

INTERIM REPORT

As Required by

THE ENDANGERED SPECIES PROGRAM

TEXAS

Grant No. TX E-142-HP

Endangered and Threatened Species Conservation

**Developing a General Conservation Plan for the Golden-cheeked Warbler and Black-capped Vireo in
Central Texas**

Prepared by:

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Director, Wildlife

26 September 2012

INTERIM REPORT

STATE: Texas **GRANT NUMBER:** TX E-142-HP

GRANT TITLE: Developing a General Conservation Plan for the Golden-cheeked Warbler and Black-capped Vireo in Central Texas

REPORTING PERIOD: 24 Aug 11 to 30 Sep 12 **OBJECTIVE(S):**

Revised version (see Attachment B):

Create a draft General Conservation Plan (GCP) to authorize the incidental take of golden-cheeked warblers and black-capped vireos within their overlapping breeding ranges in central Texas in accordance with section 10(a)(1)(B) of the Endangered Species Act.

Segment Objectives (revised, see Attachment B):

- Organize, coordinate, and support a series of workgroups composed of a full-range of potential stakeholders. These workgroups will be chartered to build the framework for addressing the science, economics, policy, and outreach needs for developing the GCP. We will support the workgroups with GIS, remote-sensing, scientific input, and other analytical products as required.
- Collect and synthesize all current information relevant to developing a specific conservation strategy for both target species within the 38-county area. This will include a summary of the threats and needs of both target species to serve as the biological basis for the GCP (USFWS 2007).
- Define and quantify activities anticipated to result in incidental take of the target species.
- Define and quantify activities anticipated to result in conservation benefit to recovery for the target species.
- Validate existing models for use in determining specific metrics of incidental take and conservation/recovery benefit.
- Organize and facilitate public scoping meetings as per NEPA requirements.
- Develop a draft GCP.

Significant Deviations:

Project Statement revised to reflect change of focus by removing activities related to Recovery Credits. Revised Project Statement (latest version attached, see below) required an amendment to the grant which cannot happen until FBMS comes back online in late 2012.

Summary Of Progress:

Please see Attachment A (Performance Report), Attachment B (revised Project Statement).

Location: Bandera, Bell, Bexar, Blanco, Bosque, Burnet, Comal, Coryell, Dallas, Eastland, Edwards, Erath, Gillespie, Hamilton, Hays, Hill, Hood, Jack, Johnson, Kendall, Kerr, Kimble, Kinney, Lampasas, Llano, Mason, McLennan, Medina, Menard, Palo Pinto, Real, San Saba, Somervell, Stephens, Travis, Uvalde, Williamson, and Young Counties, Texas.

Cost: Costs were not available at time of this report, they will be available upon completion of the Final Report and conclusion of the project.

Prepared by: Craig Farquhar

Date: 26 September 2012

Approved by: 

Date: 26 September 2012

C. Craig Farquhar

ATTACHMENT A

Interim report

Section 6 Grant: Developing a general conservation plan for the golden-cheeked warbler and black-capped vireo in central Texas

Project Coordinator: Roel Lopez, Interim Director
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Reporting period: December 2011 – September 2012

Summary of Progress

Italicized bullet points below are copied from the Project Statement; each bullet is followed by a brief summation of progress to date. Tasks are grouped by (1) first year general objectives and (2) each committee's (aka work group) objectives. Arrows indicate new or altered tasks as included in the July 2012 revised Project Statement. Discussion of the Project Statement revisions are in the "Significant Deviations" section on page 6.

1. First year objectives

- *Organize, coordinate, and support a series of workgroups composed of a full-range of potential stakeholders. These workgroups will be chartered to build the framework for addressing the science, economics, policy, and outreach needs for developing the GCP. We will support the workgroups with GIS, remote-sensing, scientific input, and other analytical products as required.*
Progress to date = Policy and Science committees have been established and have met approximately once every 1-2 months since December 2011. They continue to discuss and work through various components of the GCP. Policy committee members: Kirby Brown (TWA), David Bezanson (TNC), Wendy Connally (TPWD), Mel Davis (TSSWCB), Gene Richardson (TFB). Science committee members: Susan Baggett (NRCS), Leonard Brennan (TAMU-Kingsville), Jim Giocomo (Amer. Bird Cons.), Joe Grzybowski (UCO), Cal Newnam (TXDOT), and Nathan Rains (TPWD).
- *Collect and synthesize all current information relevant to developing a specific conservation strategy for both target species within the 38-county area. This will include a summary of the threats and needs of both target species to serve as the biological basis for the GCP.*
Progress to date = This has mainly been completed, with ongoing updates.
- *Define and quantify activities anticipated to result in incidental take of the target species.*
Progress to date = This has mainly been completed, with ongoing updates.
- *Define and quantify activities anticipated to result in conservation benefit to recovery for the target species.*
Progress to date = This task has shifted to the entities involved in developing the Texas Conservation Market (see "Significant Deviations" section).
- *Validate existing models for use in determining specific metrics of incidental take and conservation/recovery benefit.*
Progress to date = There is ongoing discussion of using existing models to quantify incidental take for the GCWA and BCVI. Additional validation may be part of the GCP's adaptive management strategy.
- *Organize and facilitate public scoping meetings as per NEPA requirements.*
Progress to date = It has been determined that USFWS will organize and lead public scoping meetings associated with the GCP. Texas A&M IRNR will assist as needed. Although public scoping meetings were originally anticipated to occur during the 2012 summer or fall, it is likely the meetings will not begin until early 2013.

➤ *Develop a draft GCP.*

Progress to date = An initial draft will be sent to both committees on October 1 for additional feedback and discussion. This initial draft will not be a complete draft, rather it is intended to compile and organize the discussions to date. We anticipate providing a full draft to USFWS in December 2012. The December draft will still be preliminary (i.e., not a Draft to be submitted to the Federal Register) and can be used to focus discussion and feedback at future public scoping meetings.

2. Committee objectives Science

- *Work closely with the Golden-cheeked Warbler Recovery Team to identify focal areas for recovery and associated steps as listed below. This process will include review and incorporation of the best-available information on climate change impacts to the two species and their habitats.*
 - *Map and describe these focal areas using the best available information.*
 - *Identify and delineate primary and secondary service areas (areas in which mitigation credits may be used) associated with each focal area.*
 - *Identify priority focal areas for permanent conservation.*
 - *Identify the potential use of buffer areas and connecting corridors.*
 - *Identify potential restoration areas.*
 - *Identify and promote funding of research to fill critical information gaps.*
 - *Develop specific criteria for attaining project success, including metrics and duration of monitoring.*

Progress to date = The GCWA Recovery Team has been inactive during this reporting period and we have not yet coordinated with them in discussions about the GCP. Currently there is no Recovery Team for the BCVI. In addition, many of the details within this task has shifted to the entities involved in developing the Texas Conservation Market (see “Significant Deviations” section).

- *Develop GCP screening and ranking criteria.*
 - *Use the focal areas identified above as part, or all of the screening criteria (Screening criteria are used to determine eligibility).*
 - *Use best available science to develop screening and ranking criteria.*

Progress to date = This task has shifted to the entities involved in developing the Texas Conservation Market (see “Significant Deviations” section).

- *Using the most current version of the Recovery Plan, identify all of the recovery actions that are likely to be benefitted by implementation of the GCP and develop (or designate existing, if available) metrics.*

Progress to date = This task has shifted to the entities involved in developing the Texas Conservation Market (see “Significant Deviations” section).

- *Identify, describe, and assign a means of valuating all of the likely debits that are anticipated to occur (through discussions with energy and transmission companies, Texas Department of Transportation, Department of Defense, and others).*

Progress to date = This task has shifted to the entities involved in developing the Texas Conservation Market (see “Significant Deviations” section).

- *In collaboration with the other committees, identify and quantify ways and means of creating a conservation benefit to recovery via mitigation requirements.*

Progress to date = Ongoing discussions with committee.

Science note: In lieu of the above tasks, the Science committee has focused on other topics relevant to the GCP, such as plan area, covered species, covered activities, conservation strategy, and mitigation options.

Policy

- *Work closely with the Interagency Task Force on Economic Growth and Endangered Species (established by Senate Bill 2534, 81st Legislative Session) to engage the appropriate communities, businesses, and agencies in the policy and economic implications of the GCP.*
Progress to date = Texas A&M works continually with the Comptroller's office (chair of the task force) in organizing and conducting committee meetings and providing GCP-related information to participants at task force meetings, but we have not yet moved forward with significant outreach.
- *Identify roles and responsibilities for Program administration and management.*
Progress to date = Ongoing discussions with committee.
- *Identify and establish a relationship with one or more accredited land trusts, which will hold permanent conservation easements*
 - *Work with the land trusts to develop a conservation easement template. Conservation easements should be standardized as much as is practical. Language and terms must be simple to understand and clearly beneficial to the species.***Progress to date** = This task has shifted to the entities involved in developing the Texas Conservation Market (see "Significant Deviations" section) and was deleted in the July 2012 revised Project Statement.
- *In collaboration with the other workgroups, identify and quantify ways and means of creating a conservation benefit to recovery via mitigation requirements.*
Progress to date = Ongoing discussions with committee.
- *Meet with federal entities that have existing or developing Recovery Credit Systems (RCS) for the golden-cheeked warbler*
 - *Educate them about the GCP, along with other existing mitigation options and programs, and identify their near-term and long-term credit needs.*
 - *Identify their near-term and long-term credit needs and outline an approach for their participation in the GCP.***Progress to date** = This task has shifted to the entities involved in developing the Texas Conservation Market (see "Significant Deviations" section) and was deleted in the July 2012 revised Project Statement.
- *Meet with non-federal entities that have existing or developing HCPs for the golden-cheeked warbler and black-capped vireo.*
 - *Educate them about the GCP and other existing mitigation options and programs.*
 - *Review offset/mitigation language and determine whether language accommodates participation in the GCP.*

- *For developing and new HCPs, assist with drafting of language that incorporates participation in GCP and describes the conservation benefit to recovery that results*
- *Outline an approach for their participation in the GCP.*

Progress to date = There have been brief discussions with the Policy committee and Comptroller's office regarding the best approach for this outreach. We have not yet proceeded with the outreach itself as we are first trying to work through certain components of the GCP.

- *In collaboration with the Economics workgroup, determine the initial and near-term (i.e., start up) funding available for credit purchase/sponsorship from federal and non-federal entities that are "ready to go" (i.e., they have the necessary RCS/HCP agreement in place).*

Progress to date = This task has shifted to the entities involved in developing the Texas Conservation Market (see "Significant Deviations" section) and was deleted in the July 2012 revised Project Statement.

- *In collaboration with the Economics workgroup, develop a protocol for a reverse auction or other market-based mechanism (credit purchase) and credit sale processes.*

Progress to date = This task has shifted to the entities involved in developing the Texas Conservation Market (see "Significant Deviations" section) and was deleted in the July 2012 revised Project Statement.

- *In collaboration with the Economics workgroup, determine the funding needs for program implementation and monitoring.*

Progress to date = This has not yet been discussed, although it is possible that funding will not be an issue depending on the mitigation options included in the GCP and whether the GCP is administered by USFWS.

Policy note: In lieu of some of the above tasks, the Policy committee has focused on other topics relevant to the GCP, such as plan area, covered species, covered activities, conservation strategy, and mitigation options.

Economics

- *Work with the Interagency Task Force on Economic Growth and Endangered Species and the Texas Comptroller of Public Accounts to develop reliable economic analyses for the development of the GCP.*
- *In collaboration with the other workgroups, identify and quantify ways and means of creating a conservation benefit to recovery with each transaction.*
- *Identify and describe a market-based approach for the GCP acquisition and sale of credits that will maximize cost-efficiency and effectiveness of the resulting recovery actions.*
- *Develop a start-up budget to include administrative expenses and funding management for credit purchase and sales.*

Progress to date = We have not established an Economics committee and have realized in recent months that development of the GCP may not require one, depending on the mitigation options and

how the GCP is administered. This committee is more relevant to development of the Texas Conservation Market (see “Significant Deviations” section).

Outreach/Administration

- *Oversee a survey of landowner attitudes within the focal areas toward participation in the various options of the GCP.*
Progress to date = Not yet initiated. We are trying to work through certain components of the GCP first.
- *Identify a team-oriented approach, and define roles and responsibilities for landowner outreach, habitat assessments, management plan development, management plan implementation, execution of easements and performance contracts, and monitoring.*
Progress to date = This task has shifted to the entities involved in developing the Texas Conservation Market (see “Significant Deviations” section).
- *Develop an outreach package of materials for landowners, including discussion of all types of covered activities as well as available mitigation opportunities.*
Progress to date = Not yet initiated. We are trying to work through certain components of the GCP first so we have more substantive information to offer during outreach activities.
- *Identify and implement opportunities for workshops within focal areas to “get the word out”.*
Progress to date = Not yet initiated. We are trying to work through certain components of the GCP first so we have more substantive information to offer during outreach activities.

Outreach note: We chose to shift these outreach tasks to the Policy committee because the same committee members are able to assist with both sets of tasks. Therefore, we do not have a separate Outreach committee at this time.

Plan Development and Stakeholder Coordination

- *Facilitate the work of the workgroups as necessary: help define specific tasks, provide information to complete tasks, enable coordination among committees.*
Progress to date = Policy and Science committees have met approximately once every 1-2 months with first meetings in December 2011, to discuss and work through various components of the GCP. Members of the Plan Development Team and associated staff have organized and led those meetings and provided information to the committees as needed. Meetings are ongoing and the Plan Development Team continues to move the process forward. Plan Development Team members: Cary Dupuy (CPA), Julie Groce (TAMU-IRNR), Bryan Hays (TAMU-IRNR), Michael Morrison (TAMU-College Station), Justin Tatum (TWMF), Matt Wagner (TPWD), David Wolfe (EDF), and Roel Lopez (TAMU-IRNR Interim Director, replacing Neal Wilkins).

- *Assemble the work of the workgroups into a cohesive and complete GCP.*
Progress to date = A preliminary committee draft will be sent to committees on October 1 for additional feedback and discussion. We anticipate providing a full draft to USFWS in December 2012. The December draft will still be preliminary (i.e., not a Draft to be submitted to the Federal Register) and can be used to focus discussion and feedback at future public scoping meetings.

Significant Deviations

Within a few months of the grant being awarded, it became clear that there was confusion surrounding the original proposal and intentions and that development of a credit market for GCWA and BCVI (as discussed in the proposal) needed to be accomplished with a funding source separate from that of the Section 6 grant. The credit market is intended to be one of the mitigation options within the GCP and important for the GCP's success. IRNR worked with TPWD and FWS staff to resolve the confusion, resulting in a revised Project Statement – with clarified objectives – provided to Craig Farquhar (TPWD) in July 2012. One of the primary revisions involved separating credit market development from GCP development. Therefore, much of the approach now focuses solely on GCP development (versus focusing on both GCP and credit market development as in original proposal). Efforts to develop the credit market – currently called the Texas Conservation Market – are being led by the Environmental Defense Fund with separate funding sources.

ATTACHMENT B

REVISED PROJECT STATEMENT (draft)

**DEVELOPING A GENERAL CONSERVATION PLAN FOR THE GOLDEN-CHEEKED
WARBLER AND BLACK-CAPPED VIREO IN CENTRAL TEXAS**

Submitted By:

Texas A&M Institute of Renewable Natural Resources

Participating Partners:

Environmental Defense Fund
Interagency Task Force on Economic Growth and Endangered Species
Texas AgriLife Extension
Texas Comptroller of Public Accounts
Texas Parks and Wildlife Department
Texas Watershed Management Foundation

Contact information

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Need

Recent scientific evaluations for the endangered golden-cheeked warbler and black-capped vireo confirmed that range-wide fragmentation and loss of breeding habitats continue to be the primary threats to both species (Wilkins et al. 2006, Groce et al. 2010). Golden-cheeked warblers have lost 5-10% of their breeding habitat since 1990, and only 4% of potential breeding habitat is in federally protected areas (Groce et al. 2010). The threat of habitat loss for golden-cheeked warblers is due to vegetation clearing associated with land development and other changes in land use (Groce et al 2010). For black-capped vireos, the direct loss of breeding habitat has also been accompanied by encroachment from juniper and other woody species due largely to fire suppression and overgrazing by domestic livestock and wildlife (Wilkins et al 2006). In addition, black-capped vireos are also limited by brood parasitism from brown-headed cowbirds.

These two species overlap their breeding ranges across a 38-county¹ area of central Texas (see Figure 1; USFWS 2011) where private lands make up more than 90% of the land area with potential breeding habitat. Although these species usually occupy habitats with different vegetation composition and structure, they often occur in close proximity, their habitat use sometimes overlaps and thus need to be managed simultaneously under a common conservation and management plan. Furthermore, from a practical perspective, within the species' overlapping ranges, a conservation plan for one species should also address the other. Also, by including both species in a single planning effort, conservation actions that benefit one species at the expense of the other may be avoided.

Regional Habitat Conservation Plans (RHCP) are being implemented across several central Texas counties where development pressures have been highest. The high-growth counties of Williamson (Georgetown), Travis (Austin), Hays (San Marcos), and Comal (New Braunfels) all have – or are in the process of developing – Regional HCPs for facilitating development while addressing one or more endangered species. In addition, Bexar County has initiated a Regional HCP effort for addressing the growth and development of San Antonio. While these efforts remain important, they are impacting only a fraction of these two species' breeding ranges and they are unlikely to lead to significant and measurable recovery benefits and in the absence of a comprehensive, range-wide approach, are unlikely to provide the scale and pace of private landowner participation needed to achieve timely species recovery. While the golden-cheeked warbler and black-capped vireo will be the covered species in the plan, as part of the planning process we will evaluate whether other species may warrant inclusion in the plan.

With human population in central Texas expected to increase to 5.6 million by 2030 – more than a 25% increase (Groce et al 2010) -- and a high rate of land fragmentation and conversion (Wilkins et al 2009), the threats due to habitat loss will likely accelerate through the next 2 decades. Additionally, the development of 2,334 miles of high-capacity transmission lines that will cross 15 counties in the species' overlapping breeding ranges further emphasizes the need for a more coordinated planning effort. Conservation planning efforts could more reliably yield real recovery benefits by coordinating efforts among cooperators, addressing threats across private lands, and monitoring both actions and outcomes across the overlapping breeding range of these two species.

For meeting this demand, we propose to develop a General Conservation Plan (GCP), in participation with the U.S. Fish and Wildlife Service (USFWS), that contributes a measureable benefit to recovery while significantly streamlining the process for non-Federal entities (e.g., private landowners, non-profits, non-governmental entities, state or local governments) to comply with the Endangered Species Act by applying for an incidental take permit (ITP) under section 10(a)(1)(B).

¹ This area encompasses the entire range of golden-cheeked warbler, including Young County, although Young is not considered within the breeding range of black-capped vireos.

Objective

Create a draft General Conservation Plan (GCP) to authorize the incidental take of golden-cheeked warblers and black-capped vireos within their overlapping breeding ranges in central Texas in accordance with section 10(a)(1)(B) of the Endangered Species Act.

Expected Results and Benefits

Once implemented, the GCP produced under this project would provide these results and benefits:

- Provide a consistent and streamlined process for participants to acquire incidental take permits (ITPs) across a broad geographic area.
- Expedite incidental take authorization and standardize mitigation measures for the entirety of the golden-cheeked warbler breeding range and a significant portion of the black-capped vireo breeding range in Texas, thus allowing for more efficient and coordinated conservation actions, better-monitored results, and increased recovery benefit to the species.
- Result in coordinated broad-scale recovery approach for both species, including using the best-available science to address impacts expected to result to both species from climate change, thus creating conservation benefits to the warbler and vireo that are directly aligned with recovery goals.
- Facilitate economic growth while ensuring ESA compliance and protecting endangered species habitat by providing a streamlined process as an additional tool for mitigating incidental take associated with development, transmission corridors, transportation construction, pipelines, and other economic activity across a range-wide geographic scope.
- Although permit applicants would receive their own ITP complete with No Surprises assurances, the process of permit issuance would be simplified and standardized and thus limit the need for extensive review of each applicant.
- The GCP would provide a much needed range-wide scope and essentially take the place of additional county-level HCPs in central Texas. RHCPs provide great benefit to the species at the county-scale but are expensive to develop and cover a relatively small portion of the species ranges. In addition, RHCPs that have been developed for the warbler and vireo thus far occur along the I-35 corridor towards the eastern edge of both species ranges and may provided limited recovery benefit.

Approach

USFWS guidance for GCP policy states that development of a GCP is undertaken by the USFWS, unlike traditional HCPs that are developed by individual applicants. As such, we would produce a plan that could be referenced by USFWS for development of an official GCP. We anticipate that completion of the GCP will require a 2-phase approach. The purpose of this proposal is to initiate and complete Phase 1, which would include the following actions:

- Organize, coordinate, and support a series of workgroups composed of a full-range of potential stakeholders. These workgroups will be chartered to build the framework for addressing the science, economics, policy, and outreach needs for developing the GCP. We will support the workgroups with GIS, remote-sensing, scientific input, and other analytical products as required.
- Collect and synthesize all current information relevant to developing a specific conservation strategy for both target species within the 38-county area. This will include a summary of the threats and needs of both target species to serve as the biological basis for the GCP (USFWS 2007).
- Define and quantify activities anticipated to result in incidental take of the target species.
- Define and quantify activities anticipated to result in conservation benefit to recovery for the target species.

- Validate existing models for use in determining specific metrics of incidental take and conservation/recovery benefit.
- Organize and facilitate public scoping meetings as per NEPA requirements.
- Develop a draft GCP.

We anticipate that Phase 2 would be funded through a separate and subsequent contract and would include finalizing the planning process, contracting a third party to develop the necessary Environmental Impact Statement or Environmental Assessment, and agency review and decision. A more specific proposal will be developed for Phase 2 following evaluation of Phase 1 results and feedback.

We propose to develop this GCP through the input of four stakeholder workgroups that will focus on core decision-making tasks deemed necessary to create and implement a fully-functioning program. We propose to support, coordinate, and organize the effort with a plan development team of scientists, managers, and outreach specialists. The *plan development team*, in coordination with the state *Interagency Task Force on Economic Growth and Endangered Species*, will lead the effort, while also providing supporting scientific and technical needs such as GIS analysis, modification and validation of habitat occupancy models, monitoring design, take quantification, and adaptive management planning. In addition the plan development team will schedule, organize, and coordinate workgroup progress toward meeting tasks necessary for project completion. The plan development team will have lead responsibility for assembling the product from the workgroups into a cohesive and complete GCP. The four workgroups will be (1) Science, (2) Policy, (3) Economics, and (4) Outreach/Administration. The workgroups will be composed of representatives of all stakeholder groups so as to insure an inclusive, collaborative, and transparent development process. This workgroup-based approach has been used successfully in the development of the Fort Hood Recovery Credit System and the Utah Prairie Dog Habitat Credits Exchange. Workgroup tasks are outlined below. Each of the workgroups will require the coordination and technical support provided by the plan development team.

Science

- Work closely with the Golden-cheeked Warbler Recovery Team to identify focal areas for recovery and associated steps as listed below. This process will include review and incorporation of the best-available information on climate change impacts to the two species and their habitats.
 - Map and describe these focal areas using the best available information
 - Identify priority focal areas for permanent conservation
 - Identify the potential use of buffer areas and connecting corridors
 - Identify potential restoration areas
 - Identify and promote funding of research to fill critical information gaps
 - Develop specific criteria for attaining project success, including metrics and duration of monitoring
- Develop GCP screening and ranking criteria.
 - Use the focal areas identified above as part, or all of the screening criteria (Screening criteria are used to determine eligibility).
 - Use best available science to develop screening and ranking criteria.
- Using the most current version of the Recovery Plan, identify all of the recovery actions that are likely to be benefitted by implementation of the GCP and develop (or designate existing, if available) metrics
- Identify, describe, and assign a means of valuating all of the likely debits that are anticipated to occur (through discussions with energy and transmission companies, Texas Department of Transportation, Department of Defense, and others).
- In collaboration with the other committees, identify and quantify ways and means of creating a conservation benefit to recovery via mitigation requirements.

Policy

- Work closely with the *Interagency Task Force on Economic Growth and Endangered Species* (established by Senate Bill 2534, 81st Legislative Session) to engage the appropriate communities, businesses, and agencies in the policy and economic implications of the GCP.
- Identify roles and responsibilities for Program administration and management.
- In collaboration with the other workgroups, identify and quantify ways and means of creating a conservation benefit to recovery via mitigation requirements.
- Meet with non-federal entities that have existing or developing HCPs for the golden-cheeked warbler and black-capped vireo.
 - Educate them about the GCP and other existing mitigation options and programs.
 - Review offset/mitigation language and determine whether language accommodates participation in the GCP.
 - For developing and new HCPs, assist with drafting of language that incorporates participation in GCP and describes the conservation benefit to recovery that results
 - Outline an approach for their participation in the GCP.
- In collaboration with the Economics workgroup, determine the funding needs for program implementation and monitoring.

Economics

- Work with the *Interagency Task Force on Economic Growth and Endangered Species* and the Texas Comptroller of Public Accounts to develop reliable economic analyses for the development of the GCP.
- In collaboration with the other workgroups, identify and quantify ways and means of creating a conservation benefit to recovery via mitigation requirements.
- Develop a start-up budget to include administrative expenses and funding management.

Outreach/Administration

- Oversee a survey of landowner attitudes within the focal areas toward participation in the various options of the GCP.
- Identify a team-oriented approach, and define roles and responsibilities for landowner outreach, habitat assessments, management plan development, management plan implementation, execution of easements and performance contracts, and monitoring.
- Develop an outreach package of materials for landowners, including discussion of all types of covered activities as well as available mitigation opportunities.

Plan Development and Stakeholder Coordination

- Facilitate the work of the workgroups as necessary: help define specific tasks, provide information to complete tasks, enable coordination among committees.
- Assemble the work of the workgroups into a cohesive and complete draft GCP.
- Organize public scoping meetings.

In summary, with the current Section 6 funding we will (1) hold public scoping meetings to satisfy one of the NEPA requirements for the GCP, (2) develop a draft GCP document (with no associated EIS) through the process detailed in this proposal, and (3) solicit an independent review of the draft GCP.

Based on results and feedback on the draft GCP and public comments, we will develop a separate Section 6 proposal to request funding for (1) contracting with a third party to develop the EIS for the GCP, and (2) finalizing the GCP to meet issuance criteria.

Key Project Personnel

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Additional anticipated planning process stakeholders and partners include: U.S. Fish and Wildlife Service (USFWS), Natural Resources Conservation Service (NRCS), Texas Parks and Wildlife Department (TPWD), Texas Departments of Agriculture (TDA), Texas Wildlife Association (TWA), Texas Farm Bureau (TFB), and Texas Department of Transportation (TXDOT).

Location

The area proposed to be covered by the GCP would include the 38-county area overlap between the warbler and vireo breeding ranges (Figure 1): Bandera, Bell, Bexar, Blanco, Bosque, Burnet, Comal, Coryell, Dallas, Eastland, Edwards, Erath, Gillespie, Hamilton, Hays, Hill, Hood, Jack, Johnson, Kendall, Kerr, Kimble, Kinney, Lampasas, Llano, Mason, McLennan, Medina, Menard, Palo Pinto, Real, San Saba, Somervell, Stephens, Travis, Uvalde, Williamson, and Young Counties.

As was noted in the USFWS guidance for GCP development, a GCP does not necessarily replace a county or regional HCP, which may be different in scope and cover incidental take for a different suite of species and a different group of activities and impacts. As such, the 5 counties² with RHCPs in place or in development may be included in the GCP if their RHCPs do not cover activities covered in the GCP, or the counties may be omitted from the GCP scope to alleviate conflict and overlap.

Estimated Cost

² These are Williamson, Travis, Comal, Hays, Bexar Counties.

Item No.	Budgeted item	Federal share	Non-federal share	Total
1	Personnel	\$151,760	\$46,754	
	Indirect Charges: 26%	\$ 79,107	\$12,156	\$289,778
2	Travel	\$15,000	0	\$15,000
3	Equipment	0	0	0
4	Supplies	\$7,500	0	\$7,500
5	Contractual	\$95,000	0	\$95,000
6	Other	\$40,520	\$71,000	\$111,520
7	Totals	\$388,887	\$129,910	\$518,798
	Percentages	74.96%	25.04%	100%

1. Personnel:

Texas A&M University

Dr. Neal Wilkins, Director, Institute of Renewable Natural Resources (IRNR)
173 hours @ \$68.86/hour.

Ms. Julie Groce, Extension Program Specialist/Project Manager, IRNR
1,341 hours @ \$23.12/hour.

Ms. Amy Snelgrove, GIS Specialist, IRNR
865 hours @ \$26.94/hour

Ms. Shannon Farrell, Endangered Species Specialist, IRNR
951.5 hours @ \$19.27/hour.

Ms. Katy Smith, PhD. Research Assistant, IRNR
1730 hours @ \$12.14/hour.

Dr. Michael Morrison, Professor and Kleberg Chair, Wildlife and Fisheries Department
216.25 hours @ \$67.49/hour.

Personnel: \$119,545

Total Fringe Benefits: \$32,215.

Indirect Charges: \$79,108. Indirect charges are calculated at 26% of Total Direct Cost.

Match: Texas A&M IRNR personnel, fringe and idc - \$58,910 (\$37,253, \$9,501 and \$12,156).

2. **Travel:** \$15,000. Standard state rates for lodging and meals for Texas AgriLife staff are applied- \$85.00/day lodging and \$36.00/day meals for approximately 124 days. (\$10,540 for lodging and \$4,460 for meals).
3. **Equipment:** No equipment will charged toward this grant.
4. **Supplies:** \$7,500. Covers costs for routine materials and supplies.
5. **Contractual:**

Mr. David Wolfe, Environmental Defense Fund - \$25,000
Phone: 512-478-5161, ext. 3415; Email: dwolfe@edf.org
Mr. Justin Tatum, Program Specialist, Texas Watershed Management Foundation - \$25,000
Phone: 254-223-2493; Email: justindtatum@yahoo.com
Independent Review, To be named. - \$15,000
Legal Services, To be named. - \$30,000

6. Other:

Landowner Analysis. \$15,000. Covers costs associated with conducting scientific landowner survey and analysis.

Graduate Student Tuition. \$5,520; 24 semester hours @ \$230/hour

Meeting Expenses. \$10,000. Covers costs associated with organizing, coordinating, and supporting a series of workgroups composed of a full-range of potential stakeholders.

Office Expenses. \$10,000. Covers a portion of rent and utilities for IRNR's San Antonio office.

Matching.

In Kind Contributions

Environmental Defense Fund, \$15,000
Texas Watershed Management Foundation, \$15,000
Texas Comptroller of Public Accounts, \$25,000

Cash Match.

AgriLife Extension ITFEGES support account, \$16,000
Account number 07-410220-60001.

7. Total Project Costs: \$518,798
Federal Share: \$388,887
Nonfederal Share: \$129,910

Milestone schedule

The schedule follows the outline detailed in the Approach section and is based on an anticipated start date of approximately December 2011.

<u>Activity</u>	<u>Completion</u>
Organize working groups	December 2011
<u>Science</u>	
Identify focal areas for recovery	January 2012
Develop GCP screening and ranking criteria	January 2012
Identify recovery actions	February 2012
Identify and assign a means of valuating anticipated debits	February 2012
Identify/quantify means of creating conservation benefit to recovery	February 2012
Develop conservation strategy for both species	March 2012
<u>Policy</u>	
Identify roles/responsibilities for GCP administration and management	January 2012
Identify/quantify means of creating conservation benefit to recovery	March 2012
Meet with non-federal entities that have existing/developing HCPs or other mitigation programs	March 2012
Determine initial and near-term funding availability	April 2012
<u>Economics</u>	
Identify/quantify means of creating conservation benefit to recovery	March 2012
Develop start-up budget	April 2012
<u>Outreach/Administration</u>	
Survey landowner attitudes of participation	April 2012
Identify approach for outreach, habitat assessments, etc	May 2012
Develop outreach package of materials for landowners	July 2012
Public scoping meetings	September 2012
Draft GCP	31 December 2012
Independent review of draft GCP	31 March 2013

Literature cited

- Groce, J. E., H. A. Mathewson, M. L. Morrison, and N. Wilkins. 2010. Scientific evaluation for the 5-year status review of the golden-cheeked warbler. Texas A&M Institute of Renewable Natural Resources, College Station, Texas, USA.
- U.S. Fish and Wildlife Service [USFWS]. 2007. Final General Conservation Plan policy. Memorandum to Assistant Regional Directors, U.S. Fish and Wildlife Service, Washington, D.C., USA.
- U.S. Fish and Wildlife Service [USFWS]. 2011. Species reports – listings and occurrences for Texas. <http://ecos.fws.gov/tess_public/pub/stateListingAndOccurrenceIndividual.jsp?state=TX&s8fid=112761032792&s8fid=112762573902&s8fid=24012944108501>. Accessed 3 January 2011.
- Wilkins, R. N., A. G. Snelgrove, B. C. Fitzsimons, B. M. Stevener, K. L. Skow, R. E. Anderson, and A. M. Dube. 2009. Texas Land Trends. Texas A&M Institute of Renewable Natural Resources. <<http://www.texaslandtrends.org/>>. Accessed 5 May 2009.
- Wilkins, N., R. A. Powell, A. A. T. Conkey, and A. G. Snelgrove. 2006. Population status and threat analysis for the black-capped vireo. Texas A&M Institute of Renewable Natural Resources, College Station, Texas, USA.

Attachments

Figure 1 – Overlapping breeding ranges for black-capped vireos and golden-cheeked warblers.

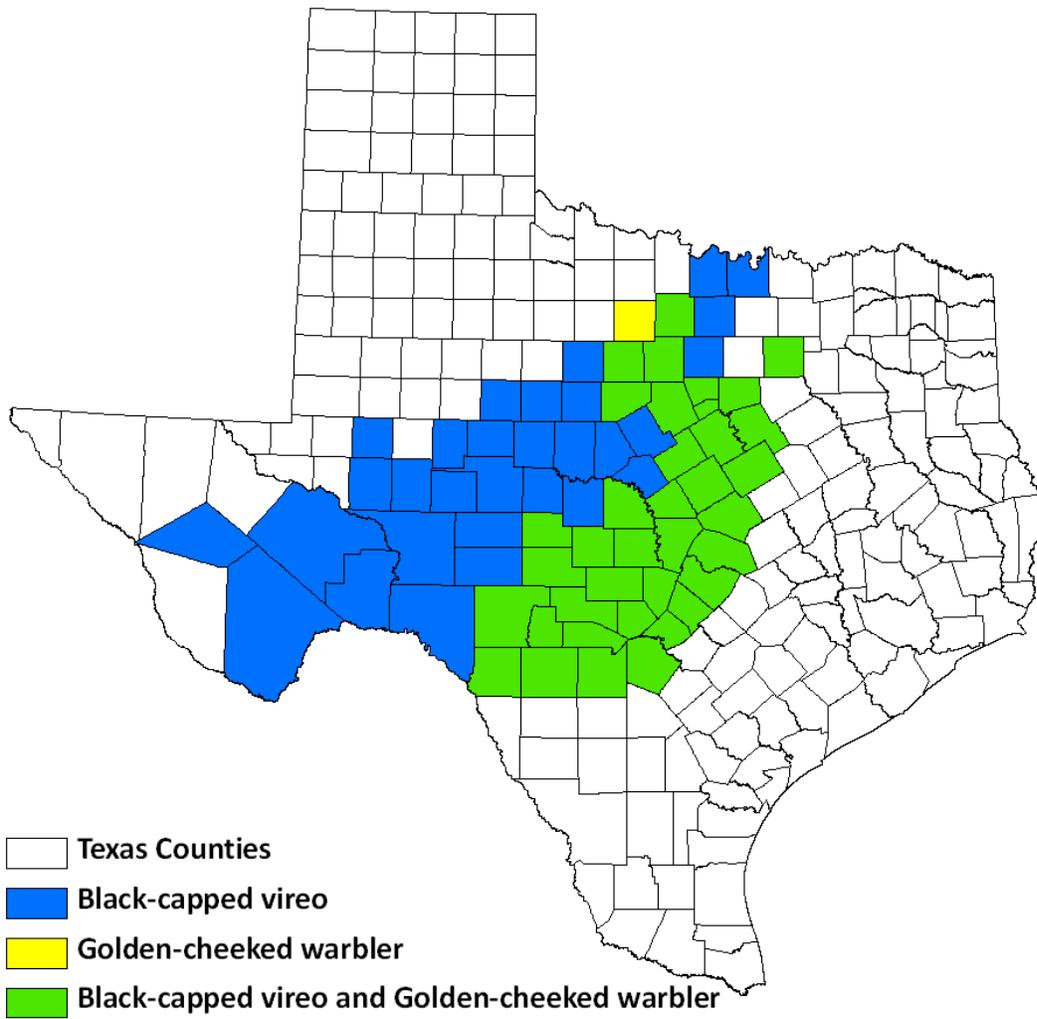


Figure 1. Overlapping breeding ranges for black-capped vireos and golden-cheeked warblers.