

Record of Decisions

**Balcones Canyonlands Conservation Plan (BCCP)
Coordinating Committee
March 10, 2017, 10:00 AM to 12:00 Noon
Travis County Commissioners Courtroom
700 Lavaca Street, Austin, Texas 78701**

Attending:

Precinct 3 Commissioner – Gerald Daugherty, Chair
District 7 City Council Member - Leslie Pool, Co-Chair
USFWS – Tanya Sommer standing in for Adam Zerrenner, Member (Ex Officio)
BCCP Coordinating Committee Secretary – Kimberlee Harvey

Call to Order 10:02 AM

- 1. Citizen Communications** Thomas Pantin spoke and asked that anyone working on COA parks, particularly Emma Long Motocross park, wear uniforms and external badges. He explained that they have encouraged their riders at Emma Long Motocross Park to immediately talk to anyone who looks out of place. Laszlo Herczeg spoke about the importance of the City ensuring compliance with the Endangered Species Act (ESA) through their permitting process. He proposed that the City make developers prove ESA compliance when their projects fall with the BCCP Permit area, by implementing an administrative hold on the permit until ESA compliance is shown. Commissioner Daugherty encouraged Mr. Herczeg to submit his comments in writing to his office and to the BCCP Secretary.
- 2. Approve Record of Decisions for the November 18, 2016 regular meeting** Motion from Pool to approve, second by Daugherty, Carried 2/0
- 3. Current Events: USFWS Black-Capped Vireo Delisting Proposal and its Potential Impact on the Permit** – Secretary explained that the City and County BCP staff have had informal discussions about the impact on the permit should the Black-capped Vireo be delisted and the general feeling is that the impact to the permit and land management activities would be minimal. The permit requires the maintenance and management of 2000 acres of BCVI habitat within the 7 macrosites of the BCP. Due to changes in landuse and fire suppression, most BCVI habitat in this area has to be maintained and or created through habitat restoration. Participation Certificate mitigation for Black-capped Vireo habitat is \$5,500 per acre but this habitat zone is small and seldomly used for mitigation purposes. If the species is delisted, BCP staff will begin a more formal process of determining what it means for the permit currently and what it means as we look forward to permit renewal. City and County staff were surprised by the de-listing proposal, because all previous work of the FWS was towards down listing from endangered to threatened. Staff provided comments based on their biological expertise to the FWS on the proposal.
- 4. Improving the Reporting and Enforcement Process for Unauthorized Clearing Activities of Habitat in the Permit Area** – Secretary said that City and County BCP staff met with Tanya Sommer with the FWS Ecological Services office, to discuss standardizing the way BCP staff reports violations to the Service and to gain a better understanding of their enforcement process. BCP staff plan to meet with the Service

enforcement officers at the next meeting. It is difficult to achieve voluntary compliance with the BCCP Permit if violations of the Endangered Species Act are not enforced.

5. **BCCP Land Management Plan Revisions Underway for the Infrastructure and Fire Management Chapters** – Secretary stated she is working on Infrastructure Chapter updates that will be reflecting the move to digital spatial data for the mapped infrastructure corridors. She also stated that Luke Ball, fire manager for the City's Wildland Conservation Division, called a small preliminary meeting, attended by BCP staff, to review the current Fire Management plan and begin discussions on potential updates.
6. **BCCP Completion Efforts: Karst Completion Group Meeting Again** – Secretary reported that the BCCP Karst Completion Group met in the beginning of February and members of the City and County BCP staff were there as well as Jean Krejca, Chair of the Scientific Advisory Committee. They reviewed work products from the last time they got together and talked about identifying goals and tasks for karst completion analysis and for permit renewal.
7. **Showing of the video "Deep Underground with Balcones Canyonlands Preserve Biologist" which includes footage from Midnight Cave.** – Commissioner Daugherty suggested that the video should be played on Travis County's Channel 17.
8. **Discussion of City and County Marketing Budgets Supporting BCP Public Awareness Campaign** – Secretary reported that City staff is working with the management team to try to increase BCP marketing budgets for next year. Council Member Pool asked about current education and outreach activities so BCP staff will be putting together a BCP Outreach Partners presentation for the next Coordinating Committee meeting.
9. **Guideline Updates for the BCCP Scientific Advisory Committee (SAC) and Citizen's Advisory Committee (CAC)** – Secretary reported that work was being done on the preliminary revisions to the CAC and SAC guidelines in collaboration with each committee's Chair and Co-Chair. They will then be distributed to each advisory committee to review and comment. The Secretary hopes to have the updated CAC and SAC guidelines available for the Coordinating Committee to review and approve at the next meeting.
10. **Chair and Vice-Chair 2017 Election Slate for the Scientific Advisory Committee (SAC)** – Secretary reported that Jean Krejca was the sole nomination for Chair, and she has agreed to be on the election slate. Craig Farquhar was the sole nomination for Co-chair, and he has agreed to be on the election slate. Per the current guidelines, elections will be held at the first meeting of the year.
11. **SAC Vacancy Update** - Secretary reported that the process has begun to find a new SAC member to fill Nico Hauwert's vacated seat. Hauwert provided a member recommendation and Kretcha and the Secretary will be reaching out to that person to confirm their willingness to serve. The Advisory Committee Task Group will be called together to review the candidate and make recommendations.
12. **Chair and Vice-chair 2017 Election Slate for the Citizen's Advisory Committee (CAC)** – Secretary reported that Peter Torgrimson was the sole nomination for Chair, and

he has agreed to be on the election slate. David Whatley was the sole nomination for Co-chair, and he has agreed to be on the election slate. Per the current approved guidelines, elections will be held at the first meeting of the year.

13. Changes to the Reporting Periods of BCCP Partner Reports – Secretary reported that a suggestion for a reporting process improvement came from Johanna Arendt, the Travis County Community Liaison who prepares the BCCP Outreach report. She suggested that, in an effort to reduce report due-date confusion and enhance data integrity for analysis purposes in the future, all BCP partner reports could be generated using FY quarters as date ranges. The idea was presented to those responsible for preparing and presenting the partner reports and the feedback was positive so staff have adopted this reporting process.

14. Receive BCCP Partner Reports; take action as appropriate – Nico Hauwert, City Program Manager for BCP, introduced David Gimnich who is the new GIS/Regulatory member of the Wildland Conservation Division, and will fill the role of BCCP Infrastructure Coordinator. Hauwert also reported on cave outreach activities. He also spoke of some problems happening at Emma Long Motocross park, where UT researchers who were doing bird surveys were harassed and chased off by motocross riders. A harassment report was filed with APD. Council Member Pool went back to Tomas Pantin's comment about staff wearing uniforms. Mr. Pantin spoke again and showed the Coordinating Committee and BCP staff a picture on his cell phone, of the researchers' vehicle in the parking lot, and said that the picture had been texted to him from a motocross rider who wondered what those people were doing out there. The Coordinating Committee spoke against the harassment by the motocross riders, stating that they do not have the authority to ask anyone for their identification in a public park and that aggression towards researchers will not be tolerated. Hauwert also said that the City of Austin will be hiring temporary cave biologists.

Kayla Miloy, Travis County BCCP Administrator reported that the BCCP Annual Report was now available online. She also mentioned that the number of Public Participation Certificates issued were holding steady. Linda Laack, Natural Resources Supervisor for Travis County, reported on land management activities they have been focusing on during the fall and winter months. She also mentioned they have had a series of law enforcement activities including theft and illegal clearing. Melinda Mallia reported that outreach activities and volunteer programs have been ramping up, now that they are fully staffed.

15. Meeting adjourned at 11:10am