

# Lower Colorado River Authority (LCRA) Balcones Canyonlands Preserve (BCP) Updates for McGregor, Wheless and Westcave Preserves

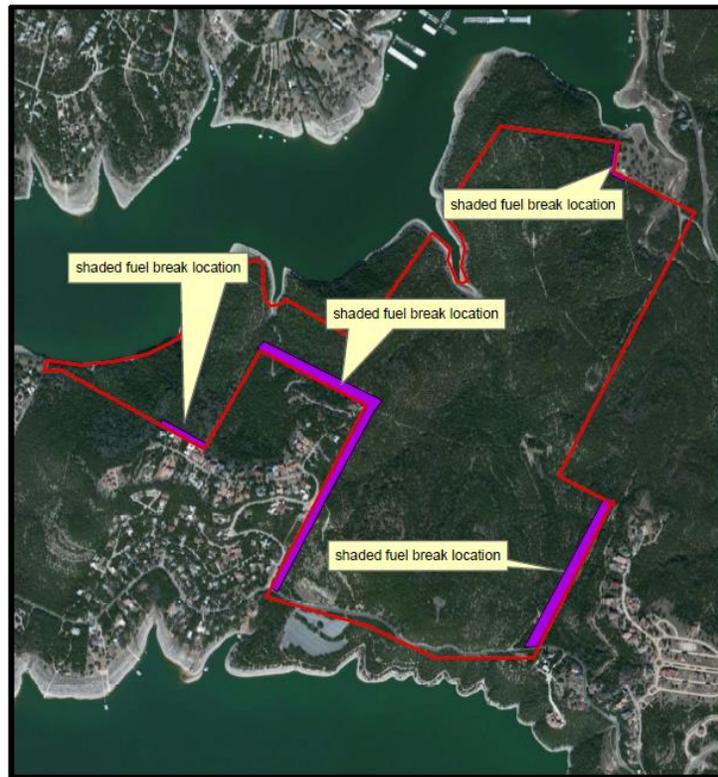
## Q1 Report October - December 2016

### LCRA's McGregor Shaded Fuel Break Project

*The activity described below was scheduled to be completed prior to February 28, 2017, but is on hold. It is currently scheduled for September 2017.*

LCRA's Conservation Services Department is planning to create shaded fuel breaks to remove ladder fuels at McGregor Preserve (see map below). Fuel treatments will extend from the boundary fence approximately 30 feet into the property in certain locations. LCRA will follow "Fuel Treatments in Juniper and Oak-Juniper Woodlands throughout the Range of the Golden-cheeked Warbler." LCRA will complete the work prior to the end of February 2017. A Texas Wildlife Risk Assessment Summary Report for McGregor was completed on September 16, 2016 by Texas A&M Forest Service.

### MCGREGOR PRESERVE



#### Legend

-  McGregor Preserve
-  Shaded Fuel Break: Approx. 4 acres (186,000 square f)



### **White-tailed Deer Surveys at McGregor and Wheless Preserves**

LCRA contracted with Plateau Land and Wildlife Management to conduct remote camera surveys at McGregor and Wheless Preserves during September and October 2016. Plateau provided a comprehensive report to LCRA, detailing White-tailed deer population size, sex ratio, doe to fawn ratio, buck age structure and harvest recommendations.

### **Wheless Preserve Sale**

LCRA has contracted with Travis County to sell the Wheless Preserve property to Travis County, with transfer of ownership anticipated to occur in spring 2017. All BCCP mitigation credits associated with the Wheless Preserve property will convey with the land. It is LCRA's understanding that the preserve will remain part of the BCP.

### **Westcave Preserve Land Management Activities**

Westcave Conservation staff has been working with LCRA's Conservation Services to manage the hog situation on the preserve. Hanging feeders and wildlife cameras are being used in various places to track the movement of the hogs. Bill has been out 3 times to hunt the hogs and has no success to date. We are currently considering trapping and will be moving to this method of control in the near future.

Water quality testing was conducted in the grotto and Pedernales River. The test results are sent to the Colorado River Watch Network (CRWN) and can be found online at <http://crwn.lcra.org/>.

The grotto pool depth was measured using a weighted measured line in 2 meter increments. Westcave staff and volunteers made the measurements. Deepest measurement taken was 20'.

Planning has begun for restoring the historic cabin. A volunteer workday was scheduled to clean up the surrounding grounds and move the fence to make room for the work. An arborist has been contacted to assess the condition of the oak adjacent to the cabin.

Volunteers and Staff are making weekly observations for FeederWatch. All data is submitted to the Cornell Lab of Ornithology

Canyon trail maintenance and repairs were made by the Texas Conservation Corps, Westcave staff and volunteers. Old and rotten steps and posts were replaced, removed and additional posts were added.

Roundtable Social presentation entitled "Chimney Swifts" was given by Paul and Georgan Kyle, Project Directors of the Chimney Swift Conservation Association. Thirteen neighbors and community members attended.

Westcave fulfilled all obligations to Partners Grant with U.S. Fish and Wildlife Service (FWS). The grant has been closed out.

Seven nesting boxes and a purple martin house have been installed for the season.

### **T161 (Marshall Ford to McNeil) Transmission Line Overhaul**

LCRA Transmission Services Corporation (LCRA TSC) plans to conduct a minor maintenance overhaul on the T161 (Marshall Ford to McNeil) Transmission Line (see map below). This line crosses the following Travis County or City of Austin managed BCPs: Steiner Ranch, Sam Hamilton Reserve East, Ribelin, Kent Butler and 3M and runs parallel (in most locations) to T160, which was rebuilt in 2015.

The T161 transmission line needs to undergo a minor maintenance overhaul to ensure it is safe. The scope of this overhaul project is to replace/repair only what is needed to keep the line from falling. LCRA TSC will conduct minimal clearing and mowing in previously cleared areas to allow bucket trucks and other vehicles

to drive to those structures where repair work is required. This work is scheduled to be completed in January/February 2017.

LCRA Environmental Affairs submitted a Balcones Canyonlands Conservation Plan (BCCP) Infrastructure Application to the City of Austin on October 13, 2016 and the determination letter was received on November 14, 2016.

