



Sky and the Johnson Canyon routes. Member Comella added that the canyoneering routes would be approved, if the Technical Committee was comfortable with them, under the following provisions:

- Users will operate under a permit system,
- Users will be provided a high-quality aerial photo showing the route with GPS coordinates,
- Any special equipment will be defined and described as necessary,
- A difficulty rating will be assigned, and
- The route will undergo a one-year assessment period – most likely January 2010 to January 2011.
- The Island in the Sky route will be open year around and the Johnson Canyon route will be open November 1 through March 14.

The committee members discussed possible impacts to nesting raptors. The difference between canyoneering and rock climbing was also talked about. They decided to closely monitor for any impacts and adjust the closure as necessary. A closure at the end of February was considered. The members agreed on a seasonal closure beginning March 15 and ending October 31 with a provision that it be carefully monitored.

It was also noted that access to the Johnson Canyon route depends on the Gila Trail being extended. Member Comella further noted that continued authorized access to this route will depend on the number of permits issued, compliance to the provisions and any necessary search and rescue events. Member McLuckie noted that impact to tortoises will be minimal because the upper area is not principally tortoise habitat. She explained that Johnson Canyon is high in elevation, it is at the northern limits of tortoise habitat, there is minimal tortoise sign and access is gained from the Gila Trail.

Members discussed how this activity (canyoneering) is included in the Public Use Plan (PUP). Members questioned if this issue needs to be re-presented to the HCAC. Member McLuckie will do some research in the Habitat Conservation Plan to assure consistency. Member McLuckie noted that according to the PUP, if there is no impact to tortoises then it is an administrative determination and an amendment is not required.

Member Topham asked about maintaining consistency with, or if necessary, amending the Snow Canyon Management Plan. Member Comella replied that the Plan is due to be rewritten in 2010.

The difference between a *trail* and a *route* was re-discussed. Member Douglas suggested that the HCAC be given the opportunity to decide if the PUP needs to be amended to include “canyoneering routes.” Member McLuckie volunteered to compose a synopsis and present it to the HCAC at their September meeting.

**MOTION** by Bob Sandberg to authorize the two canyoneering routes, Johnson Canyon and Island in the Sky on an experimental basis, with the provision that Johnson Canyon access be dependent on the Gila Trail and in conformance with the established seasonal closure, and the Island in the Sky route available year around; and operated under a permit system and evaluated at the end of a year's period.

Seconded by Renee Chi.

Discussion: None.

Vote was taken: All voted aye.

Motion passed.

- b.** Discuss the results of the Pioneer Park field trip to review garden development and trail routes.

Member McLuckie reviewed the field trip to the Pioneer Park area where they met with Mark Goble from the City of Saint George. After reviewing the proposed trail route(s) the members were not as concerned. The members recommended approval of the plans with the following provisions:

- Move the southern overlook trail as far west as possible, to keep people away from sensitive desert tortoise habitat (referred to as the "bowl").
- Reduce multiple entrances to the southern overlook trail to a single entrance to reduce trail redundancy and impacts on tortoise habitat.
- Provide signature fence (rail/post fence) to keep people on established trails.
- Recommend one TC member on site during final alignment of the trail.

Member Topham advocated a quality educational kiosk or display to provide meaningful education to the visitors to the garden area. Committee members also suggested that someone from the Utah Native Plant Society and the Washington County School District participate in the development of the park to increase the educational potential of the project.

Member Chi asked about the proposed permanent amphitheater. The members clearly oppose the permanent amphitheater concept. This needs to be reiterated to the garden planners.

Member McLuckie volunteered to compose a synopsis of the committee's recommendations and distribute it to the other members for their review (see Exhibit 3-b-1 TC – 082009).

- c.** Continue development of the Habitat Management Plan and scope of work projects – greenstripping.

Member McLuckie told the committee members that Vicki Tyler has made considerable progress in composing the proposed action. Member McLuckie added that stimulus monies will be used for the projects and that the state BLM office will be responsible for having the Environmental Assessment (EA) written. Member McLuckie also added that

restoration areas on state lands will be removed from the proposed action. Member McLuckie further explained that *greenstripping* should more appropriately be termed *fuel breaks*. Member Douglas clarified that green strips are a type of fuel break, but not all fuel breaks are green strips. The committee members also discussed chemical fuel breaks (areas treated chemically to reduce fuels) and fuel breaks created by removing non-native invasive plant species.

The committee members discussed prioritizing fuel breaks, green strips, restoration plots and research plots. The members agreed that the research plots will likely contain some non-native plant species. The members expressed concern about continuing with restoration plots, green strips or research plots when it is evident that they are not successful.

The members discussed adding a stipulation in the EA that ground-disturbing activities will, or should be, during the tortoise inactive season. Minimizing any impact to tortoises was emphasized. The members discussed experimenting with plant species to determine when it is best to plant them and avoid any impact to tortoises. The members agreed to work on the stipulations to be added to the EA.

- d. Discuss the restoration polygon monitoring by Colorado Plateau Associates.

Member Sandberg talked about the eight restoration polygons seeded by JBR in 2007. He explained that the first year of monitoring by Colorado Plateau Associates has been completed. Member Sandberg summarized the results of the reseeded areas thus far as less than successful, but the seed was hand-buried and may yet grow.

The committee members were provided with an electronic copy of the first year monitoring reports – 58 restoration plot photos taken in 2009, 2009 Restoration Monitoring Report.pdf, and Section3 Summary Tables.pdf.

- e. Zone 5 Virtual Learning Project – Dan Zaleski – status.

Member Sandberg said that he has talked with Dan Zaleski, but Dan has not yet provided a detail of the proposed project. Member Sandberg added that Dan's intent is to conduct three or four field trips during the school year, just with his class students. What Mr. Zaleski is trying to accomplish is supported, but details are necessary.

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

- a. Washington City Well #3 repair.

Member Sandberg informed the committee members that Lester Dalton has indicated the Well #3 requires major work. Mr. Dalton wished to begin work on the well by November 1<sup>st</sup> so the work can be completed by February 15<sup>th</sup>. No additional disturbance is anticipated, but vehicle and equipment ingress and egress is necessary. November 1 to December 1 is still considered active season and the protocols must be followed.

**b. Proposed budget item - \$50,000.00 for White Dome fencing.**

Member Sandberg talked about Elaine York's request for \$50,000.00 in Other Species funds to complete the necessary fencing of the White Dome. Member Sandberg told the committee members that the HCAC has directed him to see if funding is available. The Technical Committee members agreed that the project is worthwhile and fencing is critical to protect the habitat. Member Sandberg will present a proposal to the HCAC at their meeting on August 25, 2009.

**c. Human impact monitoring results.**

Member Comella talked about a meeting she and Dave Kiel had with the local spas (Red Mountain, Green Valley and Fitness Ridge) and that Dave gave her a map that shows the results of the 2009 Human Impact Monitoring and the Class 4 and 5 recreational impacts. This will be discussed further at the September 10<sup>th</sup> meeting.

**d. Fire access maps.**

Member Sandberg informed the committee members that the revised fire access maps have been distributed to fire agencies and chiefs, except Ivins, and the map may be digitally uploaded so crews can have electronic access in the fire vehicles. Acquiring the digital map and getting it uploaded is still in progress.

**e. Next meeting date.**

The next TC meeting was set for Tuesday, September 10, 2009. The meeting will be held in the Washington County Administration Conference Room, 197 E. Tabernacle, Saint George, Utah.

**f. Discuss meeting dates in October and November.**

The committee members discussed meeting dates in October and November. They set those dates as October 13 and November 19, 2009.

**5. ADJOURN**

There was no other business to discuss.

The meeting adjourned at 3:25 P.M.

Minutes prepared by Brad Young.