

**BALCONES CANYONLANDS PRESERVE
LAND MANAGEMENT PLAN**

TIER II-C

BULL CREEK MACROSITE



August 2007

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1.0 INTRODUCTION

Of the 10 macrosites in the regional permit area (Figure 1), the Bull Creek macrosite is one of the seven macrosites that contain Balcones Canyonlands Preserve (BCP) land established under the Balcones Canyonlands Conservation Plan (BCCP), a regional permit issued to Travis County and the City of Austin in 1996 by the U.S. Fish and Wildlife Service (USFWS 1996).

1.1 Macrosite Description

The Bull Creek macrosite is located in north central Travis County, between RR 2222 and FM 620 to the south and west, U.S. Highway 183 to the north, and Loop 360 and Mesa Drive on the east. Most of the undeveloped land in this macrosite supports extensive golden-cheeked warbler habitat, as well as botanically rich communities and numerous springs, seeps, and associated hydric habitats (wetlands). The Bull Creek macrosite has a total area of approximately 17,744 acres (USFWS 1996), 5,638 acres of which is proposed for BCP protection. It is centrally located within the proposed preserve system and contains significant populations of most of the listed species (Tier I, Attachment 4).

The Bull Creek macrosite contains 11,414 acres of golden-cheeked warbler habitat (Travis County 1996). The macrosite contains geologic formations that could, under certain conditions (such as fire, revegetation or clearing of mature growth), produce the early successional vegetative conditions that could potentially support black-capped vireo populations. However, almost all of this area is currently golden-cheeked warbler habitat, and it is not proposed for warbler habitat to be converted to vireo habitat. There are 9,502 acres of karst-forming strata, and 3,093 acres of potential habitat for the plants of concern in this macrosite (USFWS 1996).

1.2 Current Preserve Land

Current preserve land in the Bull Creek macrosite is illustrated in Figure 2. The City of Austin (COA) is the primary owner of the preserve lands currently protected in the BCP in the Bull Creek macrosite (see Table 1). City of Austin land is managed by the Wildland Conservation Division of Austin Water Utility (AWU) or the City of Austin Parks and Recreation Department (PARC). Travis County land is managed by the Travis County Natural Resources Department.

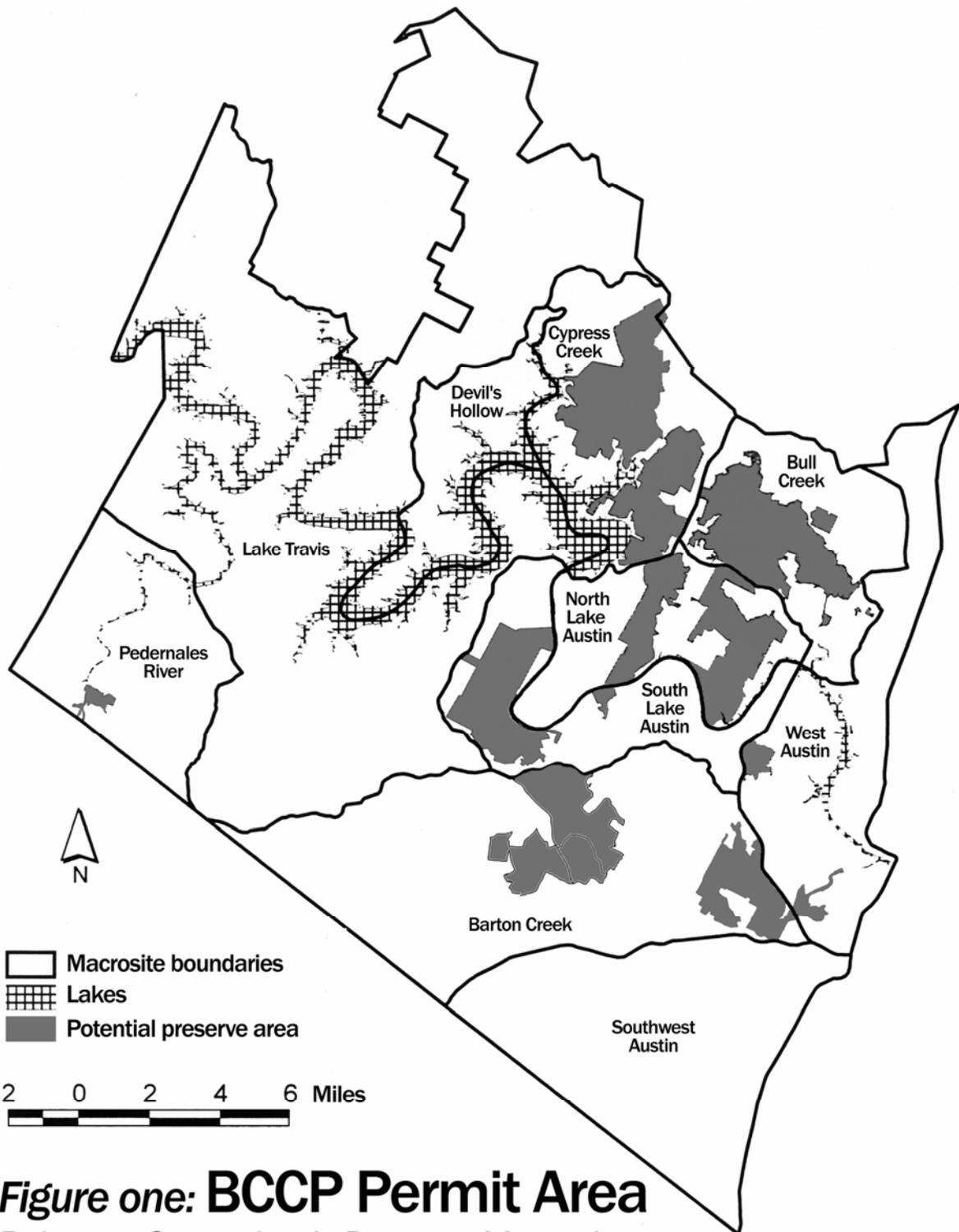


Figure one: BCCP Permit Area
Balcones Canyonlands Preserve Macrosites

Table 1. BCP Land in the Bull Creek Macrosite.

Tract	Land Manager	Acreage
Barrow Preserve	COA	8
Beard Family Tract - Canyon Creek	COA	54
Beard, One Canyon Ridge, phase A	Beard Family Partnership	33
Bull Creek District Park	COA	28
Bull Creek Greenbelt	COA	197
Canyon Creek	COA	236
Canyon Creek (transfer from MUD)	COA	215
Canyon Creek Ltd - 4 tracts	NWTC MUD #2	190
Canyon Vista	Travis County	237
Canyon Vista Conservation Easement	Travis County	1
Concordia University	Travis County	250
Forest Ridge	COA	410
Four Points	P-WB Joint Ventures	187
Franklin Federal	COA	151
Gibson/Knott	COA	9
Hanks	COA	88
Hiller	COA	17
Hilltop	COA	50
Ivanhoe	COA	942
Jester/Burris	COA	294
Kruger	COA	96
Lanier	COA	133
Ribelin Ranch	Ribelin Family	240
Ribelin Ranch	Travis County	319
St. Edwards Park	COA	50
Spicewood Springs Preserve	COA	8
Water Treatment Plant #4	COA - WW	138
3M	COA	215
	Bull Creek Macrosite total acreage	4,796
	<i>Target preserve size</i>	5,638
	<i>Remaining acres to manage</i>	842

City of Austin land in the Bull Creek macrosite totals 3,339 acres. AWU manages the preserve land west of Loop 360 and manages parkland in partnership with PARD in St. Edwards Park, Bull Creek Greenbelt, Barrow and Stillhouse Hollow Parks. City of Austin Water and Wastewater manages the Water Treatment Plant #4 site. Travis County land totals 807 acres in this macrosite.

2.0 MACROSITE GOALS

2.1 Minimum Specifications for Preserve Acquisition/Protection

The long-term viability of the Bull Creek preserve is high for the several species of concern occurring in the macrosite, assuming that properties are secured to form a

contiguous preserve without significant developed in-holdings (Butler/EH&A Team 1992, USFWS 1996). The Bull Creek preserve unit is considered essential to the BCCP and is recommended to include a minimum of 5,200 acres (Figure 1). The outer boundaries of this preserve should be no more than 0.5 mile from the North Lake Austin preserve unit and 0.75 mile from the Cypress Creek preserve unit. The central core of the Bull Creek preserve unit should be configured to have a minimum width of 5,500 feet and a maximum of 20 percent of the total area occurring within 330 feet of the boundary (Butler/EH&A Team 1992, USFWS 1996).

2.2 Justification of Preserve Location

The recommended Bull Creek preserve design encompasses the majority of habitat for the species of concern in the Bull Creek macrosite and is configured to minimize the impacts from existing and future development in the area (Butler/EH&A Team 1992, USFWS 1996).

The core of this preserve unit consists of several large tracts where the majority of the warbler habitat and karst features containing endangered species occur.

Certain properties along RR 2222 and RM 620 were not included in the preserve design, primarily due to the extent of existing development and the expense of acquiring these small parcels with highway frontage. The preserve boundary occasionally cuts across property boundary lines in this area to include important habitat and avoid potential intrusions from future development. Small parcels supporting warbler habitat were also included along the eastern boundary of this potential preserve unit in the vicinity of Bull Creek. These units were necessary in order to protect a significant amount of suitable habitat, primarily for the warbler, and to delimit the extent to which development may encroach from the east.

The Bull Creek macrosite is also important for the *Eurycea* salamander which, in the Bull Creek macrosite, occurs in Stillhouse Hollow Springs, Bull Creek Spring, Schlumberger Spring, Bull Creek Tributary Spring, Barrow Hollow Spring, Horse Thief Hollow, unnamed springs on a Bull Creek tributary, and Canyon Vista Springs (USFWS 1996).

2.3 Acquisition/Protection Goals

Acres currently protected	4,796
Remaining acres to be protected	<u>842</u>
Total needed in this macrosite	5,638

The 842 acres remaining to be protected will be protected through purchase, conservation easements, mitigation agreements, land swaps or other protection measures. Potential preserve land will be protected or purchased, based on highest biological significance and availability, and will be protected/purchased as soon as possible. Money to purchase this land will come from the sale of BCCP Participation Certificates, mitigation fees paid through USFWS to the BCCP, grants and/or other funding sources.

3.0 LITERATURE CITED

Balcones Canyonlands Conservation Plan Annual Report 2003

Butler/EH&A Team. 1992. Balcones Canyonlands Conservation Plan, Final Draft EH&A Doc. No. 920043. Prepared for the Balcones Canyonlands Conservation Plan Executive Committee.

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Travis County Natural Resource Program, Balcones Canyonlands Conservation Plan: GIS permit area and habitat map, 1996.