



Record of Decisions

**Balcones Canyonlands Conservation Plan
Coordinating Committee
February 5, 2014 10:00 AM to 12:00 Noon
Travis County Commissioners Courtroom
700 Lavaca Street
Austin, Texas 78701**

Attending: Chair Lee Leffingwell, Member Gerald Daugherty, Adam Zerrenner

Call to Order 10:00 AM

- 1. Citizen Communications** – None Presented
- 2. Approve Record of Decisions for the November 14, 2013 regular meeting**
Approved as presented on a motion from Member Daugherty, Second by Leffingwell, Carried 2/0
- 3. Report from Scientific Advisory Committee** - David Steed, Chair, gave a verbal report. The SAC recommends approval of the Advisory Committee Task Group recommendation to appoint Amie Treuer-Kuehn and Sam Whitehead to fill vacancies on the SAC. The SAC has several active subcommittees. There is a committee working with staff to prepare a peer reviewed article evaluating the use of point count methodology versus spot mapping and other methods for monitoring golden-cheeked warblers and other avian populations. The SAC endorses approval of the Sunset Valley Managing Partner Agreement and has initiated a committee to support development of a trail effects monitoring plan for the Violet Crown Trail, as described in the Violet Crown Trail Master Plan approved by the Coordinating Committee in 2011. Dr. Steed also advised members about discussions with Larry Quick from the Williamson County Conservation Foundation concerning common interests in karst and Jollyville Plateau salamanders. Quick suggested and the SAC supports collaboration between the Foundation and BCCP on areas of common interest.

Member Daugherty asked Dr. Steed's opinion about how Williamson County's concerns over U. S. Fish and Wildlife Service's potential actions there could be addressed through collaboration with Austin and Travis County through BCCP. Steed responded that he understood that Mr. Quick's primary interest was cooperation at the technical and scientific level. On the broader level that would be for the Coordinating Committee to decide as far as how BCCP worked with elected officials in Williamson County. Member Daugherty asked whether BCCP should reach out to Williamson County and Steed responded that "it's always good to talk to your neighbors" Member Daugherty then asked Member Zerrenner about what kind of relationship the service has with Williamson County do they seek advice and

support from your office? . He responded absolutely, they have their own county wide HCP for both bird species and karst invertebrates. They have also been working with them to plan and design new ordinances that would reduce threats to the Georgetown Salamander. Those ordinances have been passed. At the technical staff level communication is constant .

Member Daugherty stated that he felt like it would be appropriate to identify an official in Williamson County and reach out to them to discuss how to work together effectively. Dr. Steed suggested that perhaps Member Zerrenner could suggest someone there who is involved in these issues. Member Daugherty then offered to identify someone there and reach out to them. Chair Leffingwell stated that he felt it would be useful for BCCP to reach out to its counterparts in Williamson County and offer them what we know and have been successful with in terms of background, organization and technical information in order to serve as a resource to them in the future.

4. **Report from Citizens Advisory Committee** - Peter Torgrimson, Chair, gave a verbal report to the committee. He advised members that the CAC had elected officers for 2014. Peter Torgrimson is chair and David Whatley is vice chair. This committee reviewed fees for BCCP participation. Following a lengthy discussion, no action was taken. The CAC also received a briefing on changes proposed for the advisory committee guidelines and they voted to recommend these changes to the Coordinating Committee.
5. **Review and act upon BCCP Managing Partner Agreement with the City of Sunset Valley** – Secretary Conrad briefed members about the process to develop a managing partner agreement with the City of Sunset Valley. They will join BCCP and contribute approximately 20 acres of habitat for mitigation that will serve to mitigate Violet Crown Trail across the Gaines Creek Tract. Staff recommended approval. Member Daugherty moved approval, Chair Leffingwell second, Carried 2/0
6. **Review and act upon BCP Land Management Plan for the City of Sunset Valley Gaines Creek Tract** – Secretary Conrad briefed members that Sunset Valley in fulfilling its participation as a Managing Partner has submitted a land management plan for the Gaines Creek Tract that is consistent with BCP plans and our permit. He recommended approval. Chair Leffingwell commented that the plan also supports implementation of the Violet Crown trail and he supports the plan. Member Daugherty moved approval, Chair Leffingwell seconded. Carried 2/0.
7. **Receive a report from the Secretary regarding Advisory Committee Attendance for 2012 and 2013. Take action as appropriate.** – As requested by members in their November 14, 2013 meeting. Secretary Conrad prepared an analysis of Advisory Committee (CAC and SAC) member attendance for the past two years. He presented his report to members and reviewed it. Member Daugherty asked several questions about information contained in the report. In particular he asked how Robert Kleeman came to no longer serve on the CAC. Conrad responded that Mr. Kleeman was asked to step down by then member Precinct 3 Commissioner Karen Huber. Member Daugherty asked whether there would be anything preventing Mr. Kleeman from being reappointed. Conrad stated that while he could not speak for Mr. Kleeman he had been advised by the former CAC member that he was intending to resign before he was asked to step down. Member Daugherty then said that he now does not need to consider asking Mr. Kleeman to rejoin the CAC.
8. **Receive and take action on recommendations from the Secretary for revisions to guidelines for the Scientific Advisory Committee and the Citizens Advisory Committee** – Secretary Conrad reviewed changes to guidelines and read them into

the record. Chair Leffingwell asked whether the two absences applied to both excused absences or unexcused absences. Conrad responded that the limit applied to all absences. Leffingwell noted that this was similar to the City's Boards and Commissions policy. Conrad noted both advisory committees recommended approval. Motion from Daugherty for approval, Second by Leffingwell, carried 2/0.

9. **Receive and take action on recommendations from the Advisory Committee Task Group for appointments to fill two vacant positions on the Scientific Advisory Committee** – Secretary Conrad presented recommendations to fill vacancies in the Scientific Advisory Committee created by resignations from Monica Swartz and John Herron. He reviewed the organization and processes of the Advisory Committee task group. Thirteen potential candidates were identified. Through the task group's review process Amy Treuer-Kuehn and Sam Whitehead were identified as well qualified and interested potential candidates. The task group recommends their appointments.

Mayor Leffingwell asked if the only way to get on this is to be appointed by the Coordinating Committee, and conversely the only way to get off is to be removed by the Coordinating Committee. Conrad responded: to be removed or resign. Chair Leffingwell then asked for clarification about how Mr. Kleeman was removed from the CAC by action of the County. Conrad responded that it is more complex with the CAC because that committee has three members appointed by the County, three members appointed by the City, one member appointed by LCRA, one member appointed by the City of Sunset Valley, and four members appointed as consensus appointment from the Coordinating Committee. Governing bodies for Travis County, LCRA, and Sunset Valley appoint their members. When the CAC was reorganized in 2003 the City decided that each of its three members would be appointed from members of the Environmental Board, Parks and Recreation Board, and Water and Wastewater Commission as those three bodies represented interests that are associated with the City's interest in BCP and they are appointed by City Council.

Chair Leffingwell then asked whether City Council took action to appoint members of boards and commissions who serve on the CAC. Conrad responded no, the chairs of boards and commissions made those assignments. Leffingwell stated that he believes those appointments should be taken to oversight body (City Council, Commissioners Court,) for action to appoint the representatives from those three boards and commissions to the CAC. Daugherty concurred with that recommendation. Conrad said he would revise the guidelines to include that practice.

Commissioner Daugherty asked about the thirteen potential candidates. "Were all the candidates contacted and only six expressed interest in serving?" Conrad, responded no, the Advisory committee task group had proposed the names of the thirteen potential candidates. They were interviewed to learn more about them and ascertain their interest. Some of the seven were found to not present qualifications described in the guidelines while others were unable to serve because of other commitments. Daugherty asked, during the vetting process how do you make sure that there are people that have an honest shot getting on a committee who are not in lock step with the environmental concerns in the community. How do we make sure that there is some honest opportunity there? He noted that it is healthy for a committee to include a wide range of opinions. Conrad responded that understands his concerns but in the ten plus years he has been involved with BCCP there has

never been a decision made on appointment based upon how they would or would not support a position. On the SAC we do look for specific expertise in a field important to the Coordinating Committee. An example to consider would be to look back when public access was a very contentious issue for BCP. At the time the staff opinion was that recreation and trails were not compatible with BCP. But what came out of the CAC was an opinion that trails and access was appropriate. The process that occurred was the committee took action then members from that committee met with members of the coordinating committee and presented a policy proposal that was considered and approved by this committee and resulted in the Trail Master Plan that was approved by the Coordinating Committee. Conrad stated that he agrees that having a diversity of opinions is critical to the success of BCCP. He continued that he didn't know if he could define a process that would guarantee the member's concerns were addressed, except to provide his personal commitment that no one's opinion or position would be considered when defining their qualifications to serve on an advisory committee.

Chair Leffingwell agreed with Member Daugherty's concerns. He said he believed the Coordinating Committee needed to make some changes. He noted one change was already made with respect to the appointment process. On the SAC it is different and knowledge of scientific expertise is critical. Leffingwell asked that resumes or CV's for anyone who expresses interest to serve on a committee or applies to serve come with the recommendation of an individual to be reported so that members can review them and assure that we are using an open process. Please revise guidelines to include that change.

Member Daugherty moved to accept the nomination for Treuer-Kuehn and Whitehead, Leffingwell seconded, carried 2/0

10. **Receive reports from BCP partners on wildfire planning and actions; take action as appropriate** – Secretary Conrad and Wendy Connally gave an update on the County-wide CWPP and other aspects of wildfire preparedness. Conrad also briefed members about the work with BCP and Austin Fire Department to implement a fuel mitigation demonstration project with Jester Estates HOA, BCP Partners. Chair Leffingwell asked if fuel mitigation meant cedar eradication. He noted that habitat requires cedars as a component with other trees. He asked whether we need as many as we have and whether there is a balance that can be found with fewer cedar trees. He noted there are issues with pollen, water use, fire safety, and endangered species habitat. Conrad noted that BCP is in a five year study to evaluate habitat suitability. That should address part of your concern. What is being learned from the CWPP risk analysis if that oak-juniper woodlands are lower risk fuels, grasslands are really the higher risk fuels under most conditions.
11. **Receive reports from BCP staff regarding land management, BCP Participation, Infrastructure Management, and BCCP compliance** – Written reports were reviewed by Willy Conrad, Sherri Kuhl, and Wendy Connally.

The meeting adjourned at 11:07 AM without objection.