

# **QUARTERLY REPORT**

Fourth Quarter 2015  
To the Habitat Conservation Advisory Committee  
From the Habitat Conservation Plan Administrator  
January 26, 2016

## 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 meetings with the Quad State Organization.
- HCP staff participated in meetings with the Management Oversight Group (MOG).
- Efforts to renew the permit are continuing by coordinating with the contractor, giving responses for information requested, and clarifying items.
- Significant amounts of staff time have been spent working on land acquisition efforts.

### Fire Management:

- HCP staff continued to work with and support the DWR and Agricultural Research Service in their study of restoration methods and adapted plant species at the Turkey Farm.
- HCP staff continued its involvement with the Lower Virgin River Fire Council, Washington County Emergency Management, and County Fire Warden to stay coordinated on fire related issues. Fortunately, no fires occurred in the Reserve this year.
- HCP provided \$20,000.00 funding to UNLV for the RIT project to develop vegetation islands within burned habitat inside the Reserve and on Beaver Dam Slope. This

was in fulfillment of agreements signed by the County Commission with UNLV based on recommendations by the Technical and Habitat Advisory Committees.

#### Utility Projects

- Rocky Mountain Power test boring project and coordination on a future pole replacement project along Turkey Farm Road.
- Monitored repair of St. George City water leaks at the Cliffs and monitored work by Washington City on well repair and road maintenance.
- Trained construction crews for road repairs on Telegraph Street, Washington.

### **TORTOISE CLEARANCES, MONITORING AND MANAGEMENT**

#### Clearances Requested:

- Water tank construction west of Tuacahn in Ivins.

#### Surveys Conducted:

- Water tank construction west of Tuacahn in Ivins.

#### Removals Conducted:

- No tortoises were found during the survey.

#### Take animals:

- There were 0 captive tortoises recovered during the quarter.
- There was 0 "take" tortoise recovered during the quarter.
- There were 2 untested take animals at the TCF as of December 31st.

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

#### Blood Work:

- There were 0 tortoises tested during the 4<sup>th</sup> quarter.  
ELISA Positive: 0  
ELISA Negative: 0  
ELISA Suspect: 0

#### Translocation:

- There was 1 tortoise translocated during the 4<sup>th</sup> quarter.

#### Adoption & Captive Tortoises:

- There were 0 tortoises placed in the DWR adoption program during the quarter.
- As of 12/31/15 there were 2 tortoises awaiting adoption at the TCF.

### **EDUCATION**

#### Outreach and Education:

- Staff made 4 presentations to 437 people during the 4<sup>th</sup> quarter.
- Staff completed 6 Tortoise Awareness Training classes for 21 people. These trainings were for Telegraph Road and the Southern Parkway.
- Staff met with and responded to various requests from media for information about the Reserve.

### **RECREATION MANAGEMENT**

#### Trails and Trailheads:

- A trail to a historic rock quarry near Red Hills Golf course was approved through the Technical and Habitat Advisory Committees. Work was started on that trail this quarter.

#### Trail stewards:

- We currently have 19 active trail stewards operating on the ground. This quarter the volunteers donated a total of 294.5 hours of time on trail monitoring, trail maintenance, and visitor contact within the Reserve. They documented 96 visits in reporting their work and observations. They monitored 65 trails or areas during the quarter. Zones 1-5 of the Reserve were visited during the quarter by trail stewards.
- Social trail use continues in Paradise Canyon and in the lower sections of Zone 3 where biking and equestrian activity is at its highest. Authorized trails, however, are generally clear of trash due to the work of volunteers and community groups who use the trails and assist in the removal of trash and other debris. Substantial erosion remains in effect on some Paradise Canyon trails along with small portions of the Prospector trail and trails in the Sandstone Mountain area.

#### Additional Volunteer Work:

- During the quarter, 58 hours of trail steward volunteer program administration were contributed. Total Volunteer time for the quarter amounts to 352.5 hours.

#### Signage:

- The biologist installed new signs or improved signage at the following trails within the Reserve: Pioneer Rim, City Creek, Scout Cave, Owen's Loop, Brook's Nature Trail, and Rusty Cliffs.

#### Human Impact Monitoring:

- SUU staff and students monitored trails in Zone 3 of the Reserve.

### **LAW ENFORCEMENT**

- During the fourth quarter, Washington County deputies made 571 vehicle contacts, 220 person contacts, issued 1 citation, and 7 warnings. (The citation was for marijuana possession and the warnings were for failure to pay camping fees at Red Cliffs Campground)
- HCP staff met with law enforcement personnel in the scheduled quarterly meeting to review activities and patrols in the Reserve.
- Sheriff's department detailed report is attached.

## **FENCING**

### Boundary Surveys completed:

- None

### Fence Constructed:

- The Encanto project in Ivins constructed a rock fence on their property boundary with Snow Canyon State Park.
- Fencing was started on the Reserve Boundary in Zone 5 to resolve a problem of cattle getting onto the Reserve from the private property which only had tortoise mesh fencing on the boundary.

### 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 sources such as washouts from heavy rain storms or vandalism as noted above.

## **RESERVE ACQUISITIONS/BOUNDARY ISSUES:**

### Section 6 Acquisitions:

- The HCP administrator met with UDNR and UDWR representatives to determine how to most effectively use the remaining funding from the 2013 Sec. 6 grant in meeting the goals of the HCP.

### BLM Acquisitions:

- Long Valley Exchange EA contract was awarded to SWCA, and the initial meeting was held with the contractor and BLM. The schedule calls for a draft EA in late February.

Boundary Issues:

- One issue came up in Zone 5, where only tortoise mesh fencing was in place along the boundary of private property and the Reserve. Cattle on the private property were coming onto BLM land by going over the tortoise mesh fence. (See Fencing above)

**RESERVE MONITORING**

- DWR is working to complete the report of the monitoring done in 2015, which should be out sometime in the first quarter of 2016.

**OTHER SPECIES**

- Virgin River Land Preservation Association approached HCP about providing funds to help with the purchase of property adjacent to Confluence Park. The property has some potential tortoise habitat and contains habitat for several species of Virgin River Fishes.
- Work on the Access Points Grant at Confluence Park is nearly complete. Main Street Trail Head in Hurricane City continues to progress. Work is complete on the restroom and parking lot. The information panels have been installed, and some informational signage is still being worked on. Work on the Center Street and SR 9 Trails in LaVerkin is complete. Information signage and maps are in hand and will be installed soon.
- Noxious weed control work was undertaken again this quarter to try eradicating Scotch Thistle and Silver Leaf Nightshade.

Attached reports:

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