

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

A regular meeting of the Habitat Conservation Technical Committee (TC) was held in the conference room of the Washington County Administration Building, **MARCH 7, 2013**

Members present were:

Ann McLuckie, Chairman	Utah Division of Wildlife Resources (UDWR)
Nathan Brown, Vice Chairman	U.S. Fish and Wildlife Service (USFWS)
Kristen Comella	Snow Canyon State Park (SCSP)
Tim Croissant	Bureau of Land Management (BLM)
Cameron Rognan	Wash Co. Habitat Conservation Plan (HCP)

Absent and excused:

Gary McKell	Local Biologist
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Also present were:

Bob Sandberg	Washington County HCP Administrator
Amber Stocks	Washington County HCP Recorder
Zac Koceja	City of St. George

1. CALL TO ORDER

Chairman Ann McLuckie noted a quorum existed and called the meeting to order at 10:35a.m.

3. GENERAL BUSINESS

a. Field Trip Discussion to Red Hills Trails

Chairman McLuckie requested to discuss agenda item 3-a before item 2-a; the TC agreed. The TC visited two locations along Red Hills Parkway where the bike path intersects the Owens Loop and City Creek trails. The group first visited Owens Loop and discussed adding range fence and bringing the tortoise mesh 10-15 feet out. They also talked about placing a stepover where people are already accessing the trail. A stepover would channel the access to one location and would allow people to access Owens Loop without using Brook's Nature Trail. The second visit was off the shoulder of the parkway and west of the spillway. There is a section close to the City Creek trail where people stop their vehicles and jump the fence to access the trail.

Chairman McLuckie reported the TC was in agreement to add range fence and a stepover and to relocate tortoise mesh for easier access to Brook's Nature Pond. Zac Koceja, with St. George City, mentioned he will discuss the issue with the Public Works department.

MOTION by Nathan Brown to add range fence and a stepover at the Owens Loop trail where it meets with the Red Hills Parkway.

Seconded by Cameron Rognan.

Discussion: None.

Vote was taken: All voted aye.

Motion passed.

Chairman McLuckie expressed concern about placing a City Creek stepover gate along Red Hills Parkway because it would invite people to park along the shoulders. TC members felt they would be more receptive to the idea of a stepover if St. George designates parking there. St. George City prefers not to place “no parking” signs along the parkway. Most off-trail users access this area from the paved trail along the parkway.

MOTION by Kristen Comella to not permit a stepover at that location unless St. George re-evaluates parking, is willing to put in designated parking in that vicinity, mark in other locations where parking is not permitted as well as make any fence improvements in the immediate area if there are adjacent locations where we need to add range fence to properly funnel people. At that point the Technical Committee can re-assess.

Seconded by Cameron Rognan.

Discussion: None.

Vote was taken: All voted aye.

Motion passed.

The TC discussed the defined parking areas associated with trailheads and trail access along SR-18 and Red Hills Parkway. The shoulders along Red Hills Parkway used to be a lot wider and people have habits of parking wherever they want along the shoulder. The Public Use Plan (PUP) identifies where the trailheads and access points are located. When the parkway plan was re-designed, it provided for parking areas with connections to trails. The paved path is an adaptive element of the PUP. When changes need to be made, the adaptive management method in the PUP should be used to look at issues and make decisions.

Zac added there was a lot of thought put into the Parkway design. Before the parkway was redone people would park all along the road. Now there is curb and gutter in the high use areas between 200 East and 1000 East and parking has been defined. From 200 East to Bluff Street there is less use and until the city feels parking along the side of the road becomes an issue, it is a mute point.

Bob stated that when the intersection of Red Hills Parkway, Snow Canyon Parkway and Bluff Street is modified, it could change the parking dynamics along the parkway. Zac added that the entrance to Chuckwalla will be moved slightly north. He will keep in contact with the HCP on these issues.

2. **APPROVAL OF MINUTES**

a. January 10, 2013

The following changes were made:

Page 2, paragraph 1, sentence 2: changed,

From: “The TC felt the VRP should ~~coordinate disposal of Arundo~~ with the BLM.”

To: “The TC felt the VRP should remove Arundo piles and coordinate with the BLM.”

Page 3, paragraph 2, sentences 2 & 3: changed,

From: “This particular 10-20 acres of fenced out good habitat ~~would have a negative tradeoff if opened up. Kristen felt concern opening up the area with the susceptibility of more tortoises entering the roadway.~~”

To: “This particular 10-20 acres of fenced out good habitat could have a negative tradeoff if opened up by making tortoises more susceptible to entering the roadway.”

Page 3, paragraph 4, sentence 1: changed,

From: “Cameron Rognan mentioned that if the fence is removed, SCSP will want to remove the seasonal closure to the Padre Canyon trail and ~~to~~ include equestrian use.

To: “Cameron Rognan mentioned that if the fence is removed, SCSP will want to remove the seasonal closure to the Padre Canyon trail and possibly include equestrian use.”

Page 6, paragraph 1, sentence 2: deleted,

“Kristen Comella stated that SCSP will need something from the FWS clearing them from a loss of control.”

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

3. GENERAL BUSINESS

b. Trail Monitoring

Nathan Brown talked to Briget Eastep, with SUU Outdoor Recreation, about trail monitoring in the Reserve this year. She's interested and the HCP staff can send her all pertinent information to get started. Cameron Rognan stated it might be appropriate to wait for any long term decisions on what route to go, but it would be good to use SUU experimentally this year. If SUU doesn't work out another option could be to train a high school intern from the Natural Resource Camp. The advantage to using one intern would be a uniform bias. Information from an intern would be uniform verses a group of university students who may vary their information between each person. The group discussed the value of using an intern to get limited information on each trail, like illegal trails, rather than focusing on many aspects of a trail. Training one person and having them hike all trails in the Reserve is a lot of work for one person. However, some information is better than none. Regardless of who gathers trail data, it will be different from NAU and will be a different quality. Even NAU's data with Pam's supervision is not perfect and can be improved upon.

The group discussed trail monitoring options using either NAU without Pam, SUU, high school intern and Reserve trail stewards. Nathan felt it would be good to establish a consistent relationship with SUU and this fits right in with their outdoor program.

MOTION by Kristen Comella to pursue working with SUU to see if they are willing to accomplish anything. If they are unable to for this season then the fall back would be to pursue something locally with an intern or trail steward assistance.

Seconded by Nathan Brown.

Discussion:

Vote was taken: All voted aye.

Motion passed.

4. OTHER BUSINESS

- a. April's meeting will last the majority of the day and will include the process to review the Washington County HCP with the FWS**

The TC decided to hold their regular meeting on April 11th at 9:30 a.m. and to hold a special meeting on April 25th at 9:00 a.m. with the FWS.

- b. Tuacahn Fencing**

Chairman McLuckie reported that the option from the last TC meeting to talk to Tuacahn is not feasible. Her supervisor did not feel it was appropriate for a DWR employee to approach Tuacahn. Chairman McLuckie suggested another option to open up the 21.9 acres of fenced out habitat that was purchased with section 6 funds. She recommended fencing the east side of the wash. The fence could connect to the Reserve boundary and the fence line can follow the current alignment to the cliff. All fencing would be within the Reserve or on the Reserve boundary. She estimated the length of the range fence with tortoise mesh would be 2,460.6 feet at approximately \$4

per foot, costing \$9,842.40. This habitat addition would cost \$456 per acre compared to a grant proposal the County recently applied for at \$40,000 an acre.

Kristen Comella stated some of the things that would need to be accomplished with this option such as:

- the area would need to be surveyed to make sure the fence is on the boundary line, then it would need to be decided who will pay for the fence;
- she would need to call the Salt Lake State Parks office to make sure they are okay with a fence on the east side of the wash. Although it would be within the Reserve it could potentially cut out a portion of state parks property purchased with section six funds;
- it would need to be made certain that the FWS understands the situation and they would need to send a written acknowledgement;
- the TC needs to look at the trail alignment that goes through there and how recreation would be impacted;
- lastly, the fence would need to be pulled away from the wash enough that a flash flood event will not pull it out.

Kristen added that once a fence is put up, an impression is given to others that fenced out portions are someone else's property. Cameron Rognan stated that the fence facilitates movement of tortoises. The property would remain SCSP and the Reserve. Nathan Brown said out of the 21.9 acres, tortoises will only have a few acres of actual creosote habitat as most of the area is cliff. Chairman McLuckie reminded the TC of tortoises living in cliff areas. Bob Sandberg added there is money in the budget for fencing, but it is something we would need to take to the HCAC and get their support.

The TC discussed the trail's alignment, aesthetic concerns, equestrian issues and potential stepovers. The TC will assess the trail as a separate conversation at the next TC meeting.

c. Entrada Fence and Culvert Monitoring

Cameron Rognan reported that the fencing behind Entrada has been fixed. He will check this spring to see if any tortoises have escaped. He asked the group to pay particular attention to any areas that still need attention or to any tortoises that may have gotten out.

Culvert monitoring along Red Hills Parkway may be an option for an intern this summer. The TC felt that Dixie State may have motion sensor cameras, perhaps students can help with monitoring.

Kristen Comella said it may be good to use interns for more than one season and have an ongoing program with specific work assigned each year. Chairman McLuckie explained that UDWR tortoise seasonals are used for two to three days to walk the fence and identify areas that need work. If the fence needs a small amount of work, they fix it. If it needs more substantial work done, it is submitted to the County. HCP

Interns can also walk fence lines and make sure it's all fixed.

d. Upper Galoot Restroom

Kristen Comella reported the Snow Canyon Restroom at Upper Galoot will be a two unit vault toilet with no electrical. Cameron has been on site to look and talk about temporary fencing. The restroom facility will have big vent pipes. The primary wind is down canyon and only one side will get vented properly because of the way that the doors face the parking lot. Bob Sandberg added that the ones he has seen don't seem too bad.

e. Recreation in the Reserve

Tim Croissant reported that the BLM has completed a business plan for the Red Cliffs Recreation Area and the White Reef area. As a result the day use fee was raised to \$5 and camping was raised to \$15 to cover traffic control and to make the area self-sufficient. A trailer has been placed to control traffic with interns counting cars and only allowing a certain number in the campground area so that emergency personnel can access the area if needed. The BLM is planting a garden with annual native plants at the Adams House.

Kristen mentioned that Presidents Day weekend was the busiest that she has ever seen Snow Canyon State Park. The recreation trend is continuing to increase. That same weekend Bob left the DTC and went to the Red Rock Canyon visitor center which was also packed. Marc Mortensen mentioned the St. George park personnel noticed some commercial climbing in the Reserve at Pioneer Park that weekend. They were charging people a lot of money to learn how to climb and they were told to leave because they did not have a permit from the City or the Reserve.

5. NEXT MEETING DATES

a. April 11, 2013

6. ADJOURN

<p><u>MOTION</u> by Kristen Comella to adjourn the meeting. <u>Seconded</u> by Tim Croissant. <u>Discussion</u>: None. <u>Vote was taken</u>: All voted aye. <u>Motion passed</u>.</p>

The meeting was adjourned at 11:55 a.m.
 Minutes prepared by Amber Stocks.