

SOUTHWEST UTAH PLANNING AUTHORITIES  
COUNCIL (SUPAC)

Minutes of a meeting held May 7, 2002

1. The Southwest Utah Planning Authorities Council (SUPAC) met at the Holiday Inn in St. George, Utah, on Tuesday, May 7, 2002 at 1:00 p.m. Those in attendance at the meeting and the agencies they represent follow these minutes on page seven.
2. Vice Chairman Scott Truman called the meeting to order and welcomed those present.
3. The approval of the minutes of the SUPAC meeting of January 8, 2002 was next on the agenda. **John Williams moved to approve the minutes as written. Vane Campbell seconded the motion and all voted aye.**
4. Ron Thompson spoke next concerning the water outlook and drought conditions in our area. He said this is the driest conditions he has ever seen. This year combined with the last four years of low moisture conditions put us in a very bad situation. The Virgin River is down to 80 cfs and the normal for this time of year would be 500 to 600 cfs. There has been no spring runoff and so there has been no new flow into the reservoirs. Kolob Reservoir has 3500 a.f. left. Quail Creek has 32,000 a.f. Ron said that irrigators will be stretched pretty hard this summer. There will be a large impact on livestock and agriculture. The water district has set up monthly meetings with the major irrigation companies to discuss strategies and how to deal with the low water situation. Jerry Meredith, BLM, indicated that the vegetation moisture ratings and sagebrush moisture level are the lowest they have been since they started tasking readings. This will affect wildlife and livestock and also present a fuel danger for fire.

Ron said he believes with the water stored in Quail Creek and the wells the cities will generally be okay this summer. There is a statewide conservation program underway that is being funded by the major water conservancy districts in the state with the support of the Governor. One of the primary focuses of the program is to encourage people not to water between 10 a.m.-6 p.m. Ron indicated some of the secondary systems have saved 25% just by doing this. Ron said he feels like the bigger problem will be if this drought continues into next year.

Ron also reported that the water district is moving water from Quail Creek Reservoir to the new Sand Hollow Reservoir. By fall they will drop Quail Creek down to 10,000 a.f. to do remedial repair work. Quail Creek presently provides one-half of the culinary water in Washington County so it would be a real problem if Quail Creek doesn't fill next year. The District is also working on a regional pipeline that would interconnect St. George City, Washington, Santa Clara and Ivins and tie together the water systems from Virgin to Ivins and the cities can help each other out as needed. The goal is to have that in place by spring of next year. This pipeline is still dependent upon bringing water out

of Quail Creek and Sand Hollow reservoirs. The district has developed some wells around Sand Hollow to help with this.

Most of the cities have drought plans in place. Stages 3 and 4 of most of those plans become mandatory water restrictions on outdoor watering. Ron said he doesn't think we will hit those this year. Water conservation is a hot topic now and the water district strongly supports water conservation and its long-term objectives. The public gets upset when they see public areas and golf courses being watered a lot. Ron said that St. George City has a good secondary water system in place where they are using brackish non-portable water for schools, parks, cemetery and golf courses. A lot of the general public doesn't understand this.

5. Bob Morgan spoke next about the regional water outlook. He explained that he spent the last 17 years as State Water Engineer and he is now the Director of the Department of Natural Resources. He also gave an update on the Department of Natural Resources. Jerry Olds is the new State Water Engineer. Kevin Conway is the Director of Wildlife Resources. They are in the process of interviewing for a state forester. The final interview will be May 14.

Bob said he feels that we are facing serious drought conditions and gave an update of conditions throughout the state. A few of the examples he gave included the Bear River Drainage where one-third of the snowpack was gone by the first of April and the stream flows are 12 to 42% of normal. He indicated that Bear Lake probably won't rise any more this year. Weber drainage has 40% of the snow pack gone and is at 60% of normal. In the Monticello drainage area, flows are at 1/3 of normal. Sevier drainage lost 90% of their snowpack and is at 19% of normal. All direct flow users are starting to hurt. He informed the council that he had talked to Randy Julander, and the NRCS reports that of the 40 to 45 major reservoirs there are only two that are full and six that are 90% of normal, the rest are all somewhere below that. Areas that have groundwater will be pulling heavily on that but there is also some depletion in groundwater. He says he believes that all municipal water users will have water in their homes although agriculture and livestock will be hurting. The winter range has been very meager. The governor has declared the drought an emergency. He indicated he is extremely worried about the fire situation since the forests are so dry.

Jerry Meredith, BLM, added that Dixie Forest, the BLM and State Forestry people all met last week. They have initiated actions to bring on emergency fire fighter forces earlier than ever before. There are more fires this year than in any other of the 20 years he has been with the BLM in this area.

Bob Morgan indicated that people usually don't need fire permits until June or July but this year fire permits have been in effect since April 15. That gives some idea of the concern about fire in this area.

6. Ron Thompson gave an update on the Sand Hollow Reservoir. Both dams are now completed and they have begun putting water into the reservoir basin. There is

approximately 8,000 a.f. of water in the reservoir now. The boat ramp will be completed in the next two weeks. They do not expect boating to occur this year. They are in the process of building an outer park road. The inside road is completed. They expect 4300 West to be the main access road into the reservoir. Recreation is a big concern especially as far as the funding. The district went through a prolonged planning process on recreation with a citizens' advisory group, state agencies, the BLM, etc. and determined to make Sand Hollow a multi-use recreational area to be managed between BLM and State Parks and become a member of the State Park system. A bill has passed the house now authorizing 2.5 million dollars to BLM for facilities. The state park is closing some parks because of funding shortages. They have already planted some fish in the reservoir.

Ron explained that groundwater storage and recharge is a very important element of this project. The district believes that eventually they will be able to store approximately 200,000 a.f. in underground aquifers. They expect Sand Hollow to be the terminal reservoir for the Lake Powell pipeline eventually. The studies show that once this lake is full it will generate 20 to 30 million dollars annually into the local economy. This reservoir has tremendous potential, we just need to be patient and get the reservoir where it needs to be.

7. Bruce Richeson of Senator Bennett's office discussed the upcoming Rural Technology Conference which Senator Bennett is sponsoring along with Scott Truman's office. He said he hopes everybody has received a brochure in the mail concerning the conference. They have sent out about 5,000 brochures around the state. The conference will be May 28 & 29. The conference is aimed at assisting rural businesses to take hold and advantage of technology. Meg Whitman, CEO of Ebay, will be the keynote speaker. He said this promises to be a very good conference and he hopes business leaders and owners and community leaders will walk away with new ideas on how to take advantage of technology. Bruce said people can register online at [www.rubtc.com](http://www.rubtc.com). There is also an agenda at that site they can look at. The cost is only \$30 and they are getting a very strong response. They are planning on doing this conference on a yearly basis.
8. The next item on the agenda was a discussion of the OHV-TAG draft language "closed unless posted open" policy on public lands. Ron Wilson explained that the last time this group met they talked about importance of management of OHV's and talked about this concept of "closed unless posted open." Ron Thompson had indicated he would like to see the proposed language first before any decisions were made. The TAG got back together and had a good discussion. They decided that a small group would get together and write the proposed language and get it out to everybody to look at it before the next SUPAC meeting. They have pretty much adopted language that the State has in their OHV Act with some modifications over commissioners' concerns. This will be mailed to the SUPAC membership and if they have any feedback they should get back to someone on the TAG prior to the next meeting. It will be on the agenda for the next SUPAC meeting. Ron Thompson asked if they were just talking about off highway vehicles in regard to this policy, not street legal vehicles. Ron Wilson said that yes it would include trucks and jeeps. Ron Thompson said he feels like this would be very hard to enforce and

could potentially open up a huge problem. Ron Wilson said it would be gradual and have to go through the correct process. Ron Thompson said that closing roads is a big concern and would require a lot of input from the various counties. Scott Truman said the intent is to get control of indiscriminate use of OHV's in places where they shouldn't be and the intent isn't really just to close roads. Ron Thompson said, in his opinion, to make this work they would have to simultaneously inform public of what roads will be open or they could have a real nightmare on their hands.

9. A report on the Olympic impacts on tourism in Southern Utah and park visitation numbers was the next item of discussion. Vic Knox passed out a sheet showing park visitation numbers from March and April 2002 and a comparison of recreation visits between February 2001 and February 2002. February 2002 showed a pretty strong month in national park units around the state. They attribute a lot of this to the Olympic spinoff. For example, Arches National Park had a 38% increase from 2001. Golden Spike had a 149.8% increase. The March 2002 numbers showed a 4% increase over March 2001 and the April numbers were down from 2001. The comparison of tour buses at Bryce Canyon National Park was down nearly 50% from four and five years ago. They believe this shows that there has been a decline in international travel since the September 11 tragedy. He said to also keep in mind that March and April are usually their slower months with June, July and August being the biggest tourism months. Scott suggested having Vic give an update on these numbers at the July meeting to show any trends.

Vic also gave an update on national parks in the five county area. In Bryce Canyon National Park, the shuttle bus operations are scheduled to start June 14 and a new superintendent will be on board there in July.

At Capitol Reef National Park there is a partnership project going with Utah Valley State College at Sleeping Rainbow Ranch where they are making a field school facility. They may get some federal funding to help with that project in the next year. It will be used as a field school that will be available to colleges & universities throughout country to reserve. At Cedar Breaks National Monument the road is now open and the fuel reduction project is approved and they will begin to work on that this year.

At Glen Canyon National Recreation Area, Lake Powell is presently at elevation 3645 (55' below full) and falling. This is fairly unusual for this late in the season. It is projected to rise only a few feet this summer. It is still great for boating and recreation. The draft personal watercraft (jet ski) EIS is due out this summer for Lake Powell. There will be a range of alternatives relating to the personal watercraft. He also reported that a recent court ruling upheld the NPS's voluntary closure under Rainbow Bridge. They ask people not to go right under the natural bridge out of respect for Native American beliefs. Judge Jenkins upheld this. The NPS won't cite anyone but they are requesting people to voluntarily respect this request.

At Pipe Springs National Monument the water is flowing again into the fort there. Zion National Park has a new Human History Museum which is scheduled to open in June and which is a nice addition to the park.

10. Dean Reeder, Utah Division of Travel Development spoke next about the Olympic residuals and the 1000-day plan. He gave the example of popular TV programs and how some programs don't make money until they are in syndication – that is the residual effect. The Governor's Office of Planning and Budget projects a \$4.8 billion dollar marginal gross economical contribution to state. 90% of that \$4.8 billion has been earned and deposited already. The tax residuals are starting to come in. The questions are then 1) What happens to tourism? and 2) Will it improve tourism forecasts? He reviewed some of the state hosting efforts, media, broadcasting, etc. He also reviewed the objectives of the 1000-day plan they developed. They would like to see at least a five-year residual. Website response (# of hits to site) is one interesting method of evaluating this success.
  
11. Gretchen Merrill, representing Mary Wagner, discussed Forest Plan Revisions on the Dixie and Fishlake National Forests. A forest plan provides general management direction for the many resources, including timber, range, water, fish, wildlife, soil, recreation and air. Cultural resources, such as historic and prehistoric sites, are also addressed. She passed out packets to council members containing information on these forest plan revisions. She discussed how this is a collaboration effort with people taking responsibility to work with the forest service and other groups to help in a revision of the forest plan. Separate records of decisions will be issued for the two forests. The Forest and Rangeland Renewable Resources Planning Act requires that the forest plan be revised every 10 to 15 years to keep up-to-date with changing natural and social conditions, new scientific knowledge and new laws. Both the Dixie and Fishlake Forest Plans were established in 1986 and it is time they were reviewed and revised, where necessary. Each forest has a planner and if any group would like to have these planners talk to your group and give more detail about this, the information she distributed gives information on how to contact them. They will be having issue meetings over the summer and anyone can get on the mailing list for these meetings. She encouraged everyone to become part of this effort.

Scott Truman said they held two meetings, one in Richfield and one in Cedar City to discuss this process. The next level of meetings are at the forest level and will be held on June 11 in Cedar City, June 13 in Las Vegas, June 18 in Salt Lake and June 20 in Richfield.

Geographic area workshops & field trips will be held in St. George, Cedar City, Kanab, Panguitch, Escalante, Teasdale, Loa, Fillmore, Beaver, Richfield and Junction. Times and places in those locations will be announced.

12. Scott Truman turned the time over to Clare Ramsay to discuss a letter he received. Clare explained that the letter was from Andy Kerr regarding a situation in Kane County where Grand Canyon Trust has been buying AUM's from willing sellers then giving them to the BLM with the stipulation that they would retire those AUM's. Garfield and Kane County have sent in protests and comments about that. He said he doesn't know how serious of a threat this is but he wanted to share his concern. He read a couple of paragraphs from the

letter regarding the AUM buyouts. Andy Kerr is the Director of the National Public Lands Grazing Campaign. Garfield and Kane Counties have hired an economist to do an analysis of AUM loss in their counties. He gave the following statistics on a loss of 10,000 AUM's in the counties:

65% utilization - 10,000 aum's relinquished - over 3 million dollar loss

85% utilization - 6.5 million dollar loss

He said he wanted SUPAC to be aware of this movement to try and eliminate grazing on public lands. He indicated that this is something that economically their rural counties can't take. He feels they are playing people's greed and trying to let the grazers destroy themselves. Gordon Topham also expressed concern about how grazing land health is maintained if it isn't used for grazing.

13. Scott Truman asked Jerry Meredith to give a brief report on the OHV-TAG group's status as far as the High Desert Trail proposal. Jerry Meredith explained that a citizens' group had presented to federal, state, and county agencies beginning last October a proposal for a fairly extensive trail system from northern Beaver County to the south end of Washington County. They have been promoting, suggesting and recommending this trail system. Jerry said they met this morning in their TAG meeting and have come up with a proposal to address that recommendation. They are going to get together an intergovernmental group with Beaver, Iron and Washington counties with representatives from Five County Association of Governments, State Trust Lands, Forest Service and the BLM for the purpose of outlining a process for addressing this proposal and coming up with a timeline. They are going to meet on May 28<sup>th</sup> at 3:00 p.m. in conjunction with the Rural Technology Conference. They will also discuss how they may be able to obtain additional resources to do this analysis and address a proposal for this type of trail system. When they get an intergovernmental cooperative agreement put together they will bring it back to this group.
  
14. The agenda and place for the July 2 meeting were discussed. Ruby's Inn was suggested as a possible meeting location. Scott Truman said they will try for that. The meeting after the July meeting will be in September and will be held in conjunction with the Rural Summit. It would be a breakfast meeting on Wednesday, September 4 in Cedar City. The agenda items suggested for the July 2 meeting were:
  - Intergovernmental effort on fire prevention and fuels reduction – Ron Larsen
  - Update park visitation – Vic Knox
  - Update on High Desert Trail proposal – Jerry Meredith
  - “Closed until posted open” policy (which will be sent out to council prior to July 2 meeting for review)
  - Southwest Willow Flycatcher, Spotted Owl Habitat, 10j ruling on Condors - USFWS – Henry Maddux

15. **There being no further items of business, Commissioner Alan Gardner made a motion to adjourn.**

16. The meeting was adjourned.

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Secretary

### **SUPAC ATTENDEES**

**NAME**

**REPRESENTING**

Bob Morgan	Utah Department of Natural Resources
Gordon Topham	Utah Division of Parks & Recreation
Kim Lawson	Kanab City
Vane Campbell	Natural Resources Conservation Service
Jeannine Holt	Senator Hatch
Alan Gardner	Washington County
Vic Knox	National Park Service
Clare Ramsay	Garfield Commission
Dennis Stowell	Iron County Commission
Kenneth Sizemore	Five County Association of Governments
Randy Trujillo	Bureau of Land Management
Jerry Meredith	Bureau of Land Management
Bruce L. Bonebrake	Utah Division of Wildlife Resources
Dan McGuire	Washington County Mayors Association
John S. Williams	Five County AOG
Wayne Thomas	Dept. of Environmental Quality
Gretchen Merrill	Dixie National Forest
Bruce Richeson	Senator Bennett
Ron Thompson	Washington Co. Water Conservancy District
Dean Reeder	Utah – Travel Development
Ron Wilson	Dixie National Forest
Scott Truman	Utah Rural Development Council