

BIOLOGICAL ADVISORY TEAM “BAT” MEETING
Hays County Regional Habitat Conservation Plan

MINUTES

WHEN: March 28, 2008

WHERE: Texas Rivers Center, Room 226
951 Aquarena Springs Drive, San Marcos, TX 78666

Attendance:

BAT Members

- Craig Farquhar (Chair)
- Terri Siegenthaler
- Lee Elliott
- Linda Laack
- Randy Gibson
- Garry Stephens
- Cal Newnam

HCP Consultant Team

- Clifton Ladd, Amanda Aurora (Loomis Austin)
- Jean Krejca (Zara Environmental)
- Melinda Taylor (Smith/Robertson)

Other Attendants:

- Aimee Roberson (US Fish and Wildlife Service)
- Rachel Ranft (The Nature Conservancy)

1. Call to order. BAT Chair Craig Farquhar called the meeting to order at 9:05 am.
2. Approve minutes from February 28, 2008 BAT meeting. BAT members reviewed and approved the minutes from the February 28, 2008 meeting with no changes.
3. Citizens' comments. No citizen comments were made.
4. Review project schedule and major milestones. Clifton Ladd reviewed the overall project schedule and summarized discussions from the Commissioner's Court February 26, 2008 work session and the Citizen's Advisory Committee (CAC) meeting on March 27, 2008. Mr. Ladd reported that the consensus of the CAC expressed at the March 27 meeting was to proceed with a conservation strategy that incorporated a small initial preserve block and a rolling conservation bank, with the ultimate goal of satisfying Hays County's contribution to recovery goals for the covered species. Mr. Ladd also reported that the NEPA scoping meeting would likely be held in June.
5. Review options for species coverage in the Hays County RHCP. The BAT unanimously voted to finalize the recommendations for species coverage under the plan, with minor spelling corrections and the addition of a note regarding the northern Hays County

APPROVED June 3, 2008

populations of *Eurycea* salamander as either *E. nana* or *E. sorsorum*. The BAT also discussed the development of “no take” guidelines for addressing impacts to listed salamanders. The consensus of the BAT was that there may not be a biological basis for expanding the use of the existing TCEQ optional water quality measures to other species without further study. BAT member Randy Gibson agreed to review the TCEQ optional measures and suggest possible changes for use in the plan.

6. Review progress on habitat maps and proposed habitat determination process. Jean Krejca presented updated maps of karst species of concern that include known localities of the species of concern included to be included in the RHCP. The BAT discussed proposed processes for habitat determinations under the plan. The BAT consensus was that habitat determinations should be made using on-site assessments, instead of map-based assessments. Some BAT members were not comfortable with the TPWD description of vireo habitat presented in Campbell (2003), particularly the 6-ft canopy height and lack of criteria regarding vertical cover. The BAT recommended that another description be used, such as the habitat description from Birds of North America account for the black-capped vireo.
7. Review preserve design criteria. The BAT discussed the use of “core habitat” to define biologically valuable habitat in the preserve. The BAT consensus was that the concept adequately considered a number of biological considerations relevant to preserve design. The BAT was concerned about the proposed minimum preserve block size for the vireo, and suggested that the proposed 40 acre minimum size was not sufficient. Amanda Aurora and Melinda Taylor described concepts related to the proposed Recovery Credit Bonus, where additional mitigation credit would be generated when the overall preserve size reached certain size thresholds approaching the recovery goals. The BAT was uncertain about the biological validity of this concept, but made no recommendations for or against the idea.
8. Discuss and take appropriate action on agenda items for next meeting. Clifton Ladd announced a planned field trip to view golden-cheeked warblers, springs, and karst features in Hays County as a joint meeting of the BAT and the CAC on April 26, 2008. The BAT agreed that the next formal meeting would be June 3, 2008 to discuss comments on the first draft HCP document.
9. Adjourn. BAT Chair Craig Farquhar adjourned the meeting at 12:07 pm.