

SOUTHWEST UTAH PLANNING AUTHORITIES COUNCIL (SUPAC)

Minutes of a meeting held July 2, 2002

1. The Southwest Utah Planning Authorities Council (SUPAC) met at Ruby's Inn on Tuesday, July 2, 2002 at 1:00 p.m. Those in attendance at the business meeting are listed on page 5 following these minutes.
2. **Vice Chairman Scott Truman called the meeting to order and welcomed those present.**
3. Scott Truman asked for all those attending to introduce themselves.
4. **The minutes of the meeting of May 7, 2002 were moved for approval by Hugh Thompson. Bruce Barrett seconded the motion and all voted aye.**
5. The first item on the agenda was fire issues. Jerry Meredith started by introducing the BLM and NPS workers that were at the meeting. He gave a brief overview of the fire restrictions and the National Fire Plan. He explained that they have very good cooperation and coordination on fire issues in Southwestern Utah. He turned the time over to Randy Swick. He told the council that they started the Color Country Fire Management group a few years ago. They meet regularly for close coordination. The result of this coordination is that fire restrictions are coordinated so no one agency has fire restrictions that all agencies haven't agreed upon. He further explained that effective June 25 all state and federal agencies decided to impose Level 2 restrictions in our area. The rest of the state went to Level 1 restrictions. These restrictions include no open fires, campfires or barbeques, no fireworks or pyrotechnic devices, etc. He gave a powerpoint presentation on the National Fire Plan and the Color Country Fire Management which is interagency fire personnel that work together cooperatively. Their principle operating guidelines are: preparedness, prevention through education, rehabilitation and restoration, wildland urban interface, hazardous fuel, monitoring, collaborative stewardship, creating jobs/contracting, applied research and technology transfer. The committees include: fuels, aviation, training, information mitigation & education. He further explained that the National Fire Plan came about as a result of the big 2000 fire season. The 2002 fire season has been the worst in many years. The number of structures lost is already more than double that of 2000. There have been 2.8 million acres burned so far this year with the ten year average being 1 million acres.

The key points of the National Fire Plan are: firefighting, hazardous fuel reduction (invest in projects to reduce fire risk), community assistance (work with communities to reduce the risks of catastrophic wildfire), rehabilitation and restoration, accountability (how much is being spent, effectiveness, etc.)

Locally, there are numerous communities at risk in Color Country. There are numerous lightning and human-caused fires. These fires alter the forest and range structure. They are also working on prevention and education and we will see more and more emphasis in these areas. The national fire plan website is www.fireplan.gov. The Color Country website is www.utblm.gov/ccif/.

Jerry Meredith expressed appreciation for the congressional support and to Senator Hatch for their support of the National Fire Plan. He says it has made a big difference. He also asked the SUPAC council to help spread the word about the fire danger and prevention. This year is different and more important than any other year. There has been great coordination of strategy and equipment resources between agencies. Just in the last half hour of this meeting they have received word of two or three new fires from lightning. They deal with this every day and try to catch them when they are small.

Scott Truman suggested the possibility of holding a congressional hearing on fire management issues in the fall.

Commissioner Ramsay suggested that they don't have any prescribed burns around Bryce Canyon during the peak tourist season. He said this happened last year and was very devastating economically to the businesses because of the smoke. The timing of burns is important. They have a small window for prescribed burns but they are realizing the impacts of this and taking it into consideration and making adjustments and changes.

Next was a computer presentation of Sanford and Adams Head prescribed burn. They are often asked why they burn this time of year especially with the drought-like conditions. They do it to reduce fuels, keep pinion juniper from expanding further; maintaining vegetation at different ages; return fire to its natural role in the ecosystem and stimulate aspen suckering. Randy Swick discussed prescribed burns and effects.

6. Ron Wilson discussed the closed unless posted open policy. He explained that they weren't able to get together and put policy wording together prior to today's meeting. They did meet this morning and had a very good discussion but they still don't have the wording. They haven't convinced the commissioners yet that they need this tool. It has come down to the decision that he is going to draft the language and then send out to the commissioners and rest of the TAG and then they'll bring that back to this group after this is done. He reiterated that this policy is one of the biggest challenges they have as land managers so they really want to see something done on this.
7. Jerry Meredith gave an update on the High Desert Trail Proposal. The TAG has looked at this proposal. Brad Steggell from State Parks was assigned to chair this but he couldn't be here today. They have met twice since the last SUPAC meeting. They have talked about overall strategy and decided that they need an intergovernmental review of the proposal which would involve the three counties that the trail crosses and the state and federal agencies involved such as BLM, State Parks, DWR and others. This will require a NEPA document. They also decided that they needed to develop a document

that would outline who would do what and contribute what. They have set a July 15 meeting to do the first draft of that outline after which it will be distributed for review.

---BREAK---

8. Henry Maddux reported on the Mexican Spotted Owl. He said the Albuquerque office of USFWS has the lead on this species. There is not a lot going on but they are expecting a big lawsuit from environmentalists. This probably won't affect us as much in Utah. We already have critical habitat designated. They have received three notices of intent to sue on the Mexican Spotted Owl and the Southwest Willow Flycatcher but they have been proactive in trying to respond to these. On the Southwest Willow Flycatcher they are redoing the recovery program and updating it. They are designating critical habit which could affect us here in Utah. Henry also reported on the 10j rule regarding the California Condor. The USFWS lead for that is the Phoenix office. They are currently not doing anything about it or taking any action. He also reported that two pairs of condors tried to reproduce in the wild this year but both failed. The females are all still very young and they are still hopeful to have a chick born in the wild. Scott Truman reminded the council that they had instructed him to send letter to Phoenix USFWS in January expressing our interest in having this rule extended. Scott said he has not had any response to that letter.
9. Jerry Meredith gave an update on National Park visitation Park as Marty Ott had to leave. Jerry said that Vic Knox will be leaving Utah for a new assignment as associate regional director for the Alaska region of the park service. Marty is presently handling both Zion and Bryce National Parks because of Vic's new assignment. Craig Axtell has been named as the new superintendent at Bryce and will be installed on August 10. Visitation is down 18% for this month at Bryce but Zion National Park visitation is up. Domestic travel seems to be up and foreign travel is down so that may be the reason why Bryce's visitation is down.
10. Steven Steed wasn't able to come for the Escalante Sawmill/Skyline Timber Resources Update. Scott Truman reported that they had their first employee meeting today. They are putting on 23 new employees and have signed their first note on revolving loan fund with Five County Association of Governments. They are buying out Mr. Finley Cook and are now the owners of the sawmill in Escalante. This Friday they will sign a loan with SBA which will give them a line of credit to begin operations.

Ken Sizemore informed council members that there will be some additional monies in the Five County AOG revolving loan fund for other timber-related projects.
11. The Dixie and Fish Lake Forest Plan Revisions were discussed. They have held meetings in Cedar City, Las Vegas, Salt Lake City and Richfield for these two forest plan revisions. In August they will begin local community meetings. The first one is in Wayne County the first week of August and then in Escalante. Scott said he didn't have the list of dates with him but he can provide that. He believes that Aug 12 and 13 are St.

George and Kanab; September 3, 4 and 5 are Richfield Beaver and Fillmore. They will also be held in Cedar City, Panguitch and Junction. Scott will get these dates to everyone.

12. Scott Truman called for other business. Bruce Barrett, Bureau of Reclamation reminded council members that the reservoirs are getting pretty low. This year is bad but if we don't have a decent winter next spring could be really bad. Gordon Topham also informed those present that Paiute and Quail Creek Reservoirs will both be drained this year for dam safety work. Henry Maddux told the council that the State of Utah, Department of Agriculture and State Trust Lands have signed land exchange agreement for about 1,000 acres. This acreage includes some desert tortoise land.
13. Scott Truman reminded council members that the next SUPAC meeting will be held in conjunction with the Utah Rural Summit. Scott suggested the meeting be at 8:00 a.m. on the morning of September 4. The summit will start that afternoon.
14. There were no items suggested for the September agenda so Scott Truman indicated he would develop the agenda after which **Henry Maddux made a motion to adjourn the meeting.**
15. **The meeting was adjourned.**

NAME**REPRESENTING**

Lou Brown	SITLA
Clare Ramsay	Garfield County
Gordon Topham	Utah Division of Parks and Recreation
Dell LeFevre	Garfield County
Dennis Stowell	Iron County Commission
Ray Spencer	Kane County Commission
Wayne Thomas	Department of Environmental Quality
Scott Munson	UDOT
Jeannine Holt	Senator Hatch
Dan McGuire	Washington County Mayor's Association
Bruce Barrett	Bureau of Reclamation
Henry Maddux	Fish and Wildlife Service
Randy Swick	Dixie National Forest
Ron Wilson	Dixie National Forest
Kenneth Sizemore	Five County AOG
Marty Ott	National Park Service
Jerry Meredith	BLM
Scott Truman	URDC
Hugh Thompson	Department of Natural Resources
Bill Lund	Utah Geological Survey
David Eaker	Zion National Park