



## Record of Decisions

**Balcones Canyonlands Conservation Plan (BCCP)  
Coordinating Committee  
September 22, 2017, 1:00 pm to 3:00 pm  
Travis County Commissioners Courtroom  
700 Lavaca Street, Austin, Texas 78701**

### Attending:

Precinct 3 Commissioner – Gerald Daugherty, Chair  
District 7 City Council Member - Leslie Pool, Co-Chair  
USFWS – Adam Zerrenner, Member (Ex Officio)  
BCCP Coordinating Committee Secretary – Kimberlee Harvey

### Call to Order 1:02pm

- 1. Citizen Communications** - Tomas Pantin spoke about the BCCP Public Access Land Management Plan update requesting participation in the document's approval process, as part of a task force independent of BCP staff. Ron Hensley spoke and seconded Tomas' request to have citizen input into the Public Access Land Management Plan document approval process. Kent Browning also spoke in favor of a citizens' review of the document. Stephanie Simmons spoke about a cave near her home called Get Down Cave. She said that the cave was previously privately owned, and the cave was not being properly managed per the karst preserve obligations. She wants to know how the obligations will be satisfied now that the City of Austin owns the cave. Chris Fields spoke about his enjoyment of Emma Long Motorcycle Park and heard that there were going to be changes to the public use of the park. He feels language should be added for the special needs of the riders at that park and wants to help with the amendments to the guidelines. Robert Corbin spoke about the environmental and safety problems dogs are causing on the greenbelt.
- 2. Approve Record of Decisions for the June 2, 2017 regular meeting** Motion from Pool to approve, second by Daugherty, Carried 2/0
- 3. Updated BCCP Permit from U.S. Fish and Wildlife Service; take action as appropriate** – USFWS sent an updated permit reflecting the BCCP Secretary change. The Service has a new HCP format so some of the standard conditions are slightly different. One added condition is to have the permittees sign the permit acknowledging that they understand & agree to terms & conditions. The Service said that the new permit is what would have previously been called a minor amendment, but that they don't call this kind of update an amendment anymore, so in the Service's opinion this update shouldn't need approval by the full governing body like a permit amendment would. The committee was asked to approve the new permit and recommend it for signature by the County Judge and City Mayor. Motion from Pool to approve, on the condition that law reviews it and does not find any changes to the terms of the Permit. Second by Daugherty, Carried 2/0

4. **Letter from Coordinating Committee to BCP Neighbors** – Johanna Arendt, Travis County BCP Community Liaison presented the community outreach letter to the Coordinating Committee. Commissioner Daugherty asked that the letter be edited to remove language about cats, and presented again for Coordinating Committee signatures.
5. **BCP Land Management Plan Updates and Review Schedules** – Secretary said BCP staff will have Draft BCCP Land Management Plan Tier II Chapters available for review by BCP Partners at the end of September, with public posting mid-October. Then they will go to the CAC on October 24<sup>th</sup>, to the SAC on November 1<sup>st</sup>, and then to the Coordinating Committee on December 1<sup>st</sup>. The public will have the opportunity to comment at those meetings.
6. **Current Events:**
  - **Upcoming BCCP Infrastructure Workshop on October 13** – Secretary announced an upcoming free ½ day workshop geared towards infrastructure project managers and field crews. It provides an opportunity to learn about the BCP, how to navigate through the infrastructure mitigation process, how to work in sensitive habitats, and provides corridor considerations for vegetation maintenance and oak wilt prevention.
  - **Upcoming meeting with the City of Austin Development Services Department’s Environmental Review staff** – Secretary announced an upcoming meeting with the Environmental Review managers and staff members from the City’s Development Services Office and the Watershed Protection Department to give a BCCP refresher presentation.
7. **Status Update of Selected BCP Permit Caves and Cave Issues** – Nico Hauwert, Ph. D. City of Austin, stated that caves are a core issue for the BCCP Permit and that it is important to improve our understanding about effects on the caves and the invertebrate species. He presented information on issues affecting BCP caves. First he spoke about karst preserve efforts in Village of Western Oaks for Get Down Cave. He then spoke about hydrogeological studies happening on Flint Ridge Cave, near Sh45 SW ROW that are showing sediment. Council Member Pool asked if impact triggers have been established that would identify when we would have to alert TxDOT or the Service. Hauwert explained that tracing impacts to a source is challenging. Council Member Pool asked if he had talked to TxDOT and Hauwert said no because he only learned about the preliminary results the day before that seems to show unusual sediment in a cave drip, which through tracing has been shown to be sensitive to the surface of that area. He explained that more time would be needed to analyze the results of the monitoring to have data that we can even talk about. Pool asked that some sort of protocol be established that would allow timely presentation to the state if negative impacts are found that would affect the BCP caves and the BCCP Permit. Daryl Slusher, City of Austin, said they would establish a process to get this information to TxDOT and anybody else who may be interested. Commissioner Daugherty stated that Kimble White, a karst geologist from RMA was in the audience and asked if he would come up to speak about Sh45. White said he would be happy to look at any data that comes out of the study. White talked about several meetings they have had with stakeholders during the project development process and stated that all the reports put together have shown overall that environmental commitments have been kept, making Sh45 perhaps the cleanest road on the planet. He did acknowledge that situations

where eventualities can occur citing recent Hurricane Harvey impacts with excessive rain events. Slusher asked if White was saying that cave pollution should be expected when rain events happen and White answered that water quality always drops when there is rain produced runoff. White stated that project BMPs have performed as they should. Hauwert continued talking about restoration projects on Blowing Sink Cave, and in the Slaughter Creek Caves area. Daugherty asked how all the road construction in the Blowing Sink cave even happened in the past considering Austin's environmental stances. Hauwert answered that better science is available now so we have a much better scientific understanding of impacts. Hauwert then spoke about efforts Goat Cave Karst Preserve. Hauwert explained that a TxDOT FM 2222 to FM 620 bypass project was proposed and that BCP caves are near the area. He also spoke about CODENEXT comments he had regarding cave restoration.

8. **Report from Scientific Advisory Committee (SAC)** - Craig Farquhar, Co-Chair of the SAC, mentioned the International Union for Conservation of Nature (IUCN) efforts to put the Golden-cheeked Warbler into the category of least concern, and the lawsuit filed by the Texas Public Policy Foundation to delist the Golden-cheeked Warbler from the endangered species list on behalf of the Texas General Land Office. The SAC made the decision to form a special research task group to examine the science being referenced by the organizations proposing the delisting and review the literature and status assessments performed by the U.S. Fish and Wildlife Service.
9. **Review of updated Draft Guidelines for the BCCP Scientific Advisory Committee (SAC); take action as appropriate** – Secretary explained that the updates show a reduction in the amount of regular meetings and clarify actions that would lead to member dismissal recommendations. One change requested by the SAC was to better define the composition of the SAC members' areas of expertise. The SAC feels it is important that committee consensus appointments strive to obtain a membership composition that includes 2 karst experts (one karst biology and one karst geology), one expert in ornithology with experience specific to the GCWA and BCVI, One expert in botany, vegetation communities and plant ecology, and three members who provide a balance between those disciplines as well as conservation ecology, management, and restoration. They also added a Social Science as a discipline that may be important while considering additional areas of expertise. Motion from Pool to approve, second by Daugherty. The Coordinating Committee approved the new CAC Guidelines 2/0.
10. **Receive BCCP Partner Reports; take action as appropriate** – Linda Laack, Travis County spoke about the Tawny Crazy Ant, which is a new invasive species found on the BCP. Melinda Mallia, Travis County, added that staff have been working with UT researchers to figure out how to address this and that a report would be available soon. Mallia also mentioned that Travis County bought the BCP Wheelers tract from LCRA which would protect the land in perpetuity, and that the County also acquired additional BCP property in the Anderson Mill Rd. / 620 intersection. Hauwert spoke about Jill Harding day as she was recognized for her cave restoration efforts. Hauwert also mentioned they had a successful birding season. Johanna Arendt showed the committee the new BCP video produced by Travis County.

**Meeting adjourned at 2:56pm**