

HABITAT CONSERVATION TECHNICAL COMMITTEE

for the Washington County Habitat Conservation Plan (HCP)

A regular meeting of the Habitat Conservation Technical Committee (TC) was held in the conference room of the Washington County Administration Building, **October 11, 2016.**

Members present were:

Cameron Rognan, Chairman	Washington County HCP
John Kellam, Vice Chairman	Bureau of Land Management (BLM)
Nathan Brown	U.S. Fish and Wildlife Service (USFWS)
Ann McLuckie	Utah Division of Wildlife Resources (UDWR)
Kristen Comella	Snow Canyon State Park (SCSP)
Marshall Topham	Local Biologist

Also present were:

Lacey McIntyre	Washington County HCP Recorder
Kirk Willey	Developer
Alan Gardner	Washington County Commissioner
Lynn Chamberlain	HCP Administrator

1. CALL TO ORDER

Chairman Cameron Rognan noted a quorum existed and called the meeting to order at 2:05 p.m.

2. APPROVAL OF MINUTES

a. September 1, 2016

Page 4, Paragraph 1, Sentence 3:

Changed from: “John and Ann agreed to not allow equestrian use on the Padre Canyon Trail.”

Changed to: “John and Ann both stated this was good habitat and agreed to not allow equestrian use on the Padre Canyon Trail.”

Page 4, Paragraph 2, Sentence 2:

Added: “Kristen had asked Cameron (via e-mail) to put the Road Shoulder Expansion project on this month’s agenda and was surprised that it wasn’t. The TC and HCAC originally asked that the project come back for final review (once engineering plans were completed) and so that was what Kristen wanted to do. Cameron stated that an update was sufficient and it didn’t need to be added as an agenda item. Kristen showed the TC the most recent engineering plans. The major points are that 1) Most of the expansion work will occur on the west side from Upper Galoot to SR-18. At the time of paving the current center line will be shifted so there are two four-foot lanes on each

side of the road, and 2) The Lava Flow parking lot will be moved and reconfigured, and the Petrified Dunes lot will also be reconfigured. The goal is to start and finish work during the tortoise inactive window.

Kristen asked if any additional formal action needed to be taken. The group agreed that no additional action was needed and the project could proceed.”

Page 4, Paragraph 4, Sentence 1:

Changed from: “Nathan discussed that the HCP ignores the Beaver Dam Slope.”

Changed to: “Nathan discussed that the HCP does not include the Beaver Dam Slope.”

Page 4, Paragraph 4, Sentence 4:

Changed from: “Ann said the state will do a clearance when the time comes.”

Changed to: “Ann said the state can offer their assistance as appropriate.”

MOTION by John Kellam to approve the amended minutes.

Seconded by Kristen Comella.

Discussion: None.

Vote was taken: All voted aye.

Motion passed.

3. GENERAL BUSINESS

a. Discussion of field trip to Leeds property

Members of the committee visited a property in Leeds to assess an area of land that was offered as possible mitigation for a future access road in a planned Diamond Valley development. Committee members were able to hike to the top of the property and look out over much of the area. Cameron explained there is a south slope facing the freeway, then a north slope that would be good for tortoise foraging, and a couple of nice washes. Kristen asked about acreage impacted by the proposed access road. Kirk answered it is 4 acres so the requirement for mitigation would be 20 acres. The Leeds property in discussion is 21.66 acres.

b. Discussion and possible action on the HCAC assignment regarding the proposed Diamond Valley south access road

Cameron began discussion by reading the official HCAC assignment (Exhibit 3-b-1) regarding this topic. The assignment was for the TC to 1) evaluate the 1:5 mitigation proposal(s) offered by Kirk Willey to determine which one(s) will be a net gain for the desert tortoise and 2) if the proposal(s) are not a net gain, clearly express why and

exactly what specific locations or habitat components would be necessary for the mitigation to positively benefit the tortoise.

Kristen questioned what the loss or impact to tortoises would be if the 4 acres in Diamond Valley for the potential access road were to be developed. Cameron believes the impacts would be offset with the high mitigation ratio of the proposed Leeds property. Ann mentioned fragmentation of the tortoise population and effects of that including fire potentials, introduction and establishment of exotic weeds, mortality due to road kills, loss of habitat, and reducibility to disperse to adjacent habitat blocks. The committee looked at the Red Cliffs Desert Reserve map to see where the Leeds property in question would be in relation to the Reserve. For Cameron, fragmentation of the area is an afterthought due to the low tortoise population in the area and the small amount of fragmentation that would occur. Kristen mentioned the potential impacts from recreation.

Next, the committee discussed potential benefits of gaining the Leeds property. John started by saying there are primary constituent elements like warm desert washes, structures, creosote, and forage plants. One concern he voiced was the large portion of the property that is a steep rocky area which is not prime tortoise habitat. More importantly he is concerned that the area is unoccupied and it is on the east side of Leeds Creek and north of Quail Creek, which creates a migratory barrier. Cameron mentioned the potential for the area to be a future translocation area. Kristen agrees the portion from the freeway to the ridge does not benefit the tortoise since it is steep and rocky but the rest of the habitat could be a benefit.

John mentioned there was sign of recent tortoise presence on Mr. Willey's proposed road area but there is no sign of occupation on the Leeds property in question. It is a nice piece of property but he questioned if gaining it and losing the piece in Diamond Valley is a net benefit to the desert tortoise.

Cameron feels like the habitat value in the Leeds area is better than the habitat value in the Diamond Valley area, but he agrees it would be beneficial if it were occupied by tortoises. He voiced that this site in Leeds would be an ideal place for a translocation area in the future.

Ann stated it being a potential translocation site does not make it a clear net benefit from her perspective because she feels there are other options for translocation, if needed in the future. Also, with the fragmentation issue of putting a paved road through the Reserve, she does not see this as a net benefit for the desert tortoise.

Cameron suggested the committee take a vote, "Do these 21.66 acres Mr. Willey is offering as mitigation appropriately offset the impacts of the proposed road and provide a net benefit to the desert tortoise? Why or why not?"

John answered that looking at the barrier to migration and loss of habitat in an occupied area he does not see this unoccupied area in non critical habitat as a clear net benefit to

what is going to be lost, though it does have potential.

Ann does not think there is enough information to say it will be a clear net benefit to tortoises. The site the Reserve would be gaining is not occupied and there is already a location that can be used for a future translocation site.

Nathan thinks if it were occupied territory it would be a yes. He sees it as a benefit, but not a net benefit.

Kristen, Marshall, and Cameron agreed the proposed Leeds property should be considered. It has the capacity to provide a net benefit for the tortoise for future translocation.

Therefore, three members voted yes and three voted no.

The committee briefly discussed other options for mitigation, such as The Trails and Industrial Park properties, that they may consider a net benefit to the desert tortoise. It was a consensus that habitat adjacent to Zone 3 having tortoise presence is preferred. Ultimately, they have fulfilled their assignment from the HCAC and will take their findings to the committee later this month. If Mr. Willey comes up with another area for mitigation and wants to discuss it the TC is open to that option if the property is occupied tortoise habitat adjacent to Zone 3.

4. OTHER REPORTS FROM TC MEMBERS AND REQUESTS FOR FUTURE AGENDA ITEMS

a. None

5. NEXT MEETING DATES

a. November 3, 2016

The committee decided to move the next meeting to November 10, 2016 at 1 p.m.

6. ADJOURN

MOTION by Kristen Comella to adjourn.

Seconded by John Kellam.

Discussion: None.

Vote was taken: All voted aye.

Motion passed.

The meeting was adjourned at 3:20 p.m.
Minutes prepared by Lacey McIntyre.