

WASHINGTON COUNTY HABITAT CONSERVATION PLAN TECHNICAL COMMITTEE MEETING

A meeting of the Technical Committee of the HCP was held **OCTOBER 9, 2008**, in the conference room at the Washington County Administration Building, 197 E. Tabernacle.

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)
Bob Douglas	Bureau of Land Management (BLM)
Ann McLuckie	Utah Division of Wildlife Resources (UDWR)
Bob Sandberg	Washington County HCP
Marshall Topham	Local Biologist

Members absent were:

Renee Chi	U.S. Fish and Wildlife Service (USFWS)
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Others present were:

Brad Young	Washington County HCP
Joe Allen	Rock climber
Chris Blake	HCAC member
Lynne Scott	Bureau of Land Management (BLM)
Chuck Gillette	Ivins City Engineer
Stacy Young	<i>The Trails</i> development (SCAT Ltd.)

1. **CALL TO ORDER**

Chairperson Kristen Comella noted that there were at least four voting members present, a quorum existed and the meeting was called to order at 9:36 A.M.

2. **APPROVAL OF MINUTES**

a. Minutes from the meeting of September 11, 2008

The following changes were made:

(page 5, paragraph 8, bullet 5, sentence 2): changed,
From: “Ann stressed that if the reserve is changed, the biological impact must be considered, and there must be no loss of biological value.”

To: “Ann stressed that if the reserve boundary is changed, the biological impact must be considered, and there must be no loss of biological value.”

(page 5, paragraph 8, bullet 7, sentence 1): changed,
From: “Gain/Loss: There is a gain in that fencing will be constructed.”

To: “Gain/Loss: There is a gain in that tortoise fencing will be constructed.”

(page 8, paragraph 3, sentence 5): changed,
From: “The poles will then be cut into small, manageable sections.”

To: “The poles will then be cut into small, manageable sections.”

(page 8, paragraph 4, sentence 3): changed,
From: “Bob Sandberg indicated that the city is willing to ~~contact~~ JBR.”

To: “Bob Sandberg indicated that the city is willing to contract with JBR.”

MOTION by Bob Sandberg to approve the minutes of September 11, 2008, as amended.

Seconded by Bob Douglas.

Discussion: None.

Vote was taken: All voted aye.

Motion passed.

3. **GENERAL BUSINESS**

- a. **Buckskin Wash Trail** – Explore any new options or suggestions and consider a field trip.

Stacy Young offered a proposal – that being something imbedded in the Memorandum of Understanding that was being worked on – to create a trial trail to evaluate trail use. Stacy explained that *The Trails* will not be developed for some time due to the current economic climate. He suggested a field trip to evaluate the property proposed for donation to the reserve.

Kristen asked for a specific proposal. Stacy proposed a trial trail to evaluate use over a one to two-year period. Kristen reminded everyone that there is no current assignment to the Technical Committee (TC) because the TC has made a *no trail* recommendation to the HCAC and the HCAC has tabled the issue.

Bob Douglas summarized the options:

1. Upper trail,
2. Lower trail, and
3. No trail.

Bob added that there had been two votes for a lower trail.

Stacy suggested a *soft* trail – one that is provisional and evaluated for use or non-use. Bob Sandberg clarified Stacy’s suggestion – define a trail and then evaluate its use and any off-trail use and if there are negative impacts, then scrub it. Stacy asked for an 18-month to two-year trial period. Bob Douglas asked if the trial trail were scrubbed, would that impact the land donation? Stacy said, “Essentially, yes.” Bob Douglas suggested a longer trial period of five to six years. Lynne Scott said that a new trail would require an Environmental Assessment (EA), and added that cultural sites must be considered.

The committee members discussed the current economic climate, future development of *The Trails* and potential use of Buckskin Wash by the public at large and/or residents of *The Trails*.

Lynne asked about surveying the area for tortoise dens and cultural resources because the addition of the donated property to the reserve is important. Ann said the tortoise population in that area has been studied.

Chris Blake suggested that Stacy come back in February or March after the HCAC has made improvements in recreation and trail management.

The members decided to delay a field trip until December or January.

b. Assignment #051608 – Ivins Detention Dam – Status and review.

Chuck Gillette distributed a draft MOU and map (Exhibit 3-b-1 TC – 100908) showing proposed properties for mitigation of the permanent and temporary disturbances.

Chuck and the committee members thoroughly reviewed the draft MOU and its conditions and provisions. Maintenance of the fence was discussed, but there was no decision regarding ultimate responsibility for long-term maintenance and repair. The 6.12 acres being donated to the reserve must be surveyed but not appraised.

Property title transfer was discussed. Chris Blake suggested that only a boundary change is needed to include the acreage in the reserve – property ownership need not change.

Chuck brought up the point that the City of St. George is exchanging land ownership inside the reserve to mitigate impact at the Bluff Street/Snow Canyon Parkway intersection and why couldn’t that be the same as this case. His question was referred to the USF&WS.

Chuck added that placing the fence to include property that makes it defacto part of the reserve makes sense.

Ann asked that the MOU include a provision requiring Ivins City employees and contractors who will be performing maintenance inside the reserve attend the tortoise awareness training with an annual refresher course.

Kristen summarized the high points of the proposed MOU:

1. 6.12 acres will be included into the reserve. In this case a boundary adjustment can be made without a property ownership transfer.
2. Install fencing with tortoise mesh according to USF&WS standards. Cost sharing of 50% must be approved by the HCAC.
3. The protocols listed in Exhibit B (page 3) of Exhibit 3-b-1 TC – 100908 must comply with the current Utility Development Protocols (UDP).
(A copy of the current UDP will be sent to all TC members and to Chuck Gillette and David Glenn.)
There was discussion about applying the UDP in the defacto area. The members agreed that the UDP will be applied inside the fenced area.
There was also discussion about costs associated with complying with the UDP. Chuck made it clear that Ivins City wants to avoid any additional costs. He was given the option of seeking reimbursement through the HCAC.
4. All tortoise injuries or fatalities will be reported to the HCP administration.
5. Tortoise awareness training with annual refresher is required for city employees and contractors working within the reserve.
6. Maintenance roads along the dike will be added to the UDP service road map. This will be the responsibility of the HCP administration.

The Technical Committee will make a recommendation regarding the mitigation and MOU at the next HCAC meeting.

- d. Assignment #092308A** – Consider biological impacts of permitting trail improvement and rock climbing at *Bluff Street Cracks*.

Kristen began by reading the assignment. Joe Allen then presented a plat map showing property ownership in the area, T42S R16 W Sec 24 (Exhibit 3-d-1 TC – 100908). He proposed allowing trail improvements on City of St. George property leading to the bluff, and to add high-density climbing to the Public Use Plan (PUP). The area is accessed from the very north end of 400 W. There is uncertainty regarding the exact location of property and reserve boundary lines.

Bob Sandberg had two additional exhibits, both from BLM. The first is an aerial map showing property ownership and the second (Exhibit 3-d-2 TC – 100908) is a copy of the pages from Todd Goss' book showing the six routes at the Bluff Street Cracks (aka Diagonal Street Cliffs).

Kristen commented that all technical rock climbing in the reserve, except Turtle Wall, fall under the Snow Canyon Climbing Management Plan. The *Bluff Street Cracks*, and any others not specified, are not included so members need to think about how best to manage new and existing climbing routes.

The meeting recessed at 11:34 A.M. while a field trip was taken to the *Bluff Street Cracks*. Participating in the field trip were Bob Sandberg, Marshall Topham, Bob Douglas, Ann McLuckie, Kristen Comella and Joe Allen.

The meeting resumed at 1:08 P.M. at the HCP office. Attending this session were Ann McLuckie, Bob Sandberg, Kristen Comella, Marshall Topham, Bob Douglas and Brad Young.

Kristen asked if this issue is being presented as adaptive management, was it overlooked in the PUP process or did the property come into the reserve afterwards. The members discussed property ownership and if the parking area, trail and climbing routes are actually in the reserve.

The members discussed the PUP and the Snow Canyon Climbing Management Plan. They also discussed referring the issue to the St. George City Leisure Services Department. The location of the reserve boundary remains uncertain. Is it along the top of the cliffs, or at the bottom?

This item was continued to the next TC meeting (November 13, 2008).

c. Assignment #090408 – Frank Jackson trespass – Status.

Bob Sandberg told the members that Kathy Abbott had said that any trespass must be resolved according to the Resource Management Plan – either by removing the trespass or by a land exchange. When an exchange can be accomplished is a significant question. Kathy Abbott has met with Larry Blake and Frank Jackson. Blake and Jackson are having the parcels surveyed and applying to BLM for an exchange.

No action by the Technical Committee is required at this time.

e. Assignment #092308B – Work with State Parks in the planning process for an education facility and expanded parking.

Kristen asked that this item be continued to the December meeting or later. Because this is an education center, Marshall asked that the Washington County School District and the Dixie State College be considered stakeholders.

f. Develop a Fire Management Plan for the reserve.

Bob Sandberg distributed Exhibit 3-f-1 TC – 100908 which is the cover page and pages 7, 16, 17, 49, and 82 of the BLM's Programmatic Wildland Fire Emergency Stabilization and Rehabilitation Plan. Bob explained that the Dixie office (St. George Field Office) had composed the plan, which includes an EA, for fire management and habitat rehabilitation in this area, including BLM lands within the Red Cliffs Desert Reserve. Bob Douglas agreed and added that using the existing framework can save a lot of time, especially if it comes to writing a separate EA.

The committee members discussed the Mohave Initiative and their goals and objectives.

Kristen summarized the committee's objectives:

1. Protect unburned areas
2. Restoration
3. Augmentation
4. Monitoring and assessment
5. Suppression

The members discussed Objective 1 and action items were listed:

Obj. 1: Protect Unburned Habitat

Action Items:

- 1A. Treat (remove weeds, etc.) road sides – mow, graze, spray
Priority Areas: Cottonwood Rd, SR -18, I-15, Red Hills Parkway, Tuacahn Dr.
Partners: UDOT, Ivins, St. George
- 1B. Establish/maintain firebreaks in priority areas
 - Existing rds/trails – chemicals*, mowing, grazing * Plateau®, Glyphosate
 - Green strips – non-persistent species; kochiaPriority Areas:
- 1C. Regulations/Education
 - “Smoky the Bear” type signs – high, moderate, low
 - Snow Canyon, SR-18, Turkey Farm . . .
 - Trailheads/Kiosks – specific msgs
 - Tortoise Awareness Training
 - Public awareness/Fire awareness publications
- 1D. Non-native/Invasive Weed Control:
 - Tumbleweed, Tamarisk = Paradise Canyon, City Creek, Turkey Farm

* Bob D. – Provide aerial photos

Grazing to reduce fire fuels within the reserve was briefly discussed.

Exhibit 3-f-2 TC – 100908 is a photo of the white board at the HCP office showing the action items.

Objective 2 – Restoration of burned areas.

The members discussed methodology of assigning action items to accomplish this objective – either by geographic area or by tasks.

The members agreed, at the next meeting, to focus on the restoration objective and to use a map to develop action items.

g. Discuss the proposed 2009 HCP budget.

Exhibits 1-g HCAC Wrk Mtng – 072208 and 5-d-1 HCAC Reg Mtng – 082608 were reviewed by the committee members. Several of the budget line items were discussed but no changes to the current proposed budget were suggested.

4. OTHER BUSINESS

None

5. ADJOURN

There was no other business to discuss.

Meeting adjourned at 2:55 P.M.

Minutes prepared by Brad Young.