



Record of Decisions

**Balcones Canyonlands Conservation Plan
Coordinating Committee
Wednesday, August 15, 2007, 10:30 AM to 12:00 Noon
Austin City Council Chambers
City Hall
301 West 2nd Street, Austin, Texas**

ACTION ITEMS

- 3. Take action as deemed appropriate by members of the Coordinating Committee with respect to revised Land Management Plans submitted and certified under presentations 1 and 2.** Chair Wynn made a motion that Committee members consider the revised BCP Land Management Plans and accept public input at a called meeting on September 19, 2007 and at a regular meeting on October 24, 2007. The committee will then act to refer the revised plans to USFWS at a meeting to be called in November, 2007, before Thanksgiving. The motion also recommends that Austin City Council and Travis County Commissioners Court consider the plans on their agendas before that Coordinating Committee takes final action. Second by member Daugherty. Carried 2/0.

- 4. Call a meeting of the BCCP Coordinating Committee.** The Coordinating Committee called a special meeting for September 19, 2007 from 10:30 AM to 12:00 noon on a motion from Member Daugherty with second from Chair Wynn, carried 2/0.

CITIZEN COMMUNICATIONS

Peter Torgrimson – Spoke as a resident of the Long Canyon neighborhood. He opposes opening BCP up to more public access, especially access by mountain bikes. He described mountain bike use on Canyon Ridge and other places as destructive and said it is not appropriate for BCP. Instead educational events and volunteer activities should be considered as reasonable public access for BCP.

Carol Torgrimson – spoke as a neighbor to BCP. Because she lives near BCP she has made a point to learn about BCP and why public access is limited, and supports protection of the Preserve's goal to protect the land for endangered species. She belongs to a local organization, 2222 CONA. While this group has no formal position on the land management plans, they do support BCP and its mission by working to add land to BCP. She urged the committee to protect BCP from unnecessary and unwarranted public access.

Skip Cameron – addressed the committee representing Bull Creek Foundation which, he described as the umbrella organization for all of the Bull Creek and West Bull Creek Watershed that promotes the harmonious balance between recreation, the environment, and sustainable development. He advised the committee that the land now in BCP sustained more than 100 years of public recreation including mountain bikes and equestrian use before the land was closed to these uses by BCP. He suggested that public access will help educate the public about BCP and the environment thus enhancing the preserves rather than degrading them. He said limited use of BCP is a good thing. He described efforts to designate Emma Long Park as a laboratory tract to study effects of public access on BCP. He believes staff is trying to eliminate public access there instead of trying to keep or expand use there. He also discussed the recent fencing of the Canyon Vista tract, describing that action as a cause for more unauthorized use because fences cause people to want to explore a site with them.

Member Daugherty asked Mr. Cameron if he otherwise generally supported the rest of the Land management Plan. Mr. Cameron responded that he has not seen the plan nor had time to review it. He suggested that the Coordinating Committee schedule more meetings and seek more public input before they take any action on the plan.

Sheila Holbrook-White - addressed the committee representing Friends of Turkey Creek. She expressed concerns about plans for public participation. There is no plan on how the City and County will work to engage the public in discussions about the Land Management Plans. She suggests that there should be four public hearings; two in the evening and two during the day. These meetings should be posted at public places and not just on the web. She also asked to see a redline comparison between the original plan and the current draft on the web site.

Jeff Mundy – addressed the committee representing Travis Audubon Society. His organization is a BCCP partner. He said that while he has not seen the current draft plan he has concerns. He advised the committee to not open documented golden-cheeked warbler habitat to unrestrained public access. BCP is not a park. It was created to mitigate habitat loss for golden-cheeked warblers. Travis Audubon Society opposes unrestrained public access. He cited Turkey Creek as an example of a use that is incompatible with the [habitat conservation] plan. Unrestrained dogs threaten wildlife and pose a hazard to others. He suggested that at a minimum the City should impose a leash law on this trail, although the presence of dogs on this site is incompatible with the intent of BCP.

David Steed – addressed the committee as the chair of the BCCP Scientific Advisory Committee. He reminded members that the Scientific Advisory Committee has provided them with recommendations for the Land Management Plans in three separate documents regarding public access, research and reviews of existing policies governing public access. He commended staff that developed the revised plans. In his comments he also discussed the recent proposal by USFWS to down-list the black-capped vireo to threatened. He reminded the members that this action does not change the BCCP responsibility to protect this species and its habitat. He advised members that the down-listing acknowledges successes on the Balcones Canyonlands national Wildlife Refuge and Fort Hood. However, BCP still has not fulfilled its permit responsibilities for protecting and

managing habitat for this species. Instead of focusing on public access BCCP should be focusing on completion of habitat acquisition and management. He also reminded members that BCCP and BCP are the result of extensive and intensive public participation over a period of eight years. He asked members to recognize that current management policies are the result of this public participation and to consider this before they act to change them.

Rick Pearson – spoke as a science teacher, bird watcher, and dog owner. He advised members that he was also a member in the Turkey Creek Trail Task Group. He said that golden-cheeked warbler monitoring data at Turkey Creek indicates either stable or increasing populations during public use. The only management concerns there are erosion and user management. He also stated that no seasonal closure of the trail was agreed to by consensus. He said he cares about birds, he values a place to take his dog dogs, he understands the botany of the site and he believes that current use at Turkey Creek is compatible with birds.