

TRAVIS COUNTY'S BCCP Activities Update: 1 May 2015 –31 July 2015

BCCP Administration	
Public Participation	Eleven BCCP applications were received and processed; No Participation Certificates were issued.
Land Acquisition	No new properties were acquired during this reporting period. The total BCP acreage is 31,230 acres. Closing is scheduled on a 500-acre tract in northwest Travis County by end of July. This tract will complete protection of the surface and subsurface drainage basins of a cave named in the BCCP permit.
Personnel	Hiring is in the final stages for the two vacant Natural Resources Specialist positions and a Natural Resources Technician position; Interviewing for the vacant Environmental Specialist position will occur in August; The vacant Volunteer Coordinator position will be advertised in August.
Rare and Endangered Resources Management	
Golden-cheeked warbler	Golden-cheeked warbler surveys were conducted from mid-March until late June; Data entry occurred in July.
Black-capped vireo	Fourteen black-capped vireo territories have been confirmed on Travis County BCP: 11 on the Jollyville Unit, two on the Ribelin infrastructure corridor, and one on the new Scott and White tract.
	A pair of vireos on the Ribelin infrastructure corridor are using an area that was enhanced for vireos as part of a cooperative project between Austin Energy and the County in February 2012. Austin Energy modified their normal right-of-way trimming to encourage more shrub growth under their transmission lines. The second pair on the corridor are using an area enhanced for vireos by County staff in 2010.
Karst invertebrates	Spring season faunal surveys were performed at nine caves.
	Spring season cave cricket exit counts were performed at six caves.
	BCCP cave survey data was compiled and formatted for use in a USGS Endangered Karst Invertebrate Detectability Study for improving USFWS presence/absence criteria for karst features in central Texas.
	County staff worked with BCCP partners to develop a draft BCCP Karst Substitution process which will be reviewed by the BCCP Coordinating Committee in August.
Jollyville Plateau salamander	Surveyed for salamanders at R-Bar-B springs on the New Life tract. Conducted monthly water quality testing at springs with salamanders.
Plant and Animal Control	
Feral hogs	Traps were in operation on the Ribelin and Sam Hamilton tracts. Nine hogs were removed from the Ribelin tract during July.

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Brown-headed cowbirds	Cowbird traps were in operation from March through May; 119 cowbirds were removed from warbler and vireo habitat.
Red imported fire ants	Performed spring season red-imported fire ant surveys and boiling water treatments at five BCCP-listed caves.
Tawny crazy ants	Conducted assessments and surveys of Tawny crazy ant infestation at Whirlpool and No Rent caves.
	A USFWS Traditional Section 6 grant proposal that addresses tawny crazy ant impacts to karst invertebrate assemblages and design of control methods for use within sensitive karst environments was awarded in June 2015. This proposal is a collaboration between Travis County, City of Austin, and Dr. Ed LeBrun of UT's Brackenridge Field Lab. Dr. LeBrun will be managing the project for the next two years, with TC/COA staff providing in-kind contribution in the form of quarterly cave monitoring and design/implementation of a study to quantify TCA impacts in three BCCP caves.
Invasive Plants	Invasive plants (<i>Nandina</i> , <i>Melia</i> , <i>Photinia</i> , <i>Pyracantha</i> , <i>Vitex</i> , <i>Ficus</i> , <i>Abelia</i> , <i>Lagerstroemia</i> , <i>Lippia</i>) were removed from two tracts.
Land Stewardship	
Fencing	New fencing was constructed on the Ireland's Cave tract; Fence repairs were made on the Lime Creek Ranch and Greenshores tracts.
Wildfire Preparedness	Fuel mitigation projects are planned for this fall/winter on the Steiner Ranch and Canyon Vista tracts.
	The County expects to receive a final award for a Hazard Mitigation Grant from FEMA through the Texas Division of Emergency Management in August 2015. The grant will fund wildfire mitigation projects on County BCP properties in the Wildland Urban Interface. Travis County applied for the grant in March 2012, in connection with the declared disaster for the Labor Day Fires.
Infrastructure	The T-160 transmission line was energized in June after two years of coordinated effort between LCRA, City of Austin, and Travis County to minimize impacts to the preserve during the transmission line upgrade project.
Transportation	The status of the following transportation projects have not changed since the last staff report: LISD is pursuing an individual ESA 10(A) permit for the proposed road project in the infrastructure corridor through Travis County Ribelin, Sam Hamilton East, and private 10(A) mitigation lands.

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	<p>SH 45 SW: Final Environmental Impact Statement (FEIS) was released January 23, 2015. The Record of Decision dated March 4th identified the Preferred Alternative as the Selected Alternative. See http://www.sh45sw.com/about/environment.php</p> <p>USFWS responded to letters from City and County elected officials re concerns. The future status of Flint Ridge Cave remains in question. Details of land management in the vicinity of FRC must be resolved. On April 21st the Travis County Commissioners Court directed staff to work with the Central Texas Regional Mobility Authority (CTRMA) to include state-of-the-art stormwater controls for this area of extraordinary sensitivity; and to work with the CTRMA to require a sharing, by the CTRMA, of the risk of non-compliance under the Endangered Species Act. Staff is reviewing 30% plans in coordination with City staff.</p>
	<p>Travis County commissioned a feasibility study for the realignment of Steiner Ranch Boulevard/Comanche Trail which is under review.</p>
Adjacent Development	<p>Staff coordinated with City of Austin and developers on current and future development projects adjacent to the Cuevas, Nootsie, and Steiner Ranch tracts.</p>
Law Enforcement	
Trespass and Criminal Mischief	<p>Dumping of construction material was discovered on the Cuevas, Plains Capital, and Carson II tracts; Trespassers were encountered on the Nootsie and Volente tracts.</p>
	<p>A 0.3 acre area of tree clearing on the Gray Mountain conservation easement was observed in May. Staff sent the owner a notice of violation letter and met with the owner and the developer to begin negotiations for restoring the area.</p>
Outreach/Volunteers	
See <i>BCP Partners Education Summary May 2015 – July 2015</i>	