

BIOLOGICAL ADVISORY TEAM "BAT" MEETING  
Hays County Regional Habitat Conservation Plan

MINUTES

WHEN: June 3, 2008

WHERE: Texas Rivers Center, Room 107  
951 Aquarena Springs Drive, San Marcos, TX 78666

Attendance:

BAT Members

- Craig Farquhar (Chair)
- 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:

- Allison Arnold (US Fish and Wildlife Service)
- Henry Brooks (Hays County RHCP CAC member)
- Glenn Longley (Hays County RHCP CAC member)
- Dianne Wassenich (Hays County RHCP CAC member)
- Ed Bergin

1. Call to order. BAT Chair Craig Farquhar called the meeting to order at 9:10 am.
2. Approve minutes from March 28, 2008 BAT meeting. BAT members reviewed and approved the minutes from the March 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 noted that we have completed Phase 3 of the project (as described in the Work Plan) with the preparation of the preliminary draft RHCP. The project is on schedule with respect to the revised timeline presented in February. Currently, the preliminary draft RHCP is under review by the BAT, Citizen's Advisory Committee, and Hays County. Comments on the preliminary draft are due by mid-July. The consultant team will review the comments and prepare a second draft of the RHCP in September 2008. Allison Arnold noted that close coordination with the Austin office of the US Fish and Wildlife Service will be necessary to meet the permit issuance milestone of June 2009, due to an approximate 3-month processing time by the Service's regional and national offices. Upcoming meetings include a public NEPA scoping meeting on June

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18, 2008 with a public comment period ending July 18, 2008. The Hays County Commissioner's Court will also hold a work session related to the RHCP on the afternoon of June 10, 2008.

5. Review options for species coverage in the Hays County RHCP. Clifton Ladd presented recommendations for revising the list of species addressed by the RHCP. Recommendations were to remove the Cagle's map turtle from the list of evaluation species and add a blind, cave-obligate leech (*Mooreobdella* n. sp.) to the list of evaluation species. Various typographic changes to the "Recommendations for Species Inclusion in the Hays County Habitat Conservation Plan" document were also suggested. The BAT unanimously voted to approve the suggested changes.
6. Review golden-cheeked warbler habitat map. Clifton Ladd reviewed the warbler habitat models prepared by Loomis Austin, Inc. and Dr. David Diamond of the Missouri Resource Assessment Program, and new modeling efforts underway by Dr. Sahotra Sarkar at the University of Texas-Austin.
7. Review preliminary draft Habitat Conservation Plan. Clifton Ladd reviewed the BAT purpose statement. Amanda Aurora presented the BAT with a list of concepts (and corresponding sections in the preliminary draft RHCP) that are related to the specific purpose of the BAT and are particularly important for BAT consideration. These concepts involve the calculation of harm to the covered species, the sizing/configuration of habitat preserves, and other matters influencing the "biological integrity" of the plan. Clifton Ladd briefly describes the major funding sources proposed for preserve acquisition. Allison Arnold expressed concern regarding public access to habitat areas within the preserve and how such access might affect the mitigation value of the preserves. The BAT discussed how to translate acres of potential warbler habitat into estimates of warbler population size and some of the issues surrounding estimating species density in particular habitats. Allison Arnold also expressed that developing an appropriate estimate of warbler density in Hays County was very important to the Service. The BAT directed Loomis Austin to arrange a meeting with Becky Peak (Fort Hood) and others actively studying warbler occupancy and density topics for mid July. The BAT also decided to continue reviewing the preliminary draft RHCP and submit individual comments to Craig Farquhar by July 3, which would be compiled and forwarded to the consultant team by July 18. Loomis Austin will distribute the compiled comments to the full BAT.
8. Discuss and take appropriate action on agenda items for next meeting. Clifton Ladd agreed to arrange the next BAT meeting for mid July to receive a presentation from Becky Peak and others regarding warbler occupancy and density issues. The meeting may be a joint meeting with the Comal County RHCP BAT. The BAT tentatively scheduled a meeting on September 16, 2008 to discuss the second draft RHCP.
9. Adjourn. BAT Chair Craig Farquhar adjourned the meeting at 11:33 am.