

# WASHINGTON COUNTY HABITAT CONSERVATION PLAN TECHNICAL COMMITTEE MEETING

A meeting of the Technical Committee of the HCP was held **DECEMBER 11, 2008**, in the conference room at the Washington County Administration Building, 197 E. Tabernacle St., 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:

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

Others present were:

Brad Young	Washington County HCP
Scott Taylor	City of St. George
Lynne Scott	Bureau of Land Management (BLM)
Chuck Gillette	Ivins City Engineer
Jason Draper	PSOMAS Engineer
Clark Ronnow	Leeds Administrator and Planner
Tom Webster	Washington County HCP

## 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 9:34 A.M.

## 2. **APPROVAL OF MINUTES**

### a. **Minutes from the meeting of November 13, 2008**

The following changes were made:

**(page 4, paragraph 5, sentence 3):**

**Add:** “TC members were concerned about creating an artificial trail due to sensitivity of tortoises to human activities.”

**(page 7, paragraph 3, sentence 1):** changed,

From: “Members discussed future study plots, green strips, and using forage kochia (*Kochia prostrata*).”

To: “Members discussed future study plots, green strips, and using several varieties of forage kochia (*Kochia prostrata*).”

**MOTION** by Renee Chi to approve the minutes of November 13, 2008, as corrected.

Seconded by Bob Douglas.

Discussion: None.

Vote was taken: All voted aye.

Motion passed.

### 3. **GENERAL BUSINESS**

- a. **Assignment #051608 – Ivins Detention Dam** – Review the proposed latest MOA and discuss a recommendation to the HCAC (Exhibits 3-a-1 and 3-a-2 TC – 121108).

Chuck Gillette began the discussion by referring to Exhibit 3-a-1. Chuck was asked to correct the ratio for temporary impacts in paragraph 2 on page 1 from 3:5 to 1:3. Chuck had seen the erroneous ratio noted somewhere in the UDP. He'll make the required change. The correct ratio results in an area of 3.99 acres of off-site restoration. The 3.99 acres is included in the 4.7 acres shown on Exhibit 3-a-2. The map, Exhibit 3-a-2, is referred to in the MOA as Exhibit B.

Bob Sandberg asked for clarification on item #2 under, “Administrators of the Washington County Habitat Conservation Plan will:” because the way it is worded it could be interpreted that the HCP will pay 50% and relocate 520' of fence and install gates. Chuck agreed to reword the section so Ivins City and the HCP will split the costs of installing 2,020 feet of new fence, relocate 520' of existing fence and install necessary vehicle and pedestrian gates.

Kristen asked for a change in the wording of sentence one in item #4 under, “Ivins City will:” from, “. . . reconstruction . . .” to, “. . . construction . . .”

Exhibit C of the MOA was then discussed. Chuck described light maintenance, moderate maintenance and heavy maintenance and the coordination protocols for each. Bob Sandberg discussed the moderate maintenance activity protocols. He questioned the notification period in section 1. Chuck agreed to eliminate the 5-day notification.

The temporary fencing requirement and costs were also discussed. Bob Sandberg was uncomfortable with agreeing that the RCDR was responsible to pay for all of the temporary fencing costs. Bob Sandberg suggested that BLM, UDWR and/or HCP

provide a monitor if Ivins City will pay for temporary fencing. The committee members discussed possible alternative and solutions. Finally, the members and Mr. Gillette agreed that HCP will provide temporary fencing materials if Ivins City will provide the labor to set up and take down.

Members discussed and clarified the definitions of moderate and heavy maintenance. Coordination between Ivins City and HCP was emphasized, and compliance to the UDP for heavy maintenance was agreed upon.

Exhibit 3-a-2 was discussed. It was clarified that the future animal shelter will be fully fenced. Placement of the tortoise fence on the dike was also discussed and clarified.

**MOTION** by Ann McLuckie to accept the Memorandum of Agreement (MOA) with the recommended changes.

Seconded by Renee Chi.

Discussion: None.

Vote was taken: All voted aye.

Motion passed.

The revised MOA will be ready to present to the HCAC on January 27, 2009.

- b. Assignment #112508A – Leeds to Harrisburg sewer line** – Review the proposed pipeline route and determine biological impacts. Formulate a recommendation for the HCAC (Exhibit 3-b-1 TC – 121108).

Jason Draper introduced himself and discussed the proposed pipeline route shown on Exhibit 3-b-1 TC – 121108. There will be approximately 1,300 feet of pipe inside the reserve with a 15-foot wide permanent easement and a 25-foot wide construction zone. The proposed route is the optimum route for gravitational flow. Renee is not familiar with the exact area and a field trip to the area was suggested.

Bob Douglas asked about construction methods. Conventional digging techniques will most likely be used. Ann asked about the depth – 10 – 12 feet. A geotechnical survey of the area has not been completed. Kristen asked about the timeline. Clark Ronnow responded that Leeds would like to move as quickly as possible. Clark added that they estimate 60 days construction time. Ann explained the benefits of doing the project in the winter – December 1 to February 15 annually. Clark added that they want to have the project completed by the end of 2009. Marshall asked why the pipeline needed to go through the reserve – to avoid using a lift station. Members agreed that tortoise population in the area is low.

Ann asked about revegetation. Jason explained that Ash Creek Special Service District usually requires a gravel road over the top of the buried pipeline to allow access to manholes. Jason anticipates less than six manholes within the reserve. Jason talked about the possibility of boring under the reserve to reduce the impact and mitigation.

Kristen talked about a field trip to examine the area, and then discuss the mitigation process for permanent and temporary impacts and disturbance. The field trip will be accomplished at the beginning of the next Technical Committee meeting (January 7, 2009).

- c. **Assignment #112508B – Regional pipeline and Mountain Pipeline connection.** Review the proposed pipeline route and determine biological impacts. Formulate a recommendation for the HCAC (Exhibit 3-c-1 TC – 121108).

Scott Taylor provided details about the proposed pipeline connection. He explained that connecting the pipelines allows for better fire protection for the new Washington County Water Conservancy District (WCWCD) building and for the St. George City Water and Energy Building.

Scott further explained that the proposed connecting pipeline will be about 6-7 feet off of the east edge of the road pavement and have a 25-30-foot wide construction zone. No long-term maintenance easement is anticipated. The members expressed concern for impact to existing vegetation.

Kristen asked about the construction timeline. Scott said that they are ready to begin as soon as they get approval. Scott clarified that there will not be any manhole covers in the reserve.

The committee members discussed the tortoise population in the general vicinity and the design of a cattle guard for tortoises. The design was completed by Creamer & Noble Engineers in October 2007.

Renee inquired about the substrate. Scott confirmed that any disturbed soils will be topped with native material. The members discussed avoiding the creosote bushes or altering the pipeline route. Marshall asked about exploring alternate routes. Kristen suggested going under the asphalt. Bob Douglas suggested replacing disturbed creosote with mesquite. Bob Douglas reiterated that the project inside the reserve is only 100 feet and if the mature bushes could be avoided it would be better.

The members agreed to conduct a field trip at noon today to fully examine the site and expedite the process, and then continue the discussion after lunch.

- d. **Assignment #102808 – Red Hills Desert Garden** – Review and discuss the latest concepts and plans. Provide guidance and recommendation to the HCAC. (Exhibit 3-d-1 TC – 121108).

Marshall referred to Exhibit 3-d-1 TC – 121108 and asked if it reflects the changes that the Technical Committee has requested – it does. The members agreed that the blue area name needs to be changed. There is a desert garden working group meeting tomorrow that Bob Sandberg and Lynne Scott will be attending.

**e. Discuss and review trailhead kiosks and the information to be placed on them - Tom Webster and Lynne Scott.**

Lynne Scott distributed an example (Exhibit 3-e-1 TC – 121108) of a rules and regulations sign that is intended to be placed at trailheads, not at the informational kiosks. The sign is a draft for the committee members to look at and evaluate. The members discussed adding and modifying the logos on the bottom of the sign. Exhibit 3-e-2 TC – 121108 is an example of informational kiosks currently in use. Exhibit 3-e-3 TC – 121108 is a list of ideas that are being considered to be included on the informational kiosks.

The members discussed the examples and the list of ideas. The use of icons on the signs was also discussed. Kristen explained that the Chuckwalla Trailhead sign must be somewhat unique to meet the needs of the State Park. The members further discussed methods to find the balance between being user friendly and still informing users of the rules and regulations.

Lynne explained the concept of a three-panel informational kiosk. One panel is for a map, one for reserve information, and one for unique features of the particular area. Tom stressed the necessity of having information explaining why the rules and restrictions are required. Lynne passed out additional samples of signs that other agencies have used. The members discussed the merits of some of these examples.

The readability of the signs was also discussed, including a word or text limit. Concise and succinct messages were discussed, while still trying to meet the needs of law enforcement. The members further discussed the educational opportunities and the benefits to tortoises and other wildlife species in having good signage.

Kristen proposed crafting a theme for wayside and informational signs to help convey the message that is being projected. Kristen also volunteered to attend a meeting with Lynne, Tom, and Justin Neighbor that is scheduled for 9:00 A.M. on Friday, December 12, 2008, to further discuss the signage issues.

Renee cited favorable and desirable features on some of the sample signs passed out earlier by Lynne. Some of these features may be incorporated in the kiosks.

Lynne also discussed the possibility of the Land Bill (Washington County Growth and Conservation Act) passing and being able to adapt signs to a future National Conservation Area format.

The members recessed at 11:51 A.M. to conduct a field trip to the Pioneer Park area to inspect the proposed route of the Mountain Pipeline connection. They had arranged to meet Scott Taylor on site.

The meeting resumed at 1:36 P.M. in the HCP administration offices. Attending were:

Kristen Comella	Bob Douglas
Bob Sandberg	Ann McLuckie
Marshall Topham	Renee Chi
Brad Young	

**c. Assignment #112508B – Regional pipeline and Mountain Pipeline connection** continued . . .

For the record, Kristen formalized the recommendations that the members agreed upon during the field trip with Scott Taylor.

- 20' construction corridor that must be staked and flagged,
- The parking lot will be used for staging. The top 4" – 6" of topsoil will be removed and then replaced upon completion of the project,
- The pipeline route will be along the road as far as possible,
- Complete the project before February 15, 2009,
- The disturbed area must be reseeded immediately by raking in the Turtle Road seed mix.

Kristen will compose a recommendation and send out to the Technical Committee members. Bob Sandberg will coordinate with the City of St. George on the seed mix and coordinate between the HCAC and the project proponent.

**f. Continue development of a Fire Management Plan** for the reserve – Action items and recommendation for the HCAC (January 27, 2009).

Kristen distributed a three-page document later designated Exhibit 3-f-1 TC – 121108. The committee members reviewed and discussed this draft fire management plan. Bob Douglas and Kristen compared and contrasted fire suppression and protecting unburned habitat.

Renee talked about weed control and fire breaks in the reserve near or adjacent to developed residential areas. Accomplishing this would enable fire fighting resources to be committed to wildland areas. The members discussed the advantages of a green strip over a brown strip. Different options, or combinations of strategies, can be applied to different areas or road corridors to protect unburned tortoise habitat.

Kristen will continue to develop the fire management plan outline. The goals of augmentation and suppression will be discussed and developed in future meetings. Ann will continue to prepare a scope of work for rehabilitating and reseeded burned areas and monitoring the efforts. This is due to be presented to the HCAC in January.

The composite map project headed by Bob Douglas was also discussed. He has received map files from Ann and Kristen. The updated boundary of the Red Cliffs Desert Reserve is needed.

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

##### **a. Next meeting date(s)**

1. January 7, 2009

The members will meet in the administration conference room at 9:30 A.M. and then proceed to the Leeds area to inspect the proposed pipeline route through a corner of the reserve.

##### **b. Discuss mitigation options, and mitigation concerning the Red Hills Parkway expansion**

Renee began the discussion by saying that permanent land acquisitions to compensate for loss of habitat is becoming harder and harder to accomplish, especially near Zones 1 and 2. Other alternatives to permanent land acquisition needs to be explored. Renee spoke about mitigation regarding the permanent impact of the Red Hills Parkway expansion project. Other mitigation ideas discussed included habitat restoration and tortoise culvert installation. It is important that compensation that the Technical Committee identifies or suggests does not overlap with the responsibilities of the HCP.

Members discussed equating land acquisition value to other options. It all comes down to loss of habitat and the strategies to compensate for the loss. Restoration polygons, tortoise cattle guards, and additional culverts were among the options discussed. The members also discussed ideas and options that actually work and benefit tortoises and do not have unintended consequences. The tortoise cattle guard designed by Phil Giles was discussed.

Red Hills Parkway expansion mitigation ideas included an additional tortoise migration culvert under Red Hills Parkway, a culvert under Cottonwood Road and perhaps a culvert under SR18 in the Twist Hollow area. Tumbleweed and Tamarisk control were also discussed and considered. The members agreed that the priority is to install two tortoise cattle guards at Pioneer Park.

##### **c. Assignment #092308A – Bluff Street Cracks**

The HCAC minutes of July 25, 2006, were discussed. The Red Cliffs Desert Reserve boundary is at the bottom of the cliffs and rock climbing is permitted, with a seasonal closure to protect nesting raptors. The suggested seasonal closure of February 1 through July 31 becomes an official recommendation. (See page 6 of the HCAC minutes of 11/25/08). The HCAC will be informed of the latest conclusions at their next meeting.

#### **5. ADJOURN**

There was no other business to discuss.

Meeting adjourned at 3:24 P.M.

Minutes prepared by Brad Young.