



RECORD OF DECISIONS

**Balcones Canyonlands Conservation Plan
Coordinating Committee
Wednesday, November 28, 2007, 10:00 AM to 11:30 AM
Austin City Council Chambers
City Hall
301 West 2nd Street, Austin, Texas**

ACTION ITEMS

3. Direct staff to prepare revisions to BCCP Land Management

Guidelines – Members took no action on this item

4. Clarify or revise BCCP policy for Grandfathered BCP tracts – Chair

Wynn read into the record a Policy Statement Supporting Public Access Trails on The Balcones Canyonlands Preserve. Chair Wynn moved to direct City of Austin and Travis County staff to implement the policy that was read into the record, and to approve and submit to US Fish and Wildlife Service the draft Revised BCP Land Management plans, except for Chapter XII (Public Access), which will be revised as part of the new policy, and direct staff to maintain and support all grandfathered public access recreational uses on preserves until the Public Access chapter is revised and approved in accordance with BCCP. Member Daugherty seconded the motion noting that the full Travis County Commissioners Court may choose to act on this motion, at which time this motion may be reconsidered. Motion Carried 2/0

5. Call a meeting of the BCCP Coordinating Committee – No action was taken on this item

CITIZEN COMMUNICATIONS

Barbara Benson - Introduced herself as a frequent green space user. She commented that everyone in Austin is hungry for more green space to use; however, increasing public access on BCP “is robbing Peter to pay Paul”. BCP is dedicated as preserve and not parks and she is concerned that increasing access in BCP will be “loved to death”. BCP is behind in acquisition and growth is making BCP completion more challenging. Turning these preserves into parks will not resolve the growing green space needs for Austin. Austin’s leaders should address this need directly rather than change preserves into parks.

Skip Cameron – spoke as president of Bull Creek Foundation. He asked where the BCCP permit gives USFWS approval authority for actions taken on BCP. He referred Chair Wynn to a book called “Last Child in the Woods” (no Author cited). This book

describes what happens when children are excluded from nature. He believes this (denaturing children) is what is happening in BCP Now. He also stated that he believes golden-cheeked warblers have evolved over tens of thousands of years sharing their environment with humans and that removing human interaction is creating harm to the species.

Later in the meeting Member Daugherty responded to Mr. Cameron's question about USFWS authority by reading from a letter from the Former Field Supervisor dated 8/8/1997. In the letter Mayor Watson was asked to seek USFWS concurrence for any use of preserves. Member Daugherty advised Mr. Cameron that it cannot be any clearer that BCCP needs USFWS approval for any public access changes.

Clif Ladd – spoke as a member of the Scientific Advisory Committee. He asked members to fully consider staff recommendations and recommendations from the City's Environmental Board (he cited four points from their resolution). There should be no increased access considered until land acquisition for BCP is complete. He also asked members to consider the resolution from the COA Parks Board (he read part of the resolution into the record) and he emphasized their call to complete more monitoring and evaluation before considering increased public access.

David Steed – described his role with WCID 17 where numerous horse trail easements coincide with utility corridors outside BCP. He also described numerous other utility easements outside BCP. He advised Members that using these facilities to accommodate trails made more sense than invading BCP. He advised members that he believes increasing public access inside BCP will require a major amendment of the federal permit with increased mitigation. Before this can be accomplished the NEPA (National Environmental Policy Act) process must be followed.

Ted Siff – spoke representing the Citizens Advisory Committee. He first referred members back to the Parks Board Resolution where he read the remainder of the resolution into the record. He advised members that the Parks Board resolution was obviously in support of public access. He advised members that their resolution today is consistent with the BCCP Plan, Permit, and Guidelines and he supported that observation by quoting excerpts from the guidelines.

Dr Gary Rochelle – spoke as representative of Friends of BCP. He provided members with a document outlining proposed LMP changes recommended by his group. They believe the guidelines as currently written need no amendment. Instead, the plan as currently written takes BCP far beyond what the guidelines intended. He proposed creating three experimental sites for mountain bike access on BCP.

Member Wynn – addressed speakers and others. He stated that he believes changing guidelines would be considered a significant change to our permit. Changing the LMP is less cumbersome. Changing guidelines would risk the permit. He asked Member Zerrenner if USFWS had ever taken away a 10 (a) permit; if the Coordinating Committee ran afoul of the plan (HCP) or changed the plan adversely, what would happen. Member Zerrenner replied that the permit provided for economic growth and stability here and that his agency would avoid pulling the permit. Instead they would work with the committee to provide technical assistance to assure BCCP stayed in compliance.

Member Daugherty – also addressed speakers and others. He began by responding to Mr. Cameron's question by reading from correspondence to Mayor Watson in 1999. He advised that USFWS has authority without question to review and approve actions on BCP. After reading from this letter he also read a letter from Member Zerrenner to the committee dated 11/27/0 into the record. He said there can be access within the preserve within limits but we must monitor to assure no take. He also budgets for access will be a challenge. He advised listeners that we must assure things don't happen to habitat or all bets are off, access can be taken away as fast as it is given.