

2015 ANNUAL REPORT

To the Habitat Conservation Advisory Committee
from the Habitat Conservation Plan Administrator
January 26, 2016

This report combines and summarizes information contained in the four 2015 Quarterly Reports. For specific detailed information in each category please refer to the individual Quarterly Report.

Reserve Management:

- Significant amounts of staff time have been spent working on land acquisition efforts.
- Efforts to renew the permit are continuing by coordinating with the contractor and USFWS, giving responses for information requested, and clarifying items.
- HCP biologist, Cameron Rognan, attended USFWS Desert Tortoise Health Assessment Training in Phoenix, AZ to stay current with the latest techniques in determining tortoise health.
- HCP staff remained involved in the Recovery Implementation Team (RIT) process for the Beaver Dam Slope and the Upper Virgin River recovery units by participating in webinars and conference calls as well as responding to information requests and submitting project proposals for consideration.
- HCP staff and technical committee have worked to develop agreements and provide funding to UNLV as participants of the RIT project to develop vegetation islands within burned habitat inside the Reserve and on Beaver Dam Slope.
- The HCP hired an intern during the summer months to assist with conducting a raven predation study in the Reserve. The intern program also provides opportunities for students to gain experience in the biology field to assist them in career decisions.
- Staff and County Commission met with BLM to discuss the BLM travel management plan and RMP planning issues.
- HCP staff attended the three day Desert Tortoise Council symposium in Las Vegas, Nevada.
- HCP staff participated in meetings with the Quad State Organization.
- HCP staff participated in meetings with the Management Oversight Group (MOG).

Fire Management:

- HCP staff assisted Agricultural Research Service out of Logan, Utah with planting for their study of restoration methods and provided support when they installed automated weather stations at the plots. 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.

- The HCP contracted with the Kolbs Company, which completed its contract to create a fire break along portions of Cottonwood Road using goats to eat the vegetation. This was an experiment to see if the goats would reduce the tumbleweeds, with which they did a good job.
- 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:

- HCP staff completed a walk-thru and follow up with UDOT and the contractor at the completion of the SR-18, Red Hills Parkway, and Snow Canyon Parkway intersection project.
- HCP staff continued involvement with the entities participating on the Ivins Dam maintenance project and berm reconstruction in Snow Canyon State Park.
- HCP Staff trained and monitored road construction crews for improvements on Indian Hills Drive.
- HCP staff monitored well and waterline repair work at Mill Creek and Grapevine in Washington with both the water and power departments.
- HCP Staff worked with St. George City to facilitate repair of a waterline break on the T-Bone tank line.
- Staff monitored repair of St. George City water leaks at the Cliffs, Middleton, and Kachina Cliffs.
- Staff inspected and oversaw the replacement of several poles on St. George City's power line along Cottonwood Road.
- Staff completed tortoise awareness training for OSMOS, a subcontractor for Rocky Mountain Power, for pole maintenance inspection work.
- Rocky Mountain Power completed soil test boring adjacent to the Middleton Sub-station in preparation of line upgrades.
- HCP staff attended the Transportation Expo in St. George.
- Staff trained construction crews for road repairs on Telegraph Street, Washington.

Tortoise Management: (See the attached database report for details)

Clearances conducted:	1
Surveys conducted:	4
Tortoises removed:	0
Tortoises processed:	33
Take animals:	9
Tortoises translocated:	6

Tortoises adopted:	11	
Tortoises Blood tested:	14	
Total number retested:	2	
ELISA positive :	7	
ELISA negative	5	
ELISA suspect	2	
Tortoises awaiting blood test :	2	
Tortoises Captive and eligible for adoption	5	Three of which are at the Visitor's Center and used for educational purposes.
Tortoise shell remains recovered:	0	
Egg shell remains recovered:	0	
Total number possessed at TCF / HCP:	11	As of December 31, 2015

Recreation Management:

Trails and Trailheads:

- HCP staff participated in a community project involving the Paradise Canyon HOA, Southwest Utah National Lands Friends (SUNCLF), and BLM to clean up and repair the Halfway Wash Trail.
- 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.
- A trail to a historic rock quarry near Red Hills Golf course was approved through the Technical and Habitat Advisory Committees, and work has been started on that trail.

Trail stewards:

- We currently have 19 active trail stewards operating on the ground. This year the volunteers donated a total of 1033 hours of time on trail monitoring, trail maintenance, and visitor contact within the Reserve. They documented 337 visits in reporting their work, observations, and recommendations. They monitored 94 trails or areas during the quarter.
- During the year, 208.5 hours of trail steward volunteer program administration were contributed as were 36 hours of volunteer visitor information work and training time.

Signage:

- The biologist installed new signs or improved signage at the following trails within the Reserve: Halfway Wash, Cottonwood Hills, Spanish Wash, Paradise Rim, Rusty Cliffs, Pioneer Rim, Cottontail, Middleton Powerline, Mill Creek, Grapevine, Prospector, Dino Cliffs, Scout Cave, Bone Wash, Brook's Nature Trail, Beck Hill, Chuckwalla, City Creek, and Owen's Loop.

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

Budget:

- The County Commission approved the following budget for 2015. The HCP was able to accomplish the HCP mission and meet customer needs while staying under budget for the year. This preliminary amount does not include certain 4th Quarter 2015 impact fees.

Approved Budget:	\$2,875,088.00
*Total Expenditures:	\$ 613,753.22
*Total Revenues:	\$ 577,681.51

* Preliminary and unaudited amount

Outreach and Education:

Significant Accomplishments:

- HCP staff hosted the Mojave Max education program in teaching kids at East Elementary School (in Cedar City), Riverside Elementary School, and Valley Academy Charter School.
- The HCP staff supported the Color Country Natural Resource Camp, a week-long camp geared toward young adults with an interest in careers in natural resources.
- HCP staff participated in a Day in the Desert Program for 7th graders at local Middle Schools.
- HCP staff and volunteer trail stewards had an educational booth at the Washington County Fair for four days.
- HCP staff supported and participated in 2 Tonaquint Junior Ranger Programs, a multi-agency event to educate children and their parents.
- HCP staff made presentations to schools, scout groups, Springdale Earth Day, Zion Birthday Bash, Tuacahn’s Farmers Market, and a variety of other agencies and mixtures of people.
- HCP staff completed 31 Tortoise Awareness Training classes for local municipalities, Snow Canyon State Park, Rocky Mountain Fencing, Rocky Mountain Power, Trees Inc (a sub-contractor for Rocky Mountain Power), the Southern Corridor project, Telegraph Rd., SR-18 milepost 9-13 widening project, a large clean-up service group at Pioneer Park, JP Excavating, and John Orton Excavating.
- HCP Staff Produced 2 thirty second videos that were shown in St. George, Hurricane, and Cedar City theatres this past spring and fall. These videos were also shown at many schools and other venues promoting the HCP and conservation of the Desert Tortoise. Estimated audience was 80,000 plus at the theatres per month.

- Data:

Total number of outreach presentations:	37
Total audience:	5,777
Tortoise awareness training sessions:	31
Total number of individuals trained:	326

Fencing:

- HCP worked with Ivins City to complete fencing of the mitigation property included in the Reserve required for the Ivins flood control dam.
- Red Mountain Estates boundary fencing was completed.
- 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.

Maintenance:

- Maintenance is an ongoing issue created from sources such as washouts from heavy rain storms, vehicles leaving the roadway and going thru the fence near the Pioneer Hills Parking area, and vandalism.
- HCP staff walked many portions of the boundary fence surveying for damage from floods and rock falls.
- The HCP made contact with HOA's along Snow Canyon Parkway that border the Reserve and requested help from them to repair the boundary fence in multiple areas.
- Fencing was installed near Tuacahn to open up a portion of the Reserve that had previously restricted tortoise access.

Vandalism:

- The Chuckwalla restroom was damaged when interior lining was pulled from the restroom wall.
- There were at least 26 occurrences cutting the fence or damaging stepovers and gates. All issues were repaired.
- Total number of vandalism occurrences: 30

Law Enforcement:

- Quarterly law enforcement meetings were held with the HCP, the county sheriff, the DWR, Snow Canyon State Park, USFWS, and the BLM.
- See the attached summary report from the Washington County Sheriff's Office on law enforcement efforts funded by the HCP.

Other Species:

- The HCP provided funding to assist with the Southwest Willow Flycatcher nesting success study in 2015.

- 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 was completed on Center Street and SR 9 trail access into Confluence Park.
- 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, but there is still work being done on some informational signage.
- 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.

Reports attached:

Training received by HCP staff

Tortoises processed by HCP

Inventory of tortoises and shell remains possessed by HCP

Outreach and education presentations

Tortoise awareness training

Trail Steward Volunteers

RCDR patrol statistics by Washington County Sheriff's Office