

MEMORANDUM

TO: The Honorable Lisa Birkman
Williamson County Commissioner,
Precinct 1 and President of
Williamson County Conservation
Foundation

FROM: Gary Galbraith

DATE: 9 July 2008

RE: Williamson County Regional Habitat Conservation Plan Quarterly Report to
Williamson County Commissioners Court

A. Background.

In September 2003, the U.S. Fish and Wildlife Service (USFWS) awarded the Williamson County Conservation Foundation (Foundation) a \$200,000.00 federal grant to develop a draft conceptual Williamson County Regional Habitat Conservation Plan (RHCP), including conducting numerous pre-permit application activities and related items. The conceptual RHCP was completed and delivered to the Texas Parks and Wildlife Department (TPWD) and the Foundation in November 2004.

In September 2004, the USFWS awarded an approximately \$1,000,000.00 federal grant to complete and process the final RHCP, Environmental Impact Statement (EIS), and section 10(a) permit application in order to effectively and efficiently implement the Foundation's conservation actions. On November 23, 2004, the Williamson County Commissioners Court approved a Preliminary Work Plan (Work Plan) covering items necessary to complete the RHCP. The Work Plan requires quarterly reports to the Court of progress in developing and completing the RHCP.

On October 14, 2005, the Foundation issued a request for statements of qualifications/interest for purposes of retaining an environmental consultant for the RHCP. On November 9, 2005 the Foundation Board voted to recommend that the Commissioners Court hire SWCA Environmental Consultants (SWCA) to work on the RHCP, including the EIS, and on November 29, 2005 the Commissioner's Court approved the selection of SWCA. SWCA has prepared the Draft RHCP/EIS and anticipates finalizing the RHCP/EIS in October 2008. This quarterly report describes the major tasks completed during the second quarter of 2008.

B. Report.

This section provides an update of tasks that have been performed since the previous quarterly report. Next, this section sets forth a general schedule outlining upcoming tasks to develop the RHCP. All dates in this report refer to year 2008, unless otherwise indicated.

1. *Progress Report/Update on Tasks Pursuant to the Work Plan.*

(a) RHCP Development.

On May 16, the Service published a Notice of Availability for the Draft Williamson County RHCP/EIS. The Notice of Availability is the formal announcement by the Service that the Draft RHCP/EIS is available for review and public comment. The Notice also provided a brief description of the proposed action, the date, time, and location of the required public hearing, where comments should be sent, and the expiration date of the public comment period (July 15).

On June 16, a public hearing on the Draft RHCP/EIS was held at the Williamson County Commissioners Court from 5:00-8:00 P.M. The purpose of the public hearing was to receive public comments regarding the Draft RHCP/EIS. A total of 24 people signed in at the public hearing and three individuals provided oral comments.

(b) Committee Process, Agency Coordination.

Citizen's Advisory Committee. No activity during Quarter 2.

Biological Advisory Team. No activity during Quarter 2.

Agency Coordination. Representatives from the U.S. Fish and Wildlife Service regularly participate in the monthly Foundation Board meetings. On June 9, the consultant team met with the Service to discuss the first projects that will be enrolled under the Plan once the permit is issued.

(c) Landowner/Public Outreach.

Various items related to RHCP development can be viewed on the RHCP website (<http://wcportals.wilco.org/wccf>), which enables the public to review materials and obtain information to attend meetings pertaining to the RHCP. CAC, BAT, and Foundation meeting notices are also posted in accordance with requirements of the Texas Open Meetings Act so that the public is aware of these efforts and can attend meetings. In Quarter 2, the consultant team and members of the Foundation Board completed a series of presentations to various stakeholders including school districts, city councils, and municipal utility districts. Stakeholder presentations conducted during Quarter 2 included the Real Estate Council of Austin and Georgetown Independent School District.

(d) Economic Analysis/Financing Plan.

The financing plan is included as Chapter 9 in RHCP and the economic analysis is included in Section 4.8 of the PDEIS.

(e) Prepare DEIS.

The DEIS has been prepared and is available for review and comment through July 15.

2. *General Schedule of Major Tasks/Timeline for Continued RHCP Development.*

Following the close of the 60-day public comment period, the consultant team will respond to comments and prepare the Final EIS, which is scheduled to be issued in Quarter 3. The Permit is expected to be issued in early Quarter 4.

-- GLG --