

Section 6 Report Review

Attachment to letter dated November 26, 2002

Project: Endangered Species Technical Guidance

Final or interim report? Final

Job #: WER 4 (Job 61)

Reviewer's Station: Austin Ecological Services Field Office

Lead station was contacted and concurs with the following comments:

Yes No Not applicable (reviewer is from lead station)

Interim Report	Final Report
<input type="checkbox"/> is acceptable as is	<input checked="" type="checkbox"/> is acceptable as is
<input type="checkbox"/> is acceptable as is, but the comments below need to be addressed in the next report	<input type="checkbox"/> is acceptable, but needs minor revision (see comments below)
<input type="checkbox"/> needs revision (see comments below)	<input type="checkbox"/> needs major revision (see comments below)

Comments:

The Service appreciates the hard work that TPWD does in providing technical assistance on endangered species to private landowners and we are glad that so many landowners are doing positive things for rare and listed species. In the future, it would be helpful if TPWD would share with the Service the draft cooperative management agreements that are developed for private lands that address endangered species management using federal funds. The Service is required to ensure that any project using federal funds is in compliance with all federal and state laws, including the National Environmental Policy Act (NEPA) and the National Historical Preservation Act, to name a few.

FINAL REPORT

As Required by

THE ENDANGERED SPECIES PROGRAM

TEXAS

Grant No. E-1-11

Endangered and Threatened Species Conservation

Project WER4 (61): Endangered Species Technical Guidance

Prepared by: Linda Campbell



John Herron
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Robert Cook
Executive Director

April 30, 2002

FINAL REPORT

STATE: Texas

GRANT NO: E-1-11

PROGRAM TITLE: Endangered and Threatened Species Conservation

PERIOD COVERED: September 1, 1995 - August 31, 1998

PROJECT NUMBER: WER 4 (61)

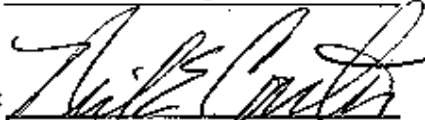
PROJECT TITLE: Endangered Species Technical Guidance

PROJECT COST (Last Segment): \$3,421.83

PROJECT OBJECTIVE:

1. To provide information and on-site technical assistance to private and public landowners and land managers concerning endangered species conservation and habitat management.
2. To increase understanding among land managers regarding land management practices and their compatibility with endangered species conservation.

PREPARED BY: Linda Campbell DATE: 02/25/02

APPROVED BY:  DATE: 06/11/02
Neil E. Carter
Federal Aid Coordinator

List of Enclosed Materials

1. Black-capped Vireo. Information Pamphlet. Pp. 29 – 36.
2. Black-capped Vireo Natural History and Management. Video. 21 min.
3. Golden-cheeked Warbler. Information Pamphlet. Pp. 19-27.
4. Golden-cheeked Warbler Natural History and Management. Video. 22 min.
5. Houston Toad Information Pamphlet. Pp. 105-110.
6. Houston Toad Life History and Management. Video. 13 min.

I. Need

It is generally agreed that the only way to reach long-term solutions to the loss of species and ecosystems is to increase the level of knowledge and awareness among the general public. In Texas, where 95% of the land is privately owned, recovery of species depends on information reaching the segment of society that controls the habitat; the private landowner. Owners of endangered species habitat have expressed frustration at the lack of information available to them concerning the biological requirements of endangered species, and the effects of common management practices on habitat needs. Biological information must be presented in a way that is easily understood, and management guidelines must be practical, with consideration of landowner objectives and economic constraints. The job objectives presented here address the need to target information for landowners and managers, and provide on-site assistance as needed to help them implement management plans which consider the habitat requirements of rare species.

II. Objectives

1. To provide information and on-site technical assistance to private and public landowners and land managers concerning endangered species conservation and habitat management. 2. To increase understanding among land managers regarding land management practices and their compatibility with endangered species conservation.

III. Procedures

1. Assemble and coordinate a Statewide Conservation Working Group composed of private landowners, and individuals representing commodity interests, conservation organizations, and government agencies, to determine information needs and concerns, information distribution systems, and conservation strategies for private lands. The goal of this working group will be to empower local communities by providing these communities with easy access to the same information that governments are using to conserve natural resources. This effort will provide the motivation and support needed to facilitate local planning efforts.

2. Texas Parks and Wildlife will seek to set up Local Working Groups at a county or regional level made up of landowners and local government and agency representatives. These Local Working Groups will attempt to identify local strategies for species recovery, using an interactive approach such as Coordinated Resource Management. The Local Working Groups will seek guidance on recovery parameters from Recovery Plans and the U.S. Fish and Wildlife Service; however, the approaches and strategies will be designed by the local members of the working

group. Working groups may also be established to address conservation concerns about candidate species in order to preclude the need for listing. Periodically, information meetings will be held to share the progress of the group with the larger local community. Priorities are as follows:

- Recovery regions for the Golden-cheeked Warbler and Black-capped Vireo.
- High plains candidate species.
- Assist with the present recovery effort initiated by the USFWS concerning the Houston toad, especially the Bastrop population.

3. Information-sharing workshops will be held in local areas in order to provide the local public more information regarding the current status and conservation needs of rare species in the area. In particular, a workshop on eco-friendly residential development will be held in the Bastrop area. Presenters will include biologists, landscape architects, or others familiar with development practices which conserve habitat.

4. Produce videos showing endangered species habitat in various regions of the state. The videos will be approximately 10 to 20 minutes in length. They will address components of life history and the effects of agricultural management practices and land use changes on habitat requirements. The videos will emphasize compatible aspects of various management practices (i.e. prescribed burning, brush management, grazing/browsing management), as well as point out the negative impacts of certain practices and land use changes. The TPW Endangered Resources and Video Production staff will produce the videos. Expected users include TPW, USDA Natural Resources Conservation Service (NRCS), USDA Agricultural Stabilization and Conservation Service (ASCS), Texas Agricultural Extension Service (TAEX), U.S. Fish and Wildlife Service (USFWS), and private conservation organizations. TPW will coordinate with the Texas Agricultural Extension Service and the USFWS in the production and delivery of these videos. The following federally-listed species are proposed for these videos, and are listed in order of priority:

- Golden-cheeked warbler
- Black-capped vireo
- Houston Toad

5. Provide on-site visits and individual technical assistance to landowners and managers as requested. Assistance will be provided by TPW on a selective basis as opportunities arise. High priority will be given to those requests which have potential for protecting and managing significant areas of habitat for listed species. Individual technical assistance to landowners and managers will include:

- Initial on-site visit with the landowner to assess the potential for endangered species management and landowner goals, objectives, and constraints,
- Habitat assessment and delineation on aerial photos or other appropriate maps,
- Surveys and inventories as needed to document species presence,
- Written management recommendations for each species of concern,
- Follow-up technical assistance as requested.

6. Develop cooperative management agreements on private land addressing endangered species management. The objective of these agreements will be to implement management practices that will enhance survival and reproduction of the listed species. A management agreement will include all aspects of technical assistance shown in item 4 above, but will result in a mutually agreed upon management plan. The cooperative management agreement will be signed by the landowner (or landowners in the case of agreements encompassing multiple ownerships) and TPWD, with concurrence by USFWS. This type of formal agreement will offer the landowner(s) a measure of assurance and control regarding endangered species management on their property. It will offer the USFWS and TPW an opportunity to enhance endangered species management and recovery on private land. We will pursue opportunities to develop management agreements as they arise. As strategies are developed, our efforts will become more proactive.

IV. Accomplishments

1. In 1995 a meeting was held in Kerrville to discuss local community planning efforts for rare resource conservation. Main points discussed concerned making resource information easily available to landowners at the county level and encouraging local planning initiatives. Agencies and organizations represented at this meeting included Texas Parks and Wildlife, USDA Natural Resources Conservation Service, Texas Agricultural Extension Service, Texas Farm Bureau, and the Texas Department of Agriculture. On August 20, 1996 a group of about 15 people representing landowners, natural resource agencies, and private conservation organizations met in Austin to discuss community-based conservation planning for the Hill Country. We received valuable input and guidance from the meeting participants (notes from this meeting were summarized and mailed to all participants). These initial meetings were to get input from a statewide perspective to guide TPW in forming additional regional planning groups.

2. Accomplishments for this objective include:

- The Golden-cheeked Warbler and Black-capped Vireo Population Viability Analysis Workshops were conducted by the USFWS in August and September, 1995, respectively. It was agreed that these workshops were needed to assess population status and recovery goals prior to implementation of local planning efforts. The outreach working groups in each of these workshops contributed valuable ideas concerning locally-based recovery efforts. TPW used the information from these workshops to develop and implement regional recovery actions for central Texas rare species.
- TPW took the lead in holding a consensus-building workshop for natural resource professionals concerning the life history, conservation, and management of the Houston Toad. The meeting was held at Bastrop State Park in April 1995. The meeting was informative and lead to a better understanding of Houston Toad conservation efforts. Those in attendance also identified several efforts, such as better identification of potential habitat in counties other than Bastrop, which has resulted in projects to address these needs.

- Efforts toward conservation of shortgrass prairie species on the High Plains continued under the leadership of the Regional Biologist located in Canyon. TPW continued work with landowners and other natural resource professionals in this region of the state to raise awareness of shortgrass prairie species, determine the status of species such as the swift fox and lesser prairie chicken, and improve habitat for these species.
- In central Texas, TPW worked with partners such as the Texas Farm Bureau and Texas Wildlife Association to encourage landowners, groups of landowners, and communities to develop locally-driven conservation initiatives that address the problems and opportunities associated with the conservation of rare species. Several meetings with landowners, landowner representatives, and natural resource professionals from various agencies were held in an effort to promote a local solution-oriented approach to rare resource conservation. A document addressing the tools or options available to landowners (i.e. financial incentives, technical assistance in developing wildlife management plans, Safe Harbor agreements, and conservation leases or easements) was initiated under this project and completed under Project 80 (Central Texas Rare Species Conservation Plan). Through these efforts, considerable progress was made in building alliances that have provided benefits with regard to regional conservation planning in central Texas.
- Texas Parks and Wildlife assisted in a project initiated by the Austin Office of the USFWS to map deep sand ecosystems in the 8-county range of the Houston Toad. The mapping project was completed, resulting in color maps of these deep sand ecosystems. The maps were produced by TPW's GIS Lab and made available to county TPW, NRCS, and TAEX offices in the 8-county area.

3. In 1997, a workshop on eco-friendly residential development was held in Bastrop. The workshop included presentations on the life history and habitat requirements of the Houston Toad, landscaping to improve wildlife habitat in an urban and suburban setting, management recommendations to conserve Houston Toad breeding and foraging habitat, the value of planting and maintaining native plants, and other topics. Speakers included biologists, landscape architects, or others familiar with development practices which conserve habitat. In addition, two workshops were also held for landowners in south Texas on the identification and management of black lace cactus and other rare south Texas cacti.

4. Three videos addressing the biology, habitat requirements, threats, and management guidelines for the Golden-cheeked Warbler, Black-capped Vireo, and Houston Toad were completed. The videos ranged from 15 to 22 minutes in length. Approximately 200 copies of each video were distributed to NRCS, TAEX, USFWS, TPW Regional Offices, TPW State Parks and Management Areas, Travis County, City of Austin, Texas Audubon, Texas Wildlife Association, Texas Farm Bureau, and other organizations. The videos are provided at cost to land managers throughout Texas upon request. They have been used to educate hundreds of land managers about the life history, habitat requirements, and management recommendations for these listed species.

5. On site technical assistance and written recommendations for rare species conservation and management were provided to over 600 landowners over the 4 year period of this project

(approximately 150 per year). This assistance was provided by Endangered Resources field biologists located in Austin, Corpus Christi, Nacogdoches, and Canyon. Requests from landowners for technical assistance concerning the conservation and management of rare species increased substantially as a result of TPW's implementation of the Landowner Incentive Program (LIP) (ref. Texas Section 6 Project WER02(77)). The LIP program resulted in many inquiries that eventually lead to on site technical assistance and written management recommendations. The increasing number of landowners interested in applying for the Open Space Tax Valuation for Wildlife Management also increased requests for technical assistance to landowners. In many cases, TPW biologists form a working relationship with the landowners and are then invited to monitor rare species on their properties. The technical assistance program within the Endangered Resources Branch (now Wildlife Diversity Branch) began with this Section 6 project and one biologist serving central Texas. Because of successful implementation and the need to serve landowners interested in rare species conservation, it has grown to include five biologists serving each region of the state.

6. The following accomplishments were achieved under this objective:

- Developed Regional Habitat Conservation Plan for the Red-cockaded Woodpecker in East Texas.
- Developed 12 Conservation Agreements with landowners in South Texas concerning conservation of listed plant species.
- Worked with landowners, conservation groups, and state and federal agencies focused on developing a conservation strategy for short grass prairie ecosystems in the High Plains.
- Worked with landowners, state and federal agencies, and conservation groups in south Texas interested in the conservation of the ocelot, jaguarundi, and Aplomado Falcon.
- Worked with PlanIt Texas organization in central Texas to develop a landowner manual addressing wildlife habitat management, including management of endangered species occurring in central Texas.
- Assisted the LBJ Heartland Network in their efforts to encourage regional conservation planning and endangered species conservation in Blanco, Gillespie, and Kendall Counties.
- As a result of the Landowner Incentive Program, numerous landowner contacts have resulted in invitations to search for tobusch fishhook cactus on private land. Conservation agreements with a number of these landowners have resulted in added awareness and protection for this listed species.
- Major emphasis on cooperative agreements was part of the cooperative planning effort to develop the Central Texas Rare Species Conservation Plan (see Performance Report for Project 80). Although the CTRSCP was discontinued under state leadership due to political pressure from property rights organizations, efforts in the private sector to continue the process lead to the completion and implementation of a habitat conservation plan for the recovery of rare species in central Texas. This effort, begun under state leadership, was completed under the leadership of Environmental Defense in cooperation with the U.S. Fish and Wildlife Service.
- A brochure for landowners discussing cowbird trapping and control was completed. The brochure was produced in response to requests from landowners who want to control cowbirds as part of their wildlife management plan under the Open Space Tax Valuation

for Wildlife Management (predator control option). The brochure included cowbird trap plans and text explaining the use of these traps. It also discussed the life history of brown-headed cowbirds and their effects on songbirds, particularly the Black-capped Vireo and the Golden-cheeked Warbler. The brochure also emphasized trapping protocol and ways to minimize effects on non-target species. This was the first step in expanded efforts by TPW and the USFWS to educate and enlist landowner assistance in trapping cowbirds to benefit rare species.