

City of Austin BCP Report  
BCCP Coordinating Committee Meeting  
February 1, 2016 – April 1, 2016

**Program Administration**

**Personnel**

- Willy Conrad retired from his position as Wildlands Division Manager and BCCP Coordinating Committee Secretary on August 31, 2015. Sherri Kuhl is acting BCCP Coordinating Committee Secretary and Kevin Thuesen is acting Wildlands Division Manager. An Interlocal Cooperation Agreement was approved between the City and Travis County to jointly fund the BCCP Coordinating Committee Secretary position, and the position should be posted soon.

**Permits**

- Research permits were issued in February for the City BCP properties. The BCP annual report was submitted to the U.S. Fish and Wildlife Service in January.

**Biological Monitoring**

**Karst**

- BCP Staff is continuing to assist Nico Hauwert and the Watershed Protection Department with the Blowing Sink critical environmental feature (CEF) stabilization CIP project. Several major recharge features/caves were unstable, leading to large amounts of sediment washing into the aquifer. This project is nearing completion; the final phase will include a new perimeter fence to help prevent ongoing trespass issues.
- In an effort to educate the public about the importance of caves and cave fauna, Nico Hauwert initiated an effort to find local non-BCP caves that would be appropriate for educational purposes. Staff and volunteers are currently excavating several karst features. To date several significant caves have been opened including grassy cove cave, LaCrosse, hideout, and Wade cave, all of which were recently gated and now open to educational guided tours. (ongoing)
- Restoration and monitoring efforts continue to be implemented at two endangered species caves located in the courtyard at McNeil High. McNeil High School science teacher Tina Vick and City and Travis County BCP staff are leading the restoration and monitoring efforts along with guidance from USFWS personnel. Travis County and City BCP staff are currently conducting cave faunal surveys and Tina Vick and students continue to conduct cave cricket exit counts with the ultimate goal of improving habitat for cave crickets and document the progress of this endeavor. Another major goal is to make this courtyard an outdoor education classroom to encourage more student participation for long term monitoring and potential research projects that will benefit the listed species. City BCP staff also held a volunteer clean up removing most of the remaining trash from the caves as well as a student volunteer revegetation effort planting, mulching, and fencing an additional 50 trees and shrubs, many of which provide forage for cave crickets (ongoing).
- Conducted cave faunal surveys and cave cricket exit counts (ongoing).
- Monitored cave conditions, removing trash, and treating for red-imported fire ants (ongoing).

**Golden-Cheeked Warbler (GCWA)**

- USFS Project: Interlocal Agreement with the US Forest Service (Dr. Frank Thompson, Jennifer Reidy) to provide GCWA Population Viability and Habitat Suitability modeling within the BCP.
  - 5-year study, focuses on four primary questions:
    - What is the absolute abundance of the GCWA on the BCP and on individual macrosites?
    - How do demographics (e.g. density, productivity, survival) vary with landscape and habitat factors?
    - How viable are these populations?

- How do various management scenarios influence population viability?
- Work on the models is in progress.
- The City of Austin is continuing to work with the USFS to collect survival data for juveniles and develop a long-term monitoring plan. The 2016 field season is underway.

### **Black-capped Vireo (BCVI)**

- COA BCP staff and volunteers are continuing to implement demonstration projects at the Vireo Preserve to promote slope stabilization, soil restoration, and regeneration of native plants on degraded areas that are currently not habitat for either the GCWA or BCVI. Since Vireo Preserve supports many of the habitat types observed throughout the BCP, lessons learned from restoration work at this site should be applicable to other areas within the BCP.

### **Jollyville Plateau Salamander (JPS)**

- COA BCP staff met with the Watershed Protection Department to discuss research goals and plans for JPS surveys. (ongoing)

### **Bracted Twistflower**

- Fencing installed at Mount Bonnell to protect Bracted Twistflower: see Dual-Managed Lands, below.
- Communicating with Bracted Twistflower Working Group to plan and organize surveys of all known sites for 2016 season. This is expected to be a good year for Twistflowers due to the wet late fall/early winter followed by the mild winter weather. At least 21 seedlings were found at Mount Bonnell in December.

## **Preserve Management**

### **Dual-Managed Lands**

- The proposed Mount Bonnell fence to protect bracted twistflower habitat and keep people off the bluff has been completed.
- Barton Creek homeless camps: see Law Enforcement below.

### **Law Enforcement**

- Homeless camps are an ongoing management challenge in the Barton Creek Greenbelt. City Wildland Conservation and PARD staffs continue to monitor these sites and work with APD to remove camps as they are found.
- The Lanier house was demolished in February to remove this attractive nuisance from the BCP.

### **Invasive Species/Animal Management**

- Tawny Crazy Ants: Staff from the University of Texas at Austin, Travis County, and City BCP staff initiated work on the Section 6 tawny crazy ant research. Ed LeBrun hired technicians to help City and Travis County staff on the research and monitoring efforts. (ongoing)
- BCP staff is continuing efforts to remove non-native plants on COA BCP tracts. (ongoing)
- BCP staff is actively removing feral hogs. (ongoing)

### **Oak Wilt**

- BCP staff continued to monitor movement of the fungus in known oak wilt centers and success of control trenches.

**Fencing Projects**

- Completed surveys and fencing on the newly acquired Lucas tract and Bohls Jr. tract.
- Surveys were completed on the Forest Ridge tract for a fence to be built in the fall.

**Fire Management**

- Wildland Conservation Division (WCD) staffs have created a final draft of Wildfire Contingency Plan Maps for all WCD properties. These maps are intended to facilitate wildfire suppression on WCD property by illustrating access points, roads, structures, vegetation, and fire potential.
- Austin Fire Department Fuels Crew initiated efforts to reduce fuels on Jester preserve in close proximity to Jester Estates residents. The goal is to reduce the threat of possible future wildfires following the specifications contained in the document “City of Austin Fuel Treatments in Juniper and Juniper-Oak Woodlands Best Management Practices within the Balcones Canyonlands Preserve”.