

HABITAT CONSERVATION ADVISORY COMMITTEE

for the Washington County Habitat Conservation Plan (HCP)

A **regular meeting** of the Habitat Conservation Advisory Committee (HCAC) was held in the Washington City Council Chambers on **January 27, 2015**.

Committee members present were:

Chris Blake, Chairman	Environmental Organization
John Bramall, Vice Chairman	Mayors Association
Larry Crist	U.S. Fish & Wildlife Service (USFWS)
Henry Maddux	Utah Dept. of Natural Resources (UDNR)
Chris Hart	Local Development
Marc Mortensen	Citizen-at-Large
Bob Sandberg	HCP Administrator

Absent and Excused:

Jimmy Tyree	Bureau of Land Management (BLM)
-------------	---------------------------------

Also present were:

Lacey McIntyre	Washington County HCP – Recorder
Alan Gardner	Washington County Commissioner
Cameron Rognan	Technical Committee (HCP)
Ann McLuckie	Technical Committee (DWR)
Kristen Comella	Technical Committee (SCSP)
Jodi Borgeson	Deputy County Attorney
Lisa Rutherford	Citizen
Paul Van Dam	Citizen
Susan Crook	Citizen

1. **CALL TO ORDER**

Chairman Chris Blake called the meeting to order at 1:00 p.m. noting that a quorum was 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 Agenda**
- b. **Review and Approve Regular Meeting Minutes**
 1. **November 25, 2014**

- c. **Next Meeting Date**
 - 1. **February 24, 2015**

MOTION by John Bramall to approve the Consent Agenda.
Seconded by Larry Crist.
Discussion: None.
Vote was taken: All voted aye.
Motion passed.

3. **DECLARATION OF CONFLICTS OF INTEREST**

- a. Chris Hart mentioned there is an issue on the Agenda regarding Ivins City and he wanted to reiterate that he currently serves as Mayor of Ivins.

4. **PRESENTATIONS**

- a. **Human Impact Monitoring Report –Briget Eastep – SUU**

Briget Eastep, Southern Utah University Associate Professor of Outdoor Recreation, presented her findings from a recent SUU Human Impact Monitoring project to the committee using Exhibit 4-a-1. She, a colleague, and a group of students began this project by discussing the desired trail conditions with the Technical Committee. They then put together a protocol for path monitoring to discover what the current conditions are versus the desired conditions. To monitor the desired conditions they looked for trail width, unauthorized trails or trail access points, trail nodes, and off trail impacts. They hiked on October 31, 2014 and November 8, 2014 stopping every half mile to record visual disturbance impacts and to collect interval data. Once the data was recorded they downloaded and analyzed it to make accurate severity ratings on each half mile of the trails. Overall, they monitored 17 trails covering 22.4 miles.

Once the data was analyzed they assigned a severity rating. The trails with red severity, meaning they do not meet the desired conditions and have severe impact included: Chuckwalla, Halfway Wash, Pioneer Names, and Toe Trail. The trails with yellow severity rating, meaning they do not meet desired conditions but the impacts are comparatively moderate included: Beck Hill, Butterfly Trail, Gap, Hidden Pinyon, Johnson Canyon, Lava Flow, Paradise Rim, Scout Cave, Three Ponds, and Turtle Wall. The trails with green severity rating, meaning they are in relatively good shape and close to meeting desired conditions included: Padre Canyon, Petrified Dunes, and Whiptail.

Through their research they discovered some of the desired conditions being followed are camping restrictions, climbing restrictions, no litter or human waste, motorized vehicles staying on designated roads, no paintball activities, no target shooting, and no signs of illegal dumping. Some of the desired conditions not being met are the existence

of unauthorized trails and trail access points, many off trail impacts, and human caused off trail plant destruction.

The recommendations from SUU included placing signage at the trailheads giving clear expectations to users and reasons for those expectations. They noted hikers caused 74% of the off trail impacts, equestrian use accounted for 21%, and mountain bikers 20%. Secondly, they suggested re-signing trails and putting in natural deterrents, like mulch, in severe areas to keep users on trail. Their third suggestion was to increase volunteer patrols in severe areas. Finally, they suggested clearly identifying equestrian trails.

SUU will continue to assess an area each fall. Kelly Goonan, the new Assistant Professor of Outdoor Recreation at SUU, has suggested collecting data by tracking conditions in line data as opposed to point data. This would supply a more detailed account of conditions on the ground, without losing previously collected data. They will also work to catalog erosion points, analyze visual disturbance point data with BLM's social trail data, and experiment on reducing impacts in severe areas.

Chris Hart asked what the recommendations are to keep people from going off trail. Briget suggested lining the trails with rocks so people can see a clear path to follow. She believes people want to do the right thing but are not always sure what the right thing is. If the path is clearly defined with a barrier most people will be willing to stay within that barrier. She also suggested having one clearly marked trail to a view point area instead of many trails to view points. Larry Crist asked if they have a sense of how the impacts have changed since they monitored last year. Briget answered from 2013 to 2014 the trails were wider and there are more visible impacts. Henry Maddux questioned whether the Youth Conservation Corps could be utilized to help line the trails with rocks or help with other issues. Bob answered that he has discussed that with Snow Canyon as well as BLM and the Outdoor Recreation planner is going to use the intern group out at Chuckwalla to see if they can work on the erosion and obliterate unauthorized trails. Briget and SUU will also be back this spring to do similar work, picking locations where the greatest benefit can be obtained in the amount of time available.

5. UTILITY AND DEVELOPMENT PROJECTS

- a. **None**

6. GENERAL BUSINESS

- a. **Update on land acquisition efforts – Bob Sandberg**

Bob Sandberg updated the committee on the section 6 funding. The state DWR representative, Greg Hanson, met with the State of Utah School and Institutional Trust Lands Administration (SITLA) and the Virgin River Land Preservation Association. They

have come to an agreement on a price for 90 acres with SITLA and 11 acres with Virgin River Land Preservation Association. They are in final negotiations and trying to close out those two parcels.

The HCP staff and county are working with BLM on two contracts with archaeological companies. BYU has completed all their work and turned in their report. The BLM has gone through their analysis and researched if sites identified are eligible for national register placement. The field work has been completed on the second parcel near Leeds, and the report is due within the week.

b. Update on permit renewal efforts –Larry Crist

Larry Crist reported state contractor Mark Capone is working on the initial request for the renewal. The initial renewal request will be submitted to the Fish and Wildlife service soon. Once that is done FWS can begin the permit renewal process. When the permit renewal process is initiated it allows for negotiation among parties. There is no time limit set on negotiations, but it is important to get the renewal in early so there is significant time for those negotiations without a permit lapse.

c. Technical Committee Report - (Cameron Rognan)

Cameron Rognan mentioned there was a field trip and discussion of an Eagle Rock drainage repair, discussed further in item 6-d-1. Also, the TC spoke about a process of Ivins dike sediment removal, discussed in detail in item 6-e-1. Finally, Cameron mentioned discussions between DWR, BLM, and FWS concerning funds to revegetate specific burn areas in the Reserve.

d. Consideration of TC recommendation on Eagle Rock Flood Control

Cameron reported there was a resident who was concerned about flooding in the Eagle Rock Subdivision. There was discussion about putting a drainage ditch in the Reserve behind the resident's property, but after a TC field trip to assess the area the concern for habitat loss was too great. The TC decided not to support the drainage ditch due to concerns for the desert tortoise and loss of habitat. The TC recommends Ivins repair the existing berm. The resident is also going to pursue other options in the area with his HOA and Ivins City to fix the issue.

MOTION by Chris Hart to ratify the recommendation by the TC to repair the existing berm and let the homeowner make improvements within his property boundary.

Seconded by John Bramall.

Discussion: None.

Vote was taken: All voted aye.

Motion passed.

e. Consideration of TC recommendation on Ivins dike sediment removal

Several months ago the Natural Resources Conservation Service (NRCS) proposed to do work on the Ivins City dams and dikes to bring them up to standard and code. Part of that is to remove sediment behind the dikes. There was an opportunity that Ivins City engineer Chuck Gillette developed to have contractors remove the sediment now.

The TC made the following motion: “to allow Ivins City to go in, during the inactive season, and do sediment removal work among all of the basins. As part of the project, Ivins will work with HCP and state park staff to clearly identify the single track access road in and out, as well as the access points off the access road to the sediment basins. The sediment is to be removed and taken off site. Where possible, the removed vegetation is to be spread back over the disturbance area at the end of the project. Also, they will look for opportunities to handpick and replant smaller shrubs all while following UDP protocols. There will also be work on a three-year weed control plan agreement. In the interim, Nathan will consult with NRCS for longer term funding and replanting of containerized shrubs.”

Chuck would like to have the part of the project of handpicking shrubs be a recommendation, but not be a requirement.

MOTION by Chris Hart to amend the TC recommendation with the phrase ‘and evaluate whether this works for future sediment removal’.

Seconded by John Bramall.

Discussion: None.

Vote was taken: All voted aye.

Motion passed.

MOTION by John Bramall to adopt the TC recommendation to allow Ivins City to go in, during the inactive season, and do sediment removal work among all of the basins. As part of the project Ivins will work with HCP and state park staff to clearly identify the single track access road in and out, as well as the access points off the access road to the sediment basins. The sediment is to be removed and taken off site. Where possible, the removed vegetation is to be spread back over the disturbance area at the end of the project. Also, they will look for opportunities to handpick and replant smaller shrubs all while following UDP protocols, and evaluate whether this works for future sediment removal. There will also be work on a three-year weed control plan agreement. In the interim, Nathan will consult with NRCS for longer term funding and replanting of containerized shrubs.

Seconded by Marc Mortensen.

Discussion: None.

Vote was taken: All voted aye.

Motion passed.

f. HCP Administrator's Report - Bob Sandberg

1. Annual and 4th Quarter report submission

Bob submitted the 2014 annual and the 2014 4th quarter reports. He asked the committee to look through them both and be ready for approval or amendment at the February meeting. John Bramall suggested the acronyms be spelled out in the reports so there is no confusion as to what they mean in the future.

2. Revenue and expense report

Bob submitted exhibit 6-f-2 which is the 2014 revenue and expense report. As of this meeting, the total revenue was \$622,363 and total expenses were \$610,007 for 2014. Chris Hart asked why the budget for fencing was so high with not much spent. Bob answered the HCP had the resources to do fencing, but there was not a lot of planned fencing. A big portion of that budget was due to previous discussions about potentially fencing the boundary of Zone 4. The HCP staff did not determine there was a need to do that in 2014.

3. Completion and closeout of Red Hills Parkway/Bluff Street Project

Bob reported the intersection work at Red Hills Parkway/Bluff Street has been completed. There has been a walk through by HCP staff and there were a few fencing issues to be corrected. Those issues were corrected and everything has been completed from the HCP standpoint.

4. MOG Meeting report

Bob attended a Management Oversight Group (MOG) meeting in Las Vegas in December. It is a management level meeting including anyone involved with the desert tortoise preservation and recovery. Recently, the group has not met regularly but with the Recovery Implementation Teams (RIT) coming together to make plans for proceeding with recovery efforts there is a renewed emphasis to put together this group again. They want to regenerate interest and involvement, redo the charter, identify those who should participate in the meetings, and discuss what they want to accomplish. County and local governments can be involved so Bob was there to be a representative for Commissioner Gardner.

5. HCP visitor center south wall update

Bob mentioned he and Cameron Rognan met with Rob and Justine Peterson to discuss

what should be done with the wall and what the costs could be. They met on site and looked at the south wall as well as a possibility on the north wall of the building. Rob and Justine will put together some options. They spoke about incorporating the tortoise, gila monster, and a road-runner as well as making it something that will be inviting to gain interest in the visitor center.

6. **White Dome Endowment Fund**

The HCAC recommended the County Commission fund the White Dome Endowment. The County Commission approved that recommendation and the full amount has been funded.

7. **PUBLIC COMMENT**

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).

Lisa Rutherford thanked the committee for moving forward with the mural. She found the human impact study interesting and wondered if the newspaper was being used to educate the public on proper use of the Reserve. She suggested using local news outlets to educate the public.

Susan Crook, Paradise Canyon HOA board and Sun Cliff, suggested posting a proper trail usage note in the Paradise Canyon HOA newsletter. She also knows scouts who are looking for Eagle projects if there is any work in the Reserve needed to be done. She notified the committee that Sun Cliff is working with BLM for a volunteer trail work day for the Paradise Canyon/Halfway Wash area.

8. **MEMBER REPORTS & REQUEST FOR FUTURE AGENDA ITEMS**

a. None

9. **ADJOURN**

MOTION by John Bramall to adjourn the meeting.
Seconded by Marc Mortensen.
Discussion: None.
Vote was taken: All voted aye.
Motion passed.

The meeting was adjourned at 2:20 p.m.
Minutes prepared by Lacey McIntyre.