

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, **April 10, 2014.**

Members present were:

Kristen Comella, Vice Chairman	Snow Canyon State Park (SCSP)
Ann McLuckie	Utah Division of Wildlife Resources (UDWR)
Tim Croissant	Bureau of Land Management (BLM)
Cameron Rognan	Washington County HCP

Absent and excused:

Nathan Brown, Chairman	U.S. Fish and Wildlife Service (USFWS)
Gary McKell	Local Biologist

Also present were:

Bob Sandberg	Washington County HCP Administrator
Amber Stocks	Washington County HCP Recorder
Jodi Borgeson	Washington County Attorney's Office

1. CALL TO ORDER

Vice Chair Kristen Comella noted a quorum existed and called the meeting to order at 9:35 AM.

2. APPROVAL OF MINUTES

a. February 13, 2014

Page 4, motion discussion, sentence 2: added,

From: "The DWR will push for the best benefit for the wildlife."

To: "He thinks the DWR will push for the best benefit for the wildlife."

MOTION by Ann McLuckie to approve the minutes as amended.

Seconded by Tim Croissant.

Discussion: None.

Vote was taken: All voted aye.

Motion passed.

3. GENERAL BUSINESS

a. Report on TC recommendation to HCAC relative to using other species funds to purchase water for Confluence Park

Bob Sandberg reported the HCAC accepted the TC's recommendation and has asked the Confluence Park board to work with the DWR and the Virgin River Program to create a plan of how to use the water once it is acquired. The plan will hopefully tie into the Confluence Park board's monthly meeting. The HCAC felt the plan should point out the best ways to benefit other species and what percentage of benefit the other species will receive from the water.

b. Update on status of tortoise adoption program

Bob Sandberg updated the TC about the tortoise adoption program. The Salt Lake DWR office had a media blitz regarding the adoption program and received around 400 contacts and 76 applications for adoption. Corry Noble is in charge of the program and will determine how many of those applicants will be eligible to adopt.

Ann McLuckie informed the TC that the Tortoise Conservation Center in Las Vegas will be losing their funding and will not continue their efforts. The FWS and UDWR have tentatively agreed to allow 12 tortoises with upper respiratory tract disease (URTD) to come to Utah. These URTD tortoises cannot be released into the wild but won't be sick enough to be euthanized. They will go to the Best Friends Sanctuary if Best Friends determines they can financially afford to house the animals. Best Friends will become a holding facility until the tortoises are adopted outside of Washington, Kane or Iron County. The adoption process will still go through the UDWR.

c. Report on fire break activities for 2014

Bob Sandberg reported he has looked at Cottonwood Road with a goat herder and determined not to continue goat grazing along the right-of-way (ROW) this spring. This has been a very dry season and the goat herder felt concern there wasn't enough forage to keep his goats going. The ROW doesn't appear to be a fire issue like it has been in the past.

The areas along the ROW that Tim Croissant sprayed are very apparent. Tim's main concern when spraying was to protect the woody species. The creosotes aren't adapted to cold weather and this past winter there were many days below freezing. Many lower creosote branches are dead which could be from the sun reflecting off the snow. Tim talked about the hand spray verses aerial spray areas that were treated. He noted that on one side of creosotes the cheat grass is dead or didn't grow. On the other side where areal spray didn't reach there is a fan of grass coming out.

Bob added that in the past the HCP has paid other firms to monitor restoration efforts. The HCP could pay someone to evaluate the effectiveness of different treatments along the Cottonwood Road ROW. The TC felt that documenting the observations informally would be a better option at this point. Bob stated it would be good to make a plan for the ROW and put together a study of how to deal with it. In the past, pictures have been taken and informal observations have been written. The committee recommended doing the same for the restoration effort this season.

d. Report on ARS and USGS study plot status

Bob Sandberg reported that Agricultural Resource Service (ARS) planted last September and February at Turkey Farm. Their plots are fenced with a modified range fence with a metal flashing to keep rodents out. The tumbleweeds have built up along the fence, allowing the rodents to get in. Within the last three weeks USGS also planted at Turkey Farm, in a separate area to the north of the ARS plot. The USGS plot has a deer fence around it. Restoration is always a challenge in the desert and ARS has had many difficulties losing their plantings due to sand, wind, tumbleweeds and more.

e. Utility project updates – Ivins Dike, Washington Wells, Rocky Mountain Power

Cameron Rognan reported that JBR is monitoring Ivins City dikes; most of the dikes are out of the Reserve. Washington City has had some water well issues which have been resolved for now. Bob reported on two Rocky Mountain Power projects. The first project they went into the Reserve to check on wood poles and make sure they're not rotting. For the second project they are going to look at vegetation along the line which may grow tall and cut off power. Bob told Rocky Mountain Power not to cut vegetation in the Reserve because none of it will grow big enough to get into the power line. They don't anticipate needing to do any work in the Reserve but they will still need to walk their line and assess the vegetation.

f. Update and review of the Reserve's interim visitor map

The number of old maps available is running low and needs to be reprinted or replaced. Cameron Rognan brought one copy of a draft Reserve map he has been working on and hopes it will be ready for print in the next month or two. Bob Sandberg added that the price people will pay for the new map will depend upon direction from the HCAC, staff time, what printing costs will be, the type of paper it is printed on, etc. The map will be available on the Reserve's website for people to review and print on their own. The committee reviewed the different sections on the map and made minor suggestions for improvement.

g. Update on potential RIT meetings

The TC was reminded about Recovery Implementation Team meetings that will most likely be held in the summer. The FWS will head those meetings.

4. OTHER REPORTS FROM TC MEMBERS AND REQUESTS FOR FUTURE AGENDA ITEMS

Bob Sandberg mentioned that the Sheriff's office recently reported a tortoise death along Babylon Road. Based on the tortoise's unique ID number, it was discovered that it had been in the area for 14 years.

Kristen Comella reported that the Snow Canyon water pipeline project and storage tank is done. The contractor reseeded the area and left the Park with a large bag to reseed again next fall. The challenge will be to keep people from parking along the road's shoulder. The Park has hired an assistant manager, Jordan Perez. This is not a law enforcement position. The Park hopes to have seasonal deputies on weekends during peak seasons. Over the next year Jordan will assess trail conditions in the Park which is an ongoing issue as many trails were not properly designed and are not sustainable.

Kristen continued that SCSP has partnered with the Friends of Snow Canyon to reinvigorate their trail steward program. The Park went from two to 11 stewards in January. In the next week ten more stewards will be trained to help with general trail maintenance and to make contact with visitors. The Friends group helped with a recent cleanup project at an old dump site near Chuckwalla trail. There will need to be around six more work parties to fully clean up the site.

Kristen further reported SCSP is working on getting approval for a replacement sewage dump site at the campground. There is too much pressure on the leach field and it has failed a few times already. If it fails again the options for another leach field become very limited. Kristen would like to move the dump station and place it in an already disturbed area within the campground. Kristen hopes to keep all impacts in the open area of the campground. Kristen will bring the issue to the HCP staff when she receives approval from the State. Ann McLuckie reported there is a law enforcement fieldtrip in April which Jordan can attend. The TC talked about the shift in Snow Canyon State Park law enforcement.

Bob mentioned the HCP was awarded a Section 6 grant. The DWR has assigned Greg Hansen from the DWR/Attorney General's Office to help acquire land in the Reserve. Greg will put out notification to all the land owners in the Reserve letting them know there is money available and will ask for bids on how much property they would be willing to sell. Jodi Borgeson added that the Washington County attorney's office is in communication with Greg and has provided information to him. Bob continued, there may be an issue with the DWR's match money which is only valid through next June. Ann added that worst case scenario we could carry over most of the match money to the next fiscal year.

Ann asked about the status of the fence that needs repair near an Ivins detention dam. The fence line which is on Reserve boundary may potentially move if additional property is added to the Reserve. Bob answered it is supposedly underway but he has had a difficult time getting response from Ivins City. Cameron added the Reserve could use the fence repair soon, it is in bad shape.

5. NEXT MEETING DATES

a. May 8, 2014

6. **ADJOURN**

MOTION by Cameron Rognan to adjourn.
Seconded by Ann McLuckie.
Discussion: None.
Vote was taken: All voted aye.
Motion passed.

The meeting was adjourned at 10:45 AM.
Minutes prepared by Amber Stocks.