



Record of Decisions

Balcones Canyonlands Conservation Plan Coordinating Committee

April 29, 2016 10:00 am to 12:00 pm

Austin City Hall, Room 1001
301 West 2nd Street, Austin, TX 78701

Attending:

Precinct 3 Commissioner – Gerald Daugherty, Chair
District 7 City Council Member - Leslie Pool, Co-chair
USFWS - Adam Zerrenner, Member (Ex Officio)
Acting BCCP Coordinating Committee Secretary - Sherri Kuhl

Call to Order 10:04 AM

1. Citizen Communications:

Tomas Pantin – Reported to the Coordinating Committee on the Great Trails book that was just released by the National Off-Highway Vehicles Conservation Council (NOVHCC). The book addresses managing sustainable motorized vehicle trails and can be downloaded free from the NOVHCC website. Before this, they were using books that addressed mountain bike trails rather than motorized vehicles. This book also takes into account the terrain, soils, etc.

He stated that this book will be of great benefit for the Emma Long Motorcycle Park and is endorsed by the Bureau of Land Management, Federal Highway Administration and Texas Parks and Wildlife Dept. The group has received \$300,000 in grants and following the guidelines of this book will also potentially help with getting future grants.

2. Approve Record of Decisions for the March 18, 2016 regular meeting - Motion from Pool to approve, second by Daugherty, Carried 2/0.

3. Review and take action regarding update to the BCCP Karst Land Management Plan (LMP) – Secretary Kuhl and Todd Bayless with Travis County BCP gave a summary of the changes made from the red-lined version to the draft updated plan. Commissioner Daugherty asked Todd Bayless which items he thought were most important in the revision. Todd discussed how the updated LMP brought in new science with FWS karst design guidelines from 2012. He also discussed new threats of climate change, tawny crazy ants, and white-nose syndrome. Pool asked follow up questions regarding tawny crazy ants and white-nose syndrome and Bayless elaborated on those new potential threats to BCP caves. He discussed the ongoing Section 6 grant to look for environmentally sensitive control mechanisms for tawny

crazy ants. He also discussed that white-nose syndrome is not here in Central Texas yet, but LMP puts in place management practices to get in front of the potential threat. Pool made a motion to adopt the updated Karst Land Management Plan with the small amendment to reference the common names from page 2, table 1 in the other tables. Daugherty seconded, Approved 2-0.

- 4. Report from Scientific Advisory Committee** - Chair Jean Krejca gave a report to the Committee. She discussed the SAC report in response to a request from Council Member Pool for information on the impacts of SH45SW on fragmenting wildlife habitat and impacts on biological diversity. She discussed the impacts of creating smaller natural areas that contain fewer species and fewer individuals, and how less diversity leads to less resilience to environmental pressures. She also discussed direct impacts of the roadway itself, the increase in edge effects on the species, and genetic bottlenecks. Pool asked about the potential future widening of the road and other impacts outside of the ROW. Craig Farquhar briefed the committee on his review of the Golden-cheeked Warbler SH45SW technical report and other TxDOT funded studies that have looked at the impacts of road noise. Farquhar and Krejca both discussed the difference between failure to detect an effect versus concluding no effect due to road noise. A “no effect” conclusion of a study should mean that all methods are appropriate and exhausted and that the studies can be repeated. Farquhar discussed how the methodologies used in these studies would not get to a no effect rather than a failure to detect an effect. Pool asked what it would take to get to the answer and the potential need for future studies. Craig discussed the best method is more long term, intensive monitoring methods similar to what is being done on the BCP. Krejca then reported on the BCP Strategic Research Plan prioritizing future research needs on the Preserve. The plan will summarize what has been done in the past to identify research gaps. She also reported on the election of Jean Krejca as chair and Craig Farquhar as vice-chair for the SAC.
- 5. Report from Citizens Advisory Committee** - Chair Peter Torgrimson gave members a brief review of recent committee activity. He mentioned the Advisory Task Force is working to fill the two consensus vacancies and making good progress on candidates. He mentioned re-electing Peter Torgrimson as chair and David Whatley as vice-chair. He mentioned the committee will copy the Secretary on all of their work in order to respond to any public information requests. He also discussed the upcoming 20th Anniversary event to showcase the benefits of the BCP and how it fits into the ecosystem. Kuhl discussed how all of the work of the committees will be copied to the Secretary. Daugherty suggested that everyone would be in support of full transparency for all the work of all the Committees. Pool asked that staff look into the feasibility of getting City Boards and Commissions, “BC” email accounts for the SAC and CAC members and what the budget implications would be.
- 6. Receive reports from BCP partners on wildfire planning and actions; Land Management, Public Outreach, BCP Participation, Infrastructure Management, and BCCP Compliance, take action as appropriate:**
Melinda Mallia and Linda Laack gave the Travis County report, briefing members on their FEMA grant and shaded fuel break work the County is undertaking. Melinda also addressed Council Member Pool’s question regarding hog management. The County recently completed two new Interlocal Agreements to use volunteers to trap hogs on County BCP and parklands. Linda gave the rest of the staff report including reporting on the new handicapped trail on the Wild Basin tract, and thanked the

Travis County road and bridge crews. Lisa O'Donnell gave the City BCP report and highlighted the Golden-cheeked Warblers returning last week. She mentioned that city staff will be surveying on the Water Quality Protection Lands along the SH45SW ROW. She also highlighted some of the recent City restoration work on the BCP and karst preserves. She reported that the Mt. Bonnell fence has now been completed to protect bracted twistflower populations along the bluff.

7. **BCCP 20th Anniversary Planning – Secretary** – Kuhl updated the members on the plans for the celebration and events leading up to the May 6th Anniversary. Pool requested that we look into the possibility of a shuttle out to Reicher Ranch from downtown. Adam Zerrenner added that it's possible that the Secretary of Interior or the Director might attend. Southwest Regional Director, Dr. Benjamin Tuggle, will attend. Pool discussed working on a proclamation at the City of Austin and Kuhl mentioned there will also be one at the Travis County Commissioners Court.
8. **Next year's Coordinating Committee meetings and BCCP Secretary Position – Secretary** – Kuhl gave an update on the Wildland Conservation Division Manager and BCCP Secretary positions. Meeting was adjourned at 11:24 am.