



Record of Decisions

**Balcones Canyonlands Conservation Plan
Scientific Advisory Committee
March 17, 2014 3:00 PM to 5:00 PM
Waller Creek Center, Room 104
625 East 10th Street
Austin, Texas 78701**

Attending:

David Steed
Nico Hauwert
John Cornelius

Jean Krejca
Craig Farquhar
Amie Treuer-Kuehn

Absent:

Sam Whitehead

Call to order at 3:00 PM

1. **Approve Record of Decisions from regular meeting on 1/14/14** Motion from Hauwert, Second Cornelius, Approved as presented 6/0
2. **Election of Officers** – Chair Steed opened the nominations process by asking members about their interests regarding the SAC. John Cornelius said he currently serves on the trail subcommittee and the modeling subcommittee. He wished to remain of the subcommittees, but wishes to step down as vice chair.

Jean Krejca advised members she would like to run for chair. She believes that while David has amazing perspective she can bring a new “lens” to the committee. She would like to move the committee away from “FYI” type agendas to focus on items that will have more of a direct impact on BCP. Her expertise is primarily Karst, and that discipline is where BCCP has most of its current challenges. Bird habitat acquisition is complete but karst compliance still has challenges.

Nico Hauwert said he would not seek more responsibility on the SAC. He had been considering asking Jean to lead the Karst subcommittee but he offered to continue leading that subcommittee.

Amie Treuer Kuehn said this was her first meeting and did not wish to serve as an officer but was happy to serve on any subcommittee.

Craig Farquhar said he serves on the golden-cheeked warbler [monitoring], and trails subcommittees. He expressed interest in serving as vice chair.

David Steed said he was interested in continuing as chair. He said he would like to continue in light of the current LISD road proposal. He offered that he believes his strong points are having contacts and respect from the Mayor, the county, the LISD superintendent, TxDOT officials, and LISD board members.

Following members comments Nico Hauwert made a motion to nominate Jean Krejca as chair. John Cornelius nominated David Steed for chair. Both nominees accepted. Following discussion the question was called. Jean Krejca received 4 votes, David Steed received 2 votes. Jean Krejca was elected chair

The floor was opened for nominees for vice chair. John Cornelius nominated Craig Farquhar. He accepted. Nominations closed and Craig Farquhar was elected vice chair 6/0.

3. **Report on LISD Road Position Statement** – Member Krejca provided a recent draft of the position statement regarding the LISD road proposal and gave a brief presentation describing recent changes to the original draft. She advised members that she believes that there is a sense of urgency for the SAC to take a position on this matter.

David Steed said he had recently been preparing some recent additions for the statement. He felt like it needed expansion commenting on the importance of the Bull Creek Macrosite with emphasis on the habitat quality there.

Craig Farquhar noted that some section 6 funding was used by the County to purchase the tract and if the road were approved that might have to be paid back.

Wendy Connally noted that there have been many discussions between the LISD team, elected officials, and county staff. There is currently an understanding that LISD might pursue their own 10 (a) permit. Steed mentioned that should that move forward there needs to be an appropriate analysis of both direct and indirect effects; and those should all be mitigated. He asked Tanya Sommer from USFWS whether they had been contacted by LISD seeking to initiate a permit. She responded that the Service had not participated in any direct communication regarding a separate permit yet.

Connally advised members that she had prepared a white paper regarding this matter and that she would share that with members.

Members agreed to have final comments to Krejca by April 7, 2014 and she would finalize the position paper and provide it to the Coordinating Committee Secretary.

4. **Receive report on revised land management plan chapters for Oak Wilt (Chapter 3) and Karst Management (Chapter 9)** – Sherri Kuhl presented members with draft copies of the Karst and Oak Wilt Chapters. After a brief review she asked members to provide her with comments before April 11, 2014
5. **Subcommittee reports**
 - a. **Golden-cheeked Warbler modeling task group** – Lisa O'Donnell briefed members about the status of the publication evaluating monitoring methods. She has received excellent comments from her co-authors and the paper is not far

from completion. Farquhar noted that this article could impact conservation policy, agencies, and people. It is important to get it right.

- b. **Mountain Bike Experimental Design** – Steed advised members that he has emailed a trail effects monitoring plan to members and asked for comments. He expects this to move forward soon.
- c. **Karst** – Hauwert briefed members about several ongoing actions. He has submitted an article to the Journal of Water Resources. The Davis Lane realignment project karst hydrogeology study is wrapping up.

He is also starting efforts to evaluate karst and Flint Ridge Cave relative to the planned SH 45. He is beginning a hydrogeological study to define the subsurface basin for Flint Ridge Cave.

- d. BCP Strategic Research Plan – no action
- 6. **Staffs' reports** - Wendy Connally and Lisa O'Donnell reviewed written reports.
 - 7. **Annual work plan update** – Krejca will take the lead on this when she assumes chair at the next meeting.
 - 8. **Members' Issues and concerns:**
 - Cornelius – none
 - Krejca – she would like to see this agenda item with posting language more specific to each of the SAC disciplines. Is there something that the SAC needs to address that they are not getting to.
 - Hauwert – he believes the SAC is working well.
 - Treuer-Kuehn – Invasive Species
 - Farquhar recommended that the SAC stay focused on subcommittee work and finish tasks.
 - Wendy Connally asked whether the SAC might hold a social meeting. Steed said he would like to do this with the CAC.

Meeting adjourned with no objection at 5:00 PM

**Position Statement on LISD
Balcones Canyonlands Conservation Plan
Scientific Advisory Committee
Updated 3 February 2014**

During a regular meeting of the SAC (October 28, 2013 3:00 PM to 5:00 PM, Waller Creek Center, Room 104, 625 East 10th Street, Austin, Texas 78701), we received a report from the Coordinating Committee Secretary regarding a request for Construction Approval to build a new road in a BCP infrastructure Corridor. For purposes of this document, we will call this project the LISD road. During this meeting we formed initial opinions of the project and came up with questions about the project in relation to the goals of the BCCP preserve system. This document serves to record those opinions and questions, acknowledging that this is a 'state-of-the-moment' address and we may see more studies or documents in the future.

The proposed LISD road will impact birds and karst.

1. The measure of impact for birds needs to account for the fact that habitat continuity is critical for the species. Golden-cheeked Warblers (GCWA) and Black-capped Vireos (BCVI) are known to occupy the area targeted for construction, including habitat on both sides of the exiting right-of-way, as well as in portions of the right-of-way itself. Researchers mapped GCWA territories adjacent to the north and south boundaries, and BCVI occurrences were documented on the eastern edge of the projected construction site. In addition to the areas of direct impacts and buffers, mitigation may need to include the entire 88 acre property south of the road that is being split off from the larger, contiguous preserve on the north since the smaller tract loses significant habitat value when it is separate. This may be a problem because of the acquisition method for that southern property.
2. The measure of impact for karst needs to account for the fact that habitat continuity is critical for the species. Four named BCP caves north of the LISD road are currently within a large, contiguous natural area, and the loss of habitat within 100-acre areas around each cave may degrade the possibility of the cave communities persisting in perpetuity. The karst aspect of the BCCP permit is based on the fact that the communities in the 62 named BCP caves will persist in perpetuity. Impacts would include loss of vegetation, addition of impervious cover, addition of roadway contaminants, and edge effects including invasive exotic species, etc. Caves are much more difficult to mitigate for than birds.
3. A list of questions that would need to be answered to fully address these issues includes:

Jollyville Plateau Salamander

- The bridge with this road will span the last tributary of Bull Creek still considered pristine.
- What water quality standards will be followed during design and construction?
- Preconstruction inventory and monitoring of salamander populations should include spring shed mapping for spring runs that JPS inhabit.

BCCP Permit and Compliance

- How will section 6 grant used for acquisition of land in question affect the Coordinating Committee's ability to approve this?

- How will protection of canyon mock-orange be effected since this is non-federal land?
- Will effects to species of concern affect BCCP permit compliance?
- How will approval of this affect BCCP acreage and configuration compliance
- What mitigation alternatives and mitigation sites are being considered?
- The entire southern Ribelin mitigation tract should be considered fragmented and should be replaced through mitigation.

Habitat Effects

- How will the Four Points Karst Faunal Area (KFA) be affected? If the road is built will it continue to be self-sustaining and will the caves integrity be maintained?
- The project should model operational pollution loading and runoff to predict effects to adjacent habitat in Bull Creek. This was done in San Antonio for the Loop 1604 project.

Effects from Road Operations

- How will the road be maintained to prevent future degradation or fragmentation of habitat? Who will do this?
- How will resources be brought forward to inventory and monitor effects on habitat and species.
- There needs to be plans for before and after inventory and monitoring of habitat and species to determine whether there have been effects.

LISD Access Road

- Is there modeling in place to demonstrate the safety benefits from this road?
- If the road is approved should/can its use be limited to emergency responders only in order to limit potential effects from traffic?