

FINAL REPORT

As Required by

THE ENDANGERED SPECIES PROGRAM

TEXAS

Grant No. TX E-111-HP

Endangered and Threatened Species Conservation

Edwards Aquifer Recovery Implementation Program Habitat Conservation Plan

Prepared by:

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Carter Smith
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25 September 2012

INTERIM REPORT

STATE: Texas GRANT NUMBER: TX E-111-HP

GRANT TITLE: Edwards Aquifer Recovery Implementation Program Habitat Conservation Plan

REPORTING PERIOD: 4 Aug 09 to 3 Aug 12

OBJECTIVE(S): To use a facilitated consensus-based decision-making process to develop, and submit a program document, including a Habitat Conservation Plan to protect and contribute to the recovery of listed species in the San Marcos and Comal springs and river systems fed by the Edwards Aquifer and affected by the management of the water in that aquifer.

Segment Objectives:

- Prior to the award of the grant, the EARIP will retain through a competitive bidding process the necessary expertise (the “Consultant”) to prepare the section 10(a) permit application, the HCP and the draft EIS covered by the requested grant.
- The EARIP will retain a consultant to facilitate the decision-making process.¹ Initially, the process will define the objectives and evaluation criteria for the development of the scope of the HCP. Principles and approaches from Structured Decision-Making (“SDM”) will be used to assist in the development of the covered actions and to provide information necessary for FWS to prepare its biological opinion.
- The Consultant will update the biological information in the EAA draft EIS.
- Information from the initial recommendations of the Science Subcommittee and Recharge Facility Subcommittee and the initial results of the Hardy Study will be integrated into the decision-making process to begin the process of developing actions and evaluating the consequences of different combinations of actions.
- As the decision-making process progresses, the Consultant will develop a NEPA scoping document. After its completion, the framework for the HCP will be presented to the general public with public meetings and notices through local media, and solicited additional comments.
- After the completion of the Hardy Study and the receipt of recommendations of the Science Subcommittee and the Recharge Facility Subcommittees, the EARIP will develop a slate of actions and mitigation and adaptive management measures.
- At the completion of the decision-making and NEPA scoping processes, the Consultant will prepare the section 10(a) permit application and complete the draft HCP and draft EIS.
- A second round of public meetings will be held after public notice to describe the plan, answer questions and gather comments.
- The EARIP will provide TPWD a final report on the project 90 days after completion of the last grant segment.

Significant Deviations: None

Summary of Progress:


Please see Attachment A and associated documents on CD and in hard copy (sent to USFWS, Ecological Services Office, Austin TX; attn. Kevin Connally).

Location: Atascosa, Bexar, Caldwell, Comal, Guadalupe, Hays, Medina and Uvalde 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: 25 September 2012

Approved by: 
C. Craig Farquhar

Date: 25 September 2012

ATTACHMENT A

**EDWARDS AQUIFER RECOVERY IMPLEMENTATION PROGRAM HABITAT
CONSERVATION PLAN**

**SECTION 6 HABITAT CONSERVATION PLANNING ASSISTANCE GRANT TO THE
TEXAS AGRILIFE EXTENSION, ON BEHALF OF THE EDWARDS AQUIFER
RECOVERY IMPLEMENTATION PROGRAM (EARIP)
No. E-111-R, Contract No. 211158**

Final Report

August 30, 2012

Submitted to the TEXAS PARKS AND WILDLIFE DEAPRTMENT by TEXAS AGRILIFE
EXTENSION, of the Texas A&M University System, on behalf of the EDWARDS AQUIFER
RECOVERY IMPLEMENTATION PROGRAM

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Abstract

The primary goal of this project was to develop and submit a Habitat Conservation Plan as part of the application requirements for a U.S. Fish and Wildlife Service Incidental Take Permit associated with the impacts to several threatened and endangered species which are found in the Comal and San Marcos springs. In achieving that goal, the EARIP was able to obtain Endangered Species Act Section 6 funds which are administered by the Texas Parks and Wildlife Department. The funding was used to select and retain an environmental consultant to develop and prepare a Habitat Conservation Plan (HCP) and associated draft Environmental Impact Statement (DEIS); and to select and retain a facilitator to assist the stakeholders in reaching consensus on the elements of the HCP.

Objective

To use a facilitated consensus-based decision-making process to develop and to submit a program document, including a habitat conservation plan designed to protect and contribute to the recovery of listed species in the San Marcos and Comal springs and river systems fed by the Edwards Aquifer and affected by the management of the water in that aquifer.

Tasks Involved in Reaching Objective

Task 1: Development and Preparation of the HCP.

- October 2011, the EARIP Steering Committee approved the HCP and supporting documents.
- December 2011, the EAA Board of Directors voted to approve the HCP and supporting documents.
- January 2012, the Texas AgriLife Extension (TAE) terminated the RECON Environmental Inc. contract. TAE retained Bio-West to complete the RECON scope of work (final processing of the HCP and supporting documents and assisting with the National Environmental Policy Act (NEPA) public comment period).
- January 2012, The Implementing Committee was formalized. The Committee is made up of 5 voting members, each appointed and representing an HCP Party.

Current Committee members are:

Michael Morrison - City of New Braunfels

Chuck Ahrens – San Antonio Water System

William Nance - Texas State University

Tom Taggart - City of San Marcos

Roland Ruiz - Edwards Aquifer Authority

- January 2012, the Implementing Committee formally applied for the incidental take permit and submitted the HCP and supporting documents to the U.S. Fish and Wildlife Service (FWS).
- August 2012, the FWS conducted seven public meetings to obtain comments on the draft EIS and an incidental take permit application. Public meetings were held at the following locations.

August 3, 2012 Dunbar Center 801 West MLK St. San Marcos, TX 78666	August 6, 2012 San Antonio Water System Customer Service Building 2800 North Highway 281 San Antonio, TX 78212	August 7, 2012 Texas AgriLife Extension and Research Center 1619 Garner Field Rd. Uvalde, TX 78801
August 8, 2012 New Braunfels Civic Center 375 S. Castell Ave. New Braunfels, TX 78130	August 10, 2012 Schreiner University Cailloux Activity Center 2100 Memorial Blvd. Kerrville, TX 78028	August 14, 2012 Harte Research Institute Texas A&M Corpus Christ 6300 Ocean Drive Corpus Christi, TX 78412
August 15, 2012 University of Houston- Victoria Multi-Purpose Room 3007 N. Ben Wilson Victoria, Texas 77901		

- October 2012, FWS will close public comment
- January 2013, Approval of the incidental take permit is expected and the HCP implementation will begin

Task 2: Consensus Facilitation

The facilitation consulting firm, Collaborative Processes, achieved their primary objectives through September 2011.

October 2011, having met their contractual requirements, professional services by Collaborative Processes were discontinued and the contract ended December 2011.