

**HABITAT CONSERVATION TECHNICAL COMMITTEE**  
for the Washington County Habitat Conservation Plan (HCP)

A regular meeting of the Habitat Conservation Technical Committee (TC) was held remotely using Zoom on **March 6, 2024.**

Members present:

John Kellam

Danielle Costantini (@10:03)

Mike Schijf

Ron Torgerson

Elaine York

Bureau of Land Management (BLM)

U.S. Fish & Wildlife Service (USFWS)

Washington County HCP Biologist

SITLA, Local Biologist

Nature Conservancy, Biologist-at-Large

Members excused:

Sarah Seegert

Utah Division of Natural Resources (UDNR)

Also present were:

Cameron Rognan

Randee Sanders

Steven Scott

Brad Winder

Richard Spotts

Sharon Richardson

Washington County HCP Administrator

Washington County HCP Executive Assistant

Washington County Attorney

Washington County Weeds

Citizen

**1. CALL TO ORDER**

Cameron Rognan noted a quorum existed and called the meeting to order at 9:08.

**2. APPROVAL OF MINUTES**

**a. February 8, 2024**

**Page 3, Paragraph 2, last sentence:**

**Change from:** “John appreciated the HCP’s offer to monitor the culvert, but worried that the findings could be later used as justification for *these* fragmented mitigation parcels being approved.”

**Change to:** “John appreciated the HCP’s offer to monitor the culvert, but worried that the findings could be later used as justification for *other/future* fragmented mitigation parcels being approved.”

**MOTION** by: Ron Torgerson

Seconded: Elaine York

Discussion: To approve the minutes with the approved changes.

Vote was taken: All voted aye.

Motion passed.

### 3. GENERAL BUSINESS

#### a. **Continuation of RCDR Habitat Fire Management Guidelines & addition of comprehensive fire management plan**

The drafted outline for the 5-10-Year Fire Management Plan was put up on the screen so that the TC could discuss and work on it as a group. Much of their discussion is reflected on the updated draft which is included in the exhibit (*see exhibit 3a*).

The HCAC had directed the TC to come up with a long-term plan for what areas of the Reserve will be treated each year and to identify potential funding sources for those treatments. The TC is already committed to reviewing the Habitat Management Plan every January, and Cameron suggested that this 5-10-year plan be reviewed at the same time.

Two main objectives have already been identified by the TC. First, to make sure fuel breaks are maintained, and second to protect unburned areas.

Table 1 addresses the first objective. The TC members were asked how they felt about how it was organized and if there was any information missing that should be included. John Kellam liked it, but asked to have all BLM trailheads added since it is being done annually due to them being an ignition point. He suggested that all trailheads ought to be done. Brad Winder thought that would be a good idea due to weeds being carried in at those points.

John suggested that the cost of treatments will vary depending if the area being treated requires backpack, boom, or aerial treatments. Cameron suggested adding a buffer column to the table, and the TC agreed that trailheads should have a buffer of 100' – 300', major roads should be equal to or greater than 300' on either side of the road, and minor roads should be equal to or greater than 25' on either side of the road.

Just before the meeting, Mike Schijf had quickly put together a map (*which is included within the exhibit*) to help identify different ROW's and linear treatment areas. He will alter it to show major vs. minor roads, as well as trailheads. Cameron suggested he add the east boundary of Zone 6, as well as West Canyon Rd. in SCSP. John suggested he add Red Mountain trailhead north of the Reserve along SR-18.

Brad and Mike have already gone out and treated a number of state lands such as Middleton Powerlines, Millcreek, Grapevine, Middleton Waterline Rd., as well as 600 N., Red Hills Parkway, and SR-18.

Brad recently spoke with Ben Newman with St. George City about all the Sahara Mustard visible along the SR-18 bike path. Ben said that he will be

getting someone to go spray from Winchester to St. George on both sides of the trail sometime next week.

For frequency of treatments, Brad suggested 3-5 years for Rejuvra. He thought January to February would be good months to go out to assess the situation each year. Mike wondered if there should be some flexibility on timing for treatments, based on what is being seen on the ground. John suggested adding “whenever/wherever possible” language to give that flexibility, as he had done in the BLM Integrated Weed Management Plan.

Tables 2 and 3 were two different ways to address the second objective (to protect unburned habitat), and the first table was preferred by the TC members.

John suggested looking at the heat map that shows tortoise densities. Areas such as Twist Hallow, the area west of Cottonwood Spring Rd. along Red Hills Pkwy., and the old growth blackbrush area in Babylon are all unburned and excellent habitat that should be given priority.

Cameron responded that the drafted 5-10-year plan does have a map showing where fires have occurred. He suggested that the heatmap be overlaid as well as shapefile polygons to give a visualization on why things are prioritized the way they are. This could be done by labeling them by year or priority levels. John preferred priority numbers, and Cameron suggested having three priority numbers based on the recommended treatment schedule.

Most of the unburned habitat will likely be treated aerially (either by drone, helicopter, or airplane). Brad expressed concern regarding the 100’ buffer to the houses in Green Springs from the aerial treatments last year. Those buffers ended up being 500’ due to requiring the use of an airplane instead of a helicopter. Mike suggested that they may want to get in there with some backpack sprayers at some point and treat at least a strip closer to the homes. Brad said there is a potential to pull from the Dedicated Hunters pool to do that. John said that quite a few community members contact BLM for projects. He thought it would make a great Eagle Scout project.

Brad has a contact who has the largest drone on the market that does these types of agricultural treatments. The drone he uses carries up to 50 gallons of product, and can fly a full load in about 15 minutes. He shared the contact info with Cameron.

John reported that during the last RIT meeting, Dr. Leslie De Falco mentioned that they are seeing Sahara Mustard in sandy areas and dune fields in Nevada. This is concerning as some of our most sensitivity species occupy

sand dune areas. If those dunes become stabilized by Sahara mustard, the bromes can then take root as well.

Brad suggested that everyone encourage the use of EDDMaps Pro. The app has the capability of collecting points or polygons of invasive species. Brad is alerted every time something gets reported on the app, and can then go out and verify them. This allows him to know where new problem areas are popping up.

John suggested enlisting Kody Rominger and others with experience with drones. Drones are really good at vegetation mapping. All partners could pool together to pay for drone surveys during the right time of the year to locate Sahara Mustard in areas that can't be seen from trails and roads.

For year one, BLM has already identified 1,100 acres of ROW and fire breaks, including the area above Pioneer Park which will be treated this fall/winter.

Ron Torgerson reminded the TC that SITLA has a noxious weed fund that could help, and to let Scott Chamberlain know how they can help. The County can apply for ISM grants, use County funds, and coordinate with State Forestry and Fire on obtaining WRI funds. John said that BLM has funding through a 3-5-year IRA Infrastructure Bill, as well as base funding, national grants, and funds through Shawn Peterson (CCFP) for brome treatments. Danielle has a meeting coming up about NFWF funding, and offered to report what she learns at the next meeting.

The TC finished by discussing objective three, to restore burned habitat. Ultimately it was rejected as it is already covered in the Habitat Management Plan. The 5-10-year plan was renamed from "Fire and Habitat Management" to "Fire and Fuels Management".

Work will continue on the drafted document and map, and members will share revisions and comment via email as well as at the next meeting.

**MOTION** by: Mike Schijf

Seconded: John Kellam

Discussion: To table this agenda item in order to continue refining the map and identify the different priority areas.

Vote was taken: All voted aye.

Motion passed.

#### 4. **ADMINISTRATOR UPDATES**

##### a. **SEIS update**

Cameron reported that BLM has sent a letter to FWS requesting that they rescind the biological opinion for the Northern Corridor while they continue to work out the additional analysis and fire impacts. He doesn't know how FWS is going to respond to that, but he anticipates hearing back in the coming days with the assumption that they may comply. If so, it may have significant implications for the County with a similar effect that vacating the ROW permit would have. Namely, on how it triggers the changed circumstance and the management of Zone 6. If Zone 6 will no longer be considered part of the Reserve, all efforts there will cease. The draft SEIS will go out for public comment in the spring, which is when it will be available for initial review.

**b. Weeds management**

Brad reported that Hurricane City is putting in a paved walking/bike path along the north side of the highway at 600 North. This could make treatments more difficult in the future. Hopefully the city will allow him to drive his side-by-side on the path. To date, treatments from spring 2021 are holding up well.

**c. Raven workgroup update**

Cameron, Mike, and John all expressed their thanks to Danielle and her excellent work in getting the raven depredation permit submitted in record time. That permit has been quickly approved, so we officially have a permit to treat ravens in our area. The County will be working over the next few weeks tracking and monitoring nests in order to prioritize areas to treat the ravens this year.

**5. NEXT MEETING DATES**

- a. Possible dates/times remaining for the year, as needed: 4/11/24 (1:00 p.m.), 5/9/24 (1:00 p.m.), 6/13/24 (1:00 p.m.), 7/11/24 (9:00 a.m.), 8/8/24 (9:00 a.m.), 9/12/24 (9:00 a.m.), 10/10/24 (9:00 a.m.), 11/14/24 (9:00 a.m.), & 12/12/24 (9:00 a.m.).**

**6. ADJOURN**

**MOTION** by: Ron Torgerson  
Seconded by: Danielle Costantini  
Discussion: To adjourn the meeting.  
Vote was taken: All voted aye.  
Motion passed.

The meeting was adjourned at 10:22.  
 Minutes prepared by Randee Sanders.