

***Show your support to protect the Red Cliffs NCA from an unnecessary and destructive highway***

**What: Washington County wants the City of St George to pass a resolution to support a bill to allow a highway through prime habitat**

**But, there is no legislative bill to consider so it is premature to vote for the bill.**

**Where:** St. George City Council Meeting

 City Council Chambers, [175 East 200 North, St. George, Utah](https://maps.google.com/?q=175+East+200+North,+St.+George,+Utah&entry=gmail&source=g)

**Date: Thursday, April 5, 2018**

**Time: 5:00 p.m.**

Washington County wants cities to pass a resolution to support a highway through the heart of protected tortoise habitat of the Red Cliffs National Conservation Area (NCA).

The County will present its *Washington County Desert Tortoise Habitat Conservation Plan Expansion Bill* at this city council meeting. However, there is no such bill for the public to review. The County has asked all the cities to pass a resolution <http://conserveswu.org/wp-content/uploads/HCP-Resolution-in-Support-of-Tortoise-Expansion-Bill-2018-pdf.pd> in support of bill. This bill is about getting Congress to mandate an unnecessary highway through the NCA’s protected prime tortoise habitat for land on the western side of County that is less desirable and not protected habitat. The bill’s purpose is to bypass federal environment laws and the 2009 legislation that was approved by Congress to protect the NCA. There are also two other bills already introduced in Congress. Chis Stewart’s introduced a bill House Bill 2423, 5/16/17 http://conserveswu.org/wp-content/uploads/Stewart-Legislation-HR-2423-PDF-1.pdfthat mandates the highway. The bill is deceptively called the *Washington County, Utah, Public Lands Management Implementation Act.* *To implement certain measures relating to management of Washington County, Utah, required by Public Law 111–11*. But, the claim the highway was in the 2009, public law 111-11 is not correct. It was not in the 2009 bill and that is why they need to pass new legislation to get around these federal laws. Senator Hatch has introduced a bill S1053 <http://conserveswu.org/wp-content/uploads/Hatch-Bill-S1053-PDF-1.pdf> to scrap the BLM’s excellent Resource Management Plan (RMP) that will not allow a highway in the NCA. The HCP, for 20 years has restricted new utility easements <http://conserveswu.org/wp-content/uploads/RMP-right-of-way-maps.pdf> to protect habitat. If you look at maps there are already utility easements that crisscross the NCA. This resolution claims this proposed bill is about: renewing the HCP, tortoise recovery, recreation open space, utility protocols. It isn’t ----it is about overturning (so called cleaning up) the existing excellent RMP and HCP by mandating an unnecessary highway that destroys legislative protected prime habitat for unprotected marginal habitat http://conserveswu.org/wp-content/uploads/ZONE-6.pdfon the west side of town that will also have a proposed highway <http://conserveswu.org/wp-content/uploads/Western-proposed-highway-map.pdf> through it. The County’s proposed HCP renewal has an amendment for a highway in it. http://conserveswu.org/wp-content/uploads/HCP-Amendment-3-22-18.pdf Herehttp://conserveswu.org/wp-content/uploads/HCP-Amendment-3-22-18.pdf--- is a history <http://conserveswu.org/wp-content/uploads/History-of-Red-Cliffs-NCA.pdf> of the NCA and the proposed highway.

The NCA helps protect critical habitat for the desert tortoise and protects open space for residence as the town of St. George continues to grow. It protects a drinking water aquifer. It provides the vast scenic vistas that is the signature attraction for our area, giving us both a sense of tranquility and wilderness, and such wonderful recreation opportunities so close to the city. The NCA also helped solidify and was overlaid on a Habitat Conservation Plan signed in 1995. This plan was a pragmatic approach to both protect the desert ecosystem and also open 300,000 acres of private land to development.

Local officials and representatives in Utah are trying to unravel this pragmatic balanced plan that has been in place and worked for this community for over 20 years. This proposed bill AND the introduced Stewart bill threaten to change the character of our desert community.

A four-lane highway does NOT belong in our National Conservation Area. It doesn’t make logical sense since the traffic would dump right back onto the road from which it seeks to remove traffic. There are alternatives that would by-pass the NCA. If you care about the character and future of your community please tell your local Mayors and City Council members to not support this resolution.

Please contact your mayor and city councils to oppose resolution. Contact your elected representatives. You can find their contact information on the city websites or call the city offices.  We have included City of St. George for your convenience..

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