



## Record of Decisions

**Balcones Canyonlands Conservation Plan  
Coordinating Committee  
October 29, 2014 10:00 AM to 12:00 Noon  
Travis County Commissioners Courtroom  
700 Lavaca Street, Austin, Texas 78701**

**Attending:** Mayor Lee Leffingwell, Chair  
Precinct 3 County Commissioner Gerald Daugherty, Member  
U.S. Fish and Wildlife Service Field Office Supervisor Adam Zerrenner, Member  
(Ex Officio)

1. **Citizen Communications** - None
2. **Approve Record of Decisions for the May 7, 2014 regular meeting** – Motion to approve from member Daugherty, Second Leffingwell, Carried 2/0
3. **Report from Secretary regarding plans to develop a recommendation for a karst substitution process for Coordinating Committee consideration. Take action as appropriate** – Secretary Conrad reported to members that recent infrastructure project planning involving BCP brought up questions about conditions R2 and S2 in the BCCP Federal permit. These conditions provide that caves required to be protected by the permit may be substituted with other caves. There is some general language in the permit that requires the “environmental integrity” of permit caves to be protected and that substitute caves must “provide significant diversity of troglobitic fauna”. However, there is no definition of these terms and there is no process defined in the permit, HCP, or biological opinion, documents that govern BCCP, to implement these conditions. Therefore, the Secretary has convened a task group of scientists and administrators to develop a transparent, science based process to consider proposals for cave substitution. Their recommendations will be brought to the Coordinating Committee in 2015 to be adopted as policy by the Coordinating Committee so that these conditions may be implemented as needed.

Member Daugherty asked whether he could come to a Coordinating Committee meeting now and propose a cave substitution, have the Coordinating Committee act upon that proposal, and approve it as their sole responsibility. Conrad responded no because the requirements for a proposal to qualify are not defined and there is no process defined to accomplish that. He also noted that a cave substitution action compliant with the permit conditions should not constitute a permit amendment, but rather an administrative action provided for the permit. But until the standards and

process are clear it is not clear when a substitution we be such an administrative action and when it would rise to the level of a permit amendment.

4. **Report from Scientific Advisory Committee** - Chair Jean Krejca reviewed recent actions with the Coordinating Committee. She noted that the SAC will be collaborating with the Citizens Advisory Committee in the near future to complete a State of the BCCP Report. She and other members are also part of the Karst Substitution Task Group. She advised members that SAC members have been assisting City staff with the development of a scientific paper that is evaluating the effectiveness and reliability of different avian monitoring methods as they would apply to monitoring golden-cheeked warblers (GCWA). This paper is nearly complete and will be submitted soon for publication in the Journal of Field Ornithology. She also reported that the subcommittee charged with completion of an experimental design for monitoring effects of Mountain biking on GCWA and their habitat is nearly complete. They have reviewed and are evaluating the applicability of two recent scientific papers on by Graber for U.S. Army Corps of Engineers, and one by Marion for U.S. Geological Survey. This subcommittee is expected to have a final recommendation early next year. The SAC has also re-initiated the Strategic Research Plan subcommittee. Dr. Sam Whitehead is chairing this committee and will have initial recommendations in 2015. This plan will look at research needs and opportunities for BCP from a very broad "Big Picture" level.
5. **Report from Citizens Advisory Committee** - Chair Peter Torgrimson reported on recent actions by the CAC. He advised members that their subcommittee on Invasive plants is developing a plan to reach out to neighborhoods and communities adjacent to BCP to inform them about plants commonly used in landscaping that become invasive in the preserve. They hope to convince them to avoid using invasive plants and perhaps remove existing invasive plants. They will also strive to educate these audiences about more suitable landscaping plants.

Chair Leffingwell asked whether this would be solely an educational effort. Torgrimson responded that it must be because realistically a person can use any plant they wish to. Leffingwell asked whether recommendations would focus on native plants or would they include adapted varieties that are not known to be invasive. Torgrimson responded that the subcommittee is focusing on the City's Grow Green Guide which includes both native and adapted species.

6. **Appoint Members' representatives to the Advisory Committee Task Group charged with making recommendations to the Coordinating Committee for new appointments representing environmental interests and development interests on the Citizens Advisory Committee** – Secretary Conrad noted that there were two consensus vacancies on the CAC. Members, during their May 2015 meeting, had taken action to revise the Advisory Committee task group process. During that meeting they discussed whether they would like members of their staffs to be represented on the task group. They agreed to consider this and take action later. Conrad advised members that he posted this item on the agenda to solicit their input. He recommended that, since the Chair's appointment will expire before the Coordinating Committee meets again, he will convene the task group to begin the recruitment process and then solicit Members' staffs' participation before a final recommendation is completed in 2015. Members discussed and agreed that any action to appoint new members to the CAC should be deferred to the Coordinating Committee in 2015 when any new members will be in place. No other action was taken.

7. **Receive reports from BCP partners on wildfire planning and actions; take action as appropriate** – Secretary Conrad reported that the Austin Travis County Community Wildfire Protection Plan (CWPP) is complete. Its adoption is on the agendas for Commissioners Court and City Council in November. A formal public roll out of the CWPP is also scheduled to occur in November at the Austin Community College campus which served as the Incident Command Post for the Pinnacle Fire in 2001, the first major fire in our communities' worst wildfire season ever.

Linda Laack reported that Travis County has initiated work to implement fuel mitigation projects in BCP that they manage adjacent to the Webb, Steiner Ranch, and Canyon Vista Neighborhoods.

No action was taken.

8. **Receive reports from BCP staff regarding land management, BCCP Participation, Infrastructure Management, and BCCP compliance** – Sherri Kuhl reported for the City's BCP. She reviewed a written report noting that the 9<sup>th</sup> Annual BCCP Infrastructure Workshop is scheduled with 190 participants registered. Conrad noted that this workshop is very successful and beneficial for BCCP. Through these workshops the secretary and program staffs have moved the BCCP relationship from being a very adversarial relationship to a very collaborative relationship where BCCP is the focal point for both interests to work toward the BCCP vision of conservation and provision of public services. She also advised members that BCP staff recently took action with Parks and Recreation Department staff to close the trail on Emma Long Park that is operating in Connors Creek. The action has received both positive and negative public responses and BCP is working with stakeholders to resolve concerns about management on the "Dual Managed" Tract. She also reviewed the BCP joint education and outreach report.

Mike Wallace reported on BCCP Participation noting that in the last quarter there were seven participation applications, resulting in the issuance of four Participation Certificates, and \$11,150 in revenues. The overall 2014 Participation Certificate totals include thirty seven applications, nineteen participation certificates covering 265 acres with approximately \$500,000 in revenues that were split between Austin and Travis County.

Wallace also reported that BCCP currently administers 30,540 acres in BCP with forty seven of the sixty two acres covered by the permit protected.

Before adjournment members Daugherty and Zerrenner as well as Secretary Conrad noted that this was Chair Jeffingwell's last meeting as chair of the Coordinating Committee. They thanked him for his service and commitment to BCCP. He thanked everyone noting that it was his honor to serve BCCP and he congratulated the other members, partners and staffs of their efforts to assure that BCCP is successful and will continue to be successful.