

HABITAT CONSERVATION ADVISORY COMMITTEE

for the Washington County Habitat Conservation Plan (HCP)

A **regular** meeting of the Habitat Conservation Advisory Committee (HCAC) was held at the Washington County Administration Building on **September 24, 2025.**

Committee members present were:

Chris Blake, Chairman	Environmental Organization
Chris Hart, Vice Chair	Mayors Association
Jason West	Bureau of Land Management (BLM)
George Weekley	U.S. Fish & Wildlife Service (USFWS)
Melinda Bennion (for Kevin Bunnell)	Utah Dept. of Natural Resources (UDNR)
Steve Kemp	Citizen-at-Large
Gregg McArthur	Local Development

Absent and Excused:

Carmen Clark	Citizen-at-Large
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Also present were:

Cameron Rognan	HCP Administrator
Randee Sanders	HCP Executive Assistant
Mike Schijf	HCP Biologist
Devin Snow	Washington County Attorney
Danielle Costantini	USFWS
Alysha Lundgren	St. George News
Matt Bandy	Resi Solutions
Mindy Wheeler	Utah State University
Lennie McConnell	Bureau of Land Management (BLM)

1. CALL TO ORDER

Chairman Chris Blake called the meeting to order at approximately 1:03 p.m. noting that a quorum was present.

2. CONSENT AGENDA

The Consent Agenda is a means of expediting routine matters which come before the committee for approval. The consent portion of the agenda is approved by one (1) non-debatable motion. If any member wishes to remove an item from the consent portion of the agenda, then that item becomes the first order of business on the regular agenda.

- a. Approval of Agenda**
- b. Review and Approve Meeting Minutes**
 - 1. May 28, 2025**
- c. Next Meeting Date**

1. November 19, 2025

MOTION by: Chris Hart
Seconded by: Jason West
Discussion: To approve the Consent Agenda.
Vote was taken: All voted aye.
Motion passed.

3. DECLARATION OF CONFLICTS OF INTEREST

None.

4. PRESENTATIONS

a. Open Meeting Training – Devin Snow

Devin Snow, County Attorney, said that the HCAC is a public body under state law, and state law requires annual trainings on the Open and Public Meetings Act (OPMA). Because this is a public body under state law, all of the meetings of this body are required to be open to the public. Anyone who wants to come in and listen to deliberations and see the actions that are being taken must be given the opportunity to do so. As part of that, we're required to have advance notice of meetings, a published agenda, minutes taken, and a recording made.

Let's say you had a quorum that decided to meet before the actual meeting to determine how they're going to vote on a certain action. That's considered predetermining action, and is prohibited by the OPMA.

There are exceptions that allow this group to close a meeting, and Devin can help this body walk through those situations. The most common one is if the committee is considering the purchase of real estate in order to not give competitive advantages to others. Talk to your attorney if you feel like there's an item that could be appropriate for a closed-door discussion.

b. Update on Washington County rare plants – Mindy Wheeler

Mindy Wheeler was asked by Cameron Rognan to present some updates to the HCAC. She reported that the species that they were specifically looking for this year was Jones cycladenia, as well as Astragalus holmgreniorum. They had also looked for Pediocactus sileri on White dome back in 2023.

2025 was a really dry year. They didn't search the entire habitat, but at the specific areas they did look, they didn't find any Holmgren's and they were unable to collect seeds. They hope to have better luck next year. It is relatively normal for the species to have boom and bust years. Like most Astragalus, they

depend on the seed bank, and those seeds can wait in the soil for the right year. It's not necessarily time to panic, she just hopes for a better winter. George Weekley added that some of the preliminary assessment of viability for Holmgren seed is seven to nine years. They've co-evolved with drought conditions. When there's a good water year, they'll come out like crazy. When it's dry, as Mindy's evidence shows, you don't see them.

Mindy made contact with Jenna Lewinson, and there really hasn't been much movement on the proposed Central Valley Preserve for Holmgren milkvetch. Jenna is hoping to reach out to TLA in the near future.

Mindy's team did find some Jones cycladenia, a listed species, in three different places in Washington County in 2024. Her presentation (see exhibit 4b) shows the general distribution of *Cycladenia jonesii* in Utah. These plants have been somewhat isolated over the years, and so the southern populations look a little bit different than the northern populations. They did collect materials from all of those subpopulations and gave them to Lee Johnson at BYU for a genetic analysis to look into how closely they are related. Lee is thinking that it might be recognized as a variety or subspecies because they're different from the rest of the Utah material. His theory is not definitive. There are a couple more tests that he needs to redo to confirm his suspicions.

They had moved over 100 Sileri from TLA property onto White Dome in 2020 and 2021. Some Washington County folks assisted with those transplants. They did some monitoring of the transplants of the listed *Pediocactus sileri* and the exhibit shows their findings. Cactus can be transplanted quite easily, but it does get difficult to try to follow them and make sure that they get some moisture when they really need it. It required carrying gallons of water. Some of those transplants were quite difficult, as is handling *Pediocactus*.

c. Discussion and possible action on rare plants

Cameron asked Mindy if she was able to confirm any new locations for the *Cycladenia* out near Virgin, especially on the private land next to BLM. Mindy answered that they did find some this spring on the BLM land. Cameron reported that the HCP completed some tortoise surveys on the private property out there and the habitat looks exactly the same as the BLM land. He wondered if Mindy would want to consider it for seed salvage or transplants if it had *Cycladenia*. Mindy answered that seeds are very difficult to find for the species. She asked if that area is likely to be developed. Cameron didn't think it would be in the near term, but he never knows when it could be. Mindy said she would appreciate Cameron's help to get access to that area so they can see what they can find. She will make a reminder to contact him this winter to arrange access to the private property.

Since Mindy had brought up the Central Valley Preserve, Cameron suggested discussing that further. Gregg McArthur said TLA keeps kicking that can down the road while the wait to see what their development partner is going to do. George Weekley shared that based on some of the surveys and data, Jenna put together a core area that FWS thinks the preserve could encompass. She presented that to Kyle 4-5 years ago. A couple of years ago a decision was made to hold off because the development time frame was pushed out to 2028. So we're basically two years out again and may need to restart the conversation. Greg responded that TLA is open to that. If there's a defined area they can start talking specifics.

George said that Jenna came up with somewhere around 250 acres. One of BLM's recreation planners presented an idea to the developer that the species can coexist really well with trails, because they like to be on the slopes. It would be pretty easy to have recreation trails on the ridge lines and still protect the slope areas where the plant actually occurs. Kyle and the developer were keenly interested in that suggestion.

Gregg suggested scheduling a conversation. He invited George to use him as his point of contact, and he could pull Kyle in. George said that Jenna no longer works for him, but she is still with FWS. He thinks he should still be able to bring her into those conversations as well.

d. Drone survey monitoring report for Zone 6 – Matt Bandy

Mathew (Matt) Bandy, with Resi Solutions, presented on the Zone 6 tortoise surveys done this past spring. Matt used a different drone and camera. The new equipment has some real advantages to the discovery rate, which will figure into the conclusions. The method was to fly the drone over the area of interest and take tens of thousands of photographs from the air. He has trained a computer vision model to find the tortoises in those photos. The tortoise model is currently trained on a data set of 657 aerial images. Most of which are Mojave Desert tortoise, but there are also some balsam tortoises and painted styrofoam surrogates as well.

He segregated the data set into training and validation sets so he could measure its efficacy. The current model has a recall rate of about 89% (meaning the trained model finds 89% of the tortoises that are in the photographs). This is about 5% better than the previous version that he used in 2023. As he puts more data into it, the model gets better.

In both 2022 and 2023, the drone surveys were conducted concurrently with pedestrian surveys. This gave the opportunity to assess how similar the results were of drone versus traditional surveys. The correspondence was quite high, especially in 2023, so it was very successful. Matt has pretty high confidence in

the drone method as producing results that will be comparable to traditional survey results.

The 2025 session was done from April 28th to May 1st, and focused on Zone 6. Matt conducted east-to-west oriented transects spaced about 150 meters apart. He surveyed a total of almost 2,500 acres, which is about 36% of Zone 6. He used a Freefly Astro, an American-made drone with a 61-megapixel Sony camera and a 50-millimeter narrow-angle lens. That allowed him to increase the flight elevation up to 73 meters (about 250 feet), and still maintain the half-centimeter resolution that is required to detect tortoises. There are a lot of advantages to flying higher, including safety.

When the data was processed, 40 unique tortoise detections were found. 34 of which were adults, and 6 were juveniles or sub adults. 2 carcasses were also found. There were about 10 detections per pilot day, which is more than the past.

There are some differences in the distribution of tortoises recovered from this survey from the 2022 survey. The higher proportions of the detections were on the east side of Bloomington Hill on the northeast side of the escarpment. Additionally, Matt didn't find any tortoises on the south end in 2022, but it seems to be a new area that's occupied now.

The soil burrow model detected 72 burrows in active or good condition. There are no soil burrows on the east side of the escarpment, because it's rocky and the tortoises don't dig burrows in that area. Matt didn't find any burrows on the south end in 2022, but there was a cluster of them this time. It does seem like there's more activity in the far south of the area than there was previously.

Ann McLuckie's telemetry study assessed that the availability of the tortoises for drone detection was about 18%. Meaning, 82% of tortoises at any given time during the survey period were probably underground or under vegetation. This is due to the fact that it was a very cold/dry winter and spring. For comparison, Mojave Max in Las Vegas emerged on May 8th, which is the latest that has ever happened in the history of that program. Previous detectability rates in 2022 were 28%, and in 2023 it was 67%. So 18% is very low. During a survey Matt did in Clark County, Nevada the detectability was about 20%. Range-wide, it was a very bad year for tortoise surveys, because they were not out and available for detection.

Using these detections, Matt created a new detection function to measure how likely it is to find tortoises based on the distance from the center of the photograph. In comparing 2023 to 2025, the 2025 function is much flatter. This means the new equipment was much more successful at finding tortoises throughout the photograph than was previously the case. This has everything to do with the increased flight elevation and the more vertical perspective throughout the photograph. It's a pretty major improvement.

Within the surveyed area, there was a mean estimate of about 300 adult tortoises with a 90% interval, or about 32.6 tortoises per square kilometer. For Zone 6 as a whole, the mean estimate is about 900 tortoises. Tortoise density in Zone 6 this year was significantly higher than was estimated in 2022, 32.6 versus about 28 per square kilometer. It was also significantly higher than the 2023 estimate for Zones 2 through 5, 32.6 versus about 20 tortoises per square kilometer. It's among the highest reported densities of any tortoise population range-wide.

e. Discussion and possible action on tortoise monitoring

Chris Hart wondered how Matt translates how many tortoises are seen in the pictures into an estimate of how many tortoises there actually are. Matt replied that the photos go through a computer vision trained neural network (AI) that is trained specifically for tortoise detection. To answer how that is turned into an estimate is a long answer. He recommended that Chris read his full report, and Cameron said he would forward it to the HCAC so that he could. Matt then summarized that he uses distance sampling, a well-established bio statistical method to estimate how many tortoises are missing based on how many are above ground. That is estimated by looking at tortoises that have radio transmitters on them to see if the tortoise is above ground or in its burrow. This helps estimate how many tortoises in the area are above ground during the survey period. Using the detection curve, how many tortoises found in each photo it can be estimated how many are missing. He can sort of correct the detection number by multiplying it by a series of correction factors to arrive at an estimate of the real number.

Melinda Bennion said that DWR saw a lot of tortoise mortality during their pedestrian monitoring in the Reserve this year. She wondered how the drone differentiates deceased tortoises from live ones, especially considering that many of the ones they encountered still had their fleshy parts. Matt answered that if he can see their head and limbs he calls them alive, if not, and if a few of the scutes are peeled off they would call them a carcass. He likely wouldn't be able to distinguish a recently deceased tortoise from a live one. Cameron suggested adding an appendix with the photographs of all tortoise observation to allow the ability to verify them.

Jason West wondered if Matt had any false positives reported, where it identified a tortoise where there wasn't one. Matt answered that probably 90% of the detections are false positives, so he has to go through every detection manually to verify that it's a tortoise. It'll get better, but tortoises are sort of camouflaged already and look like rocks. The model finds every single rock that looks like a tortoise, but he wants it that way. He would rather find all the rocks that look like tortoises and manually discard them than miss tortoises. He is optimizing for not missing anything at the cost of having to sort through a bunch of false positives.

Melinda wondered about discrepancies of measuring MCL with a drone versus pedestrians in determining if they are adult tortoises. Matt answered that he measures MCL on the photograph using the number of pixels (0.55 cm per pixel) from front to back of the carapace. He then multiplies it to get the MCL. That's not a perfect process, and it would be good to assess how accurate that is at some point. Melinda agreed, she thought it would be interesting to compare the drone measurement to hand measuring to see if there could be a correction factor.

5. UTILITY AND DEVELOPMENT PROJECTS

a. Mill Creek road repairs

Cameron reported that the recent storms washed out a lot of the road making it impossible to get on Middleton Road and go up Mill Creek. There are going to be some road repairs done over the next month or two to remedy the situation. HCP staff will be working with St. George City to make sure they don't harm any tortoises while they're out there making those road repairs.

Mike added that he had already gone out with St. George City as they did some repairs most of the way up Mill Creek, but there's still some issues on Middleton Powerline that need to be done.

b. Utility line relocation proposal

Cameron will let Mike address this agenda item later in the meeting during the TC report.

c. White Rocks trailhead completion

Cameron gave an update on Snow Canyon State Park. They've completed the White Rocks Trailhead. It is a really nice new addition in the parking area.

d. Other utility projects

Lennie McConnell reported on an application BLM will be receiving soon from Rocky Mountain Power to move the purgatory transmission line. The line is going to be coming down from the Three Peak Substation in Iron County all the way down to the Purgatory Substation in Washington County. They're upgrading that line from a 62 kV line to a 368 kV line in order to be able to provide needed power to Washington County. Right now it's in the infancy stages. BLM hasn't received an official application yet from Rocky Mountain Power, but they did have a pre-application meeting earlier this week. Jason added that they have some established routes where they can connect to the existing line, but they have to go outside of that for other requirements. BLM told them to keep all the alternatives on the table. Once the application is received, Jason will share it.

Jason reported on two ROW's that might be relative to this group. One is the Horseshoe ROW for Toquerville City, northwest of Babylon Road. The other is for the Silver Cliffs development off of Babylon Road for a ROW tertiary emergency route going into their southernmost subdivision in the Silver Cliffs area. It borders the NCA critical habitat as well. Two different entities submitted those application, but only one entity will be building those projects out.

There is an opportunity for potential rehabilitation work to be done in the Babylon Road area. The survey work done for the Silver Cliffs development led to a mistake where a blade was put down on the ground that destroyed some habitat. Additionally the big earth scrapers rounded the actual ROW, going further than they were supposed to. There is a good faith effort being put forward by the company to make it right, and BLM is coming up with a reclamation plan. BLM recently acquired land at the end of Babylon Road with a concrete structure and a mill. They're looking at that for cultural issues, and the company is willing to use their heavy equipment to reclaim that. John Kellam is going to come up with the reclamation plan to allow the processing of the two ROW's to continue to go forward, and the company's going to do that in parallel with the applications being processed, but not necessarily dependent on the outcome of the application.

Jason reported that Grapevine LLC, is asking that people check into their construction yard when they enter Babylon. They have a lot of people from the public getting stuck, and they have been pulling a lot of them out. If people check in with them, they can make sure they got out safely at the end of the night by going in and looking for them.

Cameron asked if BLM has received a proposal from St. George City for a water tank somewhere near Zone 6. Lennie has had a pre-application meeting for two water tanks in the Zone 6 area, but he has not seen an application from them. Cameron asked Lennie to let him know if the project gets advanced any further. There is a pretty high density of tortoises there, as we've learned from Matt's presentation. It's not a part of the Reserve right now, so we want to protect any tortoises. Jason speculated that everyone is waiting to see if there's going to be a stance change on the Northern Corridor.

Lennie and Jason also discussed a few other projects outside of the scope of the committee. Those projects include the Sheep Bridge Road improvement project, the Solaris Project off of Mill Lane, and 1,600 pallets of stone at the old stone quarry.

6. SURVEYS AND CLEARANCES

a. None

7. OTHER REPORTS & BUSINESS

a. TC report

Mike Schijf reported on the August 13th and September 10th TC meetings.

The first agenda item from the August 13th TC meeting was a utility pole replacement project in the Mill Creek area. A couple folks from Washington City attended the meeting and presented on this proposed project. The existing pole line runs from south of the Mill Creek trailhead, extending up the Mill Creek Utility Road into the Reserve, and then takes a jog to the east along the Bone Wash Utility Road. There are roughly 25 40-foot poles that are 40-50 years old and in need of replacement. The replacement poles would be a slightly different alignment. This will be advantageous to both the city and to the Reserve because they will be moved closer to the utility road. This will make it easier for them to maintain the lines, but will also cause less ground disturbance since they will no longer have to go off road to some of the poles.

The city does anticipate being able to complete this project completely during the less active season (between December 1st and February 14th). Washington City will be coordinating with the HCP for pre-project surveys. This project is entirely on TLA lands. There will be no permanent impacts, and the old poles will be cut at the base to minimize habitat impacts. The TC did emphasize having minimal vegetation disturbances.

There was a motion made and unanimously passed to inform the HCAC that the TC has reviewed the project and refer it to the HCAC. The TC requested that Washington City coordinate closely with the HCP office regarding surveys and mitigation (such as recontouring and seeding), and that Utility Development Protocols (UDP's) be followed.

The next agenda item from that day was the 2026 budget review of HCP discretionary spending items. Cameron presented the budget to the TC, and the TC saw no major red flags. There was a motion made and unanimously passed to approve the adaptive management budget for the upcoming year.

The TC then had a discussion on a Watershed Restoration Initiative (WRI) project proposal for 2026. The deadline to apply is in January, so a few of the TC members and partners plan to get together to iron out the details. The main projects that they're looking at doing are fencing, herbicide treatments, and habitat restoration. They will be referring to the Habitat Fire Management plan to see where the next round of treatments should be done, but nothing has been formally decided. There was also some discussion on implementing previous WRI funding to complete treatments this fall. Mike will be working with John Kellam and folks from the state to

work out the details for some of those fuel break areas to mitigate wildfire, which is an ongoing project.

In regards to the pole replacement project, Jason sent out John Kellam and their cultural specialist to look at the project as Operational Maintenance (OR). For that reason, they won't require any kind of documentation. Jason wondered if the new poles will be wood or metal. Mike answered that due to cost, the city will be using wood.

George recommended applying for Species Protection Income Funding, under ESMF, in addition to the WRI funds.

During the September 10th TC meeting, the TC received an assignment from the HCP administrator regarding desert tortoise translocation and surveys and Ann McLuckie was invited to aid in the discussion. Mike read the TC Assignment (see exhibit 7a).

The committee first discussed concerns about two instances of translocated tortoise road mortalities on I-15. They wondered if the drought conditions may have triggered some of the relocated tortoises to wander further from their translocation spots searching for forage. For this reason, the TC talked about the potential to look at some new translocation areas, including the Cottonwood Wash area (an area identified in DWR's Translocation Management Plan). The TC also discussed the possibility of radio transmitting some tortoises to get a better sense of where those tortoises are going after their release.

A motion was made and unanimously passed to investigate translocation sites and movements of tortoises. HCP and other funding sources will be looked into to start a pilot program where some tortoises have transmitters placed on them to be monitored post-release at the Grapevine Wash and Cottonwood areas. HCP staff will work with DWR on the logistics.

Melinda said she, Ann, and Alyssa have been discussing it already. Ann has even talked to some of their big game biologists that were using satellite radios on other animals to help determine contracts and costs, and to try to come up with some feasibility scenarios on equipment so that they won't have to radio the tortoises by hand. It would be a lot more useful to have spatial data to draw data from versus single points.

Cameron wondered if DWR could have a proposal ready for the next HCAC meeting for consideration. Melinda answered that she would need to check with Alyssa and Ann on that, especially since their work plans are set until 6/30/26. They are hoping to put in ESMF/SPA proposals. Cameron thought that even if they haven't submitted for grants yet, having support from this body may help.

Cameron said that the HCP does have some budgeted monies for tortoise monitoring. Even though this an atypical project that they haven't done before, it certainly fits the bill of tortoise monitoring and keeping tabs on tortoises after they are relocated. He want's to make sure that they're safe.

Chris Blake wondered, with the number of dead carcasses found being in the 70's, if that is higher than normal. Cameron suspected the usual is more like 5-10, but if you go back to 2005 it was in the 100's. When Ann's report is finalized, he will invite her to come and give a report to the HCAC and dive into those numbers a little bit deeper.

Melinda pulled up Ann's summary field notes. They state that 60 of those 79 tortoises had died within this past year, the majority of which were adults. There were only eight juveniles out of the 60. The cause of death was unknown for most of them. Only one of the females had significant puncture marks on the carapace and plastron, but sometimes you see predation after they die. 69 of those 79 were in Zone 3, 8 in Zone 2, 2 in Zone 4, and none were found in Zone 5.

Mike finished his report by touching on the County-wide presence/absence surveys that the county has been working on for the last few years. Once completed, the occupied habitats will become new take areas, and developers would be required to coordinate with the HCP before disturbing the ground. The TC motioned and approved what was identified in their occupied habitat map, once surveys have been completed and tortoise data is pooled. The occupied areas identified will be new take areas, and full coverage clearance surveys will be conducted in coordination with the developer before construction activities take place.

b. Discussion and possible action on utility line relocation

MOTION by: Jason West

Seconded by: Steve Kemp

Discussion: To accept the TC's recommendation, and authorize Cameron to coordinate to get it completed.

Vote was taken: All voted aye.

Motion passed.

c. Review and consider HCP annual implementation schedule

Cameron shared the implementation schedule (see exhibit 7c), and gave his annual review to show that the County is making progress on completing their commitments.

One that can be checked off now was having Mindy come and give a rare

plant update. Everything else highlighted in blue have also been completed. The ones in green are ongoing. Most of them are things that are done each year, and are on schedule with. Things in yellow are items that the County is in the process of completing right now. The clearance protocols and the tortoise translocation are almost done, and are on schedule for those ones. The ones highlighted in red are things that have not been done yet, such as the Central Valley Preserve. It will be one that needs to be done before January of 2028. Everything in orange are only triggered with Zone 6 and the approval of the Northern Corridor. The HCP had previously checked some of those off. It's possible that we will resume a lot of the tasks, but for right now, they're on hold until they come back as hard commitments.

Most tasks are self-imposed requirements that the County agreed to do. The one that Cameron needs the most help with is to meet with Gregg/TLA and discuss the Central Valley Preserve. At this point, they need to identify the area, and then they can start working on the management plan for it.

d. Consideration and possible action on 2026 HCP budget

Cameron shared the budget (see exhibit 7d). There have been a few administrative changes that the County's clerk auditor office requested. We combined certain things and removed some of the inactive fields, but for the most part the budget is almost the same as it was before.

Cameron is requesting a little bit more for the travel and training. The HCP office has been pretty short-staffed lately, but it's possible he may rehire some positions next year, which may incur additional training costs.

The items highlighted in orange are still subject to change. They are for items like insurance, utilities, and employee benefits. Items that have been removed from the previous budget are highlighted in red. Those were either redundant or items that he wasn't using funds for.

Chris Hart wondered about the large-scale weed spray program, and suggested it be separate item on the budget from the fire prevention and restoration program. Cameron answered that it is broadly defined so that different kind of projects can be done without limiting the number of tools that we have, because there's many different ways to go after the fire problem. George agreed, saying that the goal with weed eradication is to reduce the incidence of fire.

Cameron said that the Fire and Habitat Management Plan will be used as an outline each year to identify the areas to be targeted for weed treatments. They will then identify the costs associated with the targeted

area. The proposed budget reflects what has been used in the past as kind of a high end to make sure that we can meet whatever the grant ends up looking like. Cameron thought that that will be sufficient. In the previous iterations, the County hasn't used that full amount yet.

Gregg asked Cameron to explain the contingencies. Cameron answered that the regular budget is the baseline to run the standard HCP. The contingency takes into account the possibility that we could have changed circumstance triggered (whether that's Zone 6, drought conditions, or something else). All of the changed circumstances described in the HCP have associated costs. The contingency column is to account for those potential costs, because he doesn't know when they might occur. This way Cameron won't have to request an emergency amendment to the budget in case something happens. It's always there and available.

MOTION by: George Weekley

Seconded by: Jason West

Discussion: That the HCAC reviewed the budget and are comfortable forwarding it on to the County Commission.

Vote was taken: All voted aye.

Motion passed.

e. Land acquisition updates

Cameron didn't have any news on the Section 6 grant. It is still on hold with a lot of the other federal funding. George hasn't heard anything else either, but they did finally get fiscal year 2024 money for the Virgin River program two weeks ago, so funding is starting to move. Jason said that he is also starting to see contracts get paid this week.

Jason announced that the Warner Valley Exchange is set to close on the 26th. BLM will be able to move forward if they don't receive an appeal. It should be a 3-5 week process before land can change hands.

Jason is waiting on information on the LWCF funds. There's potential to go after more land in the Reserve with support from Flipco and the County. Zach Renstrom said that the Water District is willing to entertain a purchase to buy out the private landowners. If the funding is released, we may be able to get the majority of the land.

Mr. Doyle's attorney is regularly in touch with BLM, seeking updates. BLM may be able to buy Doyle out all the way with additional funds to move forward after that. They are looking into who else they can get land from if that happens. Cameron suggested that the Sullivan family would be a good one to reach out to. That's who he was targeting with Section 6 funding. They are a willing seller, with about 40 acres. Jason responded

that it all depends on what monies are made available, and whether or not they can buy out Doyle or only a portion of his acreages.

Doyle hasn't exercised his power of attorney yet. They want something rather than nothing, and are looking for BLM to buy the small acreage first to give them a chunk of money. BLM has told them they don't have that availability right now, but suggested to wait for the rest of the LWCF funds to get released when they might be able to get all of it at once.

Cameron offered to bring a map to the next meeting to show the committee all the remaining inholdings.

Chris Hart wondered about TLA inholdings. Gregg answered that at some point, they'll want to start getting bought or traded out. Jason felt that the issue is the difficulty of the land exchange process right now. Land tenure actions are discretionary, which means they have to fulfill all of their requirements first on our federally required pieces, and then they can move on. BLM's preference would be to work outside of the land exchange process, because it takes so long and is subject to public input. It used to be that land exchanges were easier and took less time, and now that's flipped with purchases being a much simpler process.

George knows that TLA land in particular has been used pretty extensively for equalization of land exchanges.

f. HCP Administrator's Report

1. Confluence Park fire near temporary care facility

Cameron reported that about a month ago, a fire started at Confluence Park in Hurricane. The fire got really close to the Tortoise Care Facility. The good news is that it wasn't impacted by the fire and all tortoises are safe. The bad news is they dropped fire retardant right on top of it. HCP staff had to move tortoises out of the stalls within the path of the retardant. There were some pink tortoises that got dusted, but they're safe and healthy. Cameron asked one of the firefighters "how toxic is this stuff?" to which the firefighter replied "it's less toxic than fire!" Cameron assumes that there is some toxicity risk to the retardant, so he felt a lot better to move the tortoises until it kind of filters out with rain and time. Cameron has been working with DWR for a WRI project to do some rehab as well.

2. Raven funding and upcoming report

Cameron shared that the HCP had leftover raven management funds, and the State was gracious enough to let them carry those funds over to next year's efforts. The funding will be used to hire an intern and a rock climber

to help with Raven management work. The HCP should be ready to report on this year's Raven activities next month.

8. **PUBLIC COMMENT**

This item is reserved for items not listed on this agenda. No action may be taken on a matter raised under this agenda item (three minutes per person).

None.

9. **MEMBER REPORTS & REQUEST FOR FUTURE AGENDA ITEMS**

Jason reminded the HCAC about the potential for a government shutdown next Tuesday. George added that Congress is on recess until next Monday, so they will only have about 48 hours to go from zero to passing a budget.

Melinda mentioned that the Confluence Park fire rehab proposal has been submitted by the Division. It includes planting annuals in the TCF since there is little forage down there. They are waiting to see what the funding mechanisms can do with that. Their habitat manager thought the proposal has a high likelihood of being funded.

10. **ADJOURN**

MOTION by: Chris Hart

Seconded by: Jason West

Discussion: To adjourn the meeting.

Vote was taken: All voted aye.

Motion passed.

The meeting was adjourned at approximately 2:53 p.m.
Minutes prepared by Randee Sanders.