

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 **June 10, 2026.**

Members present:

John Kellam
Danielle Costantini
Mike Schijf
Alyssa Hoekstra
Scott Chamberlain

Bureau of Land Management (BLM)
U.S. Fish & Wildlife Service (USFWS)
Washington County HCP Biologist
Utah Division of Natural Resources (UDNR)
TLA, Local Biologist

Members excused:

Elaine York

Nature Conservancy, Biologist-at-Large

Also present were:

Cameron Rognan
Randee Sanders
Ann McLuckie
Kerry Holcomb
Ryan Thomas
Paul Stead
Logan Blake

Washington County HCP Administrator
Washington County HCP Executive Assistant
DWR
Desert Tortoise Recovery Office
St. George City
DSG Civil Engineers
DSG Civil Engineers

1. CALL TO ORDER

Cameron Rognan noted that a quorum existed and called the meeting to order at 1:03.

2. APPROVAL OF MINUTES

a. February 11, 2026

MOTION by: Mike Schijf

Seconded: John Kellam

Discussion: To approve the minutes.

Vote was taken: All voted aye.

Motion passed.

3. GENERAL BUSINESS

a. Reevaluate TC Assignment 9-12-23 / Zone 6 Boundary Change

This boundary change request was recently recommended to the HCAC, but the proponents have since requested some minor changes. St. George City is requiring the developers to put in a detention basin on a portion of the original

3.5-acre mitigation parcel, which will affect the conservation value. The detention basin will take up approximately 0.85 acres. One option was to keep it in, fence around the detention basin, and add an additional acre. However, it wouldn't be optimal to have them go through us every time they need to do maintenance on the detention basin. It was agreed that the best method would be to omit the basin from the mitigation parcel and instead select habitat further to the north.

Cameron shared a rough hand drawn map to give an idea of what was being proposed. However, the exhibit (3a) includes the official map after it was completed. HCP staff met with the proponents onsite and concluded that the habitat to the north was better for desert tortoises. It has better soil for digging, and the habitat was of far better quality. Everything else under the original deal pretty much stays the same. It's just a minor tweak of the mitigation area.

Mike Schijf agreed that the original mitigation habitat that is now being proposed to be omitted is inferior to the replacement habitat that is proposed to be added. There's a nice hillside with good/rugged topography, nice rocky areas for tortoise burrows, and more dense shrub cover compared to the detention basin site.

The group went over the hand drawn map, and John Kellam wondered if the mitigation parcel would be an isolated parcel connected by a culvert. Cameron affirmed that it was basically the same parcel that was approved a couple years ago, but it now carves out the detention pond and is adjusted further north instead of east.

Danielle Costantini joined the meeting, and Cameron reviewed what was discussed so far during the meeting to get her up to speed.

John asked if the mitigation would be 1:1. Cameron confirmed that it would be. The proponents mentioned that it might end up being slightly bigger, but at a bare minimum it will be 1:1 (3.5 acres). Danielle wondered if the parcel will be fenced to exclude the detention basin. And Ryan Thomas, St. George City, responded that it would be.

Cameron asked how the TC wants to update the evaluation spreadsheet. All of the figures/etc. should remain the same. He suggested adding a comment that describes how the parcel boundary is slightly different. Mike agreed that since the acreage is staying the same, there probably won't be a need to change the language or metrics. Mike suggested adding a note about the amendment, adding today's date, and attaching the updated map to the document.

The TC then worked together as a group to update the document. Those changes can be seen by looking at the finalized evaluation spreadsheet (see exhibit 3a).

MOTION by: John Kellam

Seconded by: Mike Schijf

Discussion: To recommend accepting the amended June 10, 2026 mitigation area (see map), which is the same acreage, but of higher quality.

Vote was taken: All voted aye.

Motion passed.

Since the HCAC won't be meeting again until July, Cameron will schedule a special Zoom meeting for them to speed things up. That will allow Cameron the ability to clear up any confusion about the mitigation parcel that was approved last month.

Ryan Thomas said he will provide Cameron with an updated map, and asked when the fencing permit plan will get approved? Cameron answered that it will be approved by the County, so he won't have to come back to the HCAC. Cameron will continue to work with the city on that.

b. TC Assignment: Consider conservation options for habitat islands and fragmented tortoise populations

Cameron began by reading the TC assignment:

"In recent weeks, HCP staff reported that a portion of tortoise fence at Long Valley was non-functional due to shifting sand dunes, and that tortoise tracks were observed entering the adjacent private property. Since that time, the BLM has repaired the damaged fence, and HCP and UDWR have been removing tortoises from the private property, which is in the process of being developed. The developers expressed frustration at the need for an additional tortoise removal and requested other solutions that will prevent tortoises from entering their property again. This area, and others like it, present conservation challenges due to the fragmented nature of the remaining habitat and unknown number of tortoises they might be harboring."

"Review the primary tortoise habitat islands throughout the county's take permit (figure 1) and then consider best management practices for each location that is fragmented from larger tracks of habitat. If necessary, consider specific thresholds, such as the number of tortoises or acres, that should be needed to maintain a viable tortoise population. For areas that do not meet the desired thresholds, consider management options to remove and translocate these tortoises. Identify steps to implement a conservation strategy for each of these locations, such as additional study, culverts or fencing, and additional permitting or authorizations."

The map (see exhibit 3b) indicates some of the islands that Cameron initially identified. He admitted that the map may not be comprehensive, so it is open for discussion. He suggested picking the low-hanging fruit and thought that the easiest ones to deal with are probably the ones labeled as 1, 2, and 3. They are all within incidental take areas and are almost entirely private and/or state property that is completely surrounded by urbanized areas. The biological report done years ago listed them as being functionally extinct. They're not contributing toward recovery of the species or the Reserve population. The one that's probably more open for debate would be area 1, West Black Ridge where the old airport was, because it is larger and there probably are more tortoises there. HCP and DWR have already been removing tortoises from areas 2 and 3 over the last 20+ years, but there's likely still a few out there.

John thought discussing Long Valley would be an important starting point. It was brought to his attention that there may be some fencing issues there. He wondered if, prior to the development of the private lands abutting the ACEC along SR-7, there was a functional tortoise exclusion fence barrier put in place. Cameron answered that a fence was built, but that he didn't think it was an effective barrier. It wasn't maintained well, nor did it extend high enough along the ridgeline. When the Southern Parkway came in, it split the habitat immediately in half leaving two fragmented populations.

Ann McLuckie believed that the fence and two culverts were required to be constructed when SR-7 was built because Tim Crusant had found tortoises in the area. Mike further explained that there is tortoise fencing along a two-mile stretch of SR-7, and there's also tortoise fencing that abuts the private property development north of the BLM land. HCP staff have recently found some issues with both of those fences and have coordinated with Stephanie Taylor on some repairs. A section that was buried under a sand dune was folded at the base instead of being buried, which created some issues. Another issue is that the fence doesn't go far enough up the ridgeline, allowing tortoises to go around it. Cameron said that the culverts don't seem to be functional either, and BLM might be working on that. He offered to put some cameras on the culverts.

Mike's understanding from talking to Stephanie Taylor and Eric Hansen, is that the fence was originally built by UDOT, but there was an agreement that the ongoing maintenance would be done by BLM.

John shared his concerns with the current and future management of areas being developed, the need to make sure that developers are installing suitable fences, and that maintenance responsibilities are well-defined in advance. This way the HCP and federal agencies are not having to inspect private fences, which shouldn't be their responsibility.

Cameron said that because Long Valley is not on the Reserve boundary, the HCP doesn't have any jurisdiction to tell the developer to build and maintain a fence. All the HCP can do is remove tortoises and clear the land for development. The fence responsibility fell on BLM in this case. John agreed. It's a valuable lesson for the BLM to make sure there's conservation measures clearly defined in their documents in advance. This way it is quantified in the EA, instead after the fact. He will strive to coordinate to make sure responsibilities are outlined in future EA's. Danielle suggested doing the same for BO's. There is a need to do better about making sure it's very clear in project BiOp's who's constructing and maintaining fences and that it should be maintained in perpetuity.

Ann suggested that if fences are installed on soft soil, developers should be required to bury the mesh into the soil, not bend it. Otherwise, the fence will not last long. John agreed that if it's in friable soil, especially dunes, it should be vertical to the Fish and Wildlife Service standards. Otherwise, they will have to keep dealing with it.

Danielle asked how much habitat remains in Long Valley. Cameron answered that he measured the Washington dome area (on the west side) the other day and it was close to 300-400 acres. The east side of the road is probably an even smaller area of habitat. It might be 200-300 acres. All together it's probably over 500 acres, but he doubts the culverts are effective.

Cameron suggested moving on from Long Valley for a while, since it's tricky, and talking more about areas 1, 2, and 3. He doesn't expect to finish this discussion in one meeting, but would like to talk about what to do with some of those locations in the long term.

John has been out to the gypsum wash/detention basin in area 4 (part of the ACEC) and hasn't found any tortoise or plant sightings. It was his opinion that if a few tortoises are found in an area which is heavily degraded, has trash and weeds everywhere, and is isolated that it would be reasonable to remove them. The BLM is actually hoping to dispose of that land because of all the issues in that area and it being bisected by SR-7. However, area 1 is a large continuous chunk of occupied habitat of good quality. The whole rationale many years ago about the need to have satellite reserves was protection against episodic stochastic events. He requested more context for why we would remove tortoises from a large thriving area if there's value in long-term conservation.

Cameron wondered if the question John was getting at was "what is large and what is not large?" or "what is contributing and what is a sink?". People might have different opinions about that, but that's why he identified them on the map to be evaluated. Maybe the TC doesn't have to look at each one

individually but instead set tortoise population and/or acreage thresholds to identify which islands are beneficial to the recovery of the species. A biological report that Hillary helped come up with identified areas 1, 2, and 3 as set for extinction in the long term and not contributing to recovery.

Ann cautioned against identifying certain thresholds to define population viability based on a simple headcount of tortoises or number of acres. She thought it is more complex and should be based on the age structure of the population, their survival and reproduction rates, their population trend, their connectivity, their genetics, etc. Area 1 has a good tortoise population that maintains recruitment and retains adults. It has a trail that the city wants to maintain, ensuring it will remain open space. Regardless of the number of acres, she thought it's a valuable satellite population that can help in devastating stochastic events.

John thought area 1 could be a potential source for genetics. If the tortoises are left in place and there is a catastrophic event, they could help augment the genetic diversity of the population. However, for difficult-to-manage areas, it makes sense to relocate tortoises. Cameron used to share John's sentiment, but recently there has been a 30% decline in the Reserve. At what point do we start considering we're losing more and more tortoises in the reserve and start boosting the population with some of these fragmented populations that aren't contributing at the moment. Ann suggested it would be best to understand why those declines occurred before translocating large amounts of tortoises into the Reserve. If drought was the primary causation of those declines, then putting more tortoises in those areas is not going to help. There's habitat degradation in some of those areas that have been burned multiple times. She doesn't advise to translocate tortoises to areas full of invasive plant species.

Mike thought there were two different conversations going on. First, determining if there are any areas that the group would want to survey and systematically remove tortoises from. Secondly, what to do when tortoises spill out of the isolated islands into residential areas. Does it make sense to put the tortoises back, knowing how small and isolated the area is without tortoise fencing? Or should they be put into the translocation program for release into Zone 3?

John suggested ranking the islands with certain attributes. He wondered if the TC could draw in resources collectively, even though it's outside the reserve, to help manage areas like Temple Quarry, potentially fencing it. There may be some value to rank the areas so that the group can then focus on more effective management and keep tortoises from going into neighborhoods.

Danielle agreed that there should be some kind of matrix put in place that should include the risk of development. Area 1 sounds like it might be safe in

the near future, but she assumed some of the other sites will likely be developed in the next 5 to 10-year time period. Developing a matrix for these decisions could be helpful. Cameron responded that area 1 looks larger than reality because the city has plans to develop the top of the mesa which will make it even more fragmented.

Ann opined that the ship had already sailed for areas 2 & 3. DWR has removed over 200 tortoises from Foremaster, and they continue to remove tortoises when they've done clearances there.

Cameron debated including area 7 (the Springdale/Zion National Park population) on the map, but he wasn't sure what to do with them. It doesn't have many tortoises, but Zion National Park loves them and has good outreach. Even if the population isn't really contributing, it contributes in educational ways. The TC members agreed it would be best to leave them there.

Cameron felt that area 5, Sullivan Knoll, looks bigger on the map than in reality. HCP staff haven't been in to survey a lot of it, because the private property landowners haven't consented, but they have removed tortoises around the edges. The entire area is privately owned and will eventually be built out. When the new road went in, they pulled off 4-5 tortoises from there. Mike added that they continue to remove a couple tortoises every year from that area. It might resolve itself through the usual take process. Ann added that tortoises removed from that area have been translocated to the Reserve rather than returned.

The TC agreed that areas 2, 3, & 5 could be written off due to them being completely surrounded by, and slated for, development. However, Ann suggested to still include area 7 in the assessment. It's a small population, but having community support is also an important part of the equation. It would be good to include the reasoning of why they will be left where they are.

There is a small population of tortoises in area 6 between Virgin and LaVerkin, but Cameron thought there was a need to do more study in order to better know what's going on there. It may have some connectivity to adjacent BLM lands if the population goes that far over. Cameron didn't know that they did, but that could be explored.

For the next meeting, the TC requested maps that zoom into each area for more detail.

Danielle thought it would be interesting to know how many tortoises are being translocated annually. If area 5 is going to come up in the next several years, it would be good to know how many tortoises are being translocated and whether the areas they are being moved to can support that many tortoises.

Ann thought that was a really good question, because area 1 has a lot of tortoises. If the entire area was cleared, she didn't think enough habitat could be found for those tortoises in the Reserve. That's another reason why she would support maintaining it as a satellite population. Alyssa Hoekstra said having a forward-thinking plan will be useful so that a plan will be in place to make sure we aren't overloading a certain area. Megan Kepas from Utah Tech has been collecting tortoise data. Alyssa will reach out to her and see if she has data that she can share with the TC.

John asked about the fencing status of the red polygon immediately adjacent to the Red Cliff's NCA and to the left of area 6. That whole area is being developed right now and is an incoming nightmare for tortoise management. He thought it would be good to talk about what could be done to get it properly fenced, offering to put in for funding to finance the project. Both Cameron and Ann thought that the green portion was at least partially fenced, but Cameron said he would look at his fencing maps to make sure. Cameron said that they are supposed to enter a fence agreement with the County as they build out that development so the BLM shouldn't necessarily be on the hook for that fence financially. In Long Valley, Cameron has no authority to tell them to build a fence, but where this is on the Reserve boundary, he has a little more authority to require them to build a tortoise-proof fence.

One of the HCP Field Technicians recently surveyed the fencing situation in Long Valley along the Southern Parkway. The following two maps were shared to show his findings and aid in the discussion:

- West side: <https://www.openstreetmap.org/way/1526879315>
- East side: <https://www.openstreetmap.org/way/1526879314>

Danielle informed John that Stephanie Taylor was on a call about the box culverts that go under the road. They are under Section 7 consultation. They do need to be cleared, but the developers are responsible for that. Stephanie was going to look into it.

Mike pointed out on the maps where the section of fence was buried under a sand dune on the east side, noting that Stephanie made those repairs. North of that is where 10 tortoises were recently removed from private property.

It is believed that the fence was already existing. Cameron thought it probably went up as a part of the exchange to aid in tortoise removals. John wondered whose responsibility it would be to go from the tip on the east side and follow the lower contours down to the developable area to create a barrier for tortoises getting into private property? Mike thought that was a good question. Tortoises will continue to show up on private property. Even if the fence was in perfect condition. Tortoises can maneuver their way around the end of the fence, especially when the culverts aren't functional. There are

fairly high tortoise densities to the north, but less so to the south where there are gypsum soils. Mike didn't know the best thing to do. It does connect to BLM land to the south then wraps over to the east where there is potential habitat. But in practice, it's a fairly isolated tortoise population. Ann added that there is a population on the Washington Dome, which ought to be connected by the culverts. The dome is being protected as a recreation area for Washington City.

Cameron thought it should be an all or nothing effort. If it is decided to manage the tortoises in place, it will require some commitments from different parties to extend the fencing and maintain the culverts and fencing. Otherwise, over time the tortoises will get onto the Southern Parkway. John thought, because the Washington Dome is being set up as an open space reserve and it is contiguous, the TC should look at it in closer detail.

Both Mike and Ann reported that they receive calls on tortoises in the neighborhoods adjacent to the Washington Dome. Danielle asked if the Washington Dome area is fenced on the northwest side. Ann replied that it's not.

Cameron reiterated that he doesn't have the ability to force them to fence because it's not bordering the Reserve. This might be a situation where, if everyone agrees that it's a place for tortoise recovery, to use NFWF or other funding as it will need to be initiated by BLM or FWS. It is all on BLM land.

Mike thought it would be good to bring Stephanie Taylor into this conversation as well. A few weeks ago she and Eric Hansen were a part of a conversation where she said that she was going to talk to the developer and look into the culvert situation to see what can be done.

John suggested the TC independently look at maps/shape files of the fences and land ownership, then reconvene at a future TC meeting to discuss it in more detail. He would like to talk to Stephanie Taylor about what BLM's management plans are for Washington Dome. The city wants to develop trails out there for hiking and mountain biking which will need to be a part of that conversation.

Danielle invited Kerry Holcomb from the Recovery Office to join the meeting. Kerry came in late, but he did hear some of the discussion on installing additional fencing. Doing so can be good in some areas, but he urged the TC to be careful that they're not fencing off areas that they will need to spend money trying to maintain and manage. The closer the area is to developed areas, the more likely domesticated animals are going to be an impact to the site, as well as domesticated pet food for the subspecies of predators in those locations.

Cameron asked Kerry if he has had any experience throughout the range of small islands of tortoises with urbanization surrounding them, and if he has identified any metrics (such as acres or animals in a given area) where it makes more sense to manage those areas for recovery versus it being a lost cause. Kerry responded that they've thought about that a lot in the West Mojave. They have the same thing happening, but on a much larger scale due to the sprawl into the westernmost portion of the desert. California's Department of Fish & Wildlife disagrees with the Recovery Office's approach, so there has been some challenges enacting those changes. They would like to start clearing some of the pockets of tortoises. For one reason, growing an adult-sized tortoise and replacing all of its lost reproduction would be about \$500,000 per tortoise. And so, using these tortoises in areas that already have depressed densities is much better than allowing them to live out their existence on a postage stamp.

Essentially, what the Recovery Office knows comes from DOC 1994 and the 1994 Recovery Plan, which basically calls for areas with 10,000 or more tortoises that have a 500-year extinction probability. Any time it drops below that, the extinction probability starts getting shortened exponentially. Any area that's smaller than 10,000 tortoises shouldn't be considered as a long-term reserve. Mike responded that, unfortunately, that's everything in Utah.

Kerry thought that there were two ways to look at it. One is the contemporary density, and the other is the potential density. The Reserve is a small area, and the potential density of the habitat wouldn't be high enough to get close to 10,000. 10,000 was just the best guess in 1994. Unfortunately, the tortoise world gravitated away from population biology and went into density surveys, and we can't use any of that information to answer those extinction-type questions. That's why we're making a U-turn back to spatial capture-recapture so that we can start making those assessments. Hopefully once that is done, they'll be able to better say how large an area is needed. It's one of the reasons that the Recovery Plan assumes connectivity among all of the recovery areas, because none of them are large enough on their own to be self-sufficient over a 500-year period.

John sees this as more the continuation of death by a million cuts, and the fact that no one can say no to projects that destroy habitat, no matter how big or how small. There is value in fighting for some of the islands as a genetic reservoir, otherwise we are going to be putting all of our eggs in one or two baskets. Stochastic events put those populations at risk. He understands from a practical standpoint if there is not enough money, resources, and/or staff to effectively manage a host of smaller areas, and how we could get more conservation bank for a buck to help tortoises in larger areas. But he also didn't think that the TC should write off all of the smaller populations.

Ann said that the Upper Virgin River Recovery Unit is very unique in that it has basically 1% of the habitat that other recovery units have. The justification for that is because we have much less habitat relative to other recovery units, but we have more tortoises. The Reserve definitely doesn't have 10,000 tortoises so that justification would basically write off the Red Cliffs Desert Reserve, or portions of it, because it's bisected. She thought that satellite populations are really critical for this area because of our unique situation.

Kerry wasn't saying 10,000 is the limit, but rather that literature is limited in its resolution of what the viable size would be. Large populations of tortoises are the only way to manage the species in the future, regardless of their size. What we need to do is determine which of these islands are manageable and which are not. If all of our funding goes away and we're told to go home tomorrow, what do we do today that has the biggest impact? A part of that is getting all of the tortoises onto an island together to create connectivity and exercise gene rescue. There are some disease concerns when we do that, so we'll have to be careful with it.

Kerry cautioned against repeating the same mistakes done with the Geometric Tortoise. Only one of the habitats is available, and it's the worst one. They wish that they could go back and make that decision a decade ago, and say, "these are the places where we should have put our money in, and this is the place that we should have tried to make our stand", versus spreading themselves too thin across the entirety of South Africa.

Mike suggested the TC looks at all the islands on a case-by-case basis. Maybe there is value in keeping area 1, but areas 2, 3, 5, and 6 might just take care of themselves through the HCP process. He understands where Kerry's coming from, and the big picture is what is going to be the best approach for tortoise conservation in our area.

Cameron suggested the group get Kerry up to speed and gather his thoughts on area 1. A map of St. George was pulled up to show Kerry the West Black Ridge to aid in the discussion. Cameron gave him a quick overview of what had already been discussed earlier in the meeting. Cameron guessed that there's probably between 20 - 100 desert tortoises out there, but Ann thought there were probably over 200. The top of the plateau is going to be fully developed, but the hillsides are undevelopable and have an open space. Fortunately, that is where most of the tortoises reside.

Kerry wondered what the demographic structure is within the area. That will indicate whether the population expansion for the island is positive or negative. If it already has a negative population expansion rate, then we're just waiting for it to blink out. The tortoises could be moved to a place where they can contribute to recovery, or we can let them die out here. Another thing to consider is if the density within both the area, as well as across the NCA is

below 3.9 tortoises per square kilometer. When we get below that density, it becomes harder for males and females to find one another. Given the recent population declines, if it's not there yet, will it be there soon? Will there be more tortoises to bring from the islands now than if we wait? He suggested reading the Carter et al. paper from 2020. It indicates that across the entire range of the tortoise, live animals are not found within a kilometer of 0.5 or higher terrestrial development index. From what he sees on the map, the area is above 0.5.

Ann disagreed with moving tortoises from area 1 to an area that we know is declining by 30%. There are other satellite areas that we know are going to blink out, so she suggested moving those tortoises into the NCA instead. She sees area 1 as a great satellite area that buys time to think about what's happening to tortoises in the Reserve and why they're continually declining. Mike suggested, at the very least, moving tortoises away from the areas that the TC agrees on to buy some time while the TC iron's out what to do about area 1. Cameron challenged the notion of "buying more time". From what he understood, Kerry said that the longer the TC buys more time, we might be losing some of our advantage. If we delay this longer, it's less effective in the future. Kerry confirmed, it is his perspective that that would be wasting time.

Cameron wondered if the TC would agree to doing a population study this season to know exactly what they're dealing with and what the age classes are of the tortoises, then make a decision based off of those findings for area 1. He doesn't want to delay this decision too long, because it doesn't benefit the tortoises in the long term. In the meantime, the areas that the TC already agreed on can be addressed now. John suggested the TC also come up with a priority ranking matrix.

Cameron thought if the TC decided to clear area 1 after the study, it would be easy from a regulatory process since it is all state and private lands and covered under the incidental take permit. However, Cameron wondered if Kerry had experience of what to do when those islands occur on BLM lands. Kerry answered that they haven't had active translocations off of BLM land that are outside of ongoing projects. For example, California has solar energy zones or development focus areas where BLM has been required to ensure those areas are free of tortoises because adult survivorship is going to be low in industrial landscapes.

If that's something the TC is seriously considering, Danielle thought it would be worth making a recommendation for the HCAC to discuss. She thought the TC could try to leverage a Section 6 agreement with UDWR, have an MOU in place, or do a 7.8.1 recovery program and consult with BLM to get the tortoises translocated. It will require figuring out the right regulatory pathway, but she thought there definitely is one.

Kerry mentioned that whenever they think about these things in the West Mojave, they make it clear that the 7.8.2 as well as the Section 10 requirements for the lands are the same. It's still tortoise habitat, and the likelihood of occupancy is assumed to be occupied, so it doesn't do away with the ability to try to maintain these areas in as natural a state as possible. It just goes that extra step to say that given the proximity to development, the threat network on this parcel is probably higher than it would be on a larger parcel where you can get further away from threats and we're moving tortoises for that reason. From a habitat perspective, we want to keep it intact. These areas can be repopulated. The biggest problem is if we lose all the animals right now and there's nothing to work with in 20 to 30 years.

Mike shared that there has already been systematic clearances done on Foremaster Ridge, but tortoises are still found. The areas may be systematically cleared, but we're not going to find every single tortoise, especially hatchlings. It's possible that a few are going to persist out there and reproduce.

MOTION by: Danielle Costantini

Seconded by: Mike Schijf

Discussion: To continue this discussion and draft a matrix to help guide the TC through decision making into the future.

Vote was taken: All voted aye.

Motion passed.

4. **ADMINISTRATOR UPDATES**

a. **Update on Northern Corridor Record of Decision and lawsuit**

The plaintiffs submitted additional claims related to the Endangered Species Act and the recent Zone 6 land exchange with DWR. A decision is expected towards the end of the year. All of the documents will be submitted by October, then the judge will have about two months to sit on a decision.

b. **Zone 6 fencing and recreation planning**

As mentioned during the Zone 6 boundary adjustment discussion, Cameron has been working with the developers on a fence agreement. However, he doesn't want to sign off on it until he knows where that boundary is going to be. In the meantime, he is also working with all the different recreation groups to make sure that there will be public access to the appropriate trails.

5. **NEXT MEETING DATES**

- a. **2nd Wednesdays at 1:00 p.m., as needed. Possible dates/times for 2026: 7/8, 8/12, 9/9, 10/14, 11/10, 12/9.**

The TC will meet on July 8th to continue discussing the fragmented tortoise populations.

6. ADJOURN

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

The meeting was adjourned at 2:57.
Minutes prepared by Randee Sanders.