

**HABITAT CONSERVATION ADVISORY COMMITTEE**  
for the Washington County Habitat Conservation Plan (HCP)

A work meeting of the Habitat Conservation Advisory Committee (HCAC) was held in the commissioner's conference room at the Washington County Administration Building, 197 E. Tabernacle St., on June 24, 2008.

Committee members present were:

Karl Wilson, Chairman	Mayors Association
Chris Blake, Vice Chairman	Environmental Organization
Marc Mortensen	Citizen-at-Large
Jeff Morby	Local Development
Larry Crist	U.S. Fish & Wildlife Service (USFWS)
Reed Harris	Utah Dept. of Natural Resources (UDNR)
Todd Christensen	Bureau of Land Management (BLM)
Bill Mader, Administrator	Washington County - HCP

Also present were:

Ann McLuckie	Utah Division of Wildlife Resources (UDWR)
Alan Gardner	Washington County Commissioner
Bob Sandberg	Washington County - HCP
Tom Webster	Washington County - HCP
Brad Young, Recorder	Washington County - HCP

**CALL TO ORDER**

Vice Chairman Chris Blake noted that at least five committee members were present and a quorum existed. He called the meeting to order at 9:37 AM. Chairman Wilson's absence was excused. He joined the meeting at 10:04 AM.

**SYNOPSIS**

The topics of this work meeting were current priorities and funding, and a preliminary discussion on the 2009 budget. No motions or decisions were made. Bill Mader distributed one handout – Exhibit 1-a HCAC Wrk Mtng – 062408.

**DISCUSSION**

Bill Mader began the discussions by asking that the members focus on strategic direction and get an early start on next year's budget.

Chris Blake noted that one of the things that prompted this meeting was the proposed Buckskin Wash trail, which led to a discussion regarding trail management. Chris asked about human impact monitoring and the \$2,000.00 line item in the budget.

Larry Crist noted that we're creating a recreation area, and asked if we are accomplishing the intended purpose. He further noted that there does not seem to be a comprehensive approach to recreation or trail management.

Bill explained that Jim Crisp is coming aboard as the volunteer coordinator and will begin by focusing on trail compliance in the Paradise Canyon (Halfway Wash) area. Bill added that the Recreation Ordinance has been adopted by Washington County, and he is striving for increased communication across all fronts. Tom Webster expanded on Jim's volunteer coordinator objectives.

Larry brought up the issue of Renee Chi being uncomfortable with adding a new trail without proper current trail management. Ann McLuckie talked about the human impact monitoring study of 2007 (by Dr. Pam Foti). Larry asked how we measure success and progress in trail management. Ann said the human impact monitoring studies is one way to show trends. Reed Harris asked how we can alter trends, and Chris asked how can we recover some of the habitat loss.

Bill acknowledged that there are off-trail impacts and one of the hardest hit areas is Paradise Canyon (Halfway Wash). Bill added that this is a high priority for Jim Crisp. Bill further added that education, signage and law enforcement from the sheriff's office are all tools to help with compliance. Bill noted that an officer from the City of Ivins recently issued a citation to a chronic violator for a dog off leash in the reserve. Despite this, the non-compliance problem is still growing.

Reed said the users must police themselves and others, or else the trail(s) may be closed. Reed added that users must catch the vision that the purpose of the reserve is to fulfill a permit requirement to protect tortoises and other wildlife, and if the basic purpose cannot be met, the recreation may have to be reduced. The members discussed trail management and recreation management principles. They stressed education, consequences and law enforcement.

Bob Sandberg talked about how some of the off-trail hikers don't understand the cumulative impact of going off-trail. Reed asked if the outreach and education budget is adequate to address the issues. Bill said that it does, for now, and that he's open to any suggestions. Bill added that he'd like to get the Recreation Ordinance in place and then periodically evaluate the effectiveness.

Reed asked about trailhead signage. Bill said that it is currently not adequate and explained that it is a high priority. He further explained Tom's ongoing efforts to rectify the problem. Larry added that there is also an inadequacy in clearly marked designated trails. It is often difficult to determine the designated trails from the spider webs created by hikers. Tom acknowledged that adequate signage is necessary, and noted that many hikers don't want the Burma-shave-looking trail environment. Chris does support trail signage, especially the one that says, "Leave the trail – go to jail".

Ann added that educational kiosks at the major trailheads would be helpful. The members agreed.

Jeff Morby asked if anyone had given thought to a permitting process and suggested an annual pass. Chris supported the basic idea. Jeff noted that if the primary purpose of the reserve is protection of the (tortoise) habitat, then recreation must become secondary. Marc Mortensen asked how the permitting process would work. It is too soon to know.

Chris said that Washington County residents have a certain ownership in the reserve and he feels that many of the abusers are out-of-the-area one-time users who don't understand the reserve or don't care about the reserve. He added that a two-tiered permit, one for county residents and one for non-residents is an excellent idea and worth exploring. Ann said that neighbors to the reserve, those that live near the reserve boundary, are the most often users and still they may not know of the rules and restrictions. Tom added that some abuse is out of ignorance rather than arrogance.

Reed suggested conducting field surveys, by Jim Crisp and volunteers, to determine who is using the reserve and who does and doesn't know what the rules area. Chris suggested adding money to the monitoring budget if necessary.

Karl Wilson and Bill discussed expenditures, revenues and surpluses. Members noted that the report (Exhibit 1-a HCAC Wrk Mtng – 062408) shows that 19.78% of the budget has been spent with 41.67% of the year past.

Bill talked about the big ticket budget items:

Budget code	Line item	Amount
23-4149-313	UDWR Reserve monitoring	\$80,000
23-4149-320	T&E plants – Southern corridor	\$50,000 spent with the same amount to spend again
23-4149-435	Fencing	\$180,000 with \$115,000 spent
23-4149-436	Road reseeding	\$66,000
23-4149-456	Natural History Museum	No exploratory work done.
23-4149-712	Access Points	\$170,000 with \$6,000 spent – White Reef Park in progress
23-4149-710	Land Access	\$200,000. \$50,000 of that will be spent with BLM for the 'super land exchange' facilitator

Bill elaborated on the natural history museum. Reed asked about the committee to select a site. Bill named the committee members: Vardell Curtis, Roger Bundy and Mark Walters, with advice from Scott Hirschi. Bill said the site has been determined, near the Dino Cliffs, and that he's working closely with SITLA on it.

Chris asked if there is money available to fix the trailhead signs. Tom explained how he is in the process of making arrangements to temporarily replace signage at the trailheads while simultaneously working on permanent signs and kiosks. Tom is selecting material and acquiring bids.

Reed, Bill and Ann discussed the clearances accomplished so far this year. Bill explained how the days of the big tortoise clearances are over. We still do a few small ones here and there, but clearances required by the permit have been largely executed. Bill added that the strategic question becomes, where do we want to be ten years from now? Ann advocated a three-year plan to close all of the gaps in the perimeter fence, then clear the adjacent areas and be done with clearances. The discussion moved to fencing costs, benefits and fencing agreements.

Chris brought up the issue of goals and accomplishments according to the HCP. He would like a comprehensive review of the permit and plan requirements and see where we're at and where we need to go. He asked what the reserve should be like when the permit expires. Chris emphasized that it will happen sooner than you think.

Reed noted that the land bill converts the reserve into an NCA, and asked who manages it? The Bureau of Land Management was the reply. Alan Gardner noted that the land bill incorporates the HCP into the NCA and continues county involvement.

Jeff Morby asked about the financial report. The Exhibit only shows the expenditures and not the revenue. Jeff asked that a revenue report be made available. The current HCP department reserve was discussed – how much is it and what interest is it gaining? Alan said that it is in the state pool. Karl added that the rate is about 3.3%. This amounts to a three-year reserve. Karl said that it must be carefully managed.

Chris asked about the budget development schedule. The HCAC recommendation to the county commissioners will be made in September. The final budget will be adopted in December. Chris emphasized that spending must be in compliance with the objectives of the HCP.

Reed said that he's concerned about risks and one of the most serious is fires in the reserve – which could have an enormous impact. Bill and Ann discussed aerial reseeding and its cost and effectiveness. Ann would like to see JBR study reseeding and soil preparation. Ann stressed the importance of proper soil preparation before reseeding and the necessary scientific study to determine the most appropriate preparation. She also said that Rick Fridell suggested a field trip to Zion National Park to look at the Kolob Terrace reseeding success.

Todd reminded everyone that we are not alone in reseeding and recovery. He said that BLM could help because there's an overarching fuels program. Alan talked about reseeding, ground disturbance and run-off problems.

Bill brought up the issue of experimental grazing to reduce or remove fuels. Larry expressed hesitation but noted that experimental grazing could be successful under controlled conditions, but grazing also impacts tortoises. Ann talked about the negative impacts of cattle and grazing. She discussed some of the scientific research that has been done. Other livestock may be considered. Larry advocated pulling together all of the scientific data and studies and look at it.

The discussion shifted to the interpretive center, museum or education center. Bill was asked what his vision for this was. The actual structure or facility is unclear, but the site has been selected – but not much beyond that. Chris volunteered time and effort to assist in idea development – he may not always have the answers, but he may know who to ask. Bill said there are matching funds budgeted for planning. Jeff suggested partnering with WCWCD or exploring other options because continued operation of the facility will be the biggest expense.

Bill explained that the HCAC has wrestled with this idea for several years. The visitors center at the office was considered an interim solution – a temporary beachhead. But what is really needed is a regional attraction, such as a natural history museum, not to be confused with a visitors center. The overall vision remains unclear, and everyone probably has a different vision. Bill suggested a field trip to the Arizona-Sonora Desert Museum to see what works and what doesn't. Jeff said there are resources that may be tapped, such as SITLA. Chris supported the idea of a field trip to the Tucson facility. Chris also supported seeing the interpretive center in Las Vegas and then fly to Tucson.

Chris stressed that eight years is a very short time to accomplish a vision – for the reserve and for a facility. Karl cautioned using operational monies in case there is a revenue shortfall.

Reed emphasized that we should focus on finishing projects, such as the fencing, green-stripping or a facility feasibility study. He advocated prioritizing projects and then implementing them.

Bill reported that he and Bob had visited with Terry Martin at Kayenta and how Terry had installed some sprinkler pipes to help with fire prevention and suppression. Bill said this also might work along Cottonwood Road to protect habitat, recreation, tortoises and power poles.

Reed suggested making a work statement for each project. The work statement includes the project purpose, the background for the project, how it will be accomplished, and the budget for it. The work statement can be two pages long and the project must be acted upon. If a proposed project doesn't meet budget or priorities, then it is rejected.

Chris proposed that individual HCAC members take various projects under their wing and be responsible for nurturing the project along and be the designated person to be

responsible for the project. Several examples were cited. Bill said that a fire suppression or prevention pipeline along Cottonwood Road is another example and that should be pushed forward. Karl suggested a rolling line item in the budget for fire prevention and suppression.

Reed added that a scope of work statement could span multiple year(s), with bench marks, and could include research. Larry equated it to a work plan proposed by a principal initiator, and used fire prevention as an example. Chris suggested listing the projects to be accomplished and then make assignments for completing the objective.

Larry, Reed and Chris discussed setting long-term goals and objectives and developing a work plan, with budgeting, to accomplish the purpose of the HCP. Chris asked Reed for a paper copy of a work plan for review.

Bill reviewed the general business items on the regular meeting agenda. The Buckskin Wash issue and making a final decision was briefly discussed. The Ivins Detention Dam issue was also discussed. Chris, as previous mayor of Ivins, related the history of the flood(s) that prompted the idea of a detention dam, the purchase of land for it and other measures currently being taken by Ivins for flood control. There was also discussion about the general concept of mitigation for habitat disturbance, and how the Ivins Detention Dam was one of the first projects requiring mitigation, and at that time the mitigation process was in its infancy. Ann related the highlights of the last Technical Committee meeting where the mitigation was discussed. Larry spoke about how, right now, the issue is between the City of Ivins and the U.S. Fish & Wildlife Service. The amount of land available for purchase for mitigation in that area is almost nonexistent or far too expensive. Chris said that Ivins may choose not to construct the dam and instead let the floods naturally happen, but tortoise habitat will be impacted. Jeff asked if housing would be affected. No, homes are built in the floodplain. The issue will be further discussed at the regular meeting.

The meeting was adjourned at 11:27 a.m.

Minutes prepared by Brad Young.