



# Hays County, Texas

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**Information for the News Media**  
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## **Hays County Commissioners Court Votes to Implement Habitat Conservation Plan to Protect Endangered Species, Aid Development**

**Hays County Courthouse, San Marcos, TX** – The Hays County Commissioners Court on Tuesday took the next step in protecting sensitive habitat while streamlining development by unanimously voting to implement its federally approved Regional Habitat Conservation Plan (RHCP).

The RHCP provides a locally controlled approach for compliance with the Federal Endangered Species Act (ESA) by allowing the County to offer mitigation credits for otherwise lawful development on land where there could be “incidental takings” of protected species. In Hays County, the ESA applies to two endangered songbirds, the golden-cheeked warbler and the black-capped vireo, but the RHCP could protect as many as 56 additional species considered rare or threatened.

“The six-plus years Hays County has spent developing and getting approval for the RHCP will pay off greatly over the next 30 years,” said Precinct 3 Commissioner Will Conley, who helped spearhead the RHCP. “We will see an immediate benefit to our local economy by providing a predictable, streamlined and locally controlled process for obtaining compliance with federal regulations while continuing our tradition of conservation in the county.”

An approved RHCP allows landowners who have qualifying habitat acreage and want to preserve it as open space to voluntarily donate or sell it to the County. In turn, the County can help streamline public projects and private development in areas where the ESA applies by providing “credits” that offset the “takings” of land where protected species might be impacted. The County initially plans to offer the credits for development at \$7,500 per credit acre.

The County’s Development Services Department expects the application for landowners interested in providing habitat acreage to be available by the end of the year. In the meantime, questions can be directed to Clint Garza, Development Services Director, at 512.393.2150. For more information about the Hays County RHCP, visit [www.co.hays.tx.us](http://www.co.hays.tx.us) and choose Plans, Policies & Reports from the Government tab.

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