

Lower Colorado River Authority (LCRA) Balcones Canyonlands Preserve (BCP)
Update for McGregor, Wheless and Westcave Preserves

BCCP CAC/SAC Meetings – October 2016



LCRA's McGregor Shaded Fuel Break Project

LCRA's Conservation Services Department is planning to create shaded fuel breaks to remove ladder fuels at McGregor Preserve (see map below). Fuel treatments will extend from the boundary fence approximately 30 feet into the property in certain locations. LCRA will follow "*Fuel Treatments in Juniper and Oak-Juniper Woodlands throughout the Range of the Golden-cheeked Warbler.*" LCRA will complete the work prior to the end of February 2017. A Texas Wildlife Risk Assessment Summary Report for McGregor was completed on September 16, 2016 by Texas A&M Forest Service.

MCGREGOR PRESERVE



Legend

-  McGregor Preserve
-  Shaded Fuel Break: Approx. 4 acres (186,000 square ft)



White-tailed Deer Surveys

LCRA contracted with Plateau Land and Wildlife Management to conduct remote camera surveys at McGregor and Wheless Preserves. Once complete, Plateau will provide a comprehensive report to LCRA, detailing White-tailed deer population size, sex ratio, doe to fawn ratio, buck age structure and harvest recommendations.

Westcave Preserve Land Management Activities

Dragonfly surveys were conducted and data submitted to the Migratory Dragonfly Partnership online database. Westcave continues unofficial salamander surveys and will work with Nate Bendik (CoA Biologist) if a salamander is discovered (none to date).

Bird feeders were purchased and installed at the Murphy Bird Blind. The blind was also remodeled by volunteers. Native, evergreen shrubs were planted for vegetation screen for the blind as well. A new bird blind will be designed by architect Robert Jackson (who designed the visitor's center). The Bird Blind sub-committee has met several times with guidelines for R. Jackson to use during the design process. Water features, water tanks and various other materials have been purchased. Training was held for volunteers for upcoming Project Feederwatch program (Cornell Lab of Ornithology- Citizen Scientist program) which starts in November.

The Hays Master Gardeners will be designing a plan to fence off and expand the Monarch waystation in the Ahrens Grove. The Prairie Restoration area of the preserve was reseeded with native forb seeds as part of the prairie restoration efforts. Photo points were also maintained for the areas where prescribed burning occurred.

Water quality testing was conducted in the grotto and Pedernales River. The test results are sent to the Colorado River Watch Network (CRWN) and can be found online at <http://crwn.lcra.org/>.

Trail maintenance and repairs were completed on both canyon and Upland trail systems. Burn lines were maintained for future prescribed burns.

Roundtable Social presentation entitled "The History of Ashe Juniper" was given by CoA Senior Biologist, Lisa O'Donnell. Twenty neighbors and community members attended.

Staff witnessed around 6 feral hogs in the canyon. Hog damage had previously been seen. Westcave is still determining the best plan for control.

T161 (Marshall Ford to McNeil) Transmission Line Overhaul

LCRA TSC's T161 (Marshall Ford to McNeil) Transmission Line, which runs parallel (in most locations) to T160, needs to undergo a minor maintenance overhaul to ensure it is safe. The scope of this overhaul project is to replace/repair only what is needed to keep the line from falling. LCRA TSC will conduct minimal clearing and mowing in previously cleared areas to allow bucket trucks and other vehicles to drive to those structures where repair work is required. Vegetation management for line clearance will not occur during this project. In addition, no new holes will be drilled for the pole replacements.

This line crosses the following Travis County or City of Austin managed Balcones Canyonlands Preserves (BCPs): Steiner Ranch, Sam Hamilton Reserve East, Ribelin, Kent Butler and 3M. LCRA Environmental Affairs submitted a Balcones Canyonlands Conservation Plan (BCCP) Infrastructure Application to the City of Austin on October 13, 2016. LCRA anticipates no mitigation for this project since LCRA will only use existing access roads and cleared areas to ensure vehicles can access the structure where work is needed.

