

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, **August 14, 2014.**

Members present were:

Nathan Brown, Chairman	U.S. Fish and Wildlife Service (USFWS)
Kristen Comella, Vice Chairman	Snow Canyon State Park (SCSP)
Ann McLuckie	Utah Division of Wildlife Resources (UDWR)
Cameron Rognan	Washington County HCP
Gary McKell	Local Biologist
Tim Croissant	Bureau of Land Management (BLM)

Also present were:

Bob Sandberg	Washington County HCP Administrator
Amber Stocks	Washington County HCP Recorder
Alan Gardner	Washington County Commissioner
Eric Clarke	Deputy County Attorney

1. CALL TO ORDER

Chairman Nathan Brown noted a quorum existed and called the meeting to order at 9:40 a.m.

2. APPROVAL OF MINUTES

a. July 3, 2014

Page 2, paragraph 3, sentence 2: added,

From: "Ivins will need to bring in heavy equipment to excavate the material and haul it away."

To: "Ivins will need to bring in heavy equipment to excavate the material from the basins and haul it away."

Page 2, paragraph 3, sentence 4 & 5: added,

From: "Any time an animal burrows into a dike it has the potential to compromise the structure in a big flood event. The intent of this project is to bring the dikes into compliance with the state's requirements and to make sure the structures are not compromised in any way."

To: "In addition, any time an animal burrows into a dike it has the potential to compromise the structure in a big flood event. The other intent of this project is to bring the dikes and the basins into compliance with the state's requirements and to make

sure the structures are not compromised in any way.”

Page 2, paragraph 6, sentence 1: added,

From: “The TC agreed that if the project incurs disturbances beyond the existing structure then the MOG mitigation formula will need to be applied.”

To: “The TC agreed that if the project incurs disturbances beyond the existing structure and sediment basins then the MOG mitigation formula will need to be applied.”

Page 4, paragraph 3, sentence 2: changed,

From: “The Upper Virgin Recovery Unit RIT will work collectively and will have ~~around~~ 14 proposals.”

To: “The Upper Virgin Recovery Unit RIT will work collectively and will have a lot of proposals.”

Page 5, paragraph 1, sentence 4: changed,

From: “Trail width ~~doesn’t mean a lot~~ to her because there is always a zone of impact on each side of the trail.”

To: “Trail width isn’t as important to her because there is always a zone of impact on each side of the trail.”

Page 5, paragraph 3, last sentence: changed,

From: “~~The spring recovery actions are a big benefit to SUU’s proposal.~~”

To: “They are also willing to do on-the-ground trail work.”

MOTION by Kristen Comella to approve the minutes as amended.

Seconded by Cameron Rognan.

Discussion: None.

Vote was taken: All voted aye.

Motion passed.

3. GENERAL BUSINESS

a. Review projects for restoration grant proposals

Ann McLuckie shared exhibit 3-a-1, restoration project proposals. The three projects include: 1) removal of non-native shrubs and trees from the Red Cliffs National Conservation Area; 2) burned Desert Tortoise habitat restoration in Red Cliffs National Conservation Area; and 3) fuel breaks in the Red Cliffs National Conservation Area.

Ann explained that any project proposed for the Watershed Restoration Initiative (WRI) grant will need to have NEPA done. Tim Croissant stated he can work on the NEPA which could take three to six weeks. The BLM requires a 30 day comment period if there is a potential for controversy. Since NEPA makes it difficult to manage the Reserve, Chairman Brown felt it would be good for the BLM and the FWS to work together so that NEPA isn't required for all projects. The TC discussed NEPA and the importance of the process that needs to be followed. Management needs to occur in a timely manner.

The TC talked about planting containerized plants and seeding the Reserve. The cost could be high to hire someone that could put in and water containerized plants. The TC discussed alternatives for funding and the need to coordinate the restoration efforts and proposals between partners; a planning committee may be necessary.

Bob Sandberg felt that seeding should still be considered since planting containerized plants in 500 acres would require water trucks to drive through the Reserve to deliver water to those plants. This could be detrimental to tortoises and become a logistical problem. Tim stated that drill seeding can cause significant soil disturbance. Kristen Comella added the location of the plots should determine the methodology of restoration efforts (containerized plants or seeding). Ann further added that perennials are important long term.

Funding from WRI is available for one year, however if the project proposals are sent in as a multiple year project then it can carry forward to another year. The committee discussed how the funding is often awarded for projects involving cows and elk. However, this is an opportunity to branch out and benefit multiple species at a time.

Ann moved the committee to discuss fuel breaks and to identify opportunistic areas for fuel breaks like roads and power lines. She felt a modeling system should be used to determine where the most effective areas are away from roads and power lines. Kristen stated it's difficult to pin-point because fires are erratic. We don't know where or when they will happen. The TC agreed that if all the old roads are treated, it would help a lot. An effective fuel break needs to be wide and they need to be maintained at a three year minimum. Tim stated that UTVs could help create the firebreaks.

Ann reiterated the projects which can be done the fastest should be the ones that are considered for a WRI funding proposal. She added it would be good to remove tamarisk and Russian olive from the washes. The TC discussed how and where this can occur.

b. HCAC assignment - reevaluate the trail options at Green Springs

Cameron showed exhibit 3-b-1, an assignment from the HCAC to re-evaluate trail options at Green Springs. The committee reviewed the assignment and Cameron explained he has met with the developer and Washington City. The city is in the

process of amending their master trail plan to accept option #3 as the Green Springs trail. Cameron further explained the city really wants this trail to option #3. The developer and City will create a ½ mile paved trail from a city park to the Reserve. The developer will ensure there is a public easement on the trail and the city will maintain it.

The TC discussed the similarities with Paradise Canyon and how to avoid the same problematic issues with public access.

MOTION by Kristen Comella to approve option #3 but Washington City and the developer need to work together to come up with a public easement. The City needs to agree to provide a ten foot paved trail and mark the streets to get users up to the option #3 access point. The existing option #1 trailhead will go away.

Seconded by Gary McKell.

Discussion: None.

Vote was taken: All voted aye.

Motion passed.

c. Discussion on Winchester South access point and connector trail

Commissioner Gardner arrived.

Bob Sandberg explained the HCP staff has met with the BLM to discuss the Winchester access point. The current Reserve map has misidentified the trail. The group agreed the best location is the one shown on exhibit 3-c-1. Bob proposed to eliminate the green trail shown on the exhibit from the new Reserve map that will soon be printed. The developers and land owners are willing to put in a parking area to accommodate equestrians and allow access to the Reserve. The developer's long term plans are to build a trailhead closer to the Reserve.

MOTION by Cameron Rognan to approve the new trail designation and to get rid of the green trail as shown in exhibit 3-c-1.

Seconded by Gary McKell.

Discussion: None.

Vote was taken: All voted aye.

Motion passed.

Commissioner Gardner left.

d. Discussion and possible action on SUU's trail monitoring proposal

Cameron Rognan reported that HCP staff met with SUU and the BLM. Exhibit 3-d-1 shows a modified proposal from SUU for human impact monitoring. The BLM feels concerned about the network of illegal trails. SUU won't have time to follow all the

illegal trails during their monitoring efforts. The TC agreed it would be good to focus on recovery actions and monitoring that would be helpful to the Reserve.

Cameron explained an option could be to have SUU monitor and treat 1/3 of trails each year. Ann McLuckie stated that zone 4 is an area of concern because of ATV use in the river. She feels it's important to have some monitoring presence in zone 4. Cameron stated the Reserve's trail stewards monitor the area and send the HCP reports when other users are doing things illegally. Until zone 4 disallows users to go off trail, then monitoring there doesn't effectively use the monitoring money. Bob Sandberg felt the priority and best use of the monitoring budget should be outside of zone 4. He added that information needs to be given to benefit the land managers who can then do things that really make a difference for tortoises.

Cameron stated that if \$20,000 is spent, it should be on something that can really make a difference in improving the conditions. SUU would mostly monitor in the fall and would do recovery actions in the spring. Kristen Comella felt that SUU should be able to monitor every trail in the lowland portion of the Reserve every year instead of 33% each year. She felt that the fall and spring approach is great.

Cameron added it would be good to discuss areas for project areas such as Toe trail, Bone Wash, Elephant Arch and Paradise Canyon. The TC discussed stabilization issues with Toe trail and the need to keep this trail as an option. The TC will look at other areas until Snow Canyon decides what measures need to take place for Toe trail.

Cameron stated it would be good to have a restoration plan ready with multiple options so that the BLM can do NEPA if needed. The TC agreed Paradise Canyon is a problem area and could be a good place to start. Ann asked again if zone 4 can be monitored by SUU. The TC agreed not to include zone 4 in SUU's monitoring until the BLM implements changes in use.

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

a. Report on Ledges Fencing

Bob Sandberg reported he has met with a developer on the west side of SR-18. There are both temporary and permanent fences up and some homes even have gates allowing private access into Snow Canyon State Park. The developer has expressed willingness to honor the fence agreement signed by a previous developer. The gates that have been put in will be removed or will become inoperable.

Kristen Comella stated that the newest homes in the area have been problematic and SCSP has been in touch with Code Enforcement. She felt we need to tighten up with the development because there have been many issues besides fencing. Eric Clarke gave some advice on how to handle the issues that have arisen and which may arise.

b. Report on access point and property at "Palisades at Snow Canyon"

Bob reported that local developer, Walter Plum, came to the HCP previously and there was a fieldtrip to Ivins. The TC agreed at that time to allow Reserve access from the development if Ivins City guaranteed there would be public access. There have been some meetings with the developer, private owners, and Ivins City relative to fencing. The lower end will be developed and when they're ready to develop adjacent to the Reserve they will put in a wall, fence or railing and install a step-over. Provisions have been made for a trail on the east side of the development. Ivins City will require the developer to provide a bond so that money is available in case they go under and don't build the fence. There is a pie shaped piece that has been fenced into the Reserve and will be donated to the Reserve, contingent on public access and a step-over. Ivins City feels it would be best if the developer deeds the property to the city before developing. Ivins City would then transfer the property to SCSP.

c. Report on Ivins City mitigation property inclusion

Regarding the Tuacahn Wash Detention Basin mitigation, Bob reported that Ivins City has completed a baseline report. The report will go along with the conservation easement. The city has been getting bids on fencing. Once the HCP gets the report and the signed easement, it will be sent to the County Commission for their signatures. After they are signed then the fence can be put up.

d. Additional reports by the TC

Cameron Rognan reported he has been in contact with a sub-contractor for the Southern Parkway project. Cameron will give them tortoise training and they will begin their work in the fall. If they find tortoises it would be best for them to contact the DWR.

Kristen Comella reported she has talked with Chuck about the NRCS Ivins Dike project. They discussed the map of where they are going to take sediment out which is within their easement. Before the Reserve was created, Ivins purchased the land and had a conservation easement on the land. It will become problematic if NRCS goes outside the easement into the Section 6 property.

Kristen reported a tortoise was found by a citizen on Tuacahn drive who put it over the fence on the north side of the road into State Park property.

Kristen requested a future agenda item and explained SCSP has been working on updates and revisions to their trail plan. One thing that keeps coming up from user groups is the two mile trail that goes throughout the canyon. When the trail was created in 1994, the trail didn't go to the top of the canyon because of cost and habitat impacts. There is currently an interest to find a safe way for pedestrians and cyclists to reach the top of the canyon. SCSP is considering widening the road shoulders for this purpose from the Upper Galoot trailhead to the top of the canyon. Bob suggested that SCSP present the road widening proposal to the HCAC with the understanding that they'll probably send it back to the TC. Nathan Brown stated this will have to be looked at just

like all other projects from all other applicants. If there is a loss of habitat then proper protocols need to be followed and the integrity of the HCP needs to be maintained.

Ann McLuckie asked about the status of the BLM's draft travel management plan. Eric Clarke reported it has been sent to all cooperating agencies to comment on before it is sent to the public.

5. **NEXT MEETING DATES**

a. **September 11, 2014**

6. **ADJOURN**

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

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