



Balcones Preserves Trail Master Plan Stakeholder Committee Meeting

July 29, 2008 6:00-8:00pm

Waller Creek Center, Austin Water Utility

1. Welcome and Agenda Review – Mike Hockmuller

Due to logistics, today's meeting has a shorter agenda than initially planned. Our meeting on August 12 will have a lengthier agenda to cover the vireo and warbler discussions.

2. Takeaways from July 15th Meeting – All

At the July 15th meeting, Dolph Scott presented a map overview of the Bull Creek macrosite and a panel of science experts presented on and answered questions about karst invertebrates and their habitat. The group took a few minutes to discuss what they learned from that meeting.

Stakeholder Comments and Questions

- *I learned just how fragile karst invertebrates and their habitat really are. Tiny holes can lead to extensive damage below the surface.*
- *The surface and everything we do on the surface has a huge impact on the subsurface.*
- *I was fascinated that there was such a limited food source and that the cave crickets were so important to many of the species in the caves.*
- *The introduction of fire ants to caves and the impact they can have was surprising to me. I need more clarification on how trails can lead to fire ants in caves. Megan followed up with Mark Sanders, and he said fire ants could end up in caves for a number of reasons, and the data is inconclusive. The ants could possibly look for water in caves during dry weather or they could move into caves as a result of human activity or changes in landscape from the trails themselves.*
- *I learned of the problem with securing cave entrances. Gates are undesirable, but may be necessary from the standpoint of public safety.*
- *We haven't talked much about the fact that the WQPL trails require an educational component. It may be valuable for us to include an educational component on our trails, and we should talk more about this as a group. If the things we are learning in these meetings surprise us, they would definitely also surprise trail users and may be helpful things to communicate in signage, etc.*
- *A website on educational materials for trail users would be helpful. Willy agreed and noted that the current BCP website has lots of useful information.*

- *How will the matrix criteria be used? I've been thinking that the criteria have been growing larger than our scope.* Mike said the logistics team will continue to play with the design of the matrix and give the group several options to consider.

3. Overview of North Lake Austin Macrosite – Dolph Scott

The stakeholders received color maps of the North Lake Austin tracts. Dolph's PowerPoint presentation file will be available on the Trail Master Plan website.

<<http://www.ci.austin.tx.us/water/wildland/bccptrailplan.htm>>

There are five tracts in North Lake Austin macrosite. The tracts are all contained in the area bordered by RR 620 and FM 2222 to the north, Capital of Texas Highway on the east, Lake Austin on the south, and RR 620 on the west. Notes on each tract are below.

- **Cortaña, 1752 acres**
 - Grey trees on the maps represent helicopter observations of oak wilt, and black trees represent ground sightings of oak wilt.
 - Some invasive plants found on this tract are chinaberry, tree of heaven, golden rain tree, tallowtree, elephant ear, and nandina.
 - Karst Zone 1 is found in the north corner near 620, and some known karst features are found outside of Zone 1.
 - The north corner of the tract just south of 620 is black-capped vireo habitat.
 - Much of this tract is Zone 1 warbler and some parts are Zone 2 warbler.
 - There is quite a bit of elevation change on this tract, ranging from about 1100 feet in the north corner to about 500 feet near Lake Austin.
- **Park West, 468 acres**
 - This tract contains Zone 1 Karst in the north section near 2222.
 - A portion of this tract is confirmed vireo habitat.
 - This tract is all Zone 1 warbler, with the exception of a small section of the north portion delineated as Zone 2 warbler.
- **Long Canyon, 450 acres**
 - This tract is all Zone 1 warbler.
 - There is a private trail for Long Canyon Homeowners Association that runs parallel to Long Canyon Drive.
- **Cold Water, 427 acres**
 - Three pieces of land make up the Cold Water tract (12 acres, 150 acres, and 264 acres). City Park Road borders the three sections of land.
 - All three sections of this tract are Zone 1 warbler.

- **Emma Long, 950 acres**

- The Emma Long tract's border actually goes south all the way to Lake Austin. The maps show the BCP boundary, which is a little further north of the lake. The land directly adjacent to Lake Austin is owned by Austin Parks and Recreation.
- There is extensive oak wilt in the south section of this tract.
- Much of this tract is either Zone 1 or Zone 2 warbler.
- The only 100 acre plot in the North Lake Austin macrosite is on this tract. It is found in partly Zone 1 and partly Zone 2 warbler habitat.
- City Park Road cuts through this tract and follows the ridgeline.
- The motorcycle/mountain bike area is part of this tract. It's been open for decades.
- Trails on this map appear to continue off BCP land. That land is owned by City of Austin Parks and Recreation.
- There is an old rock quarry and a shooting range/archery field on this tract.
- Turkey Creek trail was built by Boy Scouts in either the late 70s or early 80s and has been used fairly consistently since then.
- There were two road killed golden cheeked warblers this year on City Park Road.

Stakeholder Questions about North Lake Austin macrosite

- *How is the oak wilt at Emma Long being treated?*
Staff members are putting in 5' trenches to keep it from spreading to unaffected trees. In the past, they had to go as deep as 13' on trenches on the Cortaña site because of alluvial soil.
- *Are some of the trails on Emma Long older or inactive trails?*
Most of the trails are currently active.
- *Have there been warbler sightings in the established motorcycle/mountain bike area of Emma Long?*
Yes, as shown on the maps.
- *Do these sighting on these maps include Jennifer Reidy's work?*
All of Jennifer's data available to the City was included on the maps.

4. Review Stakeholder Questions for Warbler and Vireo Panelists – all

The group reviewed the list of questions submitted for golden-cheeked warbler and black-capped vireo panelists. Mike noted that it seems that the questions can be grouped into categories such as definitions of terms, calendar-based clarifications/seasonal issues, and technical issues.

Gary said he would like to see recent data from the five 100-acre sites with trails on them. Scott said that this topic could be a presentation all on its own, but we will ask Lisa if she can touch on it at the next meeting. Sheila asked if handouts and electronic copies of the Texas State University report (100 acre plot statistical trends) could be made available

before or at the next meeting. Megan will email this report to stakeholders and get it posted to the TMP website.

Willy noted that we will always have more questions than time allows in these introductory meetings on the species, and as we begin to propose actual trails we can continue to look to experts for additional advice.

5. Next Steps – Mike Hockmuller

Our next stakeholder meeting is next **Tuesday, April 12th 6:00-8:00pm** in Waller Creek Center room 104. The meeting will include presentations and Q&A sessions on the golden-cheeked warbler and the black-capped vireo. Craig Farquhar, Clif Ladd, Lisa O'Donnell, Becky Peak, Bill Reiner, and Chuck Sexton will be panelists, and Jennifer Reidy will submit a PowerPoint summary of her findings.

The next logistics meeting is Tuesday, August 5th at 10:30am. The meeting is at the Learning and Research Center, and a link to MapQuest directions is found here: <http://www.mapquest.com/maps/2800+Spirit+of+Texas+Dr+Austin+TX+78719-2354>.