

City of Austin's BCCP Activities
Quarter 2 Update: 1 January – 31 March 2020

BCCP Administration	
Infrastructure Projects	Seven Infrastructure Habitat Assessment Application was processed, and Determination Letter was issued from January – March 2020.
	Staff negotiated a joint field visit with Austin Energy and Austin Fire Department to plan shaded fuel breaks surrounding the Travis Country subdivision. The purpose was to coordinate wildfire risk reduction between the two departments so that AE pruning did not compromise completed AFD shaded fuel breaks by removing shade.
	in February, staff found TXDOT-contracted crews pruning oaks without dressing wounds on highway R.O.W. of Senna Hills, Barton Creek Wilderness, and other BCP tracts. TXDOT responded to BCCP staff complaints that they would be taking corrective actions with the contractor to correct the deficiencies.
	Austin Water completed waterline and water tank maintenance work on Forest Ridge.
	Staff worked with Austin Energy and Pike electric to allow vegetation clearing for access to replace utility poles on the Long Canyon tract.
Land Acquisition /Management Agreements	AW BCP purchased a 5 acre lot including most of the extent Whirlpool Cave, the third largest cave on the BCCP permit. The entrance of Whirlpool Cave is owned and managed by Texas Cave Management Association and the combined lots create a karst preserve to better protect this cave. AW BCP internally reviewed a management agreement with Texas Cave Management Association for management of two BCP permit caves (Whirlpool and Lost Oasis). Also drafting management agreements with PARD maintenance operations and LBJ Wildflower Center. Acquisition of Carol Lee Preserve was postponed in order to draft an agreement with current owners that would address concerns of potential for future homeless camping, after many camps were discovered. AW BCP staff inspected 216-acre Bright Leaf Preserve and with real estate and city attorneys are working toward acquisition. Staff are also working towards a draft interdepartmental agreement with Austin Parks and Recreation to clarify dual management responsibilities.
Reports and Events	Submitted annual BCCP report to USFWS https://www.traviscountytexas.gov/tnr/nr/2019-annual-report
Personnel	On March 30 Marissa Richerson and Jaya Torres joined Wildland Outreach Program
Rare and Endangered Resources Management	
Golden-cheeked Warbler (GCWA) and Black-capped Vireo (BCVI)	Golden-cheeked Warbler Delisting – On 15 January 2020, the 5th Circuit Court of Appeals ruled that the USFWS's 90-day finding on a 2015 petition to delist the GCWA was "arbitrary and capricious...remanding to the agency for reconsideration." Their opinion reverses only this portion of the district court ruling (dated 6 February 2019), which supported USFWS's 90-day finding.
	Due to the covid-19 quarantine, field activities were reduced for staff and suspended for volunteers on March 26.
	Texas A&M University approved continuation of the study to assess the genetic structure of GCWA populations across its breeding range.
Jollyville Plateau Salamander	BCP continues to locate and conduct flow measurement, aquatic life surveys, and water-quality sampling of springs across the BCP on a periodic basis in hopes of locating new salamander locations and other rare stygobitic life.

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Karst invertebrates/ karst work	<p>Staff continued to conduct assessments of City properties for previously unknown caves and karst features with the goal of finding potential substitution and or supplementing existing BCP permit caves, and to aid in current hydrological studies, currently focusing on areas adjacent to proposed Corridor Mobility department and TxDOT roadway projects with funding support from both entities. Significant discoveries were made in Circle C Ranch at Slaughter Creek park. In March field work was limited by Covid-19 virus pandemic to solo/small group assignments related to critical infrastructure support and protection.</p> <p>Conducted cave faunal surveys and cave cricket exit counts (ongoing).</p>
Plant and Animal Control	
Mammals	2 deer and 11 hogs were removed by contractors and City staff this quarter.
Red-imported fire ants and Tawny crazy ants	Tawny crazy ants continue to be monitored per established protocol from Section 6 grant.
Soft ticks/ Relapsing Fever	AW BCP staff continue to monitor caves in the Austin area for soft ticks to improve public safety and study means for discouraging their habitation of caves. AW BCP staff continue to work with Texas State University, Baylor College of Medicine, Austin Health Department, and Center for Disease Control to study factors influencing habitat preference of soft ticks in the Austin area. AW BCP staff continue to monitor Bullet Cave on the Barton Creek greenbelt and Live Oak Cave in the Village of Western Oaks Karst Preserve and Watershed Management Area to make certain that the warning signs and gate (on live oak cave) are still in place. Most recent surveys have found few to no soft ticks in live oak cave.
Invasive Plants	BCP staff are continuing efforts to remove non-native plants on COA BCP tracts.
Oak Wilt	An oak wilt trench was completed on Emma Long tract.
Land Stewardship	
Habitat Restoration	Staff and volunteers continue to implement demonstration projects at the Vireo Preserve to promote water retention, slope stabilization, soil restoration, and regeneration of native plants on degraded areas that are currently not habitat for either the GCWA or BCVI. Since Vireo Preserve supports many of the habitat types observed throughout the BCP, lessons learned from restoration work at this site are applicable to other areas within the BCP. Staff are also now expanding these efforts to other BCP preserves.
	The bioswale project was completed on Vireo Preserve and will be completed on JJ&T in fall 2020. A video of the Vireo Preserve project was completed in March 2020: https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=jK6Jwv5cJ8U .
	Staff published findings on the importance of shade for oak regeneration: https://esajournals.onlinelibrary.wiley.com/doi/10.1002/ecs2.3017

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	Staff are conducting a study comparing emergence and growth of three species of plants in potting soil and soil collected from under Ashe junipers. To date, results appear to be comparable for both soil media.
	BCP used AYW TXCC to remove Chinese Privet on the Long Canyon tract, to supplement staff and volunteer restoration efforts.
Fencing	Game fences completed on boundaries of Cortaña tract, from Sun Tree Cove to Panther Hollow, and a portion of the western boundary of the Park West tract. The Cortaña fence will discourage trespass from River Place Nature Trail, which has resulted in several 911 calls for rescue by lost hikers. The Park West fence blocks a trespass trail which staff have observed freshly used fire rings along.
Wildfire Preparedness	Texas Conservation Corps refreshed the shaded fuel break implemented in 2009 on the boundary of the Cortaña tract from Sun Tree Cove north to Pelican Point.
Law Enforcement	
Trespass and Criminal Mischief	In March, staff reported to PARD Rangers a bicycle jump, constructed primarily of juniper staves, in the upper part of a tributary of Barton Creek near Moon Shadow Drive. A Ranger dismantled the structure the next week.
	Staff reported to law enforcement illegal trespass and poaching activities on upper bull creek, police responded on both occasions and questioned suspects.
Outreach/Volunteers	
<i>See BCP Partners Education Summary January – March 2020.</i>	
BCP staff assisted neighborhood volunteer Stephanie Simmons at her annual “Texas Most Wanted” native plant event held at the Village of Western Oaks Karst Preserve. The focus of this event is to educate the public about the ecological importance of native plants and the threats non-native invasive plants can cause. Participants were encouraged to bring in non-native plants and exchange for native plants. Social distancing was observed at all times.	