

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, **June 18, 2015**.

Members present were:

Cameron Rognan, Vice Chairman	Washington County HCP
Ann McLuckie	Utah Division of Wildlife Resources (UDWR)
Tim Croissant	Bureau of Land Management (BLM)
Nathan Brown	U.S. Fish and Wildlife Service (USFWS)

Absent and excused were:

Kristen Comella, Chairperson	Snow Canyon State Park (SCSP)
Marshall Topham	Local Biologist

Also present were:

Bob Sandberg	Washington County HCP Administrator
Lacey McIntyre	Washington County HCP Recorder
Kirk Willey	Local Developer
Roy Averill-Murray	Desert Tortoise Recovery Coordinator

1. CALL TO ORDER

Vice Chairman Cameron Rognan noted a quorum existed and called the meeting to order at 9:45 a.m.

2. APPROVAL OF MINUTES

a. May 7, 2015

MOTION by Ann McLuckie to approve the minutes.

Seconded by Nathan Brown.

Discussion: None.

Vote was taken: All voted aye.

Motion passed.

3. GENERAL BUSINESS

a. Diamond Valley Access Road proposal and discussion

Kirk Willey is a local developer who owns land in Diamond Valley. In order to develop his property he needs at least two access points for emergency purposes. There is access at the north end, but there is only a dirt road at the south end that is fenced off at his property. He would like to pave the southern access dirt road and have it extend north through his development, however, that route passes through the Red Cliffs

Desert Reserve, Snow Canyon State Park, SITLA, and UDOT lands, as shown in Exhibit 3-a-1. The committee members discussed options for this road, but ultimately decided to take a field trip to the site on July 9th prior to the next meeting.

MOTION by Ann McLuckie to continue this issue to the next TC meeting on July 9th and to have a field trip to the site at 8:30 am prior to that meeting.
Seconded by Nathan Brown.
Discussion: None.
Vote was taken: All voted aye.

b. Re-consideration of Quarry Trail alternative A

The HCAC asked the TC to reconsider alternative A for the Quarry Trail route. St. George City said option C, the original and only route recommended by the TC, was not a viable option for them due to liability. Exhibit 3-b-1 is a map of St. George City's suggested route A along with a letter of support from the City, though the City Council would still have to approve route A. Ann mentioned the committee needs to adhere to the Public Use Plan (PUP) and follow the process of adaptive management. The TC approved plan C but did not approve plan A or B because of the impact to tortoise habitat. According to the process of adaptive management, a new trail would be considered a formal amendment. The TC reiterated that route C is their only recommended route, however, if the HCAC is determined to move route A forward it will be a formal amendment and will have to follow the adaptive management process. The TC recommendation is as follows:

The approved Public Use Plan (PUP; 6/12/2000) has identified an adaptive management process in which proposed trails can be approved. The PUP (and its associated adaptive management process) was incorporated into the Fish and Wildlife Service Biological Opinion (6/21/2001) and the Bureau of Land Management's Environmental Assessment (Jan 2001). The PUP's adaptive management process requires that a proposed action does not increase take of any federally listed species and includes no adverse modification of critical habitat.

Trail option A would require a formal amendment to the PUP because it adversely modifies desert tortoise critical habitat. The formal amendment process would require formal consultation with the Fish and Wildlife Service under Section 7 of the Endangered Species Act.

Specific recommendations and discussion points included:

- There was confusion on the location of the Reserve boundary relative to the Golf Course. To reduce this confusion, the Reserve boundary needs to be surveyed in order to properly align the trail, determine where rocks for constructing the trail can come from, and appropriately determine impacts to tortoise habitat and the amount of required mitigation.
- Mitigation is required to account for the habitat loss of roughly .07 acres (roughly estimated trail at 2/10 mile X 3 ft). Acreage will be compensated at a rate of 5.5

acres to every acre of habitat loss. [MOG Compensation Ratio = C (3) + T (1) + E (1) + G (0) + A (0.5) = 5.5] If 0.07 acres is adversely impacted, then 0.4 acres of desert tortoise habitat will need to be compensated.

- To minimize impacts to tortoise habitat, option A will be foot traffic only (no horses or bikes on trail).
- In addition, option A must be built in a sustainable way to control erosion and reduce off trail impacts.
- There will be no removal of rock or shrubs from the Reserve. All materials used as monument markers or for trail construction will be obtained outside the Reserve.
- The proposed trail must be in compliance with the National Historic Preservation Act.

c. Discussion of draft 2016 budget

Bob mentioned exhibit 3-c-1, which is a draft budget for 2016. He asked the committee to look it over and let him know if there are any changes or suggestions. Ann questioned where in the budget the upcoming UNLV restoration project is located. Bob answered, the studies and research on habitat restoration line item (337) is \$30,000 and the fire restoration and rehabilitation line item (436-100) is \$80,000. Between the two they cover that restoration project. Bob asked if the members would rather see the funding for the restoration project on one line or as a separate item all together. Cameron suggested it all be under the studies and habitat restoration line item (337). The committee decided to leave the fire restoration and rehabilitation line item (436-100) the same in case the contingency was needed for a fire. They then decided to add \$20,000 to the studies and research on habitat restoration line item (337).

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

a. Springdale developments and take area update – Nathan

Nathan mentioned there have not been any steps toward fencing the area yet. It is a complex area, and he is speaking with the appropriate parties to find a solution. He would like to get permanent tortoise fencing in place but, at the least, the temporary tortoise fencing will go up during upcoming construction.

b. Update on goat grazing along Cottonwood Road

Bob updated the committee on the group of goats along Cottonwood Road. They have been successful at keeping in the right of way and are eating tumbleweed and slightly breaking old tumbleweed down. Cameron noticed they are still eating the green tumbleweed but not at the rate they were a few weeks ago. The committee agreed the goats should get out earlier before it gets too hot and the lower number of goats seems more effective than the large group they hired a couple years ago.

c. Update on SUU trail project

Cameron mentioned the Southern Utah University/Youth Conservation Corps (SUU/YCC) trail project at Chuckwalla has been completed. They did a great job with the resources they had. SUU will be giving a report on their work at the HCAC meeting on June 23rd.

d. Bob had an informational item regarding a car that apparently lost control, bounced on top of a culvert on Red Hills Parkway, and landed in the Reserve. The car did not go through the fence, but they had to cut the fence to get the car out. The fence has since been fixed.

5. NEXT MEETING DATES

a. July 9, 2015

6. ADJOURN

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

The meeting was adjourned at 11:15 a.m.
 Minutes prepared by Lacey McIntyre.