

HABITAT CONSERVATION ADVISORY COMMITTEE
for the Washington County Habitat Conservation Plan (HCP)
Work meeting – OCTOBER 28, 2008

A work meeting of the Habitat Conservation Advisory Committee (HCAC) was held in the County Commissioner's Chambers at the Washington County Administration Building, 197 E. Tabernacle St., on October 28, 2008.

Committee members present were:

Chris Blake, Vice Chairman	Environmental Organization
Marc Mortensen	Citizen-at-Large
Larry Crist	U.S. Fish & Wildlife Service (USFWS)
Reed Harris	Utah Dept. of Natural Resources (UDNR)
Jeff Morby	Local Development
Jimmy Tyree	Bureau of Land Management (BLM)
Bob Sandberg	Washington County – HCP

Absent and excused:

Karl Wilson, Chairman	Mayors Association
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Also present were:

Alan Gardner	County Commissioner
Ann McLuckie	UDWR
Lynne Scott	BLM
Brad Young	HCP

SYNOPSIS: The purpose of this work meeting was to discuss the concept of a botanical garden/living museum/education center. There was also brief discussion regarding the Washington County Growth and Conservation Act of 2008. No motions or decisions were made.

1. CALL TO ORDER

Vice Chairman Chris Blake noted that at least five committee members were present and a quorum existed. He called the meeting to order at 9:36 A.M.

2. PRESENTATIONS

None.

3. UPDATE AND STATUS

None.

3. DISCUSSION ITEM

a. Botanical garden/living museum/education center

Vice Chairman Chris Blake distributed a Discussion Guide (Exhibit 4-a-1 HCAC Wrk Mtng 102808) to facilitate the discussion.

Chris began the discussion by asking, "What do we want to do, something or nothing?" The committee members discussed an education center – how big of a project, how extensive and how to fund it.

Marc Mortensen briefed the members on the on-going discussions between the City of St. George, the Washington County Water Conservancy District and the HCP administration about an education center/botanical garden at Pioneer Park. The last group meeting was October 24, 2008. Bob Sandberg discussed some of the conceptual issues that have been discussed by the botanical garden work group.

Reed Harris discussed the Information and Education component of the Desert Tortoise Recovery Plan and the benefits of a successful program. He added that there is considerable support for the public being able to actually view tortoises and other wildlife, but a facility such as the Arizona-Sonora Desert Museum may be too much.

Jimmy Tyree wants to make sure that the HCAC has accomplished on-going and other priorities first – such as maintenance of trails and trailheads, and interpretive signs. Larry Crist added that we (HCAC) are attacking the tortoise recovery problem on many fronts and those things that are significant expenditures must be considered carefully.

The members continued the discussion about an education center and the benefits to desert tortoises and the Habitat Conservation Plan overall. Jeff Morby talked about a single site preference due to infrastructure, costs and the ability to form partnerships. Chris advocated not closing the door on any options but taking advantage of opportunities to help tortoises wherever possible.

The members asked Ann McLuckie about the tortoise habitat quality in the Pioneer Park area. She said the area has great habitat for tortoises, despite human impact.

Larry advocates a quality education program over expanding recreation use in the reserve.

The members agreed not to take any potential sites off the list, but because of the current opportunity, focus energies towards the Pioneer Park area site.

The Utilization of the Arizona Strip Interpretive Association (ASIA) was discussed and advocated.

The members discussed displaying live animals at an education facility/interpretive center, but not something like *Predators of the Southwest*.

Bob Sandberg was directed to work with the botanical garden work group and explore the possibility of a building.

Jeff supports an educational component that helps residents and visitors understand the need to preserve open space and wildlife habitat.

Reed expressed a desire to involve the Technical Committee. Ann suggested that the TC first review the existing botanical garden concept plan. The members agreed that early involvement of the TC is important and necessary. Bob suggested a joint TC/HCAC field trip to the Pioneer Park area site.

A botanical garden concept plan review will be placed on the next TC meeting agenda, and a joint field trip will be arranged.

b. Washington County Growth and Conservation Act of 2008 - status

The Land Bill status was briefly discussed. The Bill may get congressional attention before the end of the year. What this possibly means for the HCP for the next eight years was discussed – there is no certainty at this time.

c. BLM St. George Field Office

Jimmy Tyree briefly talked about finding a site and funding a new St. George Field Office.

Jimmy added that he will be unable to attend the November 25th HCAC meeting, but will send a map showing the Tier 1 properties alluded to in the Land Bill.

There were no other presentations or items to discuss.

The meeting was adjourned at 11:01 P.M.

Minutes prepared by Brad Young.