

The Williamson County Habitat Conservation Plan: Status Recap and Review - December 2016





Williamson County Regional Habitat Conservation Plan

The Williamson County Conservation Foundation (WCCF) was established as a pro-active measure to further the conservation of endangered species in Williamson County while helping to further responsible development.



WCCF Management Obligations

- **Protect and Enhance populations of
listed species**
 - **Research and Monitoring**
 - **Habitat Management**
 - **Law Enforcement**
 - **Education and Outreach**

...Williamson County proactively opted
for a REGIONAL Habitat Conservation
Plan (HCP).

The WILLIAMSON COUNTY RHCP

**Williamson County holds a Section 10(a) incidental
take permit, and the *Williamson County
Conservation Foundation, Inc.* administers the
RHCP. The plan covers a 30-year period from 2008
to 2038. Participation in the RHCP *is completely
voluntary.***



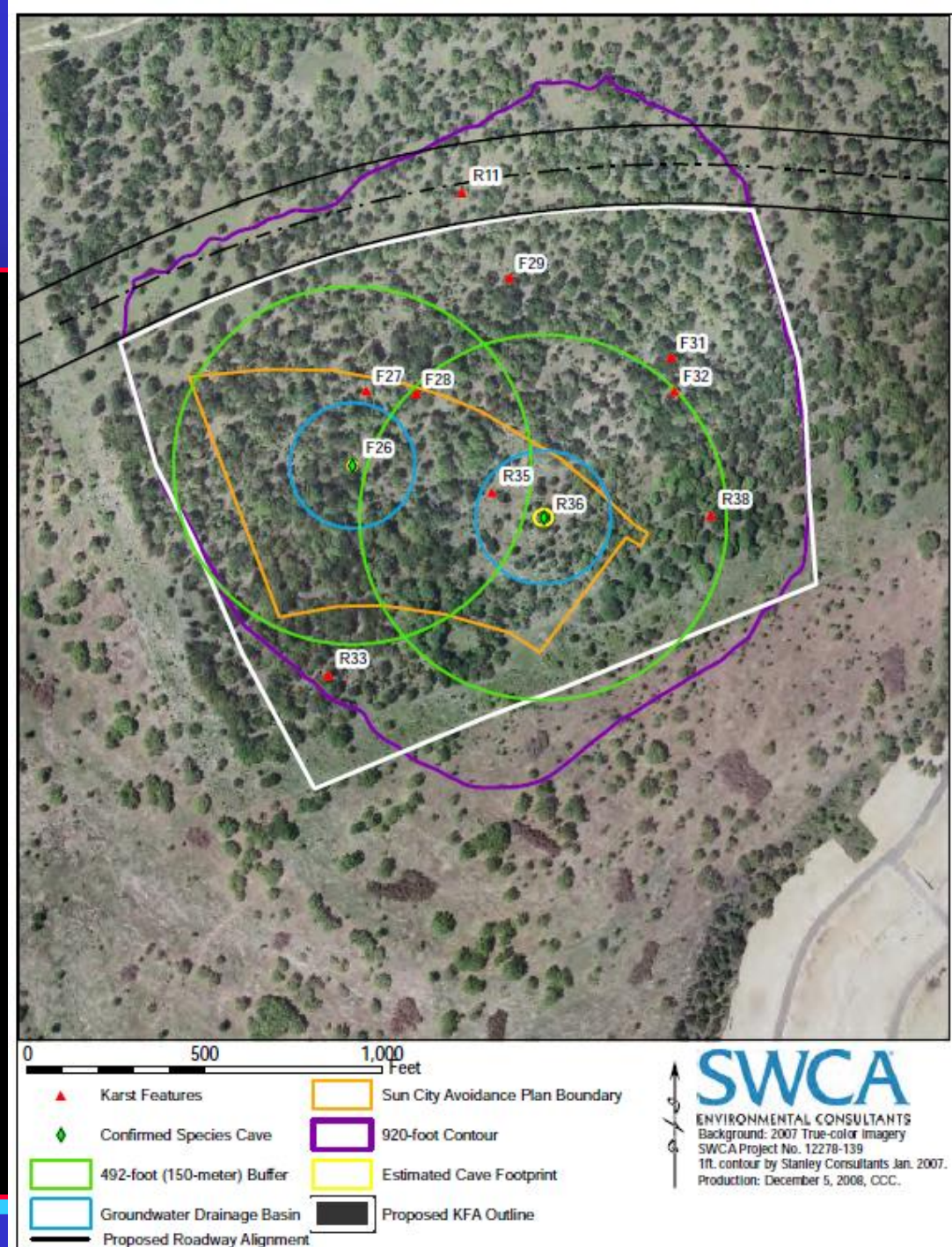
The Williamson County Regional Habitat Conservation Plan (RHCP)

- Completely **voluntary** participation.
- Grow and sustain a financial corpus of approximately \$20 million to provide for maintenance and monitoring of preserves and conservation set-asides in perpetuity.
- Over its 30 year plan, major conservation efforts will include:
 - **Estimated 1200+ preserve acres**
 - 814.87 acres to date; another 118 acres pending
 - **Approximately 6,000 acres of protection for Golden Cheeked Warbler and protection for the Black Capped Vireo**
 - 1200 acres in GCW “bank”
 - On 12/15/16 USFWS published a “notice of intent” to remove BCV
 - **5-year study for the Georgetown salamander**
 - Coordinated efforts to develop a 4(d) conservation rule that resulted in a “threatened” listing
 - Provide administrative support to the City of Georgetown; working to transfer oversight of monitoring function
 - **Public outreach and endowment**
 - Third year of a Conservation Symposium in conjunction with Southwestern University
 - A Program to provide public access to the greatest extent possible.



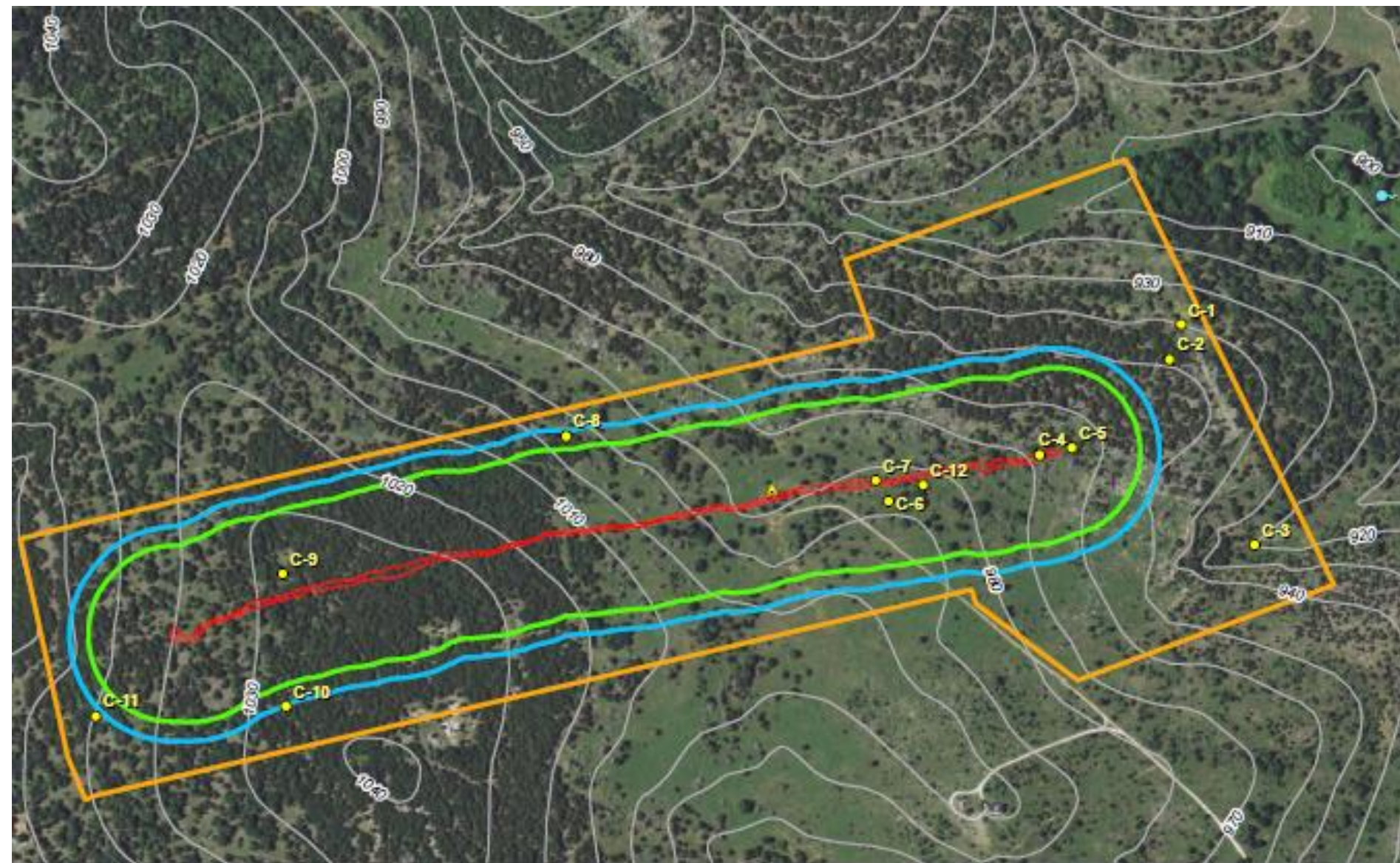
Priscilla's Well KFA

- First KFA recognized by USFWS in 2008
- 51.4 Acres
- Two Occupied caves
- *Texella reyesi* (2)
- *Batrisesodes cryptotexanus* (2)
- Five additional troglobites
- Working with Sun City Hiking Club on hiking paths



Cobbs Cavern

- In the top ten largest caves in Texas
- 156 total acres
- Approximately one mile of passageway
- Speleothem sampling yielded “one of the most pristine samples in the world”
- Gathering data (TAMU Study) that will provide evidence of about 200 Thousand Years of Climate Data
- Future public access to surface, open space recreation



Twin Springs KFA

- 170 acres
- Four species (two karst, GCW and GTS)
- 3.6 miles of pathways
- Leave No Trace based public access
- Over 600 county LNT passes issued

Sunless City

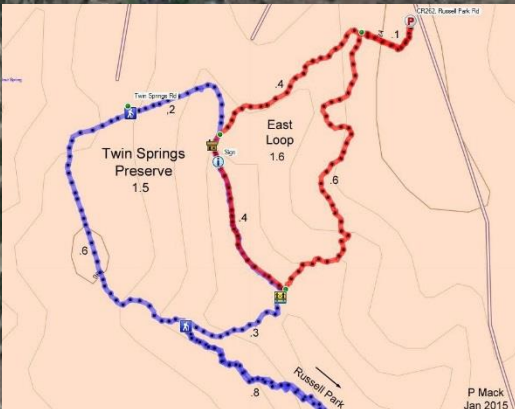
Twin Springs Spring

Whitney West

Whitney Woods Cir

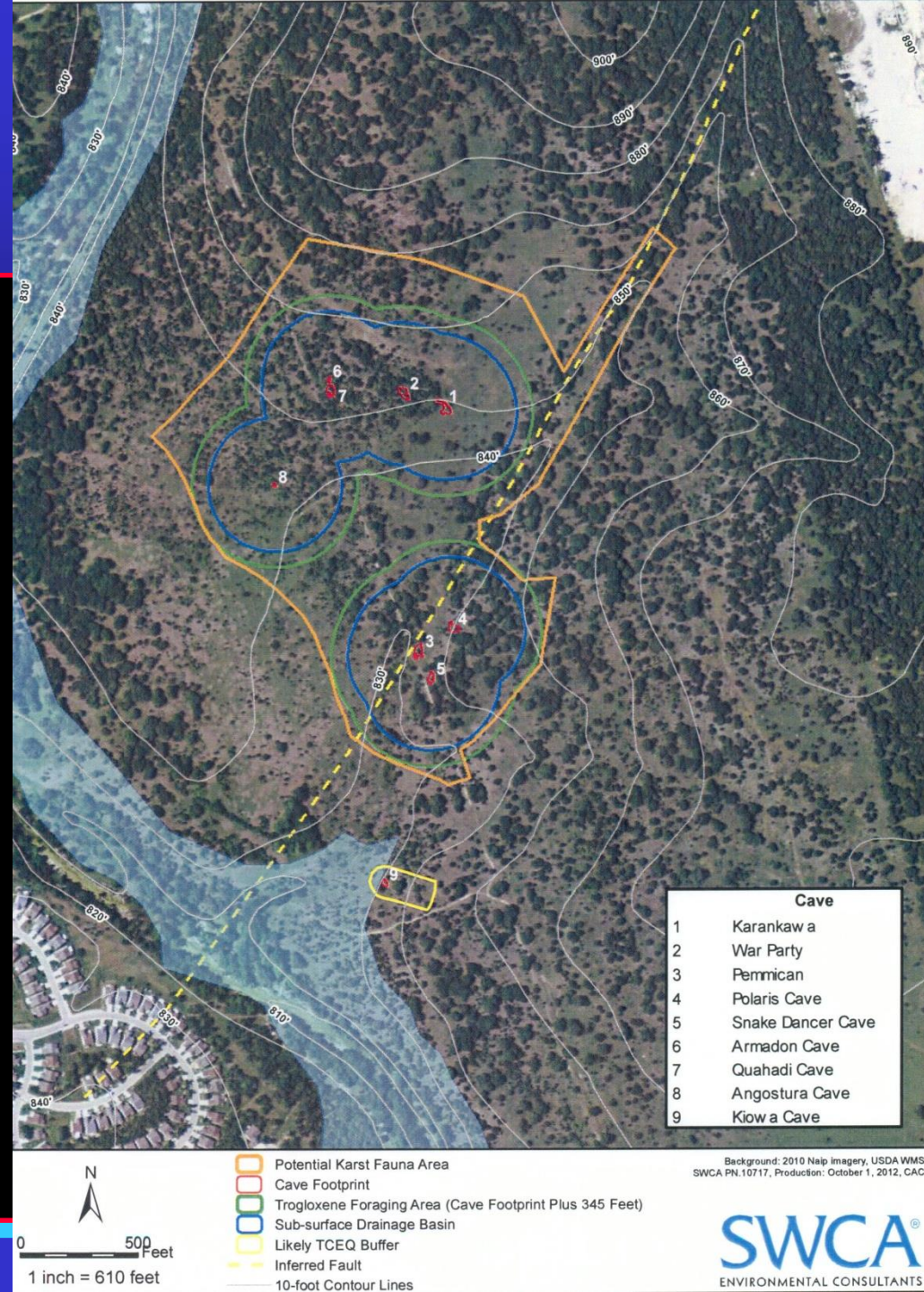
Co Rd

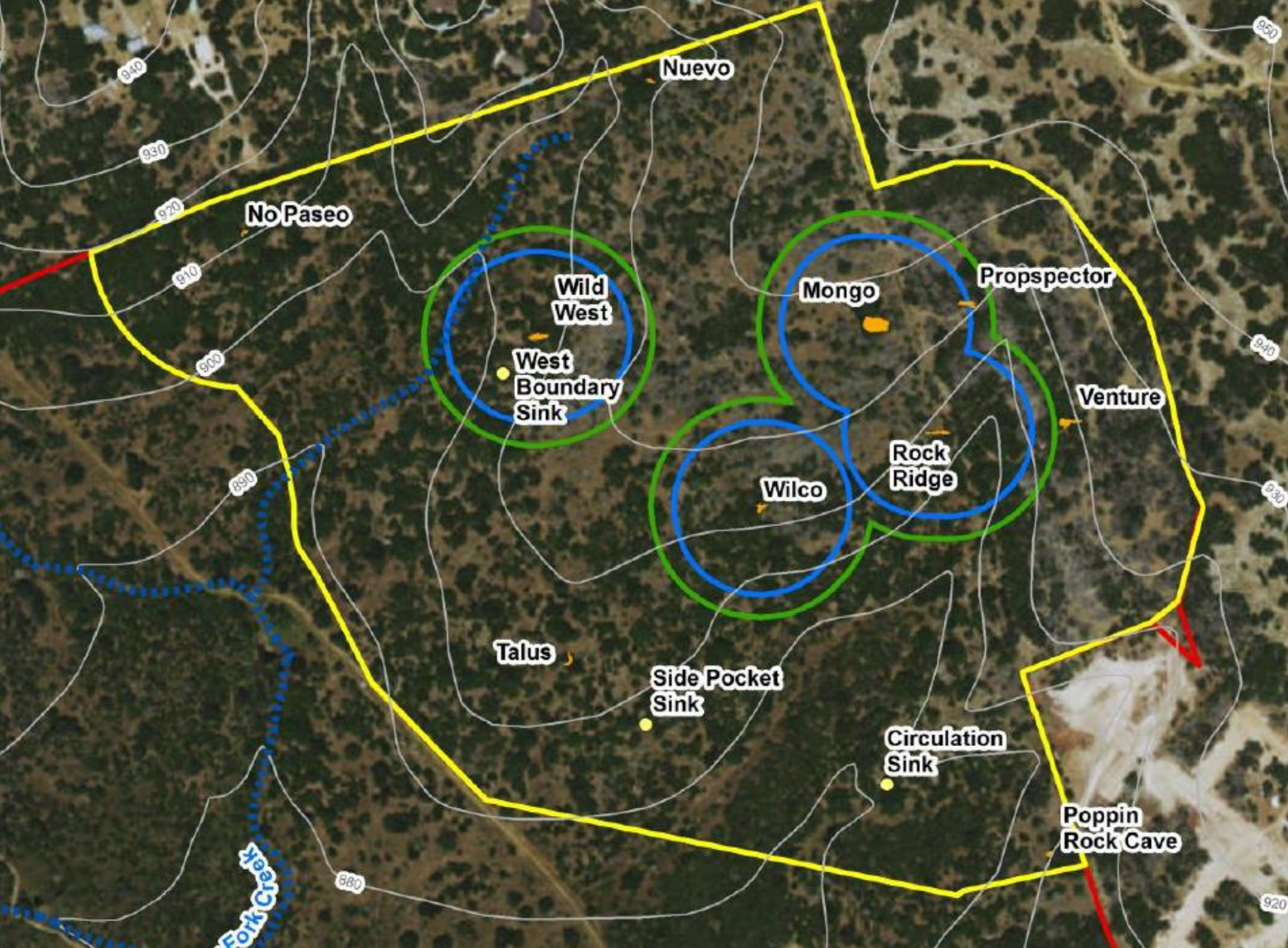
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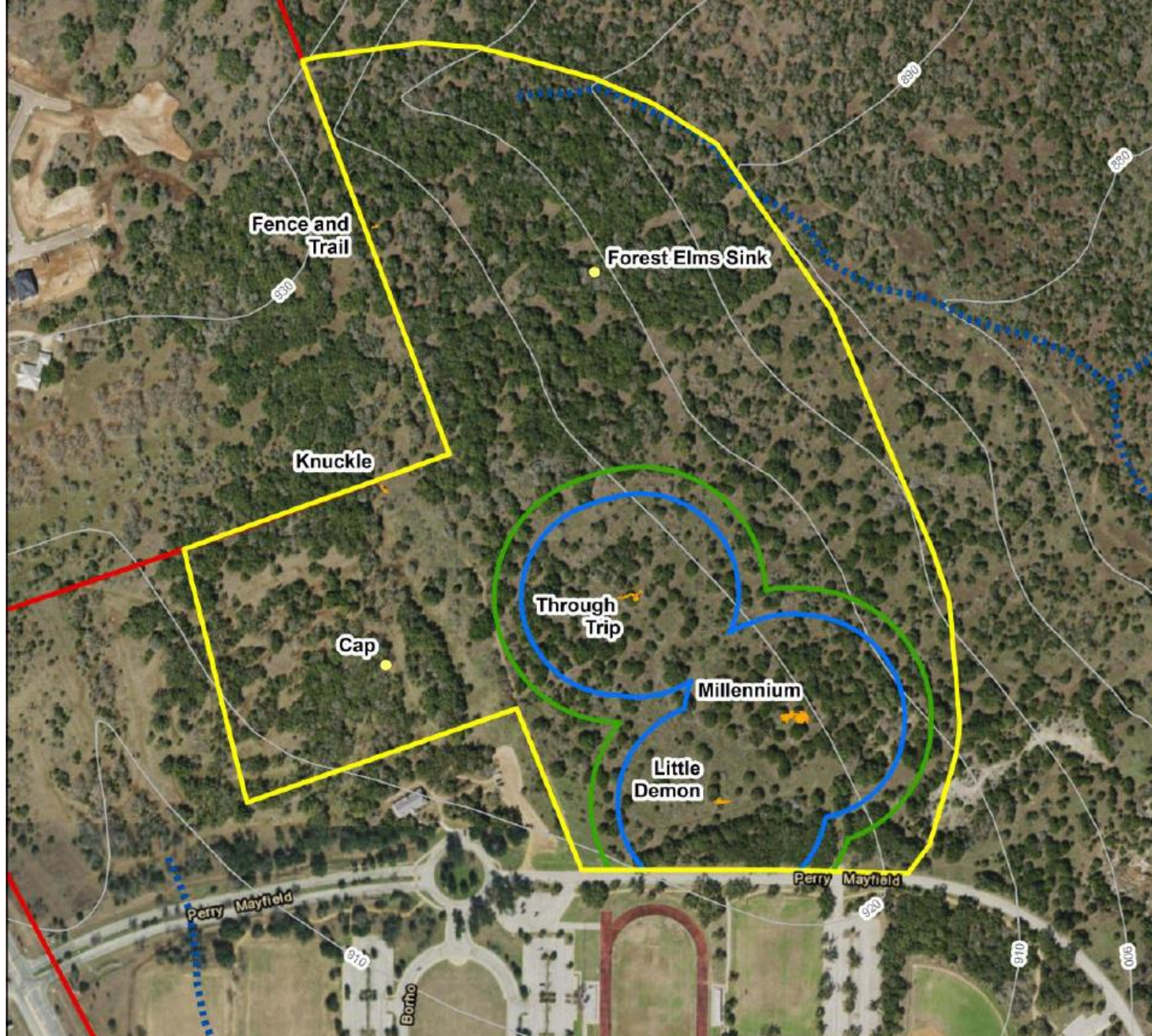
Karankawa KFA

- Two discrete cave complexes
- Approximately 70 acres
- *Texella reyesi* (2)
- *Batrisodes cryptotexanus* (2)
- Still being surveyed for additional species
- Hiking paths being surveyed





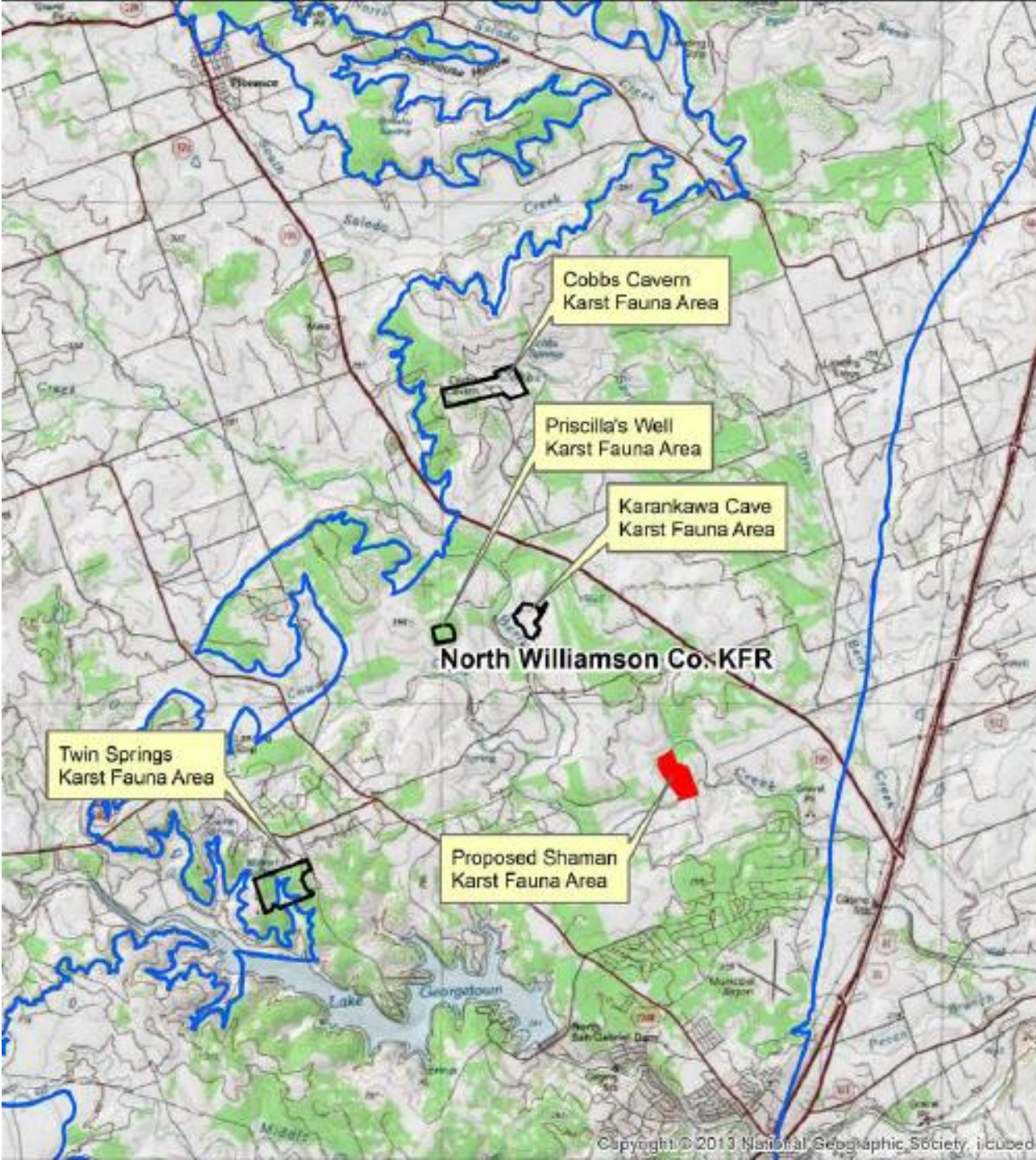
- 152.53 acres inside W.C. SWRP
- Five major *Texella reyesi* features
- Working with Parks Department to develop and maintain walking trails



- 74.43 acres inside W.C. SWRP
- Three major *Texella reyesi* features
- Working to maintain and develop walking trails with Parks Department

SHAMAN KFA

- Newest WCCF – HCP Karst Fauna Area (in process with US FWS)
- 81.7 acres
- Additional acquisition of 37.59 acres of preserve set-aside
- Will protect two major *Batrachoseps texanus* and *Texella reyesi* features plus numerous smaller features; PLUS conserves an additional, known Georgetown salamander spring
- Adjacent to 90+ acre City of Georgetown Westside Park
- Coordination with City of Georgetown, Sun City Community Association and private developer to include about 2.5 miles of publicly accessible trails



How does the Williamson County Regional Habitat Conservation Plan Benefit the Stakeholders of the County?

By:

- ✓ **Significantly reduce time and expense for Endangered Species Act compliance compared to individual permits**
- ✓ **Enhanced LOCAL control of environmental compliance and development**
- ✓ **Coordinating and accelerating endangered species conservation efforts in the County**
- ✓ **Precluding future listing of additional species**
- ✓ **Providing for and preserving some of the natural character of Williamson County**
- ✓ **Providing additional recreational and natural assets to be enjoyed**





LEAVE NO TRACE

- Working with the Center for Outdoor Ethics developed a Williamson County specific program – “Leave No Trace for Williamson County Preserves”
- Provided LNT training to over 600 county residents to provide year round access to Twin Springs KFA natural area pathways
- Future access to other KFA natural areas

TWIN SPRINGS
PRESERVE



A photograph of a natural path in a forest. The path is covered with dry, brown leaves and patches of green grass. The trees are mostly evergreens, with some bare branches visible in the foreground. The lighting is soft, suggesting an overcast day. The text "Natural pathways at Twin Springs" is overlaid in yellow on the right side of the image.

Natural
pathways
at Twin
Springs

Texella reyesi (Bone Cave Harvestman)

- Already met the recovery threshold (per US FWS) for *Texella reyesi* in North Williamson Karst Fauna Region
- Cohort in scientific petition to down list based on recovery criteria efforts and additional, original research on species distribution and abundance



Bone Cave harvestman
Photo by William R. Elliott

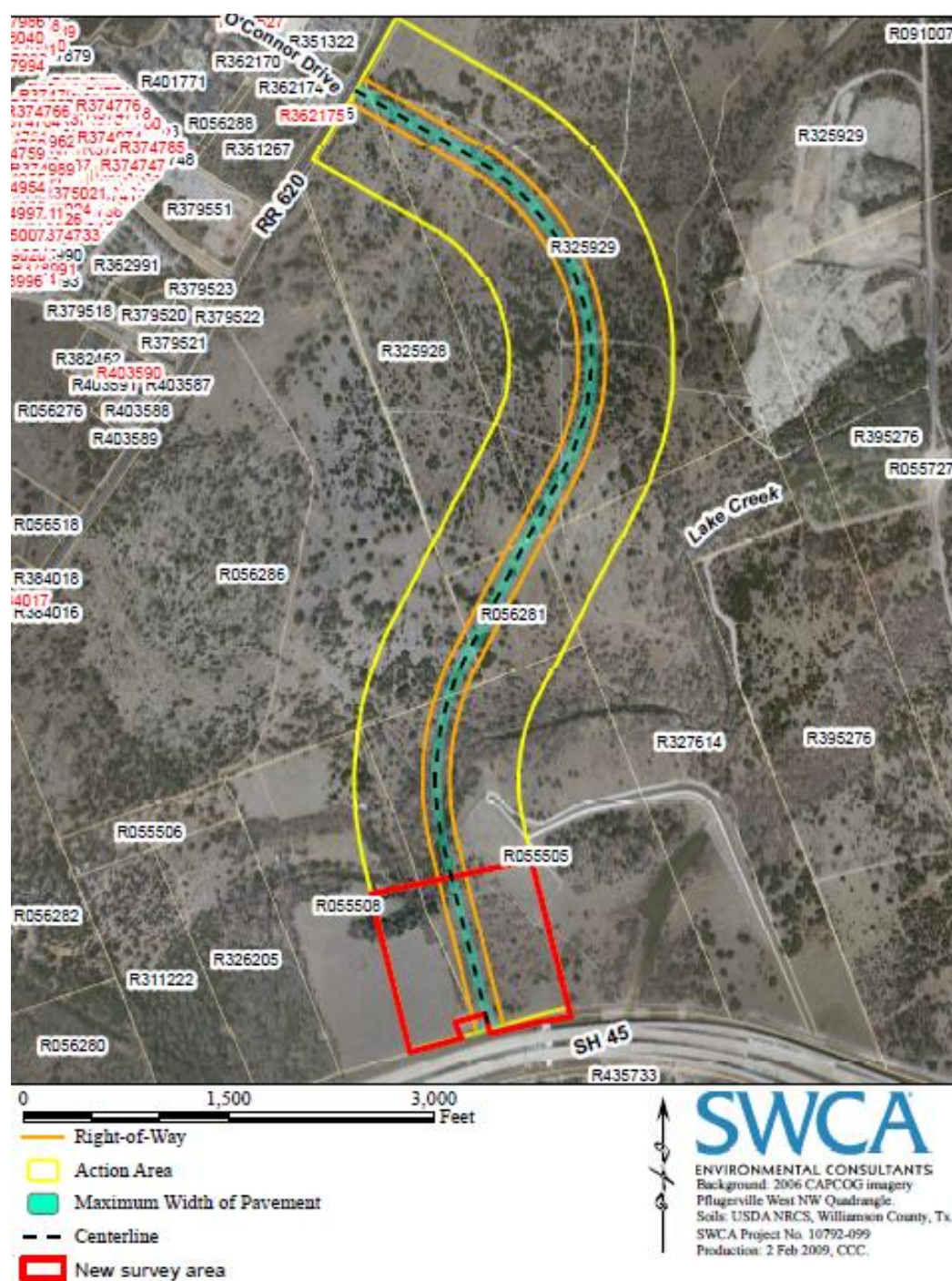


Williamson County Regional Habitat Conservation Plan

**What was the real reason
for the Williamson County
Habitat Conservation Plan?**











Beck
Preserve

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