



Balcones Preserves Trail Master Plan Stakeholder Committee Meeting

October 7, 2008 6:00-8:00pm

Waller Creek Center, Austin Water Utility

1. Welcome and Agenda Review – Mike Hockmuller

2. Gain Consensus on Final “In” and “Out” Tract Lists – all

When classifying tracts during the last stakeholder meeting, some of the groups were using different criteria for determining “In”, “Out”, and “Maybe” tracts. At tonight’s meeting, Mike helped the group determine consensus on the final “In” and “Out” tracts. The group agreed that “In” tracts would be the ones for which the City would accept proposals from possible sponsors as part of the trail master plan.

One of the challenges the group discussed at a previous meeting was the difficulty to propose trails on specific tracts without having a trail sponsor and without the ability to see the conditions on the ground. Mike understood that the groups shifted from trying to draw lines on maps to deciding which tracts are most suitable for trails. Charlie said the WQPL process followed the same procedure. The intention was to have a range of tracts to choose from when trail planning.

Stakeholder Comments and Questions

- *I want to remind everyone that our charge is to determine candidate tracts for the plan to begin access in 2009.*
- *Why are there several different listings for Barton Creek on the tract list, and would this have implications for trail planning (i.e. various funding sources with different requirements)?*
Dolph said several smaller sections make up what is known as Barton Creek Greenbelt. One piece of land is in West Austin macrosite even though it is adjacent to the others. Mopac is the rough dividing line between the macrosites. Scott said Barton Creek is all managed as one property, so for all intensive purposes the group can consider it one property.
- *Some people suggested that “Barton Creek Wilderness Preserve” is an accurate labeling of the tracts that are actually part of Barton Creek Wilderness Park. I want to raise the fact that in the bond covenant it is called Barton Creek Wilderness Park and we should clarify this wording.*
- *Group One actually labeled the second Double J & T tract as “In” although the spreadsheet shows our group labeled it “Maybe”. Megan corrected this on the spreadsheet. This means that the stakeholders agreed that all tracts in South Lake Austin macrosite are “In” except for Schramm Ranch.*

- *Friesenhahn is a Barton Creek Wilderness Park tract. I don't understand why all three groups didn't say it was "In."* Stakeholders said it parallels Highway 360 and there is no direct access to the tract. Scott said the end result of conversation at the last meeting was that a trail could go through it but not have an access point on the tract. Based on this situation, the stakeholders decided it's "In."
- *Stillhouse Hollow is a joint use, grandfathered tract, so should we include it?* Group 3 volunteered to change their classification from "Out" to "In" because they hadn't talked about the tract being grandfathered. The stakeholders agreed to expand the definition of "In" tracts to include those that are grandfathered.
- *The St. Edward tract has potential for trail restoration.*
- *My group talked about restoration at Jester, 3M, Forest Ridge, and St. Edward. There are about 10 miles of existing trails on these tracts.*

The group then discussed the 3M tract and the 1997 memo regarding access. Mike asked stakeholders for their interpretations of the memo. Some stakeholders felt that by allowing public access the City is using the tract for purposes otherwise than authorized, and some said they disagreed with this interpretation. Others said the opinion is that of the Real Estate Services Division of City of Austin, not 3M, and is therefore not very relevant. Mike concluded that at best, the 3M tract is still inconclusive. He said constraints for a trail on 3M would be very tight. The group reached consensus on the decision to leave 3M as an "Out" tract based on the discussion.

Mike reviewed the final list of "In" Tracts for the trail master plan.

Macrosite	"In" Tracts
Barton Creek	Barton Creek Greenbelt
	Barton Creek Wilderness Park
	Friesenhahn
Bull Creek	Bull Creek Greenbelt
	Bull Creek Park
	Forest Ridge
	Jester
	St. Edward
	Stillhouse Hollow
N. Lake Austin	Cortana
	Emma Long Park
S. Lake Austin	Bohls
	Commons Ford
	Double J & T

	Reicher Ranch
	Sansom
West Austin	Barton Creek Greenbelt

Willy and Megan grouped the “In” tracts into the following clusters after the meeting.

Group Name	Included Tracts
Barton Creek Greenbelt / Wilderness Park	Barton Creek Greenbelt, Barton Creek Wilderness Park, Friesenhahn
Forest Ridge / Bull Creek Preserve	Bull Creek Greenbelt, Bull Creek Park, Forest Ridge, Jester, St. Edward
Stillhouse Hollow	Stillhouse Hollow
Cortana / Sansom	Cortana, Sansom
Emma Long Park	Emma Long Park
Bohls / Reicher	Bohls, Reicher
Commons Ford	Commons Ford
Double J & T	Double J & T

3. Identify Constraints and Resources Needed for Each Block of Tracts – all

As the group went through the educational process over the past few months, they thought about issues related to the environment, access management, and trail planning. At this meeting, Mike passed out the Trail Planning Questions worksheet the group used when classifying tracts (September 9th and 23rd meetings) and the following list of management considerations drafted by Willy and Megan.

Management Considerations when Considering Trails

- Types of use
- How occupied habitat will be addressed
 - golden-cheeked warbler
 - black-capped vireo
 - karst invertebrates
 - Jollyville Plateau salamander
 - mitigation
- Management to minimize impacts
 - protected species
 - soil
 - water

- plant communities
- trail sustainability
- User management
 - group size
 - permits
 - parking
 - security/enforcement
- Facilities
- Monitoring
- Provision for ongoing management
- Education

Mike asked the group what the next step should be. The plan was to identify constraints and resources needed for each block of “In” tracts, but Mike was concerned that the group would only be able to scratch the surface of that task with the amount of time available at the meeting.

Charlie talked about the Memorandum of Agreements (MOAs) used for the Water Quality Protection Lands trail planning process. They primarily focused on:

- Types of use;
- Responsible parties;
- Monitoring of use on the trail; and
- Addressing safety issues.

Charlie said the MOAs stipulate that the trails will be closed if the above responsibilities are not met. The WQPL Stennis and Slaughter tracts both have MOAs. Each sponsor organization has a separate MOA.

The MOA between Bull Creek Foundation and the Wildland Conservation Division for the WQPL trail has been posted on the [Trail Master Plan website](#) under Meeting 14.

The group then went through the twelve Trail Planning Questions and discussed changes they would make to each question.

Trail Planning Questions Discussion Comments

1. Does the terrain support a sustainable trail?

- *The phrase seems to be the reverse of what it should be. I propose “Is the trail sustainable given the terrain?”*
- *I propose “Is the trail designed to IMBA standards?”*

2. Does the trail meet the standard for public access?

- *Does this mean IMBA standards for public access or standards in the HCP? At a minimum we need to meet standards found in the EIS-HCP and the permit.*
- *Many of the HCP standards are covered in other questions on the list. Could such standards be bullets under meeting the EIS-HCP? It would be redundant to ask the questions again.*
- *We had talked about the Land Management Plan standards for this question. Scott said some things included in the HCP are not included in Land Management Plans.*
- *I suggest enumerating a list instead of deferring to the HCP because that could be overwhelming.*

Sheila proposed that she go through the Strategic Vision after the meeting and pull out indicators/measurements that the group would expect people to answer yes or no to when proposing to sponsor a trail. She will email Megan a checklist so for distribution at the next meeting.

3. Does the trail avoid fragmenting high quality habitat?

The group said this is covered in the Strategic Vision.

4. Does the trail avoid or protect karst features?

5. Does the trail avoid cave access?

The group decided to combine these two questions due to their similarity.

6. Does the trail avoid occupied habitat?

7. Does the trail address access for infrastructure?

The group discussed using the words “user amenities” instead of “infrastructure” for more clarity.

- *I propose “Does the trail address user parking and amenities?”*

The group agreed on using this proposal. Amenities would include bathrooms, scooper bags, trashcans, etc.

8. Do trail access points support the types of use we want and discourage undesirable uses?

- *We need to be clear about what is allowed and what is not.*
- *I propose “Does the trail design support or enhance the authorized types of use and discourage unauthorized use?”* The group agreed to replace the question with this proposed one.

9. Does the trail support connectivity?

- *This really would be site specific.*

10. Does the trail avoid conflicts with ongoing land management activities?

- *I propose “Does trail design accommodate ongoing land management activities?” The group agreed to change this question as proposed.*

11. Does the trail minimize trail disturbance?

The group decided to delete this question.

12. Does the trail avoid cultural resources?

Wildland Conservation staff will come back with information about this as relevant, so this question does not need to be included.

Additional Stakeholder Comments and Questions

- *The MOA defines very specifically who is responsible for monitoring. Trail groups will not only be monitoring for species impacts, but oak wilt, water pollution, trash, and ALL impacts of the trail on the habitat and species. The enforcement issue also needs to be included in the MOA.*
- *I feel that research in terms of trail impacts has not been addressed. We should create a research structure that has a baseline and monitoring criteria. We should establish this on the front end so we have a way to monitor it over time. Dolph said not much baseline data has been done on City BCP tracts, and what has been done has been sporadic.*
- *Erosion, water quality, etc should also be included in the MOA. Scott said the process document created for the Trail Master Plan process has very specific information about the required monitoring details.*
- *Communications will be of paramount importance when we complete this process. We need a very clear communication plan, and it needs to be communicated eight times in eight different ways so we can make sure the point gets across.*
- *Regarding the previous comment: I think it is important, but neighborhoods that adjoin the properties also need to be pulled into the process.*
- *I think the process should be viewed as education and public outreach rather than communication. I want to encourage the group to include this in MOA and not in the design phase. Strategies for education will differ depending on the trail.*
- *I think that community involvement (i.e. neighborhood associations) should be a part of the MOA. Mike noted that this will lead to shared accountability.*

6. Next Steps – Mike Hockmuller

Our next stakeholder meeting is next **Tuesday, October 21st 6:00-8:00pm** in Waller Creek Center room 104.

The next logistics meeting is Tuesday, October 14th 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>>.