



Record of Decisions

**Balcones Canyonlands Conservation Plan
Scientific Advisory Committee
October 14, 2014 3:00 PM to 5:00 PM
Waller Creek Center, Room 104
625 East 10th Street
Austin, Texas 78701**

Attending:

Jean Krejca
David Steed
John Cornelius
Sam Whitehead
Aimee Treur-Kuehn

Excused:

Craig Farquhar
Nico Hauwert

1. **Approve Record of Decisions from regular meeting on 8/4/14** – Motion by Krejca, second Whitehead Carried 5/0
2. **Update regarding CAC proposed “State of BCCP Report”**– Secretary Conrad reported that the CAC has agreed to support the report and collaborate with the SAC. Conrad will report the proposed action to the Coordinating Committee on October 29, 2014 and will organize a task group thereafter.
3. **BCCP Karst Substitution Workshop Update-** Secretary Conrad reported that he organized a task group in August to develop a process to be used to implement substitution for caves protected by the BCCP Federal Permit. The permit provides that when listed caves cannot be protected, other caves may be substituted with Service approval. However, neither the permit nor the HCP speak clearly about processes for making such decisions. Conrad would like to have a process to recommend to the Coordinating Committee to be adopted as BCCP Policy by summer 2015.
4. **Subcommittee reports**
 - a. **Golden-cheeked Warbler modeling task group** – David Steed reported to the committee. He noted that Lisa O'Donnell and Craig Farquhar had actually been the lead on this effort. He gave a brief overview of the history of the subcommittee and then discussed the draft manuscript recently circulated by O'Donnell. He recommended that the SAC approve the manuscript for publication. O'Donnell asked members to review the manuscript one last time. After she receives and addresses their comments she will submit it for publication in the Journal for Field Ornithology. Chair Krejca thanked the committee for their efforts and noted that submission for publication will complete the assignment for this committee and that it will sunset afterwards.

- b. **Mountain Bike Experimental Design** – David Steed discussed the Davis *et al* paper regarding trail effects on golden-cheeked warblers. He advised members that while the study might be criticized for how the control sites and study sites differ slightly, this is still a definitive study that demonstrates that mountain bike recreation on trails in golden-cheeked warbler habitat have a measurable effect on the birds behavior, nesting success, and recruitment success. He also noted that the Davis *et al* findings are very consistent with findings from studies involving numerous other avian species.

Steed also discussed the need to monitor effects from trails on habitat. He discussed a publication by Marion with USGS that documents procedures and methodology to quantitatively monitor effects from trails on vegetation and soils. He suggested that this methodology be considered for use on BCP. Lisa O'Donnell spoke favorably about the Marion paper as well. She described Marion as a trail ecologist and said his methods have been used extensively by National Park Service.

Conrad asked the SAC members to review the Marion Paper and comment back to David and Lisa regarding its applicability to BCP before 11/1/14. Lisa will email a link to the paper. Steed, Cornelius, and O'Donnell will summarize comments on both Davis *et al* and Marion with recommendations to BCP and submit this report to the SAC at their winter 2015 meeting. This will complete this assignment for this subcommittee.

- c. **Karst** – Hauwert, no report
- d. **BCP Strategic Research Plan** – Sam Whitehead prepared a draft strategic research plan that he developed with support from Lisa Belair with Concordia University, Monica Swartz, Lisa O'Donnell, and Sherri Kuhl. SAC members received and accepted this draft and agreed to help Sam move forward with completing the plan with more specific input from others. The next step will be to develop a SWOT analysis. Members recommended that he work the the BCP Land Managers working group to conduct this step. This existing group might also be appropriate to serve as the research oversight committee described in the draft strategic research plan. Sam will be supported by Kuhl, Laack, and O'Donnell and will report back with progress at future meetings.

5. Staffs' reports

Sherri Kuhl Reviewed the Written BCP Operations report from the City and the BCCP joint Public Outreach Report.

Linda Laack reviewed the Travis County written report.

6. Members' Issues and concerns:

Aimee Treur Kuehn reported to members that Spotted Knapweed, and introduced invasive forb, has been collected at the Balcones National Wildlife Refuge. She noted that was likely established as the result of a seeding project where it was seeded using contaminating seed purchased for restoration work.

John Cornelius reported results from current white tailed deer population inventory work done through Emma Long City Park. He noted extreme population density of 2.46 acres per deer where 25 acres per deer would be ideal for preserve management and habitat resilience. He also noted that the doe to buck ratio was 7.6 to 1 and that the fawn to doe ration is 0.5 to 1. These are indicators that the trend for

deer populations will continue to rise without management. One implication for BCP is that restoration efforts planned for Connors Creek at Emma Long Park may likely be impaired by extreme deer browse and foraging pressure.

Meeting adjourned at 4:40 PM