

QUARTERLY REPORT

Second Quarter 2015
To the Habitat Conservation Advisory Committee
From the Habitat Conservation Plan Administrator
July 28, 2015

Introduction:

Quarterly reports are due in January, April, July, and October of each year. Page 107 of the Habitat Conservation Plan cites what information will be included and which agency or entity (Washington County, USFWS, BLM, UDNR, & Ivins) will provide it.

The first segment of this Quarterly Report deals with general items not associated with clearing and removing tortoises while the latter half will provide details on these and related items.

RESERVE MANAGEMENT

Administration:

- HCP staff participated in the latest round of Recovery Implementation Team meetings providing input on recovery action prioritization and implementation.
- HCP staff participated in meetings with the Management Oversight Group and Quad State Organization.

Fire Management:

- HCP staff provided support to the DWR and Agricultural Research Service out of Logan, Utah in their study of restoration methods and adapted plant species at the Turkey Farm.
- HCP staff remains involved with the Lower Virgin River Fire Council plus coordinating with Washington County Emergency Management and County Fire Warden.
- The HCP contracted with the Kolbs Company to create a fire break along portions of Cottonwood Road using goats to eat the vegetation.

Utility Projects

- HCP Staff trained and monitored road construction crews for improvements on Indian Hills Drive.
- Completed training and coordination of Rocky Mountain Power crews doing inspection and maintenance on their powerlines in the Reserve.
- Inspected and oversaw the replacement of several poles on St. George City's power line along Cottonwood Road.

TORTOISE CLEARANCES, MONITORING AND MANAGEMENT

Clearances Requested:

- None

Surveys Conducted:

- At the request of Brennan Holdings LLC, owner of property inside the Reserve, HCP staff and volunteers conducted a survey of 200 acres in the southeast corner of the Brennan parcel in late April. Several tortoises and sign were observed.

Removals Conducted:

- No tortoises were removed from the Brennan property since it is currently a part of the Reserve.

Take animals:

- There were no captive tortoises recovered during the quarter.
- There were 4 "take" tortoises recovered during the quarter.
- There was 1 untested take animal at the TCF as of June 30, 2015.

*Attached is a report showing all tortoises processed or handled by HCP staff during the quarter.

Blood Work:

- There were 8 tortoises tested during the 2nd quarter.
 - ELISA Positive: 5
 - ELISA Negative: 3
 - ELISA Suspect: 0

Translocation:

- There were 3 tortoises translocated during the 2nd quarter.

Adoption & Captive Tortoises:

- There were 11 tortoises placed in the DWR adoption program during the quarter.
- As of 06/30/15 there were 2 tortoises awaiting adoption at the TCF.

EDUCATION

Outreach and Education:

- Staff made 17 presentations to 1,238 people during the 2nd quarter.
- Staff completed 13 Tortoise Awareness Training classes for 136 people. These trainings were for Indian Hills Drive.
- Staff met with and responded to various requests from media for information about the Reserve.
- The project to paint a desert tortoise and scenic mural on the south side of the HCP building was initiated during the quarter. This project has begun and will resume once temperatures cool down.
- Staff participated in the Color Country Natural Resource camp, held at Panguitch Lake.

RECREATION MANAGEMENT

Trails and Trailheads:

- HCP staff coordinated and participated in a SUU/YCC restoration project on Chuckwalla and Beck Hill trails, to help stabilize and improve drainage from the trail.

Trail stewards:

We currently have 19 active trail stewards operating on the ground. This quarter the volunteers donated a total of 232 hours of time on trail monitoring, trail maintenance, and visitor contact within the Reserve. They documented 76 visits in reporting their work, observations, and recommendations for improved management. They monitored 43 trails or areas during the quarter. Zones 1-5 of the Reserve were visited during the quarter by trail stewards.

Additional Volunteer Work:

- During the quarter, 92 hours of trail steward volunteer program administration were contributed. Total Volunteer time for the quarter amounts to 324 hours.

Signage:

- The biologist installed new signs or improved signage at the following trails within the Reserve: Paradise Rim, Dino Cliffs, Bone Wash, Brook's Nature Trail, Beck Hill, and Chuckwalla.

Human Impact Monitoring:

- SUU/YCC conducted a trail restoration project at the Chuckwalla and Beck Hill trails. This area was identified, in part, through the Human Impact Monitoring effort.

LAW ENFORCEMENT

- During the second quarter, Washington County deputies made 413 vehicle

- contacts, 176 person contacts, issued 2 citations, and 2 warnings.
- HCP staff met with law enforcement personnel to review activities that have been happening in the Reserve.
 - Sheriff's department detailed report is attached.

FENCING

Boundary Surveys completed:

- None

Fence Constructed:

- None

Planned Fencing:

- Ledges West boundary fencing
- Pioneer Park fencing

Vandalism:

- There were 5 occurrences of cutting the fence or damaging stepovers and gates. All issues were repaired.

Maintenance:

- Maintenance is an ongoing issue created from varied sources. An example this quarter is a car leaving the Red Cliffs Parkway and going over the top of the fence and into the Reserve. The maintenance stemmed from the need to cut the fence to remove the vehicle.

RESERVE ACQUISITIONS/BOUNDARY ISSUES:

Section 6 Acquisitions:

- The DWR has completed the acquisition of the 11.4 acres of Virgin River Land Preservation Association property and 90 acres of SITLA property using the 2013 Section 6 funding.

BLM Acquisitions:

- BLM completed cultural reports for submission to SHPO on the Long Valley proposed exchange. The exchange package has been submitted to the Washington Office for approval. It has moved thru the process and is awaiting director approval.

Boundary Issues:

- None

RESERVE MONITORING

- UDWR completed tortoise monitoring in the Reserve for the 2015 season during the quarter, using funding provided by the HCP and UDNR.
- HCP hired Mark Draper, an intern from the Color Country Natural Resource camp, to assist the biologist in monitoring raven nest and roost sites within the Reserve.

OTHER SPECIES

- Confluence Park
- Work on the Main Street Trail Head in Hurricane City is progressing, with the work initiated on the restroom/kiosk complex and ordering of signs and education panels.
- An engineering firm has been enlisted to develop a design and cost estimate for an irrigation line to the agricultural fields.

Attached reports:

HCP staff training received
Tortoises processed by HCP Staff
Outreach and education presentations
Tortoise awareness training provided
Trail steward volunteers
WCOS quarterly summary
UDWR report