



ENVIRONMENTAL CONSULTANTS

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**BIOLOGICAL ADVISORY TEAM (“BAT”)
TO THE
COMAL COUNTY
REGIONAL HABITAT CONSERVATION PLAN (“RHCP”)**

MEETING MINUTES

A meeting of the BAT to the Comal County RHCP was held as follows:

- WHEN:** August 25, 2008
TIME: 2:30 p.m.
WHERE: Comal County Courthouse, Commissioners Court Board Room
199 Main Plaza, New Braunfels, Texas 78130

In Attendance:

BAT Members

- John Baccus
- Valerie Collins
- Mike Quinn
- Randy Simpson

CAC Members

- Terry Turney (TPWD)

Consultants

- SWCA Environmental Consultants: Steve Carothers, Gary Galbraith

Agency Representatives

- Bill Seawell, USFWS

Members of the Public

- Star Carey
- Rufus Stevens (TPWD)

1. Call to Order. Chair Mike Quinn called the meeting to order at 2:44 P.M.
2. Approve Minutes from May 19, 2008 BAT Meeting. Dr. Baccus moved to approve the February May 19, 2008 minutes; second by Dr. Simpson. Motion carried.
3. Citizens Comments. No citizen's comments were received.
4. Receive presentation on August 4, 2008 Comal County RHCP. Dr. Carothers summarized the comments received at the Citizen's Advisory Committee Meeting on the RHCP and then gave a brief presentation regarding proposed changes to the document.
5. Receive and discuss BAT comments and questions on the Comal County RHCP. Dr. Baccus stated that he did not support mitigating impacts to golden-cheeked warbler (GCW) habitat primarily at a 1:1 ratio as presented on page viii of the executive summary. He suggested a wording change in the executive summary that would remove the word "primarily" from table ES-1 and that we revise the first paragraph of page viii to include higher mitigation ratios for better quality habitat. Dr. Baccus stated that good quality habitat is worth more than a 1:1 mitigation ratio, and in some cases, high quality habitat is worth more than a 3:1 mitigation ratio.

Bill Seawell was asked what mitigation ratio the U.S. Fish and Wildlife Service (Service) generally uses to compensate for impacts to GCW habitat. Bill indicated that the Service uses a 3:1 mitigation ratio for good quality habitat and that the Service looks at habitat quality, fragmentation, and indirect impacts when determining total mitigation for a project. Bill suggested possibly looking at the amount of acreage needed to support a viable GCW population in the County rather than focusing on a mitigation ratio. Dr. Carothers indicated that applying this approach to Comal County would require preservation of approximately 500 pairs of GCWs in the County.

Valerie Collins asked Bill Seawell how many habitat conservation plans (HCPs) had been approved in the past in Comal County. Bill Seawell indicated that there are no approved HCPs in the County.

Dr. Baccus was asked whether he was comfortable with the proposed 1:1 mitigation ratio for the black-capped vireo (BCV). Dr. Baccus indicated that he was comfortable with a 1:1 ratio for the BCV since suitable habitat can be created in a relatively short time using prescribed fire and other management techniques.

Dr. Simpson asked if we could rename the “evaluation species” in the plan. Dr. Carothers indicated that he had received that same comment from one of the members of the CAC earlier in the day and then went on to explain that we were trying to be consistent with terminology being used for other RHCPs in the region.

6. Discuss and take appropriate action regarding establishment of optional water quality measures for plan participants. Dr. Carothers briefed the BAT on our discussions from the previous BAT meeting regarding possibly adding optional water quality measures to the plan to benefit aquatic species. Dr. Carothers then discussed that the consultant’s recommendation at this time is to not include optional water quality measures in the plan since water quality and listed aquatic species will be covered under the TCEQ’s Edwards Rules and the Edwards Aquifer Recovery Implementation Program (RIP). It was moved by Dr. Baccus to not include optional water quality measures in the plan; second by Dr. Simpson. Motion carried.
7. Discuss and take appropriate action regarding date and agenda items for next meeting. It was proposed that the BAT possibly meet concurrently with the CAC on October 13 at 10:00 A.M to discuss the revised RHCP. All BAT members in attendance indicated that time would be acceptable. Next meeting tentatively set for October 13.
8. There was a motion by Dr. Baccus to adjourn the meeting at 4:20 P.M.; second by Dr. Simpson. Motion carried, meeting adjourned at 4:20 P.M.