

## **WASHINGTON COUNTY HABITAT CONSERVATION PLAN TECHNICAL COMMITTEE MEETING**

A meeting of the Technical Committee of the HCP was held **October 7, 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:

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)
Renee Chi, Chairperson (via speaker phone)	U.S. Fish and Wildlife Service (USF&WS)

Absent and excused was:

Marshall Topham	Local biologist
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Also present were:

Bob Sandberg	HCP
Brad Young	HCP
Lynne Scott	BLM
Iris Picat	BLM

### **1. CALL TO ORDER**

Vice Chairperson Rognan noted there were at least four voting members present and a quorum existed. The quorum consisted of Members Rognan, Croissant, McLuckie and Comella. Vice Chairperson Rognan called the meeting to order at 9:21 A.M. Chairperson Chi joined the meeting via speaker phone at 9:43 A.M.

### **2. APPROVAL OF MINUTES**

#### **a. September 9, 2010**

The following changes were made:

**Page 2, paragraph 1, sentence 2:** changed,

From: “Those attending the field trip were: Renee Chi, Ann McLuckie, Kristen Comella, Tem Croissant, and Cameron Rognan.”

To: “Those attending the field trip were: Renee Chi, Ann McLuckie, Kristen Comella, Tim Croissant, and Cameron Rognan.”

**Page 3, paragraph 2, sentence 1:** changed,

From: “The field trip also included visits to Brook’s Nature ~~Park (Cox Pond)~~, the Owen’s Loop trail, and the City Creek trail.”

To: “The field trip also included visits to Brook’s Nature trail, the Owen’s Loop trail, and the City Creek trail.”

**Page 3, paragraph 3, sentence 3:** changed,

From: “The members did agree that the connection to the City Creek and Owen’s Loop trail would not use the power line route.”

To: “The members did agree that the connection to the City Creek and Owen’s Loop trail would not use the proposed power line route.”

**Page 5, paragraph 1, sentence 2:** changed,

From: “She said that last year there were two tortoises (#0323 & #0063) collected from Zone 4 but both died at the TCF before they could be shipped to Dr. John Roberts at the ~~Alabama State~~ Diagnostics Laboratory.”

To: “She said that last year there were two tortoises (#0323 & #0063) collected from Zone 4 but both died at the TCF before they could be shipped to Dr. John Roberts at the Thompson Bishop Sparks Diagnostics Laboratory.”

**Page 5, paragraph 2, sentence 4:** changed,

From: “Member Rognan also noted that one of the tortoises collected from Zone 4, the one that was the ~~sickest~~ and most emaciated, was unmarked.”

To: “Member Rognan also noted that one of the tortoises collected from Zone 4, the one that was the most emaciated, was unmarked.”

**Page 5, paragraph 2, sentence 5:** changed,

From: “The members briefly discussed the tortoise population in Zone 4—~~native and non-native.~~”

To: “The members briefly discussed the tortoise population in Zone 4.”

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

### **3. GENERAL BUSINESS**

#### **a. Discuss trail connections pursuant to the Red Hills Parkway widening project**

The discussion began with Member McLuckie distributing a copy of the Technical Committee Report on Assignment #022404 (Exhibit 3-a-1 TC – 100710) which was originally submitted to the HCAC on April 28, 2004 as Attachment B. Member McLuckie read the fourth full paragraph into the record.

##### Tortoise Fence at Human Culvert and Utility Road at Relocated Parking Area

The TC recommended that the tortoise fence NOT be moved from the human culvert to the parking area. In addition, the TC recommended that there would be no utility access at the relocated parking area. Tortoise habitat in the area surrounding the relocated parking lot is high quality tortoise habitat. The area is heterogeneous, mosaic habitat and includes sandstone slabs, minor washes, and tortoise dens. The following recommendations were made to minimize biological impacts in this important tortoise area:

- Due to biological concerns, a multi-use gravel trail should be placed adjacent to Skyline Drive, between the tortoise fence and the paved road. The trail should be of a substrate that can accommodate multiple users (e.g., trail should not be paved).

The committee members referred to Exhibit 3-a-2 TC – 090910 and began discussing the trail route from the Pioneer Hills TH northward to the pedestrian underpass. Lynne Scott mentioned the property ownership issue and suggested that an easement may be necessary because the proposed trail between the tortoise fence and the roadway is likely within the right of way. The members discussed the safety distance required from the widened roadway to the proposed trail. Bob Sandberg asked about who may need to pay for the trail construction – UDOT or St. George City; and if it is St. George City is it the Parks Department or whom? Lynne Scott suggested that Laura Taylor be contacted.

Member McLuckie suggested retaining the TC recommendation made in 2004.

**MOTION** by Kristen Comella to carry forth with the TC recommendation from March 23, 2004 with creating a graveled access trail in the right of way, given that we work with the appropriate planners with St. George City and UDOT.

Seconded by Ann McLuckie.

Discussion: Bob Sandberg asked if the committee should have an Option B in case there is some kind of obstacle. Members Comella and McLuckie agreed that the committee should not, but will instead deal with whatever obstacle arises.

Vote was taken: All voted aye.

Motion passed.

The members next discussed the connection to the Owens Loop and City Creek trails. The connection will not be along the power line but will follow the bike path southerly and then connect to Owens Loop. Protection of cryptobiotic soils was cited. The members discussed the merits of options; they did agree that no parking would be permitted along the west side of the roadway south of the Pioneer Hills TH.

**MOTION** by Cameron Rognan to have the existing connector trail from City Creek tie into the paved bike trail as close as possible to the existing stepover.

Seconded by Kristen Comella.

Discussion: None.

Vote was taken: All voted aye.

Motion passed.

The members talked about making a motion on the route to connect the Rusty Cliffs trail with City Creek.

**MOTION** by Kristen Comella to approve the Rusty Cliffs connector off of the paved trail as proposed.

Seconded by Ann McLuckie.

Discussion: None.

Vote was taken: All voted aye.

Motion passed.

Chairperson Renee Chi joined the meeting by cell phone speaker at 9:43 A.M.

The members discussed proposed access points. Member Rognan said that the first access point would be at the Brooks Nature Pond intersection with Owens Loop. A second access point was described near the roadway shoulder where users are accessing City Creek trail. The bike trail will go right next to the trail at those two points. The issue about providing or not providing a stepover at the second location was debated.

Member McLuckie reiterated the issues. She said that one issue is the illegal trail near the Brooks Nature Pond trail and that installing an access point nearby would encourage use of the illegal trail. Her other point is that by installing an access point visible

from the road it may encourage illegal and unsafe parking. Lynne Scott pointed out that there are two alternate routes to the Owens Loop trail via the Cox Pond (Brooks Nature Park) connection and from Pioneer Park.

Members discussed the options and possible routes to access the hiking trails and the bike paths. The members discussed the merits of installing an access point at this time, or waiting to see the use patterns, or not installing one at all. It may be easier to put it in later rather than put it in now, have problems, and then try to remove it. Members talked about users taking the path of least resistance and use of the illegal trails. They also considered options for hikers and for bikers taking into account terrain and topography. They considered a barrier fence to prohibit illegal access. Ultimately it may be up to BLM because the access point location discussed is on BLM property. Member Croissant noted that it may be less difficult to not put in an access point and wait until the roadway is filled and completed and then consider it again. The committee members agreed that they could go either way on this access point.

**MOTION** by Ann McLuckie to deny installation of an access point at this time, but remain open to reconsidering the decision after the roadway widening has been completed and the bike path installed.

Renee Chi asked for clarification of the location discussed. It is the last location that the committee stopped at during the field trip on September 9, 2010.

Lynne Scott suggested that the motion be amended to strike the, "open to reconsidering the decision, to "will reconsider the decision".

Ann McLuckie amended the motion to: Deny installation of an access point at this time, but will reconsider the decision after the roadway widening has been completed and the bike path installed.

Seconded by Renee Chi.

Discussion:

Vote was taken: All voted aye, except Member Croissant who had temporarily stepped out of the meeting.

Motion passed.

#### **b. Zone 4 URTD and necropsies update**

Member McLuckie said that all six tortoises have been sent to Dr. John Roberts. The tortoises were shipped between August 30<sup>th</sup> and September 27<sup>th</sup>. Member McLuckie further reported that Dr. Roberts has not completed all of the analysis but preliminary results indicate that all tortoises processed so far were infected with pin worms, had a runny nose, and all were positive for mycoplasma agassizii. One of the tortoises tested was also positive for mycoplasma testudineum. Member McLuckie graphically described some of the symptoms and conditions suffered by the tortoises, including fistulas and the respiratory disease, as reported by Dr. Roberts. Member McLuckie added that Dr. Roberts will complete a pathology workup on the blood chemistry and continue with examination and analysis of the organs. Bob Sandberg asked if there were any surprising or unexpected results. Member McLuckie said there were not.

Member McLuckie explained that the upper respiratory tract disease (URTD) can make the tortoise vulnerable to other infections and viruses, such as the pin worms; the tortoises often die from the secondary infection or disease. Member Rognan asked about the location where the tortoises processed so far came from. Member McLuckie explained that of the six tortoises shipped for necropsy, four were *take* animals from Zone 4 and two were Reserve animals; of those two, one was an unmarked animal from Zone 4 and the other was from Zone 3. The Zone 3 animal tested positive for mycoplasma agassizii and mycoplasma testudineum.

Member McLuckie talked about the concentration of tortoises near Babylon Road that show clinical signs of URTD and how they appear to be clustered. The unmarked tortoise was taken from the cluster area.

Member Rognan asked when the final test results may be available. Member McLuckie said hopefully by the time of next year's Desert Tortoise Council symposium. Bob Sandberg confirmed with Member McLuckie that she would be able to present at the HCAC meeting on October 19, 2010.

There were no other questions or comments and Vice Chairperson Rognan moved the agenda.

**c. Discuss a possible field trip to the Red Rocks NCA**

Member Rognan explained that Lynne Scott had recently visited the Red Rocks NCA (RRNCA) and found that they may have some information useful for the RCDR.

Lynne Scott said that the RRNCA used funds from mandated land sales for a new visitor center and scenic drive. Lynne suggested a field trip to the RRNCA but added that they seasonally close at the end of September. The entrance fee is \$7.00 but a federal recreation pass is accepted. Lynne distributed informational brochures from the RRNCA and photos from her recent visit. Lynne talked about the location and its vicinity to Summerlin, NV (a suburb of Las Vegas).

Lynne described the scenic drive and the outback country; she showed photographs and described the visitor center, including the display area for roving displays. She added that the bulk of the money went into outside development of different themes – earth, air, etc. She reported on the kid-friendly area and the vista area. Lynne further added that the visitor center has just recently been completed. The highpoint was the outdoor area for live desert tortoises. The committee members discussed the seasonal closure from September 30 to April 1.

Lynne talked about the five different brochures they have for specific subjects – birds, cultural history, geology, mammals, and wild horses.

Lynne and the members discussed a possible Red Cliffs interpretive center, its use, funding, location, and participants – BLM, Forest Service, Fish and Wildlife Service, BIA, and USGS.

The members agreed to have this item on the agenda for the March 2011 TC meeting and plan for a possible field trip to the RRNCA in April. Member McLuckie asked about a special tour being arranged through the RRNCA administrative staff. Chairperson Chi volunteered to contact the Fish & Wildlife Service office in Las Vegas, which is shared with BLM, and see if a special tour could be arranged. Member Rognan will recontact the TC members and see if something can be arranged.

The committee members talked about how the RRNCA manages their visitor impacts and their limits of acceptable change in an effort to preserve, protect, enhance, and restore habitat.

There were no other questions or comments and Vice Chairperson Rognan moved the agenda.

**4. OTHER BUSINESS**

None.

**5. NEXT MEETING DATES**

a. Thursday, November 18, 2010 beginning at 9:30 A.M.

b. Thursday, December 9, 2010

**6. ADJOURN**

The meeting was adjourned at 11:48 A.M. for a field trip to Zone 4. Attending the field trip were Cameron Rognan, Tim Croissant, Ann McLuckie, Bob Sandberg, Lynne Scott, and Iris Picat.

Minutes prepared by Brad Young.