



MEMORANDUM

TO: Mayor Lee Leffingwell, Chair, BCCP Coordinating Committee
Precinct 3 Commissioner Gerald Daugherty, Member, BCCP Coordinating Committee
Mr. Adam Zerrenner, Member (Ex Officio), BCCP Coordinating Committee

FROM: William A. Conrad, BCCP Coordinating Committee Secretary

DATE: May 2, 2014

SUBJECT: Some BCCP Accomplishments on its Eighteenth Anniversary

On May 2, 1996 Travis County and the City of Austin entered into an Interlocal Cooperation Agreement to create the Balcones Canyonlands Conservation Plan (BCCP). This is the first regional, multi-species Habitat Conservation Plan in the country. Its stated purpose, from the interlocal agreement, is that the "Balcones Canyonlands Conservation Plan Shared Vision will ensure the protection of endangered species under the [Endangered Species] Act, while providing a mechanism to permit continued economic development in the region without the need for individual project approval." Today, I am sharing with you some facts about the success of BCCP in fulfilling this vision.

The BCCP Partners have established the majority of the Balcones Canyonlands Preserve (BCP), protecting and managing 30,538 acres in addition to forty eight of sixty two caves required to be protected by the BCCP federal permit. This habitat is dedicated in perpetuity and managed specifically for the benefit and persistence of eight endangered species and twenty seven species of concern. In 2013, the Jollyville Plateau salamander was listed as Threatened. Significant amounts of its habitat and range are also protected within the boundaries of BCP.

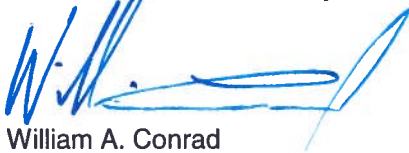
In order to permit continued economic development, BCCP includes a mechanism where private property owners and public service infrastructure providers may comply with the Endangered Species Act by participating in BCCP. This streamlined process has resulted in 279 private entities participating in BCCP, facilitating development on 14,532 acres (8,869 tax parcels) in Travis County, and improved in compliance with the Act through BCCP Participation. This participation resulted in \$4.5 Billion assessed value of those improvements contributing to the local tax base. That same \$4.5 billion was multiplied many times over by developers, contractors, trades professionals, and service providers who contributed to those improvements.

Additionally, 236 public service infrastructure projects were mitigated through BCCP. This represents expansion of infrastructure across Austin and Travis County to provide safe, reliable services to our citizens. While it is difficult to place a hard financial value for this BCCP accomplishment, one example would be the nearly complete Austin Water Utility Water Treatment Plant 4. This is a \$350,000 million project that complied with the Endangered Species Act through participation in BCCP

The public, elected and appointed officials, Permit Holders' staffs, land managing partners, and the conservation community worked for more than 10 years to negotiate Permit details; have spent millions of local and federal dollars to conserve lands in strategic areas; collaborated with local communities and user groups to interpret Permit purpose and administration; and have successfully implemented the Permit for 18 years. In addition to habitat conservation and economic growth, BCCP and its preserve system assures that our citizens enjoy numerous open space services – beautiful viewsheds, increased property values, recreation and education opportunities, protected water quality and quantity, and improved air quality - that earn Austin and Travis County the reputation as one of the most livable places in the United States.

In recent months there have been cases where BCCP has been criticized for obstructing development, hindering public safety, and failing to support the continued well-being of our communities. On this eighteenth anniversary of BCCP it is important to stop and look back at the purpose, intention and facts. BCCP is in fact a major economic engine in our community. Travis County and City of Austin BCCP permitting programs and preserve management with our public and private partners serves our constituents through this community-based, planned, locally implemented solution to federal regulation. It streamlines permitting for safe, reliable public services and private development. It also equally assures we are conserving endangered and threatened species and their habitat while we support delivery of valuable ecosystem services that make our communities most livable.

None of this would be possible were it not for the collaboration between Travis County, City of Austin, and U.S. Fish and Wildlife Service with the active support from numerous community leaders, scientists and citizens. Thank you for your contribution to the Balcones Canyonlands Conservation Plan and for your support of conservation in Austin and Travis County.



William A. Conrad