

**BALCONES CANYONLANDS PRESERVE
LAND MANAGEMENT PLAN**

TIER II A

**CHAPTER XII
PUBLIC ACCESS**



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1.0 INTRODUCTION

The Balcones Canyonlands Preserve (BCP) is an assemblage of properties in western Travis County established to protect federally listed endangered species and numerous other species of concern. The BCP was created by U.S. Fish and Wildlife Service (USFWS) permit PRT-788841 issued under Section 10(a)1(B) of the Endangered Species Act, issued May 2, 1996. The City of Austin and Travis County share responsibility as joint Permit Holders for compliance with the terms and conditions of the federal permit referred to as the Balcones Canyonlands Conservation Plan (BCCP). A Managing Partner (the Lower Colorado River Authority) and other cooperating entities (including private landowners, The Nature Conservancy of Texas, Travis Audubon Society and others), join the Permit Holders in owning and managing designated properties within the Preserve. These entities are collectively referred to as the BCP Partners.

The purpose of the BCP is to protect and enhance populations of those species listed in the permit, and to provide mitigation for habitat losses elsewhere within the permit area. In order to meet the terms and conditions set forth in the BCCP, no actions that may “harm” or result in “take” are permitted within the BCP. “Harm” is defined by the USFWS as:

“To perform an act that kills or injures wildlife; may include significant habitat modification or degradation when it kills or injures wildlife by significantly impairing essential behavioral patterns including breeding, feeding, or sheltering.”

“Take” is defined by the USFWS as:

“To harass, harm, pursue, hunt, shoot, wound, kill, trap, capture, or collect, or to attempt to engage in any such conduct; may include significant habitat modification or degradation if it kills or injures wildlife by significantly impairing essential behavioral patterns including breeding, feeding, or sheltering.”

The Habitat Conservation Plan (HCP) and Final Environmental Impact Statement upon which the BCCP permit was issued includes “Land Management Plans and Guidelines” (also included in Tier II-A Chapter I of this document) that form the basis for the public access guidelines in this chapter. These guidelines stipulate that endangered species management must take precedence over recreational opportunities within the preserve. Public access and use of the BCP, therefore, must be carefully planned, monitored and controlled in order to prevent impacts to the species or their habitat that may result in “harm” or “take”.

The preserve system may offer public access and recreational opportunities within the Austin and Travis County area where possible and manageable. Public access may be allowed where and when such access does not threaten the welfare of the target species of concern, which is the overriding goal of the preserve system, nor cause the degradation of soil, vegetation, or water resources.

“Public access” in this document is defined as any access by the general public to land managed by the BCP Partners including a range of uses including but not limited to educational access, managed access, and unmanaged access. This also includes access to privately owned BCP tracts managed by the BCP Partners that allow restricted access to members of the public.

The key to allowing public access which is non-threatening and non-damaging to preserve lands is implementation of effective management strategies to control such access and use. These management strategies must be specified in the individual land management plans and implemented by the preserve tract managers. Demonstration over time of effectively implemented management strategies on a preserve tract may justify increased public access opportunities. However, if management strategies prove ineffective and/or habitat degradation is observed, public access may be justifiably restricted or even closed for that tract.

The BCP is a fundamental asset for the community as a window into Central Texas natural heritage, as well as a reserve for unique species of flora and fauna, a key contributor to better air and water quality, and as a resource and venue for environmental education activities. Environmental education activities should be a part of any public access program. This chapter describes currently approved public access types and public access management policies for all BCP tracts. It also provides a process for those seeking approval of new public access or proposals for changes in current use (See Section 7.0).

Tracts covered under individual USFWS 10(a)1(B) or Section 7 tracts that are not managed by BCP Partners are not included in this document. Specific information regarding public access for each BCP tract can be found in the Tier III individual tract Land Management Plans.

1.1 Goals and Purpose

The primary purpose of managing the BCP is to ensure the continued survival of the golden-cheeked warbler (GCWA), black-capped vireo (BCVI), Tooth Cave ground beetle, Tooth

Cave pseudoscorpion, Tooth Cave spider, Kretschmarr Cave mold beetle, Bone Cave harvestman, Bee Creek Cave harvestman and 27 additional rare karst and rare plant species referred to as “species of concern” (See Tier I, 3.3). Goals for public access within the preserve must always defend and support the purpose of the BCP. The BCCP stipulates that endangered species management must take precedence over recreational opportunities within the preserve. Therefore, the BCP system offers public access and recreational opportunities at selected sites where and when it can be demonstrated such access does not threaten the welfare of species protected by the permit, or cause the degradation of soil, vegetation, or water resources (USFWS 1996).

This chapter shall serve as a guide for BCP Land Managers, as required under the terms and conditions of the BCCP and include general public access management policies for all BCP tracts. Specific information for each of the BCP tracts by each BCP managing partner agency or organization is included in the Tier III individual tract Land Management Plan. This chapter will first provide information about categories of existing public access in the following section, including:

- Pre-existing parkland with “grandfathered” uses specifically defined and allowed at the time that these tracts were incorporated into the Preserve in 1996;
- Public access trails that were permitted in the 1999 LMP documents;
- Private access trails allowed by individually negotiated USFWS agreements that later became managed by the BCP Partners;
- Private access trails managed as part of the BCP by cooperating entities such as Travis Audubon Society and The Nature Conservancy of Texas.

Following the access category descriptions, section 1.3 discusses guidelines for public access, which are based on guidelines set forth in the BCCP/HCP. Section 2.0 defines recreation types approved for the BCP. Those recreation types are then discussed in more detail defining allowed activities within the BCP in section 3.0. Non-commercial and commercial uses are discussed in sections 4.0 and 5.0 respectively and current public access in the BCP by tract is shown in section 6.0. Information on access to cave and karst features is provided in section 7.0. Section 8.0 details the BCP public access approval process and provides sample documents for guidance and finally Section 9.0 provides a discussion of recent studies on impacts of recreational use on wildland management and endangered species.

1.2 Categories of Access on BCP Tracts

1.2.1 “Grandfathered” Uses

The BCP includes tracts that were dedicated parkland or preserve land prior to the creation of the BCP that were brought into the Preserve with uses that were conditionally allowed to continue at specific levels and have since become known as “grandfathered” uses. These “grandfathered” tracts allow continued public access at the same levels as were occurring as of the date of adoption of the BCP (1996) as stated in the HCP. However, it also notes that, “the nature of the use of some facilities may change with the creation of the BCCP preserve system” (1996). The HCP directs land managers to proactively increase management and access restrictions when monitoring or observation indicate that this is needed for the benefit of the species protected by the permit. It also specifies that the number of existing roads and trails on these “grandfathered” tracts may be decreased. Public use of protected species habitat must not be promoted, except as approved in the BCCP “Land Management Plans and Guidelines”. Approved public access and new public access proposals must be carefully planned, monitored and managed to cause no “harm” and/or result in no “take”.

Pre-existing park and preserve land with allowed 1996 level of use includes the City of Austin’s Barton Creek Greenbelt and Wilderness Park, Bull Creek Park and Greenbelt, Commons Ford Park, Emma Long Metropolitan Park, Mt. Bonnell Park, the non-BCP portion of St. Edwards Park, Stillhouse Hollow Preserve and Barrow Preserve. Travis County’s pre-existing preserve land with allowed 1996 levels of use includes the Romberg Preserve, Hamilton Pool Preserve and Wild Basin Preserve. The Lower Colorado River Authority’s (LCRA) sole pre-existing preserve land with 1996 level of use is Westcave Preserve. See Section 7.0 for a description of the “grandfathered” cave access locations.

1.2.2 Access approved in the 1999 Land Management Plans documents

The public access trails outlined in the Tier III 1999 BCP Land Management Plan were approved by the BCCP Coordinating Committee and by the USFWS and are currently approved for the location and level of public access indicated.

1.2.3 Private Access Trails

Some tracts within the BCP are operated under individual Section 10(a), Section 7 or BCCP participation agreements approved by the USFWS that allow some level of authorized private access. Properties covered by such agreements managed by the BCP Partners will follow guidelines associated with these respective agreements. An example of a property with USFWS approved private access trails is The Crossings, a 175 ac tract in the Cypress Creek Macrosite. The landowner of this tract negotiated private access trails with the USFWS as a

component of their individual Section 10(a) permit. The habitat on this tract is now managed by Travis County and access management is conducted cooperatively and in accordance with the BCP goals. For details on access and access management for The Crossings and other tracts see the Tier III Individual Tract Land Management Plans.

Private volunteer cooperating BCP Partners such as Travis Audubon Society and The Nature Conservancy of Texas also manage and restrict public access on their BCP tracts. As with The Crossings, both Travis Audubon Society and The Nature Conservancy of Texas manage and monitor access in accordance with the BCP goals and guidelines.

1.3 Public Access Guidelines

The BCCP allows the BCP system to offer public access and recreational opportunities within the Austin and Travis County area where possible and manageable. Public access may be allowed where and when such access does not threaten the welfare of target species of concern, which includes threatening the quality of habitat. Access should not cause the degradation of soil, vegetation, or water resources. The key steps to allowing public access which is non-threatening and non-damaging to BCP lands is determining appropriate areas for access, planning for management of access privileges and rule enforcement, implementation of the proposed plan, and monitoring access use to ensure that no impact or only minimal impacts to species and their habitat, are occurring.

Demonstration over time of effectively implemented management strategies on a preserve tract may justify the allowance of increased public access opportunities. Likewise, site problems including, degradation of soil, vegetation, or water resources, resulting from public access may justify closing or reducing public access for a particular tract. If impact observed or measured, land managers should take actions that ensure the welfare of the protected species.

The BCCP does not document or establish 1996 public use levels for “Grandfathered” tracts therefore, managers must rely on annual reporting and their active observations and monitoring for impacts on habitat, base soil, water and plant resources in determining the thresholds for changes needed in access levels. When impacts to these resources result in change, demonstrate damage, or appear unsustainable under current use levels, managers must act to more effectively manage public access to eliminate threats to protected species and their habitat on those sites.

Effective management strategies may include, but are not limited to:

- no access;
- seasonally restricted access;
- rotation of accessible preserves over a period of years;
- prohibited access to selected sensitive areas of a tract;
- selected access to non-habitat areas of a tract only;
- careful trail and amenities location, design and relocation, fencing, signs, ranger patrols and enforcement; and
- guided access with BCP staff.

Management strategies to accommodate public access uses are also specified in the Tier II-A and Tier III individual land management plans and must be implemented in accordance with the “Land Management Plans and Guidelines” (Tier II-A Chapter I). If monitoring of implemented management strategies on a given preserve tract are demonstrated to be effective, public access uses in accordance with these strategies may be increased. If monitoring demonstrates negative impacts to the species or their habitats, public access may be curtailed, shifted to other properties, or stopped altogether to allow site recovery. Demonstration over time of ineffectiveness of implemented management strategies may justify changes in public access opportunities. For example, access on grandfathered tracts has increased significantly over levels observed in 1996. Preserve managers must understand how growth in access levels is occurring and how it affects protected species, their habitat, and the resource base.

Individual land or tract managers shall develop access policies that include procedures for enforcement of policies when unauthorized activities occur on sites where access may or may not be otherwise allowed. (See also Tier III Individual Tract Land Management Plans).

In all cases, preserve managers are encouraged to create access policies that include plans for educational activities to increase the understanding of the purpose of the BCP. In implementing management strategies that may include restricted access, managers should incorporate where appropriate the reasons for the restriction as part of the educational message for citizens (USFWS 1996).

2.0 RECREATION AND TRAILS

Recreational activities, their “on-the-ground” requirements, such as trails, and their intensity and level of use must be considered in determining access and recreation policy on BCP properties. This section categorizes types of activities by defining them as either “passive”

or “active” and provides guidance in addressing them in each property’s land management plan.

Certain restrictions on these recreational uses—and requirements for their compatibility with endangered species management—were established by the City of Austin and Travis County in the EIS that is part of the regional permit. These restrictions are addressed in the “Land Management Guidelines,” referred to in Section 1.0 above.

All trails in BCP properties must be part of an approved land management plan and be approved by the Coordinating Committee. New trails should only be considered by a land manager where closing or relocation of existing trails will improve protection of listed species or species of concern, or address a public need without any impact to protected species and their habitat. Land managers shall seek approval for all new trails from the Coordinating Committee and address the new trails in a revised preserve land management plan. New trails or the rerouting or modification of existing trails must be designed to leave woodland canopies intact and minimize erosion. In golden-cheeked warbler habitat, new trails and modifications of existing trails should not fragment woodland interiors or allow intensive human use detrimental to populations of this species and/or breeding activities and breeding success or within woodland interiors or beyond the fringes of high quality habitat.

Existing authorized trails (see maps in Tier III of this document for locations) into woodland interiors should be minimized, not extended, and must be closed and restored if they exhibit significant erosion. Managers should consider blocking these trails where feasible with temporary barriers during the nesting season to discourage human use. The EIS requires “existing approved trails” be restored to habitat if and when they are no longer in use. All non-authorized trails will be closed.

2.1 Definitions

***Passive Recreation:** Passive recreation within the context of the BCCP is defined as hiking, photography, nature observation, and guided educational tours where these activities do not compromise the primary purpose of the preserve.

(*Definition provided by the BCCP Scientific Advisory Committee in May 2006)

Active Recreation: Active recreation is herein defined as those activities requiring a vehicle or animal for transportation, such as bicycling, horseback-riding, and off-road vehicle-riding; exercise activities engaged in specifically for their aerobic and muscle-strengthening benefits, such as jogging, cross-country racing, and mountain-biking; and other faster-paced

activities which can disturb fish and wildlife, such as swimming, jogging, racing and group sports; activities involving organized groups of greater than 10 people-unless guided by staff or other approved leader (see Section 3.1.1); noise-producing activities, such as music events and bird-watching-when birders use taped bird calls and other sounds to attract birds; resource extraction-when it is not an approved ecosystem management objective-such as sport-fishing and hunting, as well as collecting or harvesting of plants or plant parts, animals or animal parts, and mineral or fossils; and rock-climbing.

In an effort to address public need for these activities, it is suggested that land managers refer the public to non-BCP locations where these activities are allowed with the permission of those facilities. Managers may also want to consider posting a link to these alternative recreational sites on their respective agency's website. Detailed discussion regarding these activities can be found in Sections 3.0 below.

Approved Plan: The BCCP HCP allows the addition of new trails and recreational activities within Preserve land when part of an approved plan. The BCCP Coordinating Committee and USFWS must approve all additions or deletions to the Land Management Plan.

Approved Trails: "Approved trails" are herein defined as trails which are marked on maps contained in the approved 1999 Tier III land management plans, or which have been approved subsequently by the Coordinating Committee.

Approved Recreational Activities: The activities listed in this chapter are "approved recreational activities" within the individual preserve units and changes in these approved activities or levels of activities will require approval of the Coordinating Committee.

2.2 Recreation Grandfathered in BCP Parkland

The BCP is composed of previously existing parkland and lands purchased as mitigation for habitat loss permitted elsewhere. Previously existing parkland is permitted by USFWS to continue providing active and passive recreational uses at levels current in 1996. The tracts have been conditionally "grandfathered" from the more stringent requirements placed on other BCP lands. For "grandfathered" tracts, the BCCP specifies, "the nature of use of some facilities will change with the creation of the BCCP preserve system." Developments and improvements for recreation are to be monitored, and uses must be restricted when appropriate for the protection of BCCP species including decreasing existing trails and roads. Construction of new trails or roads on "grandfathered" tracts must be approved by the BCCP

Coordinating Committee Secretary and tract owner/manager(s) in accordance with BCCP Public Access Approval Process described in the Section 8.0 below.

”Grandfathered” tracts include City parkland along Barton and Bull creeks, Emma Long Park and Commons Ford Park as well as the Travis County’s Wild Basin Wilderness Preserve and Hamilton Pool Preserve and LCRA’s Westcave Preserve. These tracts are described in Table 1 of Section 6.0 and are identified with bold type.

3.0 ALLOWED ACTIVITIES BY RECREATION TYPE

3.1 Individual or Independent Group Use

The “Land Management Plans and Guidelines” from the HCP provide the basis for the following public access restrictions. The following types of outdoor activities may be allowed if they do not conflict with conservation of target species as described in the Tier III individual tract land management plans. BCP Partners are responsible for posting signs that reflect access and recreation policy for their individual tracts, especially for prohibited or restricted activities.

3.1.1 Walking/Jogging/Hiking

Unsupervised group access shall not be allowed within 100 meters of occupied songbird habitat during the breeding/nesting season, unless such access can be documented to show no apparent degradation to the welfare of the BCP protected species. Public access trails within non-park BCP units are reserved for walking and hiking access only (HCP/FEIS 1996).

3.1.2 Fishing and Stocking of Fish

Fishing may be allowed where there is existing access to lake frontage that is not inhabited by target species. If it is allowed on a site, fishing locations are to be designated. Fishing is prohibited outside these designated areas. Construction of new roads, access points and other support facilities for fishing must be part of that preserve’s approved land management plan.

Fishing in environmentally sensitive springs and deeper spring runs, especially where rare salamander species are present, is absolutely prohibited.

Stocking of native species is discouraged. If stocking is necessary, the BCCP Coordinating Committee under advisement of the Scientific Advisory Committee must approve the type of species to be stocked. Stocking with exotic species is expressly prohibited (HCP/FEIS 1996).

3.1.3 Swimming/Boating/Rafting/Tubing

Areas designated for swimming, boating, rafting or tubing may be made available at selected locations within parks or preserves, based on approved land management plans. Bank access restrictions may be necessary to protect adjacent target species habitats. All of these activities are prohibited in environmentally sensitive springs and deeper spring runs on non-parkland BCP units (HCP/FEIS 1996).

3.1.4 Bicycling

This activity is prohibited on all BCP tracts that are not “grandfathered” tracts. Biking on the Motorcycle Park in Emma Long Metropolitan Park is “grandfathered” from this prohibition, and may continue at 1996 levels and should be monitored for effects on the endangered species. Appropriate barriers and enforcement penalties should be established to minimize trespass into preserve properties and subsequent damage by bicycles. Enforcement of all applicable rules is required (HCP/FEIS 1996).

No units purchased specifically for endangered species management or accepted for mitigation or units that were pre-existing City of Austin Nature Preserves are available for biking. This active recreation is not compatible with the passive uses of wildlife viewing, nature study and contemplation.

3.1.5 Horseback Riding

This activity is prohibited on all BCP tracts because it is not compatible with preserve management objectives and goals (HCP/FEIS 1996).

3.1.6 Off-Road Vehicle (ORV) Riding

This is prohibited as a recreational activity because it is not compatible with preserve management objectives and goals. The Motorcycle Park in Emma Long Metropolitan Park is “grandfathered” from this prohibition, and may continue at 1996 levels and should be monitored for effects on the endangered species. Appropriate barriers and enforcement penalties should be established to minimize trespass into preserve properties and subsequent damage by ORVs. These vehicles may be used in the non-nesting season for appropriate preserve operations and maintenance activities, as needed (HCP/FEIS 1996).

3.1.7 Picnicking

This activity may continue at 1996 levels on “grandfathered” tracts. Adoption of “Pack-it-in and pack-it-out” policies by park/preserve managers is encouraged. If this activity is included in an approved Tier III land management plan, preserve land management plans will

designate picnic sites that can be easily maintained to avoid creating focal centers for cowbird feeding or red imported fire ant foraging (HCP/FEIS 1996).

3.1.8 Camping

This activity may continue at 1996 levels on "Grandfathered" tracts that are now part of the BCP. If camping is allowed at other units, it must be minimum-impact camping related to operations and maintenance or to guided educational activities and must occur in sites designated in approved Tier III plans. Preserve managers should rotate designated camping areas frequently to enable each site to recover from past use. Only closed-burning fires (such as camp stoves) will be allowed (HCP/FEIS 1996).

3.1.9 Nature Viewing

Permitted nature-viewing opportunities include designated viewing areas with blinds, trails with interpretive materials, or guided tours. Educational tours for groups should be encouraged, but procedures for minimizing and monitoring the effects of tour group activities should be established and followed (See Tier II-A: XIII). Supplemental feeding to improve wildlife viewing is prohibited (HCP/FEIS 1996).

3.1.10 Spelunking

All access to caves is restricted to those holding permits issued by the appropriate land management agency based on guidelines in Tier II-A, IX for the preservation of the caves' ecosystem (HCP/FEIS 1996).

3.1.11 Rock-Climbing

Rock-climbing and related activities are prohibited on the BCP, except on the "grandfathered" Barton Creek Greenbelt under management by the City of Austin where it is permitted to continue at 1996 levels at those sites already designated for this activity. The site will be monitored for effects on the preserve and enforcement of all applicable rules (HCP/FEIS 1996).

3.1.12 Pets

No pets are permitted in areas designated for endangered species management, except in those areas of "grandfathered" tracts as specified in the 1999 Land Management Plan document where pets were already allowed or area where pets are allowed through separate agreements with USFWS. Pets in these areas should be leashed at all times (see Tier III individual tract document for locations that allow walking dogs on leashes).

4.0 NON-COMMERCIAL GROUP USE

Non-commercial groups are nonprofit organizations, schools, and educational groups that request visitation to any tract for educational purposes or research. This use should be encouraged where there is sufficient staffing to monitor effects upon species and habitat. These groups will be issued permits by the appropriate land management agency. The permit process should include user guidelines that protect target species and their respective habitats.

4.1 Educational Uses

Educational use is defined as those activities that present or interpret information about the ecology of the preserve sites and the target species. Daytime field trips by school groups are encouraged where they are compatible with species protection. They will need to be coordinated through the appropriate preserve land manager and monitored by staff.

Limits should be established for maximum group sizes and number of groups accessing an individual preserve at any one time. Consideration should also be given to managing their transportation to site, need for restroom facilities, and desire to picnic if allowed at site. See Tier II-A Chapter XIII for more information about public education on BCP properties.

4.2 Research Uses

Research use activities include those activities that gather and interpret site-specific data in a way that improves understanding of the ecology of preserve species, plant communities, and aquatic and subterranean environments. Research will be focused on topics that are directed toward management goals of permanently conserving the listed species and species of concern. Such activities will be coordinated through the appropriate BCP Partner. Research related to endangered species must have approval from the U.S. Fish and Wildlife Service. Additionally, the BCP Partners policy is that anyone conducting research on BCP tracts will have state and federal authorization for this research work. The BCP Partner may refer such research proposals to the Scientific Advisory Committee (SAC) for review and comment. Any and all research conducted on BCP properties should be made available to the land manager and subsequently to other BCP Partners and the SAC.

In furtherance of conducting research on the BCP, BCCP partners have developed a BCP research application. Parties interested in conducting research on BCP must complete this application and submit it to the BCCP entity or agency managing the site(s) on which they wish to conduct research. The managing entity/agency may approve or disapprove any

application at their sole discretion. However, they may also seek input from the SAC before making any decision.

5.0 COMMERCIAL USE

5.1 Guided Tours

Commercial tour groups may be allowed to schedule tours of preserve sites with the approval of the tract manager, subject to the provision that such groups abide by prevailing visitation guidelines. Tours must not impact the preserve environment or the protected species. Tour groups will need to be coordinated through the appropriate preserve land manager and monitored by staff for possible impacts to the preserve. Limits should be established for maximum group sizes and number of groups accessing an individual preserve at any one time.

Contractual tour leaders are responsible to the tract managers. Contractual arrangements for guided tours will be non-exclusive with regard to public access.

5.2 Film-making

Film production projects may be allowed subject to approval by the tract manager and the Coordinating Committee Secretary. The film production process must not harm the preserve environment.

6.0 PUBLIC ACCESS IN THE BCP BY SITE

The following table summarizes the designations of recreational uses for the various units of the BCP. Note that all these locations may be accessed via approved volunteer service outings. All City of Austin and Travis County tracts may also be accessed for approved guided educational outings.

Tracts and/or Parklands in which recreational activities are “grandfathered,” i.e. may continue those activities at 1996 levels of use, are printed in **bold** type. Plans to increase public access in these “Grandfathered” tracts prior to their dedication into the BCP were then voided by their inclusion into the BCP. Maps showing approved public trails are shown in the approved 1999 Tier III Land Management documents for the individual tracts.

Table 1. Public Access in the BCP by Site. “Grandfathered” tracts are shown in **bold**. Only tracts owned or managed by BCP Partners (City of Austin, Travis County, and LCRA) are listed below.

UNIT	TYPE	PRIMARY MANAGEMENT RESPONSIBILITY	TYPE OF PUBLIC ACCESS AND USE
Barton Creek Greenbelt/Wilderness Park	park	Austin Parks and Recreation Department Operations* , Austin Water Utility – Wildland Conservation Division	hiking, swimming, tubing, mountain biking, rock climbing, picnicking, spelunking
Black-capped Vireo Research Area	preserve	Austin Water Utility – Wildland Conservation Division	approved educational/research access, guided educational groups & tours
Bull Creek Greenbelt and Bull Creek Park	park	Austin Parks and Recreation Department Operations*	hiking on marked trails, swimming, tubing, mountain biking, picnicking
Bull Creek Preserve (Forest Ridge)	preserve	Austin Water Utility – Wildland Conservation Division	hiking from March through July by permit; hiking without permit from August through February; guided educational group tours
Bull Creek Unit (Canyon Vista & Ribelin tracts)	preserve	Travis County Natural Resources	approved educational/research access, guided educational group tours
Commons Ford Park/ BCP portion	park/preserve	Austin Parks and Recreation Department Operations* /Austin Water Utility – Wildland Conservation Division	hiking and biking on marked trail
Cortaña Tract	preserve	Austin Water Utility – Wildland Conservation Division	approved educational/research access, guided educational group tours
Cow Fork/Coldwater Tract	preserve	Austin Water Utility – Wildland Conservation Division	approved educational/research access, guided educational group tours

UNIT	TYPE	PRIMARY MANAGEMENT RESPONSIBILITY	TYPE OF PUBLIC ACCESS AND USE
Cypress Unit	preserve	Travis County Natural Resources	On The Crossings Tract: Sec. 10a Conservation Easement Agreement allows restricted hiking for landowner's guests on approved trail. Other tracts: approved educational/research access, guided educational group tours
Double J&T/Reicher/Bohls Tracts	preserve	Austin Water Utility – Wildland Conservation Division; Reicher also Parks and Recreation Department	approved educational/research access, guided educational group tours; on Reicher: reservations of facility may include unsupervised hiking on marked trails near facilities and outdoor education programs
Emma Long Metro Park	park	Austin Parks and Recreation Department Operations*, Austin Water Utility – Wildland Conservation Division	hiking on marked trails, mountain biking, motor bikes during the non-nesting season on specified trail (A stakeholder group is currently revising public access management plan for this site. Any changes will be added/revised in this document and Tier III when complete.)
Hamilton Pool Preserve	preserve	Travis County Parks and Natural Resources	hiking on marked trails, swimming, picnicking, guided tours, fishing on river
Ivanhoe/Beard Trust Tracts	preserve	Austin Water Utility – Wildland Conservation Division	approved educational/research access, guided educational group tours
Jollyville Unit	preserve	Travis County Natural Resources	Grandview Hills Sec. 10a Conservation Easement Agreements allow some activities in Buffer Areas (see Tier III doc.). Other tracts: approved educational/research access, guided educational group tours

UNIT	TYPE	PRIMARY MANAGEMENT RESPONSIBILITY	TYPE OF PUBLIC ACCESS AND USE
Lime Creek Tract	preserve	Austin Water Utility – Wildland Conservation Division	approved educational/research access, guided educational group tours
McGregor Tract	preserve	Lower Colorado River Authority	approved educational/research access, guided educational group tours
Mt. Bonnell Park	park	Austin Parks and Recreation Department Operations* , Austin Water Utility – Wildland Conservation Division	hiking, viewing, picnicking, mountain-biking
Romberg Preserve	preserve	Travis County Parks and Natural Resources	approved educational/research access, guided educational group tours public access
St. Edward’s Park/ BCP portion	park/preserve	Austin Parks and Recreation Department Operations* /Austin Water Utility – Wildland Conservation Division	hiking on marked trails, mountain biking
Senna Hills Tract	preserve	Austin Water Utility – Wildland Conservation Division	approved educational/research access, guided educational group tours
South Lake Austin Unit (Medway tract)	preserve	Travis County Natural Resources	approved educational/research access, guided educational group tours public access
Spicewood Springs Preserve/Barrow Preserve	preserve	Austin Parks and Recreation Department Operations* , Austin Water Utility – Wildland Conservation Division	hiking on marked trails, mountain biking
North Lake Austin Unit (Steiner Ranch and Greenshores)	preserve	Travis County Natural Resources	Steiner Ranch CE agreement allows Steiner Ranch residents to hike on approved trails, dogs are permitted only if on leashes. Greenshores Sec. 10a permit allows developer access. Outside these approved areas: approved educational/research access, guided educational group tours

UNIT	TYPE	PRIMARY MANAGEMENT RESPONSIBILITY	TYPE OF PUBLIC ACCESS AND USE
Ullrich Water Treatment Plant	Austin Water Utility Facility	Austin Water Utility	no access
Upper Bull Creek Tract	preserve	Austin Water Utility – Wildland Conservation Division;	approved educational/research access, guided educational group tours
Water Treatment Plant #4	Austin Water Utility Facility	Austin Water Utility	no access
West Cave Preserve	preserve	Lower Colorado River Authority	approved educational/research access, guided educational group tours
Wheless Tract	preserve	Lower Colorado River Authority	approved educational/research access, guided educational group tours
Wild Basin Wilderness Preserve	preserve	Travis County Natural Resources /The Committee for Wild Basin Wilderness	hiking, guided educational tours, approved research

* Austin Parks and Recreation Department Operations do not manage for Endangered Species; they perform regular maintenance, i.e. mowing, trash pickup, and some trail management activities. Austin Water Utility Wildland Conservation Division staff supporting the BCP program provides BCP Endangered Species management activities.

7.0 CAVES AND KARST FEATURES

All caves owned or managed by public entities on the various units of the BCP are closed to unsupervised public visitation and may only be accessed via permit from the tract manager, with the exception of the following caves, which are “grandfathered” to 1996 access levels:

- Airman’s Cave in the Barton Creek Greenbelt
- The first portion of District Cave in Dick Nichol’s Park (Note: the remainder of the cave is gated and accessible only by permit.)

Because so much is still unknown about cave ecosystems and until sufficient survey information is available to better determine the effects of human visitation on karst invertebrate species, it is assumed that human visitation may adversely affect their populations. BCCP caves that are currently open to public access through controlled access and/or guided tours are considered as “experimental access caves”. Regular biological surveys of karst invertebrates as well as human visitation counts shall be conducted at these sites to assess if impacts are occurring. Uncontrolled visitation may endanger sensitive features within the cave and may endanger inexperienced people. See Tier II-A Chapter IX, Section 3.3.5 for additional information on public access into BCP caves.

8.0 PUBLIC ACCESS APPROVAL PROCESS

The HCP allows the addition of new trails and recreational activities within the Preserve when part of an approved plan. New public access or changes in the types or levels of activities on current BCP tracts require authorization through the Public Access Approval Process. The Public Access Approval Process cannot authorize activities that constitute or that result in “harm” or “take” of the listed species or their habitat. The Public Access Approval Process may authorize uses determined to have no impact on the protected species or their habitat once BCCP Coordinating Committee and USFWS approvals are received.

Applicants wishing to submit an application for new public access or for changes in levels or types of uses currently approved shall complete a BCP Public Access Approval Process Application (See Appendix A). The BCP Public Access Approval Process Application requires that the applicant provide information on the proposed location, type and level of use, anticipated impacts to protected species, monitoring protocols to measure potential impacts of such use, measures to protect preserve areas and BCP species, and source of funds to create and maintain the facilities necessary to provide such access. Facilities proposed for lands owned or managed by public entities may require compliance with applicable regulations and agency policies.

8.1 Public Access Approval Guidelines

The BCCP and HCP guidelines specifically prohibit creation of trails that open woodland canopies, create additional impervious cover, or facilitate public use of preserve interiors or high quality sites occupied by protected species.

Existing public access and its management has not been effectively implemented on some BCP lands. Endangered species monitoring is demonstrating apparent effects on breeding and nesting behavior for golden-cheeked warblers in “Grandfathered” tracts. Because of this, proposals for new public access on any BCP tract must not only define any facilities and accommodations for proposed new access, they must also define how the proposed new activities will be structured, managed, and mitigated so as to prevent negative impacts to species and habitat protected by the BCP.

New activity *organization* refers to plans for limited and/or regulated public access in order to minimize threats to protected species. These plans would include specifications for timing, duration, leadership, location and type(s) of activities.

New activity *management* refers to plans that govern how public access will be conducted so that it does not harm protected species and their habitat. These plans would include specifications for use, educational components, supervision, access controls, and access limits.

New activity *mitigation* refers to actions to be specified in plans that will overcome threats to protected species and their habitat not prevented by *management* or *structure*. These plans would include specifications for maintenance, species monitoring, habitat monitoring, base resource monitoring, and habitat restoration.

Applications will be reviewed by the Permit Holders and tract owner/manager(s) for compliance with the terms and conditions of the permit. Applications meeting the conditions and guidelines set forth in this document will be submitted to the Scientific Advisory Committee for review. USFWS will be provided copies of the Application materials for concurrence and evaluation of compliance with the permit. Access proposals that require additional mitigation on the part of the Permit Holders will not be approved. The Scientific Advisory Committee and the permit holders, tract owner(s) and/or manager(s) will present recommendations regarding Access Applications to the BCCP Coordinating Committee. Applications receiving favorable recommendations from the Scientific Advisory Committee,

Permit Holder, tract owner(s) and/or manager(s) as well as USFWS concurrence may be approved by the Coordinating Committee.

New trails or the rerouting or modification of existing trails must maintain intact woodland canopies and avoid or minimize erosion. In golden-cheeked warbler habitat, new trails and modifications of existing trails should not fragment woodland interiors or allow intensive human use detrimental to increasing populations of this species. Construction of new trails in woodland interiors should be minimized.

Existing trails on “grandfathered tracts” were permitted under the permit at levels of use on the date the permit was issued in 1996. The BCCP Coordinating Committee, however, must approve any new trails or changes in use on these “grandfathered” tracts.

8.1.1 BCP Public Access Application Checklist

Appendix B contains a copy of the BCP Public Access Application Checklist. This document is intended to be used as a guide by the BCCP Secretary or designee and other reviewers in reviewing public access applications in a structured and consistent manner. It is meant to guide reviewers in determining whether requested activities and access comply with the purpose of BCP and are proposed in a manner that complies with land management plans and guidelines. This Check list is also intended to be a useful tool for applicants to use to plan their application and proposed activities in a manner consistent with BCP needs so that they have a reasonable expectation of having their application approved.

8.1.2 Public Access Approval

An example of a *structured, managed and mitigated* public access application is provided as Appendix C. The approval process would initially follow the public access application checklist, which is provided as Appendix B, before being reviewed by the SAC and USFWS. Specifically all applications must be complete and demonstrate effectiveness in preventing or mitigating potential threats to protected species.

As described in the Appendix C checklist, when proposing a public access activity, applicants should design the activity to assure that the following items are included in order to gain approval for their proposal:

- The sum of all effects on the protected species is not likely to constitute an unauthorized regulatory “Take” of the protected species.
- The activity is neither contrary to the mission nor proposes changes to the nature or purpose of the preserve

- Use or facilities are not likely to interfere with site management
- The application is complete and clearly and understandably described
- The proposed uses are included in the allowed uses in the Tier II Plans and Guidelines and do not exceed the described limits for this (these) activity(ies) there described
- The use will protect preserve interiors or high quality habitat and will not degrade habitat quality
- The structure including use, when, where, how managed, and by whom is clearly and understandably defined
- The structure assures that users are led, controlled, supervised, and/or managed at all times
- Management including education, controls, and limits are clearly and understandably defined
- Management assures users are limited to authorized uses, controlled to avoid unauthorized uses, and educated about their access authorization, the sites sensitivity, and BCP requirements
- The proposed use will not affect active territories, colonies or populations of protected species
- The proposed use deters unauthorized uses
- Mitigation plans are adequate to repair, restore, or protect areas with existing damage from authorized uses or unauthorized uses related to this approved activity
- Vegetation disturbance will not open the canopy or significantly alter habitat for the protected species
- Vegetation disturbance will not alter water surface flow in a manner expected to accelerate erosion or deposition

9.0 NEW DATA ON IMPACTS OF RECREATIONAL USE ON WILDLAND MANAGEMENT AND ENDANGERED SPECIES

As previously stated, public access may be approved where manageable and where it will not result in “harm” and/or “take”. All public access must be carefully planned, monitored and adaptively managed. In support of a cautious approach numerous recently published scientific studies have documented the impacts of recreational uses associated with woodland trails on birds, mammals, reptiles, other wildlife and native plants. Various recreational activities such as hiking, jogging, horseback riding, biking, and nature photography have been demonstrated to have negative ecological impacts on components of the ecosystem (plants, soils, wildlife, etc.). Trampling of vegetation, soil compaction, erosion, siltation of

streams, noise and motion that disrupts foraging and breeding behavior, and introductions of non-native, invasive or disruptive species into wildland habitats have been demonstrated to be a result of recreational activity on woodland trails. In addition trails act as corridors that fragment blocks of habitat and introduce abiotic (noise light, other forms of disturbance) and biotic factors (predators, invasive plants and animals) that may negatively impact native wildlife and plants. Below is a list of published studies addressing these topics.

Currently, several academic studies are being conducted within the BCP to address the potential interaction between various recreational activities and the natural behavior and productivity of listed species and other native wildlife found within the habitats of the Preserve. These and future studies will aid the Preserve managers and staff in making management decisions and developing management strategies that will protect and enhance populations of those species listed in the permit and allow recreational activities that have been demonstrated to cause no “harm” or result in no “take.”

See:

Glaspell, B. and A. Puttkammer. 2001. Linking Wilderness Research and Management – Volume 2. Defining, Managing, and Monitoring Wilderness Visitor Experiences: an Annotated Reading List. Gen. Tech. Rep. RMRS-GTR-79-VOL2. Fort Collins, CO: U. S. Department of Agriculture, Forest Service, Rocky Mountain Research Station. 29 p.

Hellmund Associates. 1998. Planning Trails with Wildlife in Mind. Trails and Wildlife Task Force. Colorado State Parks. Colorado Department of Natural Resources. 26 p.

Jordan, M. 2000. Ecological Impacts of Recreational Use of Trails: A Literature Review. The Nature Conservancy. Cold Spring Harbor, New York. 6 p.

McCool, S. F. and D. N. Cole. 1998. Limits of Acceptable Change and Natural Resources Planning: When is LAC Useful, When is it not? *In*: McCool, S. F. and D. N. Cole (Eds.). Proceedings of the Limits of Acceptable Change and related planning processes: progress and future directions; 20-22 May 1997; Missoula, MT. Gen. Tech. Rep. INT-GTR-371. Odgen , UT: U. S. Department of Agriculture, Forest Service, Rocky Mountain Research Station.

Stankey, G. H., D. N. Cole, R. C. Lucas, M. E. Peterson and S. S. Frissell. 1985. The Limits of Acceptable Change (LAC) System for Wilderness Planning. Gen. Tech. Rep. INT-176. Odgen , UT: U. S. Department of Agriculture, Forest Service, Intermountain Forest and Range Experiment Station. 37 p.

10.0 LITERATURE CITED

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- Burger, J. 1981. The effect of human activity on birds at a coastal bay. *Biological Conservation* 21:231-241.
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- O'Donnell, Lisa. 1998, United States Fish and Wildlife Service, personal communication.
- Sparkman, L. J. 1996. Effects of human intrusion on singing behavior of black-capped vireos (*Vireo atricapillus*), Hill Country State Natural Area, Texas. Master's thesis, Southwest Texas State University, San Marcos.
- Tremblay, J. and L N. Ellison. 1979. Effects of human disturbance on breeding of black-crowned night herons. *Auk* 96:364-369.
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- U. S. Fish and Wildlife Service, 1996. Final Environmental Impact Statement/Habitat Conservation Plan for Proposed Issuance of a Permit to Allow Incidental Take of the Golden-cheeked Warbler, Black-capped Vireo, and Six Karst Invertebrates in Travis County, Texas. U. S. Fish and Wildlife Service, Albuquerque, N. M. (HCP/FEIS)
- Westmoreland, D. and L. B. Best. 1985. The effect of disturbance on mourning dove nesting success. *Auk* 102:774-780.

APPENDIX A

BCP PUBLIC ACCESS APPROVAL PROCESS APPLICATION



Balcones Canyonlands Conservation Plan
Public Access Approval Process Application
For City of Austin and Travis County BCP Tracts

Application No. _____

Failure to supply complete application information may delay processing. A copy of this application will be reviewed by City of Austin and Travis County BCCP Staff, the BCCP Scientific Advisory Committee, and U.S. Fish and Wildlife Service Austin Ecological Services Office. Additionally the BCCP Coordinating Committee must review, approve and receive approval from all parties on applications before any project activities or construction may begin. Public Access Process Application determinations are valid for twelve (12) months after completion. Projects determined to result in “harm” or “take” of protected species or their habitat (as defined by the USFWS) do not meet the terms and conditions of the BCCP and will not be approved.

1. Applicant Name:

Company or Agency:

Mailing Address: _____

City: _____ State: _____ Zip Code: _____

Contact Name: _____ **Contact Title:** _____

Daytime Phone # (____) ____-____ Fax # (____) ____-____

2. Landowner (if different from Applicant):

Mailing Address: _____

City: _____ State: _____ Zip Code: _____

3. Project Name:

4. Project location:

5. Proposed use:

6. Does this project propose a new or a changed use of Balcones Canyonlands Preserve land? (Please check one.)

7. Brief Project description:

Proposed type(s) of use:

Needed facilities:

Description of activity structure:

Description of access management:

Description of measures to mitigate threats or impacts to protected species:

8. Description of vegetation disturbance for facilities or accommodations:

9. Dimensions of disturbed areas (length, width, total square feet or acres):

10. What impacts do you anticipate to protected species on this property:

11. How will you support monitoring to measure impacts of proposed use:

12. How will you fund this proposal:

13. How will on-going operations and management be funded:

14. Provide a brief description detailing how this project benefits the BCCP:

15. Attach to this application:

1. Regional map, showing location of project
2. Site plan maps
3. Map delineating disturbed areas (show source of #6 and #7)

An application review check list is attached to assist you with preparation of this application.

*Additional pages or other supporting documentation may be attached to this Application.

SIGNATURE of Person Responsible for Submitting Application

DATE Signed

**PRINTED NAME of Person Signing
Attorney**

Indicate Agent or

Call or fax directly to: William Conrad 512-263-6430 or Fax 263-9645

**Submit applications to: BCP Program - Infrastructure
Wildland Conservation Division, Reicher Ranch
City of Austin Water & Wastewater Utility
3635 HWY 620 South
Austin, Texas 78734
Attn: William Conrad**

FOR BCCP STAFF USE		
Date Received: _____	Staff Reviewer(s): _____	Application complete? _____
Additional information needed:		

Describe anticipated Impacts:		

Are anticipated impacts avoided or mitigated:

Does Project comply with terms and conditions of the BCCP and the BCP Land Management Plan?

Describe additional planning and actions needed in order for this application to comply with the terms and conditions of the BCCP and BCP Land Management Plan:

FOR BCP TRACT OWNER/MANAGER USE (IF APPLICABLE)

Date Received: _____ Reviewer(s): _____ Application complete? _____

Additional information needed:

Describe anticipated Impacts:

Are anticipated impacts avoided or mitigated:

Does Project comply with terms and conditions of the BCCP and the BCP Land Management Plan?

Describe additional planning and actions needed in order for this application to comply with the terms and conditions of the BCCP and BCP Land Management Plan:

FOR BCCP SCIENTIFIC ADVISORY COMMITTEE USE

Date Received: _____ Date of Scientific Advisory Committee Review: _____

Additional information needed:

Describe anticipated Impacts:

Are anticipated impacts avoided or mitigated:

Does Project comply with terms and conditions of the BCCP and the BCP Land Management Plan?

Describe additional planning and actions needed in order for this application to comply with the terms and conditions of the BCCP and BCP Land Management Plan:

Date of Coordinating Committee Recommendation: _____

FOR USFWS USE

Date Received: _____ Staff Reviewer(s): _____ Date of USFWS Review: _____

Additional information needed:

Does Project comply with terms and conditions of the BCCP and the BCP Land Management Plan?

Describe additional planning and actions needed in order for this application to comply with the terms and conditions of the BCCP and BCP Land Management Plan:

APPENDIX B

BCP PUBLIC ACCESS APPROVAL PROCESS APPLICATION CHECKLIST

NOTE: This checklist is intended for use by the BCCP Secretary, his or her designee, and the preserve landowner's representative when responding to Public Access Applications as provided for in the BCP Land Management Plan Tier IIA Chapter XII section 8.0 and 8.1, revised January 2007. The review results from using this checklist shall be documented in correspondence to the applicant. The reviewers shall respond to each item in the checklist. When an item is accurate and complete, simply document this. When a checklist item response is "return application" document detailed reasons for this action. Complete the entire checklist review before returning any application.

When responses to all checklist items are affirmative or do not require the application to be returned, then the correspondence may document that the application is approved, when the preserve land owner's needs are also addressed, and provide direction to the applicant about how to proceed with their project.

Also note that approval by the BCCP Secretary only constitutes a recommendation to the BCCP Coordinating Committee and US Fish and Wildlife Service. Furthermore, a positive recommendation from the BCCP Secretary, and approval by the BCCP Coordinating Committee and US Fish and Wildlife Service does not relieve the applicant or tract owner from responsibilities for compliance with all other federal state or local laws, statutes, ordinances, codes and regulations.

Items 1 through 4:	
All information is complete	Proceed to item 5
Incomplete information	Return application
Item 5	
A) Proposed uses are included in allowed uses, Tier II Plans and Guidelines	Proceed to B
A) Proposed uses not allowed	Return application
B) Proposed uses planned according to plans and guidelines	Proceed to item 6
B) Not planned according to plan and guidelines	Return to application
Item 6	
C) New Project	Proceed to item 7
C) Changed Use	Return Application
Item 7	
Project Description	
D) The proposed project is clearly and understandably described	Proceed to E
D) The proposed project is not clear understandable	Return Application
Types of Use	
E) The proposed uses are clearly and understandably described	Proceed to F
E) The proposed uses are not clearly and understandably described	Return Application
Needed Facilities	
F) Proposed facilities are clearly and understandably described	Proceed to G
F) Proposed Facilities are not clearly and understandably described	Return Application
G) Construction or implementation of facilities will not result in take	Proceed to H
G) Construction or implementation of facilities will result in take	Return Application

H) Facilities will not degrade habitat quality	
H) Facilities will degrade habitat quality	
Mitigation possible	Proceed to I
Mitigation questionable	Return Application
I) Facilitates use of preserve interiors or high quality habitat	
Mitigation possible	Proceed to J
Mitigation questionable	Return Application
I) Does not facilitate use of interiors etc.	Proceed to J
Activity Structure	
J) Structure including use, when, where, how managed, and by whom is clearly and understandably defined	Proceed to K
J) Structure not clearly and understandably defined	Return Application
K) Structure assures that users are led, controlled, supervised, and/or managed at all times	Proceed to L
K) Structure inadequate	Return Application
L) Management including education, controls, and limits are clearly and understandably defined	Proceed to M
L) Management is not clearly or understandably defined	Return Application
M) Management assures users are limited to authorized uses, controlled to avoid unauthorized uses, and educated about their access authorization, the site sensitivity, and BCP requirements.	Proceed to N
M) Management is inadequate	Return Application
N) May not affect protected species	Proceed to O
N) Proposed use may affect active territories, colonies or populations of protected species	Return Application and define additional mitigation needs
O) Includes plans to measure/monitor effects on protected species, habitat or base resources	Proceed to P
O) Does not include monitoring	Return Application or proceed to
P) Limits uses to preserve buffers (<100' from boundaries)	Proceed to Q
P) Uses beyond buffers	Return Application or proceed to
Q) Includes plans to close and/or restore unauthorized facilities	Proceed to R
Q) Does not include restoration plans	Return Application or proceed to
R) Includes habitat enhancement proposals	Proceed to S
R) No habitat enhancement proposals	Return Application or proceed to
S) Proposed use may deter unauthorized uses	Proceed to T
S) No plans to deter unauthorized uses	Return Application

T) Includes plans to repair, restore, or protect areas with existing damage from authorized facilities or uses	Proceed to U
T) Does not address existing damage	Describe existing uses and facilities and describe extent of changes
U) Mitigation plans adequate (one or more of O through T have affirmative responses as needed to mitigate impacts from proposed uses or facilities)	Proceed to item 8
U) Mitigation Plans not adequate	Return Application
Item 8	
V) Vegetation disturbance will not open canopy	Proceed to W
V) Vegetation disturbance will open canopy	Return Application
W) Vegetation Disturbance will not significantly alter habitat protected species	Proceed to X
W) Vegetation Disturbance will significantly alter habitat for protected species	Return Application
X) Vegetation disturbance will not alter water surface flow in a manner expected to accelerate erosion or deposition	Proceed to item 9
X) Vegetation Disturbance is expected to alter surface flow.	Return Application
Item 9	
Y) Extent of disturbance is not likely to constitute an unauthorized regulatory "Take"	Proceed to Item 10
Y) Extent of disturbance likely to constitute "Take"	Return Application
Item 10	
Describe the expected affects on protected species based on the preponderance of evidence from the information provided and best professional Judgment.	Proceed to Z
Z) Sum of all effects on protected species are not likely to constitute "take"	Proceed to items 11-15
Z) Sum of all effects are likely to constitute "Take"	Return Application
Items 11 through 15	
Document Completeness of Application	Proceed to Additional Considerations
Additional Considerations	
AA) All items are complete	Proceed to BB
AA) All items are not complete	Return Application
BB) Use or facilities not likely to interfere with site management	Proceed to CC
BB) Use or facilities likely to interfere with site management	Return Application
CC) Does not exceed limits for this (these) activity(ies) as described in Plans and Guidelines	Proceed to DD

CC) Exceeds limits for this (these)activity(ies) as described in Plans and guidelines	Return Application
DD) Not contrary to mission or proposes changes to nature or purpose of preserves	Review Complete
DD) Contrary to BCP Mission or proposed changes to nature or purpose of preserves	Return Application

APPENDIX C

BCP PUBLIC ACCESS APPROVAL PROCESS APPLICATION - EXAMPLE



Balcones Canyonlands Conservation Plan

Public Access Approval Process Application

For City of Austin and Travis County BCP Tracts

Application No. _____

Failure to supply complete application information may delay processing. The City of Austin and Travis County BCCP Staff, the BCCP Scientific Advisory Committee, and U.S. Fish and Wildlife Service Austin Ecological Services Office will review a copy of this application. Additionally the BCCP Coordinating Committee must review, approve and receive approval from all parties on applications before any project activities or construction may begin. Public Access Process Application determinations are valid for twelve (12) months after completion. Projects determined to result in “harm” or “take” of protected species or their habitat (as defined by the USFWS) do not meet the terms and conditions of the BCCP and will not be approved.

1. Applicant Name: Jane Smith

Company or Agency: Austin Recreation Club

Mailing Address: _____

City: _____ State: _____ Zip Code: _____

Contact Name: _____ **Contact Title:** _____

Daytime Phone # (____) ____-____ Fax # (____) ____-____

2. Landowner (if different from Applicant): City of Austin

Mailing Address: _____

City: _____ State: _____ Zip Code: _____

3. Project Name: Third Saturday BCP Hiking Tour

6. Project location Lower Bull Creek macrosite Forest Ridge, Bull Creek District Park, Beard Trust, Ivanhoe, 3M, and St Edwards Park

7. Proposed use: A monthly hiking tour of BCP areas not normally open to the public.

6. Does this project propose a new or a changed use of Balcones Canyonlands Preserve land? (Please check one.)

7. Brief Project description:

Austin Recreation Club proposes to conducted monthly guided hiking tours of the Lower Bull Creek macrosite for club members to allow them to experience some of Austin’s natural areas in a guided educational setting

Proposed type(s) of use:

Low impact guided hiking tours

Needed facilities:

No new facilities are proposed. Instead Austin Recreation plans to use existing roads, approved trails, infrastructure corridors, and infrastructure access routes.

Description of activity structure:

Tours will only be conducted on the third Saturday of each month during the non-nesting season, September 1 through February 28. Each tour will be led by an Austin Recreation Club member who has a Bull Creek Entry permit and has received additional educational leadership training from City of Austin BCP staff or volunteers. The tour will consist of a three to four hour low to moderately challenging hiking trip through the BCP land. Austin Recreation Club has planned five proposed routes through the area.

Description of access management:

Each tour will be limited to a maximum of twenty (20) Austin Recreation Club members who have reregistered. Prior to each monthly event the Austin Recreation Club leader responsible for that event will visit the site to check route conditions and make decisions about the route to be used. No route will be used more than once in two consecutive months. A route will not be selected if it is wet, damaged, or unsafe. The event leader will then contact the City's BCP program manager to receive route approval and to identify any special site needs or circumstance that would affect tour plans. These might include management activities, dangerous wildlife, or infrastructure maintenance activities.

On the day of the tour members will meet at the BCP entrance at the site designated as the staging/parking area for the designated tour route. Parking will only occur on areas approved for this use for the designated use. Prior to initiation of the tour the tour leader will conduct a short educational program describing BCP, its purpose, species the site is managed for, as well as instructions to participants on how to conduct themselves in order to avoid damage to habitat and wildlife. The tour leader is responsible for assuring that no participant strays from the designated route, collects any natural or manmade objects – except litter, and/or leaves litter or trash on the site. The tour leader is responsible for notifying the Austin Recreation Club President and Board of Directors of members who fail to conduct themselves in a manner consistent with these commitments. Those members will be barred from participating in future Third Saturday Hiking Tours. This sanction will also apply to members who enter this BCP site outside of a planned monthly tour.

Description of measures to mitigate threats or impacts to protected species:

During site planning visits tour leaders will inspect routes and document any damage, invasive plants, erosion, or any site problems that might affect local habitat or tours. This information will be provided to the City BCP program manager and the Austin Recreation Club activity chairman. The Austin Recreation will conduct a minimum of one work day a year on the Lower bull Creek macrosite. During this work day club members will address damage and concerns noted in the tour leaders reports.

8. Description of vegetation disturbance for facilities or accommodations:

No Clearing or vegetation removal is proposed. Occasional tree limbs will be cut during pre-tour planning to remove safety threats. This will be done using Oak Wilt management methods specified by Texas Forest Service. Invasive species removal will only be conducted under the supervision of BCP staff or trained volunteer leaders

9. Dimensions of disturbed areas (length, width, total square feet or acres): NA

10. **What impacts do you anticipate to protected species on this property:** No direct impact to Golden Cheeked Warblers is expected because no use is proposed when this species is present. No impacts to rare plants are expected because only routes avoiding these populations are proposed. Impacts to aquatic species are minimized because proposed routes avoid stream crossings or travel through riparian areas. Indirect impacts are minimized by rotating tours over numerous routes and by strict adherence to management and mitigation commitments.
11. **How will you support monitoring to measure impacts of proposed use:** Pre-tour planning includes requirements for monitoring tour routes for activity related damage and for monitoring for concerns not directly related to activities. This proposal also provides for documenting monitoring observations for BCP as well as Austin Recreation Club.
12. **How will you fund this proposal:** Austin Recreation Club will fund all tour and work day expenses except training provided by BCP staff..
13. **How will on-going operations and management be funded:**
Ongoing operations will be managed using in-kind services provided by Austin Recreation Club volunteer members as described in item 7.
14. **Provide a brief description detailing how this project benefits the BCCP.** This proposal allows City of Austin BCP to educate a diverse group of constituents about conservation and about how their activities may affect plants, animals and their habitats. This will assure that these constituents are educated users who also use other sites managed by BCP.
15. **Attach to this application:**
 1. Regional map, showing location of project
 2. Site plan maps
 3. Map delineating disturbed areas (show source of #6 and #7)

An application review checklist is attached to assist you with preparation of this application.

*Additional pages or other supporting documentation may be attached to this Application.

SIGNATURE of Person Responsible for Submitting Application

DATE Signed

PRINTED NAME of Person Signing

Indicate Agent or Attorney

Call or fax directly to: William Conrad 512-263-6430 or Fax 263-9645

**Submit applications to: BCP Program - Infrastructure
Wildland Conservation Division, Reicher Ranch
City of Austin Water & Wastewater Utility
3635 HWY 620 South
Austin, Texas 78734
Attn: William Conrad**

FOR BCCP STAFF USE

Date Received: _____ Staff Reviewer(s): _____ Application complete? _____

Additional information needed:

Describe anticipated Impacts:

Are anticipated impacts avoided or mitigated:

Does Project comply with terms and conditions of the BCCP and the BCP Land Management Plan?

Describe additional planning and actions needed in order for this application to comply with the terms and conditions of the BCCP and BCP Land Management Plan:

FOR BCP TRACT OWNER/MANAGER USE (IF APPLICABLE)

Date Received: _____ Reviewer(s): _____ Application complete? _____

Additional information needed:

Describe anticipated Impacts:

Are anticipated impacts avoided or mitigated:

Does Project comply with terms and conditions of the BCCP and the BCP Land Management Plan?

Describe additional planning and actions needed in order for this application to comply with the terms and conditions of the BCCP and BCP Land Management Plan:

FOR BCCP SCIENTIFIC ADVISORY COMMITTEE USE

Date Received: _____ Date of Scientific Advisory Committee Review: _____

Additional information needed:

Describe anticipated Impacts:

Are anticipated impacts avoided or mitigated:

Does Project comply with terms and conditions of the BCCP and the BCP Land Management Plan?

Describe additional planning and actions needed in order for this application to comply with the terms and conditions of the BCCP and BCP Land Management Plan:

Date of Coordinating Committee Recommendation: _____

FOR USFWS USE

Date Received: _____ Staff Reviewer(s): _____ Date of USFWS Review: _____

Additional information needed:

Does Project comply with terms and conditions of the BCCP and the BCP Land Management Plan?

Describe additional planning and actions needed in order for this application to comply with the terms and conditions of the BCCP and BCP Land Management Plan:
