

WASHINGTON COUNTY HABITAT CONSERVATION PLAN TECHNICAL COMMITTEE MEETING

A meeting of the Technical Committee of the HCP was held August 19, 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)
Cameron Rognan, Vice Chairperson	Washington County HCP
Tim Croissant	Bureau of Land Management (BLM)
Ann McLuckie	Utah Division of Wildlife Resources (UDWR)
Kristen Comella	Snow Canyon State Park (SCSP)
Marshall Topham	Local biologist

Also present were:

Laura Taylor	City of St. George Parks and Recreation
Bob Sandberg	HCP
Brad Young	HCP
Dawna Ferris-Rowley	BLM
Iris Picat	BLM
Lynne Scott	BLM

1. CALL TO ORDER

Chairperson Chi 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. July 1, 2010

The following changes were made:

Page 4, paragraph 2, sentence 3: change,

From: "The members discussed the ~~perceived weakness in the unclear~~ correlation between human impacts and the tortoise population."

To: “The members discussed the correlation between human impacts and the tortoise population.”

Page 4, paragraph 2, sentence 5: change,

From: “And secondly, the human impact data measures habitat degradation and ~~there is no correlation~~— we already know that off trail impacts leads to habitat degradation.”

To: “And secondly, the human impact data measures habitat degradation and we already know that off trail impacts leads to habitat degradation.”

Page 5, paragraph 2, sentence 2: change,

From: “Bob added that he has talked with Stacy Young about the property and Stacy mentioned an initial figure of \$70,000 per acre.”

To: “Bob added that he has talked with Stacy Young about the property and Stacy mentioned an initial figure of \$70,000 per acre; the undevelopable property value will likely be something less.”

Page 5, paragraph 4, sentence 4: change,

From: “The committee also ~~recommended that~~ \$2,000 be budgeted for tortoise care (line item 434) and \$7,000 for insurance on buildings and vehicles (line item 450).”

To: “The committee also approved the \$2,000 budgeted for tortoise care (line item 434) and \$7,000 for insurance on buildings and vehicles (line item 450).”

<p><u>MOTION</u> by Kristen Comella to approve the minutes as amended. <u>Seconded</u> by Ann McLuckie. <u>Discussion:</u> None. <u>Vote was taken:</u> All voted aye. <u>Motion passed.</u></p>

3. **GENERAL BUSINESS**

a. **Proposed Outdoor Learning Center** for the Hurricane Elementary School (Exhibit 3-a-1 TC – 081910)

Consideration of this agenda item was postponed until Bob Sandberg could join the meeting.

b. Proposed City Creek/Owen's Loop connector trail
(Exhibit 3-b-1-a TC – 081910)

Member Rognan began by informing the committee members that he had recently met with St. George City staff and engineers regarding the Red Hills Parkway expansion. Member Rogan explained that the shoulder parking area on the west side of the road and south of the Pioneer Hills trailhead will be eliminated so parking will likely shift to the trailhead lot. The proposal is to access the Owen's Loop trail and the City Creek trail using the existing old service roads and paths so no additional trail cutting will be necessary.

Laura Taylor, Lynne Scott, and the committee members discussed the connection route from the Pioneer Hills trailhead, and whether or not to use the existing service road(s) and/or paths, or to make a new route closer to the expanded parkway. A field trip to the area was discussed. Member McLuckie recalled a previous TC field trip to the area and said that she would research the results of that trip. The members will conduct a field trip to the general area next scheduled meeting date.

Lynne Scott, Laura Taylor, and the committee members also discussed the Red Hills Parkway expansion and fence realignment, and trail alignment in the area north of Brooks Nature Park (Cox Pond). They talked about a new stepover and possible nearby parking areas. They discussed discouraging unlawful and unsafe parking.

Marshall Topham joined the meeting at 9:59 A.M.

The members also discussed the area near Pioneer Park. This area, when the roadway expansion is complete, will include a bike path and a pedestrian underpass.

The fourth area discussed is near the south end of the Rusty Cliffs trail. The discussion was regarding the pedestrian underpass and the connection between the Rusty Cliffs trail, the City Creek trail, and the planned bike path. The members agreed to include all four areas in the field trip next meeting. The field trip will begin at 8:00 A.M. on Thursday, September 9, 2010. The members will meet at the Pioneer Hills trailhead.

Member Rognan asked about tortoise culverts under the expanded Red Hills Parkway. The members said that five culverts had already been decided upon. The members also briefly discussed the location of the pedestrian underpass near the south end of the Rusty Cliffs trail. Apparently Lori Rose and St. George City engineers made the decision on its location.

There was no further discussion or comments and the Chairperson moved the agenda.

c. Discuss limits of acceptable change (Exhibit 3-c-1 TC – 081910)

The discussion began with Dawna Ferris-Rowley distributing a handout on the planning process for developing Resource Management Plans for both NCAs. The handout was later labeled Exhibit 3-c-2 TC – 081910. Dawna talked about five components for the

plans to manage National Monuments and National Conservation Areas. The five components are:

- The plan must clearly and specifically identify the resource objects and values,
- Establish goals and objectives for each object and value,
- Identify best management practices to include mitigation measures to ensure that the objects and values are protected,
- Conduct a thorough and quantitative analysis of the effects of any proposals,
- Develop a monitoring strategy which identifies indicators of change, acceptable thresholds, methodologies, protocols, timeframes for evaluations, and whether or not desired outcomes are being achieved.

Dawna stressed that the last point is very important and that limits of acceptable change (LAC) are critical to the Resource Management Plan (RMP).

Member Chi asked about the process for incorporating the TC's recommendations into the RMP. Dawna explained that for each resource identified within the NCA there will be a range of alternatives developed to manage its use. The recommendations provided by TC will be included in the alternatives. She added that the types of uses permitted on public lands are restricted. She referred to Public Law 111-11 (Omnibus Public Land Management Act of 2009) and restated that the law requires that the resources be preserved, protected, and enhanced.

Lynne Scott asked if there will be limits of acceptable change covering all resources, or will there be limits set for each resource, e.g., cultural, native plants, etc. Dawna said that she anticipates that the TC will develop and recommend limits of acceptable change focused on the biological aspects of tortoise habitat and/or related species.

Member Chi talked about the process of involving the public. Member Comella clarified that the TC will be making biological recommendations to the BLM who will then consider incorporating the recommendations into the RMP. The public will be involved through BLM's RMP development process. Dawna and Member Comella briefly discussed using the recommendations in the management of Snow Canyon State Park (SCSP). Future use of the recommendations is unclear because SCSP relies on the Public Use Plan (PUP) and the recommendations are unknown at this time.

The members discussed a timeline within which to provide recommendations to BLM, and the level of detail that should be provided. The members agreed to provide the recommendations to BLM as soon as feasible, and to be as specific as possible.

Bob Sandberg joined the meeting at 10:30 A.M.

The members discussed the necessity of developing biological recommendations based on measurable elements. And they discussed the process of developing biologically-based limits of acceptable change recommendations and providing them to BLM. Dawna said the alternatives in the RMP proposal will include as much specificity as possible and she emphasized the necessity of envisioning desirable future conditions.

The committee members talked about the assignment (Assignment #122909) that initiated the LAC discussions, and they talked about the scope of their discussions and whether or not the discussions should be limited to recreation use on trails, or to include other aspects, e.g., impacts to native plant life. Bob Sandberg clarified that the original intent was to identify limits of acceptable change in a micro view while BLM is looking at resource management in a broader overarching view. Member Chi emphasized developing standards that will lead to and justify management actions.

Dawna, Lynne, and the committee members discussed the process of determining LAC and the various articles and papers that each member had researched. Dawna stressed the importance of staying focused on envisioning future desired conditions. And, after reviewing the research documents, the members chose one that listed a nine-step process to determine limits of acceptable change. The nine steps are:

1. Identify Area Issues and Concerns
2. Define and Describe Opportunity Classes
3. Select Indicators of Resource and Social Conditions
4. Inventory Existing Resource and Social Conditions
5. Specify Standards for Resource and Social Indicators for Each Opportunity Class
6. Identify Alternative Opportunity Class Allocations Reflecting Area Issues and Concerns and Existing Resource and Social Conditions
7. Identify Management Actions for Each Alternative
8. Evaluation and Selection of a Preferred Alternative
9. Implement Actions and Monitor Conditions

The members began with **Step 1** and listed the issues and concerns, they are: No off-trail impacts, protect tortoise habitat, minimize habitat degradation, pets on a leash, centralized trash locations to reduce raven impacts, and no new user trails.

The members discussed and listed goals and objectives. The members agreed that there is conflict between resource protection and recreation use, and that compromise may be necessary. By listing the desired conditions for resource protection and for recreation use, this will identify any conflicts and set the stage for compromise. The members made the following list.

Broad resource goals	Broad recreation goals
No off-trail impacts; users stay on designated trails	Continued recreation use/development where appropriate
No pet impacts	Maintain appropriate visitor experience
Centralized waste disposal/restrooms	Use education
No new user-created trails	Maintain existing range of uses
Healthy native plant systems; soils (presence/spread of invasives) – maintain/restore	Appropriate facility for user
No motorized habitat degradation/mortalities	
No net loss of habitat	

a. Proposed Outdoor Learning Center for the Hurricane Elementary School
(Exhibit 3-a-1 TC – 081910)

The members took a break from discussing the limits of acceptable change and began discussing this agenda item with the idea that perhaps it could be completed before taking a lunch break.

The committee members began by considering the expression, ‘virtual’ outdoor leaning center. Member McLuckie read aloud the last portion of the first paragraph of the proposal (Exhibit 3-a-1) and noted that the ‘outdoor’ experience will be in the form of field trips. Bob Sandberg clarified that there will not be any actual facility – as described in paragraphs two and three of the proposal –. The members talked about the number of students on each field trip, and Member Rogan explained that the students will have classroom learning about the Reserve before the field trip, and when they do go out they will have specific points to go to observe something special.

The members chose to return to the limits of acceptable change discussion.

c. Discuss limits of acceptable change, continued

The committee briefly discussed the criteria of **Step 2** and decided that it may not be applicable and that they may come back to it.

The members began discussing **Step 3** by talking about the indicators – the variables monitored by Dr. Pam Foti’s students at Northern Arizona University (NAU).

Member Rognan noted that the human impact monitoring (HIM) data collected by NAU is the only quantitative data available but because of the constant student turnover the data may not be 100% reliable. The members agreed and talked about using the data to trigger a closer evaluation and then use that evaluation to institute a management action.

The members talked about listing the current resource indicators monitored by NAU. Lynne Scott suggested referring to the table of variables that NAU uses. She proposed a one-page excerpt from the NAU monitoring materials. The members accepted it and it was later labeled Exhibit 3-c-3 TC – 081910.

Because Member Topham had to leave for another meeting the discussion returned to the proposed outdoor learning center.

a. Proposed Outdoor Learning Center, continued

The committee returned to this agenda item in an effort to complete it before Member Topham had to leave for another meeting.

Member Topham clarified that in the proposal there will be no facility, and there may be up to 50 students in each field trip. Bob Sandberg provided a detailed explanation of the

proposal, and he added that the 4th-grade curriculum includes the study of plants and animals and the 5th-grade curriculum includes the study of geology. These studies would be enhanced by adding a field trip to the Reserve to actually observe the various plant and animal species and geological formations. Member Comella calculated that there may be up to eight field trips per year.

The members and Lynne Scott talked about the process and approval by the land owner – BLM. It may require a use permit issued by BLM. The members discussed suggested conditions if an approval is granted.

MOTION by Kristen Comella to forward the proposal to BLM for assessment, amended as follows:

- Revise the proposal from an Outdoor Learning Center to an Outdoor Learning Experience,
- Emphasize staying on the designated trail,
- No collection of any plants, animals, or minerals,
- Pack it in, pack it out – Leave no trace,
- Provide adequate student/supervision ratio,
- A Reserve representative must be present for all field trips.

Seconded by Marshall Topham.

Discussion: Lynne Scott requested that the listed details be specified by the applicant in the proposal and submitted to BLM.

Vote was taken: All voted aye.

Motion passed.

The committee recessed for lunch at 12:17 P.M. to reconvene at 1:15 P.M.

The meeting resumed at 1:19 P.M. Present were: Renee Chi, Cameron Rognan, Tim Croissant, Ann McLuckie, Kristen Comella, Bob Sandberg, Iris Picat, and Lynne Scott.

c. Discuss limits of acceptable change, continued

The members continued discussing **Step 3**. Exhibit 3-c-3 TC – 081910 had been copied and distributed.

Member Comella reminded the members of the seven broad resource goals that had been listed, and that the resource indicators are a means to measure the goals. Member McLuckie suggested establishing study transects for plants to quantify habitat change. The members agreed that plant and soil data is lacking and should be a necessary component. The committee discussed the difference between habitat loss, and its causes, and habitat degradation. Members talked about correlation and causation. The members agreed that study transects should be permanent and should measure plants and soil.

Member Comella listed eight criteria that indicators should meet, they are:

1. Quantitative – the indicator should be measurable,
2. Reliable,
3. Cost effective,
4. Significant – conditions or features,
5. Relevant – changes that occur from human activity,
6. Sensitive – provide early warning,
7. Reflect – the condition,
8. Responsive – to management control/actions.

The members referred to Exhibit 3-c-3 and discussed the reliability of NAU measuring the variables. The members talked about setting LAC based on measurement of variables and perhaps weighting different variables to trigger different management actions.

Pets off leash were also discussed. Pets off leash can cause harm to tortoises so the group decided to include the observation in the data report. The terms *indicator* and *variable* are synonymous.

The committee talked about listing the most appropriate entity to gather or record the indicator data. Measurement of social conditions, e.g., recreation experience quality, was also discussed.

The committee moved on to **Step 4** – Inventory Existing Resource and Social Conditions. This is what the NAU HIM data provides; Step 5 is writing the standards.

Lynne Scott distributed a Natural Resources Recreation Settings document, later labeled Exhibit 3-c-4 TC – 081910, to provide an example of BLM's approach to managing recreation activities.

The members discussed measurement of biological indicators and measurement of social conditions. The members talked about setting change triggers that initiate management actions for different areas. There does not seem to be a universal change indicator. The merits of adaptive management was talked about, and the necessity of retaining flexibility. The members' discussion focused on setting goals, and LAC, with a mind to future desirable conditions. They considered the current condition of various areas, such as Paradise Canyon in general, as opposed to a pristine area. The members discussed setting limits in certain areas, e.g., critical tortoise habitat, based on habitat change or recreational experience. Members talked about the Upland Zone/Lowland Zone designations and tortoises and tortoise habitat. The discussion continued on setting and measuring different standards for different areas, and how to universally, or specifically, record indicator values.

A multiplication system similar to the MOG model was discussed. Member Rogan suggested that when a threshold is reached it triggers an evaluation or a decision tree that may lead to a management action. The members talked about running a test scenario in a critical area to evaluate LAC. The members agreed on using the Paradise Rim trail for a test scenario. The members agreed that Member Rogan will provide a progress report to the HCAC.

4. OTHER BUSINESS

a. Reclamation polygon monitoring report – B. Sandberg

Bob Sandberg re-familiarized the committee members with the restoration polygon monitoring being done by Colorado Plateau Associates. Bob said, according to Del Despain, the good news is that vegetation is returning, but it is difficult to determine the success because native seed was used. It is unclear if the revegetation is due to the reseeding efforts or to natural revegetation. Desert marigold is the exception. There is one more year to go on the monitoring project.

b. Update on the mining road disturbance in Zone 4

Bob Sandberg said that BLM law enforcement has worked with the US Attorney's office and citations have been issued to the alleged person responsible – who has an August 30th court date. Bob added that HCP had received a letter yesterday from him and the letter claims that there has been a *taking* of his mining rights and wants to be compensated. Bob is consulting with BLM and the Washington County Attorney's Office regarding the letter and a response.

c. Discuss a future field trip

The members previously agreed to conduct a field trip to the Red Hills Parkway next meeting. The field trip will begin at 8:00 A.M. on Thursday, September 9, 2010. The members will meet at the Pioneer Hills trailhead.

d. PacifiCorp reclamation seed mix

Bob Sandberg distributed a modified proposed seed mix for the PacifiCorp powerline. The modified seed list, later labeled Exhibit 4-d-1 TC - 081910, was accompanied by the original proposed seed mix, labeled Exhibit 4-d-2 TC - 081910.

Bob asked the members for feedback on the modified proposed seed mix, especially because some of the seed may not be available. The California poppy was discussed. Bob explained that it is intended to stabilize the soil, compete with cheatgrass, and provide food for tortoises. The committee members approved the seed list.

The committee talked about the pounds (17) per acre and that undesirable over-germination may result. Again, the committee expressed comfort with the list.

e. Red Cliffs fire – August 2, 2010

Member Croissant distributed a handout regarding the Red Cliffs fire that occurred about two weeks ago. The handout, later labeled Exhibit 4-e-1 TC – 081910, consists of a two-page report and a map of the fire area.

Member Croissant explained that a spark from sheet metal cutting caused the fire. Leeds Area Fire Department responded and had the fire under control in a couple of hours. There was some minor habitat damage. Dawna Ferris-Rowley is considering taking some kind of action against the contractor.

There were no questions or comments and the chairperson moved the agenda.

6. ADJOURN

MOTION by Ann McLuckie to adjourn the meeting.

Seconded by Cameron Rognan.

Discussion: None.

Vote was taken: All voted aye.

Motion passed.

The meeting was adjourned at 3:07 P.M.

Minutes prepared by Brad Young.