

HABITAT CONSERVATION ADVISORY COMMITTEE

for the Washington County Habitat Conservation Plan (HCP)

A **regular meeting** of the Habitat Conservation Advisory Committee (HCAC) was held at the St. George City Council Chambers on **JULY 17, 2012**.

Committee members present were:

Karl Wilson, Chairman	Mayors Association
Chris Blake, Vice Chairman	Environmental Organization
Jimmy Tyree	Bureau of Land Management (BLM)
Henry Maddux	Utah Dept. of Natural Resources (UDNR)
Bob Sandberg	HCP Administrator

Absent and excused:

Larry Crist	U.S. Fish & Wildlife Service (USFWS)
Marc Mortensen	Citizen-at-Large
Chris Hart	Local Development

Also present were:

Amber Stocks	HCP - Recorder
Cameron Rognan	HCP - Biologist
Tim Croissant	Technical Committee (TC) Chairman
Mike Empey	Congressman Matheson's Office
Marreen Casper	Senator Orrin Hatch's Office
Craig Shanklin	Friends of Snow Canyon State Park

1. **CALL TO ORDER**

Chairman Karl Wilson called the meeting to order at 1:00 p.m. noting that a quorum was not present.

2. **CONSENT AGENDA**

The Consent Agenda is a means of expediting routine matters which come before the committee for approval. The consent portion of the agenda is approved by one (1) non-debatable motion. If any member wishes to remove an item from the consent portion of the agenda, then that item becomes the first order of business on the regular agenda.

- a. **Approval of the agenda**
- b. **Review and approve minutes**
 1. June 26, 2012
- c. **Next Meeting Date**
 1. August 28, 2012
- d. **Declaration of conflicts of interest**

Chairman Wilson explained that with the absence of a quorum the committee can have discussion but official action cannot be taken. The consent agenda was suspended until the August meeting.

3. PRESENTATIONS

a. Introduction of new UDNR representative

Chairman Wilson introduced Henry Maddux, the new UDNR representative who is replacing Reed Harris. Bob Sandberg welcomed Henry and expressed appreciation to Henry for being willing to serve on the committee. Chairman Wilson also noted that Henry was heavily involved in the HCP when it was first formed.

4. UTILITY AND DEVELOPMENT PROJECTS

None

5. GENERAL BUSINESS

a. Presentation and discussion of Ivins Detention Dam (Chuck Gillette)

Chairman Wilson tabled this agenda item.

b. Discussion and possible action on 2013 budget (Bob Sandberg)

Chairman Wilson explained that the budget has been static for the past few years so there has not been any work meetings to discuss it. The HCAC will review the budget and give the County Commission their recommendation.

Bob Sandberg showed exhibit 5-b-1, the proposed 2013 budget. The Technical Committee (TC) has reviewed the budget and they feel comfortable with it. The red numbers shown are increases and the blue number shown is a decrease from the 2012 budget. The budget shows an amount to keep the HCP department open and functioning properly. Green numbers show a contingency amount identified to help with additional opportunities such as property appraisals, rehabilitation and restoration work among others. Even though some line item amounts have gone up and down, the bottom line budget is the same as 2012.

Exhibit 5-f-1-b is a graph which shows what the revenues and expenses have been since the year 2000. Even though the revenues have been below the expenses since 2007, there are some savings in the bank to carry the HCP through these lean years.

Chairman Wilson stated the HCP has collected more than was originally planned for. Bob added that with the HCP review, the FWS is pulling information together on HCP expenditures and there will need to be discussion on how to factor in inflation and increases in property value over what was anticipated when the HCP was put together in 1995.

Exhibit 5-f-1-a shows the total revenue, as of June 30th, of \$129,297.76 (20% of
HCAC Meeting Minutes – July 17, 2012

projected revenues) and expenses of \$227,413.62 (10% of the budget). Chairman Wilson tabled the discussion.

c. Land acquisition efforts update (Timmy Tyree)

Jimmy Tyree explained there is good news to report. Last week there was a conference call between the BLM realty specialist, the state office and the Washington D.C. office. The BLM is in the process of getting appraisals started through the Office of Evaluation Services in anticipation of 2013 Land and Water Conservation Fund (LWCF) money coming through. The Red Cliffs NCA inholdings are nationally rated in the top four to receive LWCF. Even though the LWCF is still in flux, it is strongly felt that funding will be received and surveys have been ordered. Bob Brennan has been contacted and the Trust for Public Lands is also working with the BLM to facilitate the transaction.

d. Quail Fire Restoration (BLM)

Tim Croissant reported he has been working on a Quail fire emergency stabilization plan with Melanie Mendenhall from the Color Country office of the BLM (in Cedar City). The Determination of NEPA Adequacy (DNA) for stabilization has been completed and Melanie submitted the stabilization and rehabilitation plan. The plan will be funded but not to the full extent originally hoped for. The seed mix has been approved but the state office will most likely pull out the Palmer penstemon from the mix as it is not viewed as an effective stabilization plant. It may be good desert tortoise food and it may be a pretty little flower but they do not feel it is good for soil stabilization and they're concerned with the poor germination rate.

The maps shown in exhibit 5-d-1 show the BLM land within the fire perimeter that will have aerial seeding. It also shows where hand crews will rake seed into the ground in areas of higher tortoise density. Tim explained it is not practical to rake the entire burned area as terrain is too rough to chain. If the seeds are not covered somehow there will be an extremely low germination rate. The Color Country office is not willing to apply herbicide to the area because of concerns that herbicide would suppress germination. They are hesitant to do anything that would jeopardize germination.

Bob Sandberg asked if there has been discussion about sand drop seed or other species covered in the DNA. Sometimes people think Palmer penstemon is not a stabilization plant but this is the Mojave Desert, not the Great Basin. Any plant that will establish here (Palmer penstemon will) is a stabilization plant. Bob asked if there is any room to wiggle or to influence the seed mix. Jimmy Tyree stated he will discuss the seed mix with Tim and the Cedar City office. Chris Blake suggested that the HCP consider paying for the seeding which is not funded by this emergency stabilization plan.

Tim explained that the DNA approved a much wider range of application; however, the seed mix shown on the exhibit is what is being funded. With additional funding there is

a lot that could be done. Tim also looked into galleta grass. This plant grows well but it doesn't feed well through the seed hoppers. Bob stated that galleta seed is big and fluffy and has pubescence which plugs up their seeder when they try to use it in an airplane hopper because they don't have an agitator to keep the seed from packing down and plugging the outlet.

e. Technical Committee Report (Tim Croissant)

Tim Croissant reported that the Technical Committee (TC) discussed the Quail fire, discussed here in agenda item 5-d. The TC made a motion to continue to work with the FWS to apply appropriate recovery and stabilization actions on the fire area.

There is continual progress on an EA for fall of 2012 herbicide application along the major road corridors on BLM land in the NCA. This EA would also allow mowing of the trailheads, pullouts and fenced off sections along Cottonwood Road. The TC will arrange a scoping meeting with the Color Country fuels staff to scope out a more wide ranging plan for 2013 which could be applied across all agency jurisdictions.

UDOT is working on a project on I-15 from the state line to milepost 16. UDOT would like to modify the interchange at milepost 16, impacting 0.22 acres of suitable habitat in the Reserve. An additional 0.77 acres is needed for the new right-of-way. The TC looked at the MOG formula and determined that mitigation should be at a 5.5:1 ratio. Different mitigation options were discussed and the TC decided that open space located in The Trails development would best meet the criteria for suitable tortoise habitat. The property owner may be willing to sell their property. UDOT would need to purchase the property and then turn the land over to another agency to manage.

Tim reported on a small fire which burned in the Reserve on July 11th. The fire was on SITLA and BLM wilderness land, covering about 3 ½ acres. The fire was taken care of very quickly.

The TC discussed the latest webinar from desert tortoise Recovery Implementation Team (RIT). The threats rankings were discussed and the TC feels the threats are not accurate for our recovery area. Landfills are listed as the largest threat which is puzzling to the TC. Through the web based system the RIT can look at the various threats and add appropriate recovery actions. The TC looked at potential recovery and habitat restoration actions. The recovery actions that rank highest for the Upper Virgin River recovery unit were habitat restoration, environmental education and increased law enforcement protection. The RIT can enter into the system different strategies for implementing recovery actions. The TC brainstormed different potential recovery actions and added their recommendations to this web based system.

f. Administrator's Report (Bob Sandberg)

1. HCP revenues and expenditures report

HCAC Meeting Minutes – July 17, 2012

Bob Sandberg stated the revenues and expenditures report was discussed in agenda item 5-b-1 along with the appropriate exhibits.

2. Results of Quail fire survey

Bob Sandberg reported that he walked through parts of the burned area in places of highest tortoise sightings with Tim Croissant (BLM), Ann McLuckie (DWR) and Justin Neighbor (HCP). They didn't find any dead or injured tortoises but did find one live tortoise that appeared totally healthy and unharmed. Bob stated we may have avoided a bullet but there isn't going to be much for tortoises to eat once they do come out.

3. SR-18 widening project update

Work began yesterday to widen SR-18 from the intersection of Red Hills Parkway and Snow Canyon Parkway north to The Trails subdivision. HCP staff has looked at the fencing and did some cursory surveys inside the fence but didn't find any tortoises. HCP staff will continue to monitor as they will be moving the fence on the culvert at Buckskin Wash.

4. Submission of 2nd Quarter Report

Bob submitted the 2nd quarter report for 2012 for the HCAC to review.

6. PUBLIC COMMENT & REQUEST FOR FUTURE AGENDA ITEMS

This item is reserved for items not listed on this agenda. No action may be taken on a matter raised under this agenda item. (Three minutes per person.)

Chairman Wilson invited the public to comment or request future agenda items. No one came forward and the chairman moved the agenda.

7. OTHER BUSINESS

None

8. ADJOURN

MOTION by Chris Blake to adjourn the meeting.

Seconded by Jimmy Tyree.

Discussion: None.

Vote was taken: All voted aye.

Motion passed.

The meeting was adjourned at 1:28 p.m.
Minutes prepared by Amber Stocks.