

## **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 **August 13, 2025.**

**Members present:**

John Kellam  
Danielle Costantini  
Mike Schijf  
Elaine York

Bureau of Land Management (BLM)  
U.S. Fish & Wildlife Service (USFWS)  
Washington County HCP Biologist  
Nature Conservancy, Biologist-at-Large

**Members excused:**

Sarah Seegert  
Scott Chamberlain

Utah Division of Natural Resources (UDNR)  
SITLA, Local Biologist

**Also present were:**

Cameron Rognan  
Randee Sanders  
Devin Snow  
Jason West  
Chad Reynolds  
Kaden Leavitt

Washington County HCP Administrator  
Washington County HCP Executive Assistant  
Washington County Attorney  
Bureau of Land Management (BLM)  
Washington City Power  
Washington City Power

**1. CALL TO ORDER**

Cameron Rognan noted that a quorum existed and called the meeting to order at 1:01.

**2. APPROVAL OF MINUTES**

**MOTION** by: Mike Schijf  
**Seconded:** Elaine York  
**Discussion:** To approve the minutes.  
**Vote was taken:** All voted aye.  
**Motion passed.**

**3. GENERAL BUSINESS**

**a. Open Meeting Training – Devin Snow**

Devin Snow, who works with the County Attorney Office, spoke with the committee first. Every state in the country has public meeting laws. Utah does as well, and it's called the Open and Public Meetings Act (OPMA). State law requires the county to do OPMA trainings every year for every public body.

The act requires that meetings be open to the public, and have a quorum to convene and talk about matters over the committee's jurisdiction or things that the committee has advisory power over. Prior to having a meeting, it is required to notice the meeting and have an agenda. It is required that minutes are taken and a recording is made.

If there is a quorum present who are doing the business of the committee, it is considered a meeting. There are some scenarios under OPMA where we can close the meeting to the public. Devin didn't know of a scenario where that would be needed for this group so he didn't go into that in detail. However, he is available to council if such a situation arises.

The main way that committees can get in trouble with OPMA is by predetermining action. Devin gave an example that happened a few years ago in San Juan County. There was a three-member county commission, and two of the three commissioners were meeting together before the actual meetings to have a huddle and talk through how they were going to vote on actions that were going to come forward in their open meetings. That is called predetermining result, and it can't be done.

If a mistake is made, such as finding out that the agenda wasn't properly posted before a meeting. That's fine, we could have another meeting to ratify the decisions for actions that were taken during that meeting.

#### **d. Utility pole replacement in Millcreek – Washington City**

**MOTION** by: Mike Schijf

**Seconded** by: Danielle Costantini

**Discussion:** To move agenda item d above item b to allow Washington City the ability to present earlier in the meeting.

**Vote was taken:** All voted aye.

**Motion passed.**

Chad Reynolds, the Project and Development Manager for Washington City Power, said that the current poles serving the wells and tanks were put in probably 40-50 years ago by Rocky Mountain Power. This was even before the Reserve boundary was established. Easements were put into place, but the routes to those lines were never really thought through for a tortoise habitat.

A map showing the proposed project site was shared (see exhibit 3d). It shows the existing system (green colored lines) and the proposed route to rebuild the line in a way that would be more conducive to not disturbing more area (cyan colored lines). The yellow dots on the map show the power poles that are currently running the system. The lines are decades old and are in

need a replacement, so Washington City came to discuss with the TC the potential of relocating them.

The new lines would follow along the existing roadways that lead toward facilities. This shift would be more conducive to access for maintenance and not having to cross over areas that are not on a traveled path. This is especially the case for the pole just outside of the Reserve entrance, which requires them to either walk or drive a tractor vehicle to get to it. It would be a lot better if they are able to relocate them to the main road so that the habitat would be more protected. There are about twenty-five 40' poles that are in the system that would need to be replaced. They will attempt to straighten out some of the alignments and get rid of any angles in order to limit having to have anchors and guides installed (which disturb more ground).

Kaden Leavitt, who also works with Washington City Power, said that this project will help with fire prevention as well. All of the new framing would be more spread out on fiberglass cross-arms, and they would be putting a fire-proof paper wrap on every pole. This ought to help keep the lines from burning if there is a fire.

Cameron's initial impression is that the project makes a lot of sense. He would be very supportive of consolidating utilities within the ROW's, and hoped the TC members agree. The committee will want to look at ways to minimize impacts and better understand the acreages that might be impacted either temporarily or permanently, so time was turned over to them to ask questions and discuss the project.

#### **e. Discussion and possible action on utility pole replacement**

In answer to John Kellam's inquiry, Chad confirmed that all the impacts would occur on SITLA land. The map does show the HCP boundary on the south side, which was obtained from Washington County GIS.

Mike Schijf wondered if it would be possible for the project to occur during the less-active season (December 1<sup>st</sup> – February 14<sup>th</sup>) or if it would spill outside of that window. Kaden answered that they would want to get the poles ordered as soon as possible so they aren't held up waiting for them. The project itself should only take 2-3 weeks.

Mike suggested that Washington City follow the Utility Development Protocols (UDP's). The HCP will want to coordinate with the city and go out and do a final sweep for tortoises before they start removing any of the old poles or putting any new ones in. The HCP will also periodically check in with the city during the project as well. The project should go smoothly as long as it is done during the less-active season window. Obviously, the HCP asks that the

city cause as minimal vegetation surface disturbance as absolutely possible, and a pre-project walk through will be done to assess that.

Cameron asked the city to describe the on-the-ground operation, what kind of equipment would be needed, and how the poles would be taken down and put up. Kaden answered that they would be using a crew truck to collect their poles/etc. They would need a pole digger, crane, and a bucket truck for installing the new line. Kaden suggested that they could cut the old poles to the ground rather than removing them completely to create less ground disturbance. That way they could get away with using one small track machine. Cameron and the TC seemed to agree on cutting them at the base in order to have less ground disturbance. That area is on shifting sand dunes, so they may get covered over by sand anyways. Chad pointed out that the old poles aren't metal and are already deteriorating. It is likely that they will deteriorate even more with time.

John Kellam agreed that the project should occur during the less active season, that there should be a clearance survey done before, and ongoing monitoring during the project. He also suggested that the city re-contour and disperse native seeds after the project is completed. Chad inquired if anyone would be willing to share contractors who re-contour and reseed. Mike thought that the city could probably work directly with the HCP on that for the heavily disturbed areas, and they could provide a seed list that has been approved for the Reserve and the NCA.

Cameron asked if there would be any permanent impacts. Chad answered that he doesn't foresee any permanent impacts because they will do everything they can along the existing corridor. Kaden said that will enable them to access the lines for maintenance more easily, where they wouldn't have to go off-road like they do right now for some of those poles.

Cameron recalled that Washington City was planning to do a trailhead near the access road by the gate about a year or two ago. He suggested they coordinate with the city so they can make sure the poles won't interfere with their plans. For whatever reason, the Mill Creek gate and fence line is currently south of the actual Reserve boundary. In the future, the adjacent east-to-west utility road that leads to the nearby well sites should be fenced out of the Reserve.

Chad and Kaden hadn't heard anything about a trailhead, but they said that they would look into it. There weren't any plans to change that outline yet, just everything from the gate going north. There is one pole that's just south of that line that may have to get changed out due to the fact that they do have to have a straight line to hold onto. If so, they will work with the city's parks department since that area is outside of the Reserve boundary.

Danielle Costantini wondered if it would be possible to include design features for raven perch deterrents so we are not putting up more structures that the ravens can use for nesting in the Reserve. Chad responded that they will be putting in wider cross arms for that purpose. He was sure they could work together on something more (like raptor triangles) if there was a potential to get some funding for the additional cost that would incur. Cameron supported the idea. If the city is willing to put them in, the County could look at the costs to possibly use HCP funds. The project area is highly frequented by groups of ravens. It would be helpful to have deterrents in the northeast area where there are quite a few tortoises. Chad said he was willing to work with the HCP on that, and can provide some designs.

Cameron had drafted the evaluation form for the project, but where it will only have temporary impacts, he thought maybe it wouldn't be necessary after all. It may be easier for everyone involved to have the city follow the UDP's. He wondered if Danielle had any strong preference on that. Danielle didn't, so long as it is documented that UDP's were followed. That should be efficient since there will be no permanent impacts.

These project requests normally go to the HCAC first. This one was on the July HCAC agenda, but the meeting was cancelled so Cameron thought he would bring it to the TC first so that they could make a recommendation to the HCAC at their next meeting to help expedite the process.

**MOTION** by: John Kellam

**Seconded** by: Mike Schijf

**Discussion:** To refer this project to the HCAC, informing them that the TC has reviewed Washington City's plans for both the removal of the old power pole structures as well as the construction of new power poles within the existing ROW. The TC requests that Washington City coordinate closely with the HCP office regarding surveys and mitigation (such as re-contouring and seeding), and that all UDP's be followed.

**Vote was taken:** All voted aye.

**Motion passed.**

#### **b. HCP 2026 budget review of discretionary spending items**

Cameron shared the proposed budget (see exhibit 3b), noting that it is the same as what has been proposed the past year or two. Significantly less money has been spent this year based on the fact that the changed circumstance of the Northern Corridor has not been occurring this year. However, Cameron would still like to keep that contingency in there in case different decisions are made in the future in that regard. He invited the TC to further discuss the budget.

#### **c. Discussion and possible action on 2026 budget**

Danielle inquired whether the raven management program would continue, and if so, where the funding source would come from. Cameron answered that the HCP did get funding from the ESMF, and utilized only about ½ of it this year. He asked Paul Thompson if the leftover money could still be used, and Paul found a way to allow the HCP to use most of the remaining money (about \$3,500) next year. That money is designated primarily to hire a rock climber that can actually rappel down to the nests. Moving forward, it is unknown how reliable that source of funding will be, but the HCP will continue to apply for it with the hope to continue to get support from DWR. This is certainly something long-term that we will want to be thinking about. It is an important program that will make a difference in controlling raven populations in tortoise areas if we can continue to do it long-term.

While on the topic of ravens, John shared that the BLM assisted with surveys this year, and he was able to place money into an agreement to hire a technician next spring to help with raven nest searches and monitoring. John will be coordinating with Mike and Cameron about how best to use that resource as time draws near. Going forward, every year he plans to use a portion of the funds that he receives toward raven monitoring and management.

Cameron asked Mike how much funding was used for the SUU Human Impact Monitoring, how that went, and how he sees that project going in the future. Mike responded that the HCP contracted with a trail crew from the Intergovernmental Internship Cooperative (IIC) program with SUU. In May, a 3-5 person crew worked for 10 days on a few different trails in the Reserve. The crew addressed old and degraded signage, such as fiberglass carsonite signs that were really beaten up or not readable anymore. They also added signage in areas where there wasn't any and it was needed to keep people on trail. The IIC crew installed probably over 100 total carsonite signs and removed a ton of the old degraded ones. They also erased a number of social trails. All the details from this project are going to be in a report to be included with the HCP annual report at the end of the year.

The main reason why Cameron brought up SUU was to see if it will be something that the HCP will want to keep doing at the same level, or if the crew knocked off enough priorities that it can be scaled back in the future. Mike thought there is an ongoing need, especially given the ongoing level of visitation in the Reserve. There are additional trails that can still be prioritized. Even if they get to a point that not as much signage work is needed, the crew can still work on more social trail removals, etc. Some of the mountain bike trails in particular (such as prospector and church rocks) get off trail bike use. Trail steward reports could be used to give a better sense of what is needed as well. Randee Sanders pulled up the 2025 SUU IIC contract, and reported that the HCP had budgeted \$9,942.57.

Cameron wondered if the Greater Zion Tourism office might be able to support us in some of these efforts with matching funds, or maybe they would be willing to take over some of the trail management and improvements. If so, the HCP could shift some of those funds to permanent raven management.

Cameron had talked to Brittany McMichael years ago about the sales at our visitor center. They aren't selling anything now, but they were contemplating it. If they ever do, they won't be able to do anything with the funds so they had discussed using the proceeds for trails. It would be something that promotes both the Reserve and Greater Zion's tourism industry. Cameron can check with her again and see where they are at. It may or may not pan out, but he thought it was at least worth checking into.

Mike said there used to be a man from a bike company that Greater Zion hired. Mike didn't know all the details, but he recalled it was funded by few different entities. The man had great trail expertise. He would identify a big project that needed to be done, and he would take the lead on recruiting volunteers. Mike wondered if that could be revived.

Danielle wondered, with Ammon departing earlier this year, if the Education & Outreach Coordinator position will be refilled. Cameron answered that it won't for the time being. It was one of the positions linked to the triggered changed circumstance so the HCP is currently unable to re-fill that position. It has been a strain on all of the staff, because he did more than just the education and outreach program. He also staffed the front desk, and went in the field to assist with survey's etc. It was great to have an extra body around.

**MOTION** by: Danielle Costantini

Seconded by: John Kellam

Discussion: To approve the Adaptive Management budget for the upcoming year.

Vote was taken: All voted aye.

Motion passed.

#### **f. Discussion and possible action on WRI project proposal for 2026**

In the Habitat Management Plan document, the TC wanted to annually consider working with DWR on WRI proposals. Cameron asked Mike and John if they were comfortable starting that discussion. The WRI proposals aren't due until January, but he wanted to at least start talking about it. Mike answered that he would like to dig up the plan and review the identified targeted areas first (see exhibit 3f, updated to most current version). Curtis Roundy is no longer with UDWR, and he was who the HCP worked with on the WRI proposals in the past. John said that UDWR is working to fill Curtis' position and are encouraging moving forward with WRI proposals.

John reported on two active BLM projects within the Red Cliffs NCA. The first was to fence 600 North. John has \$94,000 to do additional fencing during this next less-active season. Priorities include parts of Cottonwood Springs Road, and there's some fencing near the golf course by 600 North that needs additional fencing. John will be talking with Ann McLuckie and Kristen Comella to talk about priorities as well, and he will keep the TC posted.

BLM is also putting \$32,500 into a WRI project to continue fuel break treatments within the NCA. John will be working with fire staff to determine the right timing, ratios, and cost to better help estimate much he can do with the funds. He has already created polygons for parts of Red Hills Parkway going north on SR-18 to protect areas that haven't burned between Cottonwood Springs Road and SR-18. Melanie Oberhelman from BLM has already talked to Kristen Comella about some possible treatments, and said she was supportive of the idea so John will be talking to her more about it. Both projects are fully funded and are expected to occur this winter. The BLM will be doing linear fire breaks, but also some spot treatments of high priority areas where Malta star thistle and Sahara are occurring, such as near White reef and Babylon.

Mike suggested getting Brad Winder involved for the fuel breaks, since he may be able to use his truck to do some treatments out there. Mike suggested scheduling a side meeting with him to go over what the fall/winter priorities are going to be.

John said that there were plans to aerially treat a block of land near Pioneer Park last year using a helicopter, but there was talk that there might be too much drift for being in an urban interface so it was pulled from the project. It might be a really good location for drones because there's a lot more control and less drift and would offer complete coverage, especially after looking at the track logs for treatments done by Middleton. That's an area that needs to be treated.

John agreed it would be good to set up a meeting with Brad Winder. Last year, John gave him a motorized tank to help contribute to his efforts on public land. It is very likely that BLM will be able to provide some chemicals this year for those joint efforts. Mike needs to check with Brad, but there should still be a good amount of chemical left that the HCP purchased as well. If we put our resources together, we should be able to do treat whatever we decide needs to be treated.

Mike suggested getting a meeting scheduled and figuring out what our priorities are, and then getting the ball rolling with UDWR to put contracts out for bid on a drone/helicopter. Mike will get the ball rolling on that. He will watch to see when Curtis' position gets refilled, but if it's going to be a few more weeks he may even see who else from DWR might be able to assist us



in putting that out for bid since this takes some time. We treated it a little bit later than we normally would last year (in January), so if we can do it in November that would be ideal. John agreed, and suggested they up a meeting within the next 30 days to get the ball rolling.

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

##### **a. Tortoise monitoring**

Cameron reported that both DWR and Resi Solutions did tortoise monitoring this year. The drone survey was of the Zone 6 area, and DWR has been monitoring Zones 2-5. While DWR haven't completed a final report, they did submit a preliminary report, and what they found is a little alarming. In Zone 3 they have found a number of recent carcasses indicating that there was at least a small die off in Zone 3. It is unknown what that looks like for the population as a whole, or for the density estimates yet, as they haven't finalized their survey yet.

The good news is that tortoises are doing really well in Zone 6. In fact, it was the highest report for Zone 6 to date. Each time we have monitored that area, it has gone up a little bit. Resi has polished their final report and reported a density estimate of 32.6 tortoises per sq. kl. Cameron will invite both Resi and Ann McLuckie to give an official report to the HCAC once all reports are finalized. Cameron will also make both reports available to the TC members.

##### **b. Raven management**

Cameron gave an update that the HCP is going to try to have the remaining funds left over from this year's raven management efforts roll-over for their raven management next year.

Cameron has recently observed crows move into town after the Pine Valley fire. He even saw a group of crows at the county the morning of the meeting. If the crows stick around, he wonders how it may change the dynamic with the ravens. Management may have to extend to crows if the trend continues.

John plans to hire a technician to assist with monitoring efforts next spring. That individual would not be authorized to do rappelling though, as John was informed that would not be a covered activity for them. They would still be able to do the nest monitoring and any other type of projects related to raven monitoring. Cameron said that if the technician is qualified to operate drones over the nests to see if there are eggs or not, that would also be a huge benefit. The HCP has the drones, and would be happy to put them on loan if needed.

Danielle wondered if there have been any wildfires in the Reserve this summer. Both Cameron and Mike said that they weren't aware of any yet. John hasn't been informed of any in the NCA either.

**c. County-wide tortoise surveys**

The HCP is nearing the end of their county-wide tortoise survey effort. There are a few areas here and there that haven't been visited, but they hope to finish by the end of the year and before the deadline in January.

Cameron wanted to seek out information from the committee members, inviting them to share any new tortoise reports or information that would be relevant to this process with Cameron and/or Mike. This will help them as they start considering what areas are going to be added as potential take areas that require a tortoise survey before any development efforts begin. Currently the land right next to the Reserve requires this, but there are a number of other places further from the Reserve that should also require it now that there are known tortoises there. This will probably be a future agenda item sometime before December.

Danielle requested to touch base on this more, as it is something that wasn't on her radar and she needs time to think about it. Especially regarding the larger BLM parcels that have been removed from BLM ownership over the past few years. Cameron responded that those are definitely spots that the HCP would not have a survey, due to them not being identified on their list. If there is any kind of shape files for those parcels, they can be sent to him so he can start looking at some of those to determine if there is a tortoise absence or presence there. Danielle responded that BLM had all of them surveyed so there should be some data. She offered to contact Stephanie Taylor to see if any come to mind that may be worth updating on the map.

**5. NEXT MEETING DATES**

- a. 2<sup>nd</sup> Wednesdays at 1:00 p.m., as needed. Possible dates/times remaining for the year: 9/10, 10/8, 11/12, &12/10.**

**6. ADJOURN**

**MOTION** by: Mike Schijf  
Seconded by: Elaine York  
Discussion: To adjourn the meeting.  
Vote was taken: All voted aye.  
Motion passed.

The meeting was adjourned at 2:10.

Minutes prepared by Randee Sanders.