

Item 118 -  
110807

**City of Austin Environmental Board Resolution on BCCP EB110707 D2**

WHEREAS the BCCP was formed as a community compact with the U S Fish and Wildlife and the City of Austin Travis County Lower Colorado River Authority the Nature Conservancy of Texas and the Travis Audubon Society that allows public use as long as the use is within well managed and monitored plans that protect the species covered by the plan

WHEREAS according to the USFWS IN 1996 The BCP Preserve System is to be managed to permanently conserve and facilitate the recovery of the population of target endangered species inhabiting western Travis County This priority objective will govern preserve management activities to improve target species habitat while protecting preserves against degradation caused by urbanization of surrounding lands and increase demand for recreational usage within preserve lands

WHEREAS the biologists after reductions in necessary acreage to ensure continued survival of the Black Capped Vireo and the Golden Cheeked Warbler decided that 30 428 acres and 62 important cave features was the minimum amount of habitat needed just to ensure the continued survival of the Black Capped Vireo and the Golden Cheeked Warbler

WHEREAS the BCCP terms and conditions require that a minimum of 30 428 acres of endangered bird habitat and 62 important cave features be protected in a system of preserves

WHEREAS the BCP permit is mitigation for the recovery of target endangered species that allows for economic growth and development in Travis County

WHEREAS the BCP has not yet achieved the 30 428 necessary acres and is 2 000 acres short

WHEREAS the BCP is managed to conserve all of our native wildlife to protect and restore Endangered species and to protect source water areas for Austin s water supply as well as a host of ecological services to our community such as air and water quality benefits

WHEREAS adverse effects to the golden-checked warbler are already occurring with the incidental take of approximately 26 000 acres of warbler habitat within the permit area 74% of the available habitat Any additional impacts will exceed the amount of take authorized

WHEREAS according to the USFWS IN 1996 the BCP Preserve System is to be managed to improve target species habitat while protecting Preserves against degradation caused by urbanization of surrounding lands and increase demand for recreational usage within preserve lands and

WHEREAS the Fish and Wildlife position before a large stakeholder group nearly a decade ago was that the preserve was purchased as the first step to recover specific endangered species population known to be incompatible with mountain biking and/or urbanization

WHEREAS seven parkland tracts in BCCP allow the full range of recreational activities that existed at the 1992 level

WHEREAS the Environmental Board supports recreational activity in Travis County

WHEREAS increased trail usage and new trails in the preserve has been shown to increase changes in plant communities that result in habitat fragmentation trampling soil compaction erosion introduction of exotics increased spread of oak wilt potential wildfire ignition sources and increased nest predation Such activities over time could result in a decline of the species which could result in asking the permit

WHEREAS should the BCP fail to preserve the species and the permit is revoked the site development permitting process is likely to return to vast portions of western Travis County  
THEREFORE

NOW BE IT RESOLVED BY THE CITY OF AUSTIN ENVIRONMENTAL BOARD that the Board does not support the policy of allowing additional recreational uses on preserve land until the full 30 428 acres that are needed to ensure the continued survival of the Black Capped Vireo and the Golden Cheeked Warbler have been acquired and

BE IT FURTHER RESOLVED THAT the Board does support additional compatible uses such as service projects on the preserve

BE IT FURTHER RESOLVED THAT upon completion of the Preserve system the Board does not support additional recreational non nesting season use of preserve lands as the result could be a decline of the species that could result in a violation of the permit

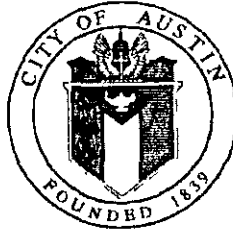
BE IT FURTHER RESOLVED that the Environmental Board does not support additional unrestricted public access after preserve acquisition is complete including non nesting season public access as this poses a risk of violating the federal permit

**ADOPTED** November 7, 2007

**ATTEST** \_\_\_\_\_

David J. Anderson PL CLM

Environmental Board Chair



To Environmental Board Members

From BCP Staff  
Kelly Nesvick Biologist  
Austin Water Utility

Steve Windhager Ph.D.  
Director Landscape Restoration Program  
Lady Bird Johnson Wildflower Center University of Texas

Date November 7 2007

Subject Comments to the Environmental Board on the presentation on the Land Management Plans for Balcones Canyonlands Preserves requesting Environmental Board recommendations for the BCCP Coordination Committee and City Council regarding possible actions related to the draft plans presented by William Conrad Austin Water Utility and BCP SAC Presentation by Steve Windhager Ph.D.

Gentlemen

Enclosed are comments and a presentation to the Environmental Board on November 7 2006/7 to be submitted with the City of Austin Environmental Board Resolution on BCCP EB110707-D2

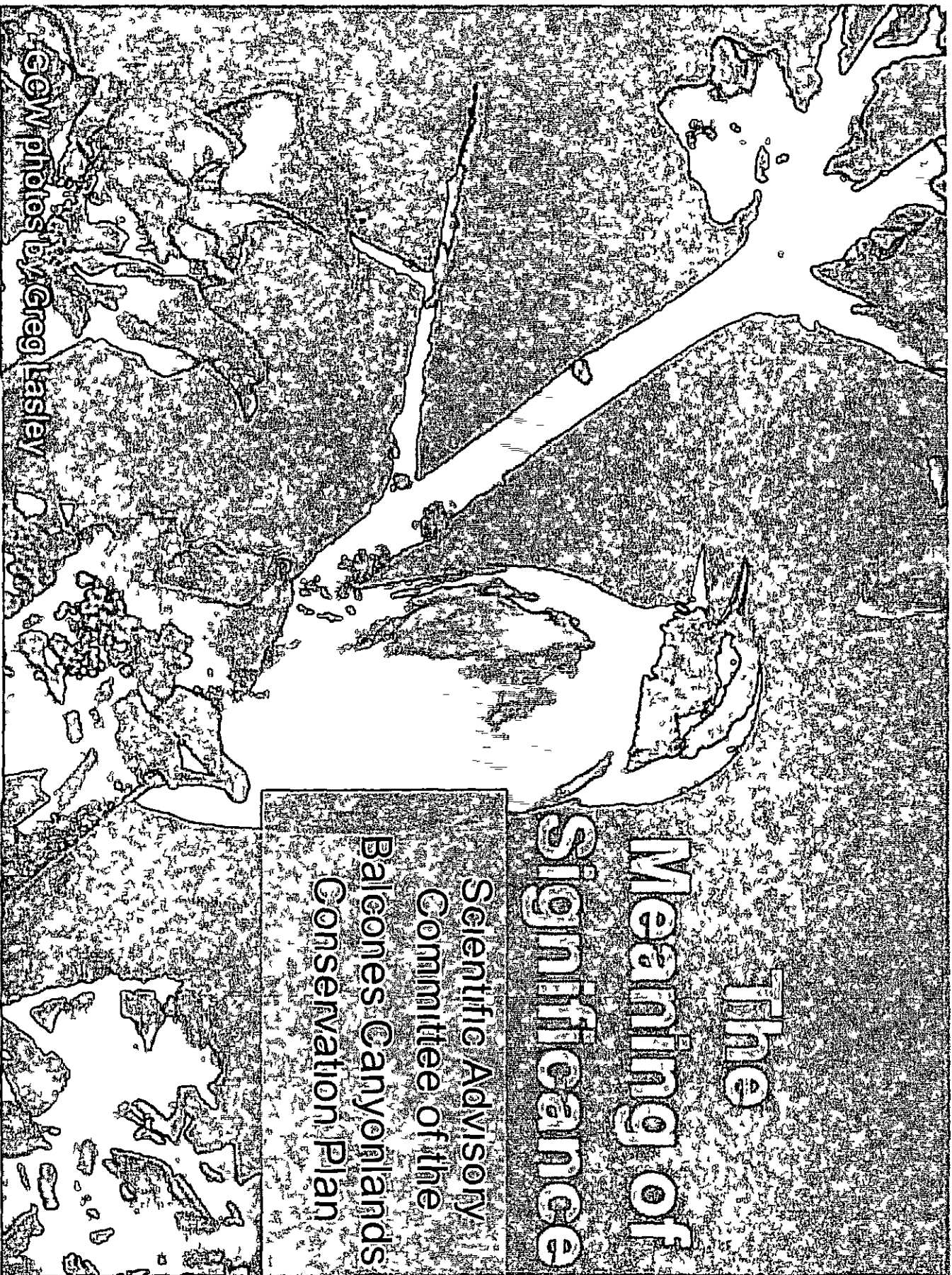
Respectively submitted

Marilla Shepherd  
Environmental Board Liaison  
WPDR

Attachments Agenda item A 1  
Agenda item D 2

BCP Staff Comments to the Environmental Board November 7 2007

- \* We do have data regarding the adverse effects of recreational activities – including hiking camping and mountain biking on soil vegetation and wildlife
- \* These adverse effects include loss of vegetation and/or changes in vegetation composition soil loss and compaction and general disturbance to wildlife
- \* Although many of these recreation effects studies are not specific to the GCWA or their breeding habitat they provide support for adverse effects to soil plant and wildlife In ecology we often do not have data directly on the community we are studying but have to use similar research from other areas to make inferences
- \* In the COA BCP tracts with public access have more issues regarding trailblazing unauthorized maintenance of trails including vegetation cutting and removal which could lead to increases in oak wilt introduction of materials into the preserve potential wildfire ignition sources invasive plants and soil erosion Thus the impacts of one trail are not limited to the trail itself
- \* Potential adverse effects may encompass an area much larger than the trail footprint Vegetation loss and subsequent soil loss could inhibit hardwood regeneration This is especially a concern when taking into account the decline of the hardwood component of the oak juniper woodlands in Travis County due to the cumulative effects of oak wilt and over browsing by WFD Loss of hardwoods from the community removes an essential component of GCWA habitat and could lead to the loss or reduction in GCWA from an area
- \* Any activity that removes vegetation and/or soil has the ability to alter community structure and function It is possible the community can be modified to the point where it is ineffectual as habitat for the species that depend on it



# The Meaning of Significance

Scientific Advisory  
Committee of the  
Balcones Canyonlands  
Conservation Plan

©CW photos by Greg Hasley

# Significance

- Statistical Significance — 95% confidence
- Significance — having meaning

Can there be *insignificant* effects to *GEW* in the BOP?  
How confident should we be?

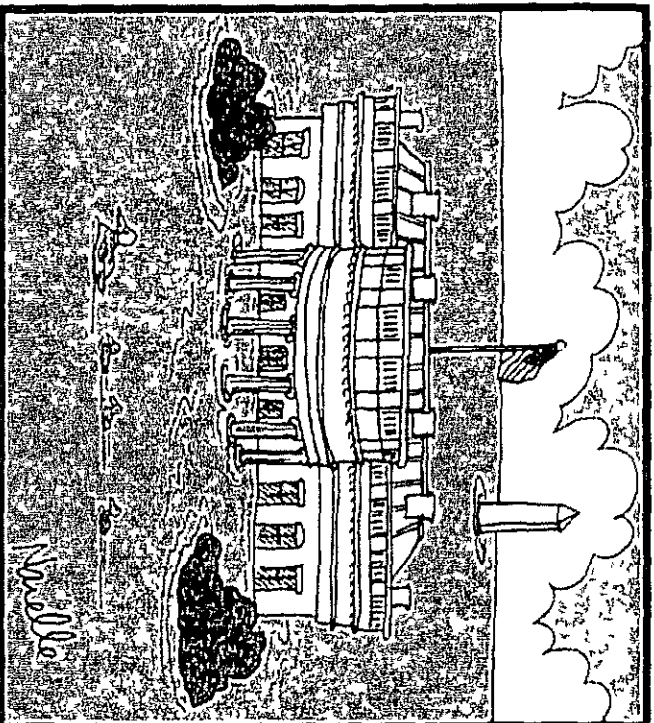




# How To Measure Impact?

- Population estimates?
- Reproductive success?
- Flushing?
- Over what time period?

Individuals demanding increased access have stated that “If an effect on population cannot be measured with statistical significance, it is not significant.”

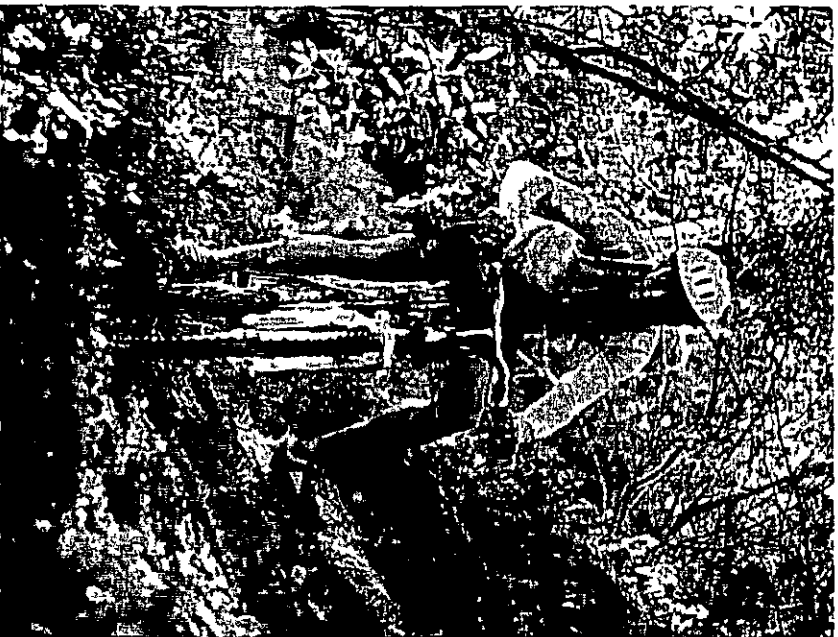


The President's indifference to global warming was starting to show

This is likely  
NOT true for  
the BCP.



# Significant Results



No “statistical significance,” does not necessarily mean that there is no effect  
It could mean recreation and Warblers can coexist, or that we lack the statistical power (enough data) to establish the effect with 95% confidence

# BCP Facts



- BCP mitigation for development in Travis County
- BCP represents minimum size needed for mitigation
- BCP still incomplete
- Adverse effects within the preserve would have to be mitigated

# Consequences



**Access in the “off season” also has adverse effects**

- Adversely affect habitat
- Increased erosion, soil loss, sedimentation
- Increased oak wilt risk
- Increased fire risk
- Difficult to restrict access during breeding

# Significant Consequences?

**Err on the side of  
CAUTION and we  
are wrong**

- Carefully controlled access will continue to be the norm
- Uncontrolled recreation will occur elsewhere in Travis County

**Err on the side of  
RECREATION and  
we are wrong**

- Violation of the BCCP/Permit
- Actions will require additional mitigation
- Suspension of the permit could threaten future development

# We do need better information

- Without better data, we must err on the side of caution
- Existing data needs to be analyzed
- Test “no effect of recreation” using a paired test off BCP lands



# Recommendations

1. Complete BCP preserve acquisition
2. Complete paired studies documenting effects on populations and nesting success
3. Mitigate any adverse effects of recreation in advance
4. THEN allow for additional recreational access in appropriate areas