads meeting that he recently attended. Bill said that they want to get the Red Cliffs trailhead done as soon as possible; they want to get going on the Babylon trailhead; and they're going to hold off for now on the Green

Springs trailhead. Bill added that Paradise Canyon was discussed. Bill said that Jim Crisp has agreed to be the HCP Volunteer Coordinator and he's going to use volunteers to get Paradise Canyon under control.

e. **I-15 improvements**

Renee said that there will be a consultation regarding the addition of another lane on the north side of I-15 between milepost 13 and milepost 16. UDOT is going to replace the fence along that stretch. They will likely use the same T-posts, but new tortoise mesh will be installed. A presence/absence survey will be conducted and the results of that will determine if the consultation is formal or informal.

f. **Next meeting dates were set as follows:**

Thursday, June 12, 2008 @ 10:00 AM,  
Thursday, July 3, 2008.

The meeting concluded at 11:33 A.M.

Minutes prepared by Brad Young