

Considerations – BCCP Permit, EIS/HCP – FWS Perspective

Talking Points

Objectives of presentation:

1. Provide an overview of FWS role in the BCCP Trail Master Planning Process
2. Give general thoughts on FWS directions before proposing specific trails.

1. FWS role;

- To participate in the planning process as the agency issuing the permit and responsible for monitoring compliance.
- To advise the group and the Coordinating Committee on what actions are possible without a Permit amendment.

2. Things to consider in proposing new trails:

Reasons to be Careful

- Total acreage targets for GCW and BCV have not been met in total or in the configuration proposed in the EIS/HCP.
- Cave acquisition goals have not been met, both in terms of total caves and in many cases, area protected around them.
- Balcones Canyonlands National Wildlife Refuge land acquisition has been slow, currently slightly less than half the target acreage.

EIS/HCP Considerations

- The BCCP preserve system is to be managed to permanently conserve and facilitate the recovery of the populations of target endangered species inhabiting western Travis County. This priority objective will govern preserve management activities to improve target species habitat, while protecting preserves against degradation caused by urbanization of surrounding lands and increased public demand for recreation usage within preserves. (p. 2-31).
- The welfare of target species (species of concern) will be the overriding influence on all decisions regarding activities on preserve lands (p. 2-32).
- Decisions about activities within preserves should be made cautiously, so as to meet biological objectives to protect and enhance target species and minimize risk of damage to the habitat (p. 2-32).
- **Public Access.** The preserve system may offer public access and recreational opportunities within the Austin and Travis County area where possible and manageable. Public access may be allowed where and when such access does not threaten the welfare of the target species of concern, which is the overriding goal of the preserve system, nor cause the degradation of soil, vegetation, or water resources (p. 2-36).

- Biking/Jogging/Hiking. Unsupervised group access should not be allowed within 100 meters of occupied songbird habitat during the breeding/nesting season, unless such access can be documented to show no apparent degradation to the welfare of the species of concern (p. 2-37).

Permit Considerations

- For the GCW:
 - In conjunction with the managing partners, control human activities to eliminate or mitigate any adverse impacts of human activities to the warbler on these 28,428 acres, for the acreage acquired (p. 5).
- For the BCVI:
 - In conjunction with the managing partners, control human activities to eliminate or mitigate any adverse impacts of human activities to the vireo on these 2,000 acres, for the acreage acquired (p. 5).

Amendments

Substantive amendments include those actions or decisions which affect the scope of mitigation or method of implementation of the BCCP or Permit and require the consent of the USFWS. Major amendments would involve changes in amount of incidental take allowed under the permit, changes in Permit Holders, or changes in the species covered under the permit (p. 2-51).