

# **SOUTHWEST UTAH PLANNING AUTHORITIES COUNCIL (SUPAC)**

## **Minutes of a meeting held July 12, 2005**

1. The Southwest Utah Planning Authorities Council (SUPAC) met at Brianhead Town Offices in Brianhead, Utah, on Tuesday, July 12, 2005, at 1:00 p.m. Those in attendance at the business meeting are listed on the roster attached as Appendix A to these minutes.
2. Vice Chairman Scott Truman welcomed those present and conducted the meeting in his absence. Introductions were made and a roll was passed
3. The minutes of the meeting of May 3, 2005, were moved for approval by Ron Thompson. John Williams seconded the motion and all voted aye.
4. The next item on the agenda was a Report on HB 146 - Standards for Fire Protection for Outlying Communities and a report on Current Fire Conditions by Ron Wilson. Ron talked about the current fire situation first. He said this has been a very tough fire year, especially in Washington County. All the rain we got increased the vegetation, especially cheat grass. Some of the cheat grass measured in Washington County was 39" tall. There were three large fires in Washington County. In June and the first part of July the West Side Complex fire burned 68,000 acres at a cost of 1.5 million dollars (State's portion \$168,000); the Diamond Complex Fire burned 11,128 acres at a cost of 2.9 million dollars (State's portion \$75,000). This was a higher cost because there was so much air fighting. The Third fire was the Blue Springs fire which started by Anderson's Ranch. It threatened Pintura, Anderson Junction and New Harmony and burned 12,286 acres at a cost of 3.4 million dollars (State's Portion \$500,000). Ron also mentioned that in Nevada there was over 700,000 acres near our border that was burned. There were no homes lost in any of the fires and no serious injuries or accidents to fire fighters or public.

Ron introduced Dave Dalrymple to discuss HB 146. A copy of the State of Utah, Wildland-Urban Interface Standards. He explained that there is a lot more threat with fires now and that is the reason for this bill. On the fire that got close to New Harmony they were able to get a FEMA declaration which will pay about 70% of the costs. Dave said that there has been a change in Utah in the last 75 years with a major change in fuels the last 15 years. There has been a huge build up of dead materials. This has been in the process for a long time. Fire is a natural regulating element. There used to be more logging and other activities that removed vegetation. Now there is much more invasive material such as cheat grass. The bottom line is that there are much more lethal conditions out there than we've ever had before. The demographics of the country are

changing. They are large developments now in urban interface. There have been 600 communities identified that are urban interface which could be threatened by fire. This is a bad situation that has been a long time coming but is now here and it is a long term problem. 25% of our fires now are wild & urban interface. House Bill 146 is a response to a portion of this problem. After the 2000 season a task force was put together to look at the fire program to see what they could change to make it more effective. They came up with three recommendations:

- 1) have to get handle on interface
- 2) have to find a way to make sure that fire program meets the needs of the future
- 3) need new revenue stream to help pay for these fires

House Bill 146 lays out three areas to be dealt with: 1) relationship between county and state; 2) physical fitness and training of people who fight fires; and 3) equipment they use to make initial attack against fire.

5. The OHV TAG report was passed on the agenda.

6. Steve Burr from the USU Institute of Outdoor Recreation & Tourism gave a Powerpoint presentation on their visitor study on the Grand Staircase-Escalante National Monument. Hopefully the BLM will be able to use this data to build more tourism.

Their study objectives were to collect baseline data on visitor characteristics and use patterns; visitor expectation and satisfaction; visitor images of the Monument and the relationship between tourism, visitor and hospitality services, and local community development. He explained their research methods, identified who the front country visitors are and where they are from, tourism trends, etc. Some of the findings included: Visitors residences: 23.0% from other countries; 14.2% from Utah; 30.0% from other states; 13% from California; 5.8% from Arizona; 4.8% from Colorado and 9.2% from other western states. They found that 60.6% were first time visitors and 39.4% were previous visitors. On reasons for visitation 57.1% came for recreation (non-monument); 20.1% recreation (monument); 15.2% passing through; 5.2% other and 2.4% family/side trip and 0.1% for work. Visitors general satisfaction with trip to the monument showed 59.2% very satisfied; 33.0% satisfied; 5.2% somewhat satisfied; 1.7% somewhat dissatisfied; 0.4% dissatisfied; and 0.5% very dissatisfied.

The monument receives approximately 600,000 visitors per year (BLM estimate) with 90% of these or 540,000 people are visiting the Front Country. The average group size is three people. Based on the survey results 14.1% of the groups are from Utah; 62.9% of the groups are from other states and 23.0% of the group are from other countries.

The economic impact of monument visitation using average total trip expenditures for a group are as follows: Utahans spend about \$8,581,000; visitors from other states spend about \$25,022,000 and international visitors spend about \$25,022,000. For additional information contact Dr. Steve Burr at [steve.burr@usu.edu](mailto:steve.burr@usu.edu) or at (435)797-7094.

7. A 15 minute break was taken.

8. Dixie Fishlake Forest Plan Revision Public Workshops were discussed by Gretchen \_\_\_\_\_ . She distributed copies of a news release entitled “Dixie National Forest Issues Duck Creek Fuels Treatment Decision. This is a fuels reduction project that will significantly reduce the threat of wildland fires for an estimated 2,300 residences and businesses in the Duck Creek Village area. She said she believes this project will go forward.

She also discussed the Dixie and Fishlake National Forest Plan Revision. The Dixie and Fishlake National Forests have moved forward in their forest plan revision effort. In January, the Forest Service established a New Planning Rule. They are now busy transitioning to that new rule. Ten local workshops were held in May to discuss a Management Direction Package (MDP). Everything they presented in the MDP (including maps) is draft. It is all available on their website: <http://www.fs.fed.us/r4/dixie/projects/FParea/HomePage.htm>. Comments are due by July 15 after which they will begin working on another version. They hope to have a draft Revised Forest Plan for review and comment by late Fall 2005 and a Final Plan ready for signature by late Summer or early Fall 2006. The Planning Rule is available online at [www.dfs.fed.us/emc](http://www.dfs.fed.us/emc).

9. Darrin Bird reported on the Department of Natural Resources changes. They have now filled some of the vacancies. Mary Turlius has been selected as state park director. Darrin said they did a nationwide search for the division director positions that needed to be filled. They even had some international applications. Gordon Topham is retiring this week and Bruce Hamilton has been named the new Deputy Director of State Parks. They will be looking for a new Southwest Regional Director to replace Bruce. The Wildlife Resource Director will be Jim Karpowitz. Oil, Gas and Mining Director will be John Baza. They also filled the law enforcement director position with Sid Growl. Darrin said he will be over southwest issues.
10. RonThompson gave a water report. The highest snow water content is at Midway with 70". This translates into stream flow. Ron said they are still seeing very high water in the Virgin River system. Most of the reservoirs in the state are nearly full or full and some are still spilling. Sand Hollow won't completely fill but should get nearly full by the end of the runoff. The carry over storage will be best it has ever been. In Washington County we are using about 260 gallons per day per capita except in some areas such as Sky ranch and Kayenta where the use is about 140-160 gallons per capita. Ron said we are making strides in water conservation. Ron also reported on the water funding task force for the Lake Powell and Bear River projects. This task force was created by Governor Walker and is looking at how to fund these projects. They are looking at a state funding mechanism. The Lake Powell Pipeline needs to be on line by 2020. The Bear River Project is about a decade behind that. Ron said he hopes our legislators will be able to move this funding in the political arena.

11. Wash. Co. Land Exchange/Wilderness Bill was the next item on the agenda. Alan Gardner was not at the meeting so Bruce Richardsen reported that Senator Bennett continues to work on this. They don't have a timeframe for when this will be introduced but they are continuing through the process.
12. Duck Creek Wastewater Planning Study - Walt Baker, Director of Division of Water Quality discussed the Duck Creek Wastewater Planning Study. There has been a lot of growth on Cedar Mountain and there is a need for managing waste water. This is putting pressures on ground water and protecting that ground water. They are working with Kane County Water Conservancy District to do a plan. Historically the cabin owners had to haul water in but now there are water companies, irrigation companies, water transmission lines and a number of storage reservoirs. There is also lots of fractured limestone so they have to worry about wastewater. Kane County Water Conservancy District got a \$75,000 grant so they are doing a plan to look at a long term method of disposing of wastewater. They have about 1500 water connections now with up to 3000 expected. There is 1.2 million gallons of wastewater everyday. The plan will have a public comment period. It is in infancy stages right now but should be in place by the end of the year.

He also discussed mercury testing in waters of Utah. Since February of this year there has been about 20 articles in the Salt Lake Tribune about mercury. Some of the articles suggested that mining operations in Nevada may have an impact in Utah and also one suggested that Utah was turning a blind eye to the mercury problem. Walt explained mercury is naturally occurring in the environment. It is in the soils and the core of the earth. There are natural sources of mercury. From a volcano or geothermal springs mercury is vaporized and goes into the atmosphere. There are also many manmade sources of mercury such as coal fired powerplants. Mercury is also in a lot of our electronics and tooth fillings and is also used in the manufacture of plastics. It can reside in the atmosphere for a number of months. It can also come down in the rain. There are different types of mercury - organic and inorganic. The bad type is the organic mercury (methylmercury). This kind is highly toxic. It can get into the tissue of fish and it is not easily discharged. Water quality standards protect our streams and reservoirs for drinking, recreation and fishing. There are no impairments with our waters because of mercury now. The problem is when it starts accumulating. Utah has been monitoring fish tissue samples for some time now. The Tribune article that said Utah is not doing anything about mercury is wrong. They have analyzed 200 samples and had 4 hits. The EPA threshold is .2 parts per million. One of those was on Green River, two on Millcreek in Grand Country and one in Gunlock Reservoir. They have taken additional samples on these sites and expect the results back in August. By the first of September they will be able to determine whether to issue a health advisory. They are also putting together a work group to establish better protocol on how to analyze this and having a routine monitoring program.

13. The next item on the agenda were the Congressional reports. There was no one present representing Senator Hatch. Senator Bennett's office didn't have anything. Mike

Empey from Congressman Matheson's office reported on the transportation bill which has a 6 year reauthorization. Congress has passed several extensions. There is now an extension to July 19 but they don't know if they will even have a bill by then. There are still a few issues in conference between the senate and house. There will be several good projects for the Southwest area if that happens. Peggy from Congressman Cannon's office said that Cong. Cannon has been nominated as a member of the Roadless Area National Advisory Council. The entire Utah delegation has written a joint letter supporting his nomination. Congressman Cannon has a meeting with Secretary Norton and other members of the Western Caucus to discuss DOI's current issues and to discuss PELT. She said their office would like to hear comments from people on how the new grazing regulations have effected them, positively or negatively. Congressman Cannon sent a letter to Speaker Hastert and Nancy Pelosi asking that they fund PELT fully. The APPLE Initiative will be introduced this month. Congressman Bishop will be introducing this bill and Congressman Cannon will be co-sponsor. It has good support. She said they receive a lot of letters on the ESA. Congressman Cannon is working with Congressman Pombo on this.

14. The following calendaring items were discussed: The Rural Summit will be August 10-12 in Cedar City.
15. Scott Truman Called for other items of business. Ryan Cottam said he would like to distribute a summer update from the office of planning and budget.
16. The next SUPAC meeting was set for Tuesday, September 13 at the Five County AOG offices in St. George.
17. Scott Truman asked for any agenda items to be sent to him after which the meeting was adjourned.

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Secretary