

WASHINGTON COUNTY HABITAT CONSERVATION PLAN TECHNICAL COMMITTEE MEETING

A meeting of the Technical Committee of the HCP was held **July 1, 2010**, in the conference room at the Washington County Administration Building, 197 E. Tabernacle, Saint George, Utah

The views expressed at this, or any other, Technical Committee meeting do not necessarily represent the positions or views of any particular federal, state or local governmental agency, division or department. They are solely the opinions of the individual members of this Technical Committee.

Members present were:

Renee Chi, Chairperson via speaker phone	U.S. Fish and Wildlife Service (USF&WS)
Cameron Rognan, Vice Chairperson	Washington County HCP
Tim Croissant	Bureau of Land Management (BLM)
Ann McLuckie	Utah Division of Wildlife Resources (UDWR)
Kristen Comella	Snow Canyon State Park (SCSP)

Absent and excused:

Marshall Topham	Local biologist
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Also present were:

Bob Sandberg	Washington County HCP
Brad Young	Washington County HCP

1. **CALL TO ORDER**

Chairperson Chi noted there were at least four voting members present, a quorum existed and the meeting was called to order at 9:35 A.M.

2. **APPROVAL OF MINUTES**

a. **June 10, 2010**

Chairperson Chi explained that she was absent last meeting and asked about the context of **page 2 paragraph 6 sentence 4**:

“Dawna talked about management actions to achieve the desired future conditions, and asked, when is recreation use too much?”

Members McLuckie and Comella explained that it was a general hypothetical question and was discussed in broad terms.

Members Comella and McLuckie commented on **page 4 paragraph 6**:

“Member Rognan suggested providing technical data to BLM on desert tortoises and tortoise habitat protection and preservation. Lynne suggested that the TC provide a product – a report – because each member has their own view and their own job. The members discussed the Technical Committee being the point person. The members continued to discuss a collaborative process on habitat-based technical recommendations. Dawna talked about the management plan development process and Section 7 consultation with the U.S. Fish & Wildlife Service, and including an adaptive management suite.”

The members discussed the content and context of the paragraph. A new first sentence was added to the paragraph.

“The BLM will be the primary agency drafting the limits of acceptable change document while the Technical Committee will provide technical support and recommendations.”

Chairperson Chi also asked about **page 3 paragraph 1 sentence 1**:

“Member Rognan talked about no net loss of habitat and where to set the habitat impact level.”

Chairperson Chi asked if the statement was a rhetorical or hypothetical statement, or were there actual specifics discussed. Member Comella said that no specifics were discussed; it was a kind of a general comment.

Chairperson Chi further asked about **page 3 paragraph 2 sentence 2**:

“Dawna responded by talking about the current RMP, what the future RMP may look like, and how to justify management actions, e.g., closing trails.”

Chairperson Chi asked about any specifics that were discussed. The members said that it was a general discussion about how the Technical Committee can contribute to the RMP development process.

Chairperson Chi also asked for specifics regarding **page 4 paragraph 3**:

“Dawna talked about the reality of some areas where some habitat sacrifice is acceptable – within limits, and areas where the habitat is so sensitive that no loss can be tolerated.”

Member Comella explained that it was a broad-based comment.

The following additional changes were made:

Page 3, paragraph 5, sentence 2: change,

From: “Member McLuckie talked about long term trends of the human impacts.”

To: “Member McLuckie talked about long term trends of the human impacts including increase of off trail use.”

Page 4, paragraph 7, sentences 2 and 3: add two new sentences,

“Member McLuckie stated that low-density areas are as important as high-density areas because density changes over time and low-density areas often have healthier tortoise populations. Her point is that they are equally important and we shouldn’t assume one is better than the other.”

Member Comella clarified that these minutes, other than the Technical Committee making recommendations to the BLM, reflect the broad range of general discussion.

Chairperson Chi asked about the final outcome of the discussion and was there a commitment by the TC regarding a technical recommendation to the BLM? Member Comella answered by explaining that, yes the TC will provide recommendations to the BLM and the BLM will assign someone to coordinate with. Furthermore, the TC being the biological arm, will not get into social conditions nor the public scoping, but will focus strictly on the resource conditions and make recommendations concerning the resources to the BLM.

Page 5, paragraph 6, sentence 3: change,

From: “Member McLuckie also suggested including a note in the Ivins City ~~utility bills~~ regarding authorized recreational uses.”

To: “Member McLuckie also suggested including a note in the Ivins City monthly newsletter regarding authorized recreational uses.”

Page 6, paragraph 3, sentence 3: change,

From: “Member McLuckie talked about the potential for ~~additional~~ tortoise necropsies ~~this fall.~~”

To: “Member McLuckie talked about the potential for carrying money over from one fiscal year to another regarding tortoise necropsies.”

Page 6, paragraph 9, sentence 2: change,

From: “There was a meeting yesterday with the power companies and ~~Member McLuckie.~~”

To: “There was a meeting yesterday with the power companies, BLM, County HCP, and UDWR.”

<p><u>MOTION</u> by Ann McLuckie to approve the minutes with the recommended changes. <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. Discuss limits of acceptable change

The members discussed how the TC should proceed in formulating a biological recommendation, and a time frame in which to accomplish it. They talked about what Dawna Ferris-Rowley had said about the process being backwards, that the TC is discussing specifics without having the overarching management plan in place. The members talked about how to use the NAU human impact monitoring data and how to get it in recommendation form to the BLM. Timing and submission to BLM was also discussed. It will be 18-24 months minimum before a resource management plan document can be produced and the TC doesn't want to wait that long. The members discussed improved trail signage and closing spur trails, but not necessarily implementing trail closures or group size limits.

The members talked about the human impact monitoring data and evaluating it to answer the questions, is it the right data and what other data should be sought? The members discussed the best ways to utilize the data. The members discussed the correlation between human impacts and the tortoise population. Member McLuckie said that correlation has never proven causation; there is no proof that A causes B, and B causes C. And secondly, the human impact data measures habitat degradation and we already know that off trail impacts leads to habitat degradation.

The members discussed making the limits of acceptable change recommendations habitat-based and stressed the importance of reducing or eliminating habitat degradation. The members talked about defining the limits of acceptable change, e.g., trail width and trail depth, in the recommendation to the BLM. The members discussed the general decision criteria for setting limits of acceptable change.

Lastly, the members talked about the limits of acceptable change research that they have done, and sharing that research with the other committee members, and that more research is necessary.

MOTION by Kristen Comella to continue the limits of acceptable change research and discussion to the next meeting.

Seconded by Cameron Rognan.

Discussion: None.

Vote was taken: All voted aye.

Motion passed.

b. 2011 budget planning (Exhibit 3-b-1)

The committee members reviewed and discussed Exhibit 3-b-1 TC – 070110. Member McLuckie indicated that in discussions with Rick Fridell it was determined that approximately \$15,000 will be needed next year for the Southwest Willow Flycatcher nesting success survey. This is less than the current \$30,000. Member McLuckie added

that approximately \$10,000 will be needed in 2011 for systematic clearances, and she wants to look at fencing in Zone 4. Member McLuckie also requested that monies be earmarked in the Education line item (743) for reproducing the stickers – salamander, tortoise, Willow Flycatcher, and Virgin River fish.

Bob Sandberg explained that \$200,000 has been put back into Land Purchase (line item 710) in anticipation of something happening with *The Trails* subdivision property that is within the defined boundary of the Reserve. Bob added that he has talked with Stacy Young about the property and Stacy mentioned an initial figure of \$70,000 per acre; the undevelopable property value will likely be something less. Bob affirmed that HCP will pay for an appraisal. The members discussed the appraisal cost and how much information is needed before an appraisal can be conducted.

The members also discussed the definition of Buckskin Wash, the boundary line that is described as 20 feet west of the west rim of Buckskin Wash, and the difficulties in specifically determining the rim of the wash. Member McLuckie stressed the importance of getting Buckskin Wash into the Reserve.

Fencing in Zone 4 and along Highway 18 north of Winchester Hills was briefly discussed. The members also noted that the culverts at Pioneer Park are included in the Red Hills Parkway expansion project. Leaving the fencing budget (line item 435) at \$60,000 was recommended. The committee also approved the \$2,000 budgeted for tortoise care (line item 434) and \$7,000 for insurance on buildings and vehicles (line item 450). BLM Realty Specialist funding (line item 445) was discussed but no recommendation was made.

Member Comella asked about funding the maintenance of the outhouses at the Chuckwalla trailhead (line item 312). She explained that she has talked with Lynne Scott and BLM feels that the restrooms are important enough that BLM may fund the maintenance. Member Comella and Bob Sandberg agreed to meet with Lynne Scott and discuss it.

Printing costs (line item 242) were also discussed. The exact cost of printing the new map is uncertain. Lastly, funds for research and necropsies (line item 713) were discussed. Member McLuckie indicated that up to four tortoise necropsies may occur this fall.

MOTION by Cameron Rognan to approve the budget recommendation as discussed.
Seconded by Kristen Comella.
Discussion: None.
Vote was taken: All voted aye.
Motion passed.

4. **OTHER BUSINESS**

a. **Update on boundary line discrepancy at *The Trails***

This agenda item was previously discussed by Bob Sandberg; see page 5.

b. Update on the mining road disturbance in Zone 4

Member Rognan referred to Exhibit 4-b-1 TC – 070110 and explained that on or about June 15th Justin Neighbor discovered recent road blading in Zone 4 near the cinder knoll. Member Rognan further explained that the road blading, or vegetation scraping, was apparently done to access old mining claims. He added that not all of the old mining claims had been extinguished before the land was withdrawn from mining by the BLM. This blading may be in violation of BLM regulations.

Member Rognan said that he has been into the area and documented the habitat disturbance. The exhibit shows the location of the road blading. Member Rognan added that he observed evidence of tortoises and Gila monsters in the vicinity. Furthermore, it is possible that one tortoise burrow was crushed.

There was discussion about the exhibit itself. Member McLuckie urged that it be withheld from the general public because it may reveal the location of sensitive biological resources. The HCP Recorder will research the exceptions to the public document rule and Member McLuckie will research the GRAMA law for limiting public access to the locations of sensitive species.

Bob Sandberg talked about the BLM requirement for submitting a plan for mining development and having the plan approved before engaging in mining claim development or improvements. Bob also talked about the actions taken by BLM and USF&WS law enforcement officers.

Other possible mining claims were discussed; there are no others that are known.

c. Update on the rock shelter west of Dixie Mobile Home subdivision

Bob Sandberg familiarized the members with the general location of the unlawful structure/incident. Bob described the rock stacking and the mud packing that was used to create the enclosure. Bob described how law enforcement is involved and added that HCP will continue to work with enforcement officers and with the eventual removal of the enclosure.

d. Minor brush fire report

Member Comella reported on a minor brush fire in the area northerly of Brooks Nature Park (Cox Pond) that occurred yesterday. BLM and the St. George Fire Department responded and extinguished the blaze. A portion of the fire may have been within the Reserve.

e. Quarterly Report

Member McLuckie asked when the quarterly report was due – not later than July 21st.

f. Gila monster observation form

Member McLuckie reported to the committee that the Gila monster observation reporting form is now on the UDWR website.

g. Proposed new trail in the Paradise Canyon area

Bob Sandberg provided a handout map showing a proposed new trail in the Paradise Canyon area. The proposal comes from one of the HCP trail stewards. Member Comella said that the process should have begun with Snow Canyon State Park because the trail is within the park. She added that the Technical Committee has already reviewed and rejected this proposed trail.

h. Next meeting dates

The members discussed future meeting dates. The next regularly scheduled meeting is on August 12, 2010, but this date is during the county fair and HCP staff will be involved in that event.

MOTION by Ann McLuckie to change the meeting date to August 19, 2010 at 9:30 A.M.
Seconded by Cameron Rognan.
Discussion: None.
Vote was taken: All voted aye.
Motion passed.

The members agreed on the subsequent meeting dates of September 9 and October 7, 2010.

5. FIELD TRIP

- a. Optional field trip** to Turkey Farm Road intersection to discuss the relocation of a stepover

The optional field trip was discussed and it was agreed not to take the trip at this time.

6. ADJOURN

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

The meeting was adjourned at 11:20 A.M.

Minutes prepared by Brad Young.