

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, **January 8, 2015.**

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
Tim Croissant	Bureau of Land Management (BLM)
Marshall Topham	Local Biologist

Also present were:

Bob Sandberg	Washington County HCP Administrator
Lacey McIntyre	Washington County HCP Recorder

1. CALL TO ORDER

Chairman Nathan Brown noted a quorum existed and called the meeting to order at 10:30 a.m.

2. APPROVAL OF MINUTES

a. November 20, 2014

Page 2, paragraph 1, sentence 1: changed,

From: “The Technical Committee took a fieldtrip to Snow Canyon State Park to assess the ~~proposed~~ area to be affected for the shoulder expansion project.”

To: “The Technical Committee took a fieldtrip to Snow Canyon State Park to assess the area to be affected for the proposed shoulder expansion project.”

Page 3, paragraph 1, sentence 2: deleted,

~~“Kristen mentioned Washington County, Ivins, St. George, and Santa Clara do not want residents to pay fees to enter the park so to think they will support or fund this is unlikely.”~~

Page 3, paragraph 2, sentence 1: deleted,

~~“Nathan suggested making the argument that it is a road improvement and safety project, not expansion.”~~

Page 4, paragraph 1, sentence 1: changed,

From: “Kristen updated the committee on the berm repair and possible drainage addition in the Eagle Rock subdivision.”

To: “Kristen updated the committee on the berm repair and possible extension in the Eagle Rock subdivision.”

Page 4, paragraph 1, sentence 4: changed,

From: “Exhibit 3-c-1 showed the proposal to put in a drainage ditch immediately behind Dennis Green’s property in Eagle Rock.”

To: “Exhibit 3-c-1 showed a separate proposal to put in a drainage ditch immediately behind Dennis Green’s property in Eagle Rock.”

Page 4, paragraph 2, sentence 3: added,

From: “Ann mentioned the current policy is that if they test positive through the Elisa test they are not to be placed back into the Reserve.”

To: “Ann mentioned the current policy is that if they test Elisa positive they are not to be placed back into the Reserve, but to be placed into the captive tortoise program.”

Page 4, paragraph 2, sentence 7: deleted,

From: “This is not a TC decision and is instead something that Ann and Nathan need to confer on ~~and make decisions about what to do with tortoises that test positive for the disease.~~”

To: “This is not a TC decision and instead is something that Ann and Nathan need to confer on.”

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

3. GENERAL BUSINESS

- a. Discussion of field trip and potential recommendation to the HCAC for flood prevention at Eagle Rock**

Ann McLuckie explained that the TC went on a fieldtrip to Eagle Rock and spoke about a proposal for a drainage ditch that would be adjacent to the wall on Dennis Green's property, up to 2-4 feet out, and have a slope of approximately 33-45%. The committee was concerned about loss of habitat and tortoises getting into the ditch and not being able to get out. Upon assessing the area where the proposed drainage ditch would be located, the TC decided the loss of habitat was too great and had concerns for the desert tortoise.

Kristen Comella added that with the flooding issues happening on Dennis Green's property there is one piece in place to keep water from the homes, which is the Eagle Rock drainage berm. The city will be repairing that structure. Dennis is going to pursue extending the water barrier on his wall between himself, the city, and his HOA.

MOTION by Kristen Comella that the TC does not support installation of the drainage ditch due to potential permanent loss of habitat.

Seconded by Cameron Rognan.

Discussion: None.

Vote was taken: All voted aye.

Motion passed.

b. TC Assignment – Discussion and potential recommendation to the HCAC of Ivins flood control dike sediment removal and rehabilitation

Cameron read Exhibit 3-b-1 which was a TC assignment regarding the Ivins flood control dike sediment removal. After storms last year, there was a lot of sediment in the Tuacahn detention basin. To address this issue, Chuck Gillette, Ivins City engineer, sent an email to contractors asking if anyone wanted to come remove the sediment. There were so many interested parties that Chuck decided to negotiate with some of those contractors in exchange for fixing berms or drainage facilities elsewhere. Due to his efforts, there will be sediment removal in the Tuacahn detention basin starting within the next week. There were still more parties wanting sediment so Chuck offered to negotiate for other areas that need sediment removed.

Chuck Gillette reported that Natural Resources Conservation Service, NRCS, still wants to help rehab dams. Part of that rehab is removing sediment as discussed in TC meetings last summer. However, that process through NRCS will not happen right away whereas Chuck has the ability to get some of the sediment removed now through negotiations with local contractors. He explained the contractor will go in and remove the sediment, clear vegetation, pile it up, grade out the area, and scatter vegetation back over the affected area.

Cameron added that he, Bob Sandberg, and Justin Neighbor have been out to the sites where sediment needs to be removed to make sure there were no tortoise issues. There is no evidence tortoises are in the proposed project areas now.

Nathan Brown suggested that he talk with NRCS and see if they are willing to work on the restoration after the sediment is removed. The NRCS process may be a few years off, but when the area is disturbed and not revegetated weeds will grow. Chuck mentioned weed control could be negotiated between himself and the contractors doing the sediment removal.

Bob Sandberg asked if the contractor could dig up a few of the smaller creosote and replant them. Chuck likes the idea, aesthetically, to replant a few plants but prefers that not be a requirement. It is something he can pursue.

MOTION by Motion by Kristen Comella 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.

Seconded by Ann McLuckie.

Discussion: None.

Vote was taken: All voted aye.

Motion passed.

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

a. Ann reported that she presented the RIT habitat restoration proposal to the HCAC in November. She spoke with Scott Abella with UNLV, who is excited about the project. Nathan, Ann, and Tim Croissant identified previously burnt polygons that would be appropriate areas for the project. The first polygon is on the east side of Cottonwood Road and south of the old Turkey Farm. The second polygon is on the Woodbury and Hardy study plot. There will be areas within those two 100 acre plots where containerized plants will be placed. They will be planting up to 5,000 plants in each plot with a small cage placed over the plant for protection.

The first phase of the project will focus on ordering and growing out the plants. Then, they will look at their efforts and see if there are ways in the future to apply this method with lower costs.

Cameron asked what the research monitoring aspect of the project involves. Ann

answered there will be focus on how many plants survive. For every plot they put on the ground in the treated area there will be a pair in the untreated area within the same polygon. Scott will do the research monitoring as well as the monitoring post treatment. Nathan suggested that, before the planting be established, there should be an inventory of what exists on the ground for an accurate rate of survival. Scott was not concerned with existing inventory because the main question they are asking is how many of the containerized plants are going to survive. Ann explained a portion of the containerized plants will be tagged so they can do a sub sample in order to estimate the rate of survival.

b. Nathan asked when the seats rotate for the committee. Bob answered that it is usually February at which time a new Chairperson will be selected.

c. Cameron mentioned that Tim is presenting at the Tortoise Symposium next month in Las Vegas. Tim will be focusing on the travel management plan.

d. Marshall Topham reported that he will be late to the next three meetings due to his teaching schedule at Dixie State. The committee decided to have the meetings begin at 10:30 for the next three months to work around Marshall's schedule.

5. NEXT MEETING DATES

a. February 12, 2015

6. ADJOURN

MOTION by Cameron Rognan to adjourn.

Seconded by Tim Croissant.

Discussion: None.

Vote was taken: All voted aye.

Motion passed.