

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 **May 26, 2015**.

Committee members present were:

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

Also present were:

| | |
|------------------|----------------------------------|
| Lacey McIntyre | Washington County HCP – Recorder |
| Cameron Rognan | Technical Committee (HCP) |
| Kristen Comella | Technical Committee (SCSP) |
| Ann McLuckie | Technical Committee (DWR) |
| Alan Gardner | County Commissioner |
| Jodi Borgeson | Deputy County Attorney |
| Eric Clarke | Deputy County Attorney |
| Wayne Pace | Sons of Utah Pioneers |
| Arthur Partridge | Dixie Encampment Chapter |
| Julie Applegate | St. George News |
| Bob Brennan | Brennan Holdings |
| Jim Raines | Brennan Holdings |
| Alan Carter | His Family Matters |

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. **April 28, 2015**
- c. **Next Meeting Date**
 1. **June 23, 2015**

Approved HCAC Meeting Minutes – May 26, 2015

MOTION by Chris Hart to approve the Consent Agenda.
Seconded by Marc Mortensen.
Discussion: None.
Vote was taken: All voted aye.
Motion passed.

3. **DECLARATION OF CONFLICTS OF INTEREST**

a. Chris Blake declared he sits on the Board of Directors for the Virgin River Land Preservation Association and, therefore, has a conflict on the land acquisition item (6-b) on this week's agenda.

4. **PRESENTATIONS**

a. **Brennan Holdings presentation – Bob Brennan/Jim Raines**

Bob Brennan and Jim Raines presented Exhibit 4-a-1, an updated report from Brennan Holdings on options available to acquire the private lands within the Red Cliffs Desert Reserve. The land owners are requesting a plan that shows options and methods in place as compensation for their land. Brennan Holdings is asking that the USFWS, Washington County, and the HCAC use this report as the basis to consider Reserve acquisition alternatives.

Jim Raines mentioned four fundamental questions they would like to be answered. First, are the private lands within the Reserve critical to the Reserve's ability to provide the required mitigation under the Section 10 Incidental Take Permit? Larry answered, yes, the lands are critical to the Reserve. He mentioned it is in the HCP that private land owners within the Reserve can develop their own HCP. In order to do that, there must be adequate land for mitigation. Many of those lands have disappeared from development so it is something that can be looked at, but it is increasingly difficult to come up with mitigation. Secondly, if the Private Lands are needed in the Reserve, are the Private Land owners willing sellers? Jim answered they are here today to say they are a willing seller. Thirdly, if the Private Lands are needed for the Reserve, are the stakeholders of the Washington County HCP willing buyers? Finally, Brennan holdings asked, if the private lands are required for the viability of the Reserve and if there is a willing seller and a willing buyer, then what options are available?

Jim reported there are eight acceptable alternative options currently available for Reserve acquisitions and discussed each of the following: land exchanges, land and water conservation funds, US Fish and Wildlife Funds, conservation easements, private land owner donations, private land owner development within the Reserve, local government impact fee or property tax, and congressional appropriation.

5. **UTILITY AND DEVELOPMENT PROJECTS**

a. None

6. **GENERAL BUSINESS**

a. **Discussion of Desert Garden Field Trip**

Some members of the committee took a field trip to the Red Hills Desert Garden. Overall, the committee believed it was a great opportunity to see what the Water Conservancy District, St. George City, and Virgin River program partnered together to accomplish in regards to conservation in the area. Chris Blake commented there was not public education on the desert tortoise at the site. Bob mentioned the TC is working on possibly making a trail out of the Desert Garden going north with panels telling about some of the plants, animals, and history of the Reserve.

b. **Update on land acquisition efforts – Bob/Dawna**

Regarding section 6 acquisitions, the state Division of Wildlife Resources (DWR) has sent the paperwork for the Virgin River Land Preservation Association property to the title company. It should close within a week or two.

Dawna reported the feasibility package for the Long Valley exchange has gone back to Washington and is moving forward.

c. **Update on permit renewal – Bob/Larry**

Larry reported the permit renewal has not moved forward since the last meeting. The Fish and Wildlife Service (FWS) sent the HCP a letter acknowledging they received the renewal application. The current permit will remain in force as long as there are good faith negotiations taking place. Larry acknowledged it is time to move forward with the discussions on the linkage between how to deal with the land acquisition issues and permit renewal.

d. **Continuation of the Quarry Trail proposal**

In the previous HCAC meeting the committee discussed three options for a proposed Quarry Trail: Routes A, B, and C. Route C was the only route recommended by the TC, but Route A was the most favorable with the City of St. George. After a discussion regarding the trail, the HCAC decided to make a motion to send Route A back to the TC for more consideration. The committee would like the TC to evaluate Route A to determine how much mitigation would be required.

MOTION by John Bramall to send Route A back to the TC to evaluate this option further.

Seconded by Dawna Ferris-Rowley.

Discussion: None.

Vote was taken: Henry Maddux voted No. All other members voted Aye.

Motion passed.

e. Consideration of 1st Quarter 2015 Report

Bob asked if the committee members had any questions or concerns regarding the 1st Quarter 2015 report that was handed out at the April meeting. No members had any changes or questions.

MOTION by Chris Hart to accept the 1st Quarter 2015 report.

Seconded by John Bramall.

Discussion: None.

Vote was taken: All voted aye.

Motion passed.

f. Technical Committee report – Kristen Comella

Kristen reported the TC discussed that Southern Utah University (SUU) and The Youth Conservation Corps (YCC) will be working on the Chuckwalla trail focusing on erosion control and trail definition. The groups will begin work in early June.

The TC had a brief discussion about habitat restoration projects and funding. Ann is working on an over arching contract to outline all parties' responsibilities so, as the projects move forward, details do not get lost.

g. HCP Administrator's report – Bob Sandberg

1. SUU trail restoration project

The HCP is working with BLM and State Parks to have the SUU and YCC crews do trail erosion and trail definition work on the Chuckwalla Trail.

2. Tortoise adoption program/Nevada tortoises

Bob reported DWR has a tortoise adoption program for outside Washington, Kane, and Iron County. Those tortoises are captive tortoises or those who have tested positive for the respiratory disease. There has been more demand than the HCP could supply so 5 tortoises from Southern Nevada were brought in to be adopted out in the Salt Lake City area.

3. South wall mural update

Bob updated the committee about the south wall mural. Rob and Justine Peterson, along with a group of students, have begun the mural.

4. Cottonwood Road fuel reduction efforts

Bob mentioned the HCP hired goats for Cottonwood Road that are eating the current crop of tumbleweed. The HCP believes the goats are doing a good job on existing new growth. Bob will continue to see if there is a way to deal with dead tumbleweed removal.

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).

a. None

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 2:30 p.m.
Minutes prepared by Lacey McIntyre.