

**BALCONES CANYONLANDS PRESERVE
LAND MANAGEMENT PLAN**

TIER II-C

CYPRESS CREEK MACROSITE



August 2007

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1.0 INTRODUCTION

Of the 10 macrosites in the regional permit area (Figure 1), the Cypress 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 Cypress Creek macrosite is in northwestern Travis County, located east of Lake Travis and west of the Travis County line (Figure 1). Most of the undeveloped land in this macrosite supports good golden-cheeked warbler habitat (Travis County 1996). It contains large areas of occupied black-capped vireo habitat, biologically important caves and karst topography, as well as botanically rich communities, numerous springs, seeps, and associated hydric habitats (wetlands). The Cypress Creek macrosite includes approximately 21,606 acres, 8,111 acres of which are proposed to be protected in the BCP. Acquisition and habitat management in this macrosite should promote protection of existing populations of the endangered species and species of concern, and establish practices that would allow for the expansion of habitat for the golden-cheeked warbler and black-capped vireo (USFWS 1996).

1.2 Current Preserve Land

The current preserve land in the Cypress Creek macrosite consists of 7,803 acres and is summarized in Table 1. In the Cypress Creek macrosite, preserve tracts are owned by the Lower Colorado River Authority (LCRA), the City of Austin (COA), The Nature Conservancy of Texas (TNC), Travis County (TC), and Travis Audubon Society (TAS). Individual 10(a) mitigation lands include the Volente, Theriot and City of Cedar Park tracts. Parts of the McGregor Tract (excluding Hippie Hollow Park) and Romberg Tract (excluding Bob Wentz Park located on the lake side of Comanche Trail) are undeveloped and managed as preserve land. Hippie Hollow Park and Bob Wentz Park are developed, non-BCP land managed as public parks.

Tier III reports are written for all currently protected tracts with the exception of private mitigation properties, which have their own requirements with USFWS, including the following tracts: Volente, City of Cedar Park, and Theriot. Travis Audubon Society and The Nature Conservancy are voluntarily submitting Tier III land management plans for their tracts.

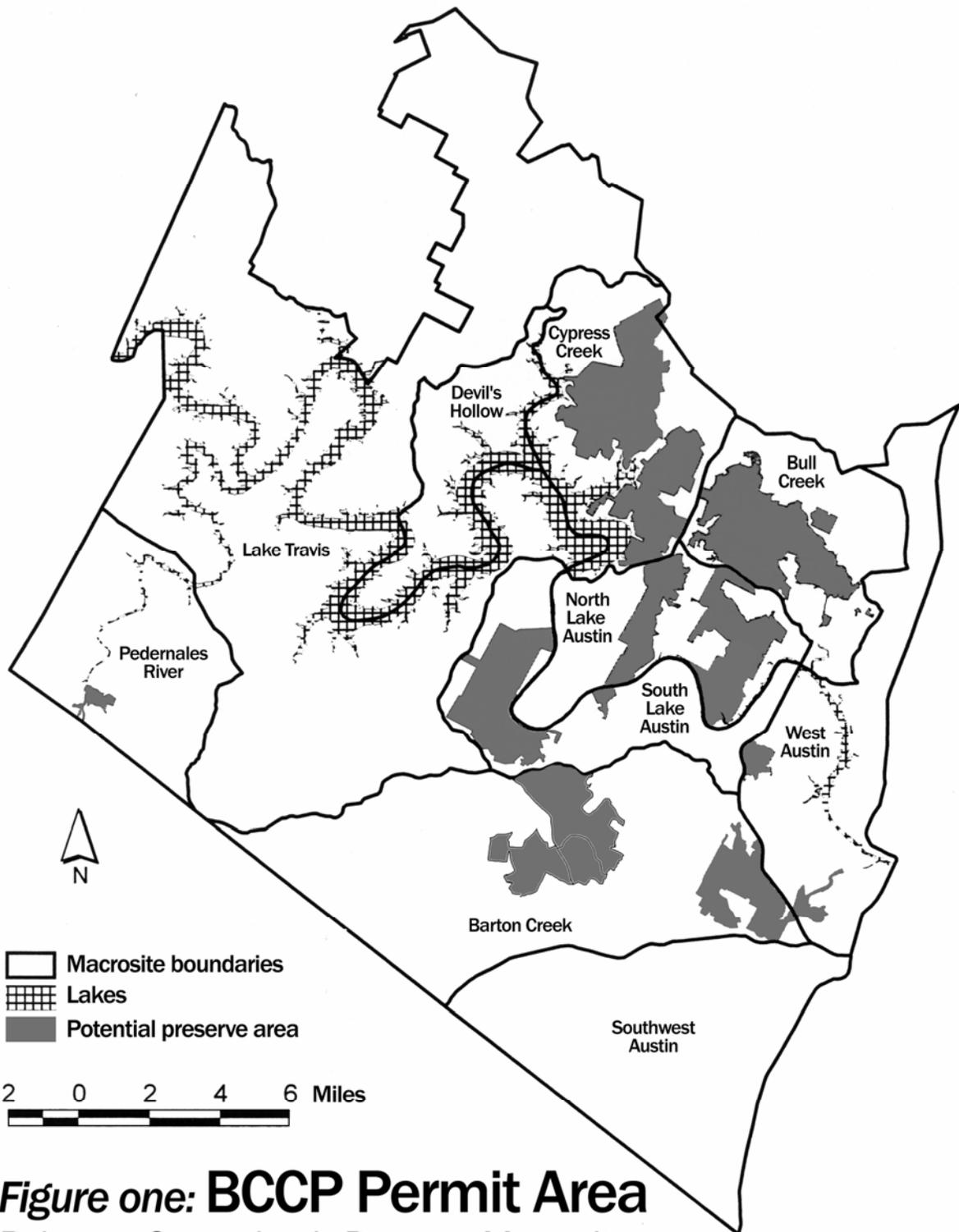


Figure one: BCCP Permit Area
Balcones Canyonlands Preserve Macrosites

Table 1. BCP Land in the Cypress Creek Macrosite

Tract	Land Manager	Acreage
Attwood	Travis County	31
Austin Simon	COA	100
Baker Sanctuary	Travis Audubon Society	680
Blake	Travis County	38
Bunten	Travis County	141
Cedar Park ¹	City of Cedar Park	33
Comanche Canyon Ranch ¹	Theriot	305
The Crossings ¹	Travis County	175
D.C. Reed, 1 Volente Group ¹	Grayson Volente Group, LTD	827
Grandview Hills 10(a) ¹	Travis County	287
Grandview Hills 10(a) Section 8, Verandah Apts. ¹	Travis County	24
Grandview Hills, phase one	Travis County	263
Grandview Hills, phase two	Travis County	318
Grandview Hills Section 14, Lot 2 ¹	Travis County	35
King	Travis County	59
Lake Perspectives	Travis County	124
Lehmann	Nature Conservancy	160
Lime Creek	COA	494
McGregor	LCRA	363
Mirtsching	Travis County	2
Nootsie Tract	Travis County	120
Romberg	Travis County	40
Schulze	LCRA	13
Snowden	Travis County	54
Stratton	Travis County	6
TSNL Caves	Travis County	6
Toops	Travis County	170
Tomen Caves Tract	Travis County	141
Vaughan, Davenport and Seven Oaks	LCRA	128
Vista Point	Travis County	490
Wheless	LCRA	2,176
	Cypress Creek Macrosite total acreage	7,803
	<i>Target preserve size</i>	8,111
	<i>Remaining acres to manage</i>	308

¹ Private Section 10(a) mitigation or Section 7 consultation

2.0 MACROSITE GOALS

2.1 Minimum Specifications for Preserve Acquisition/Protection

Acquisition of the Cypress Creek component of the preserve system is essential to the success of the BCP. The minimum acreage recommended for this high priority preserve unit would include no less than 7,700 acres (Figure 1). The Cypress Creek preserve unit should be configured with a minimum width of 3,000 feet or greater, so that a maximum

of 20 percent of the minimum preserve area occurs within 330 feet of the perimeter. The outer edge of the Cypress Creek preserve unit should be no greater than 0.75 mile from either Bull Creek or North Lake Austin preserve units and no more than 3.5 miles from the Balcones Canyonlands National Wildlife Refuge (BCNWR) (USFWS 1996).

2.2 Justification of Preserve Location

The proposed preserve area mapped within the Cypress Creek macrosite represents an effort to maximize protection of habitat for the golden-cheeked warbler, black-capped vireo and karst invertebrates that occur on parcels greater than 15 acres in size. In some cases, smaller tracts containing occupied warbler habitat were included in the preserve design in order to minimize the potential impact of development intrusion. Property that was not included within the proposed preserve in the western portion of the macrosite includes very expensive, small, developed tracts, existing lakefront development, and developed land in the vicinity of the town of Volente (USFWS 1996).

Cedar Park is an urban center that presents a barrier to the northeast. Much of the area to the east of the proposed preserve unit southwest of Cedar Park in the Cypress Creek watershed has potential for the occurrence of karst features; however, limited habitat for other endangered species and species of concern occurs due to historic clearing for cattle grazing. Much of the area omitted from the potential preserve area along RM 620 was omitted because utility infrastructure has already been provided Volente (USFWS 1996).

Habitat management in this macrosite should promote protection of existing populations of the endangered species and species of concern, and establish practices that would allow for the expansion of habitat for the golden-cheeked warbler and black-capped vireo. Of the 4,447 acres of potential golden-cheeked warbler habitat estimated within the macrosite, approximately 2,651 acres are included within the recommended preserve area (USFWS 1996).

The management potential for this preserve area is very high. It consists primarily of large tracts that, to varying degrees, contain habitat for the species of concern and are relatively undeveloped or in agricultural use. Internal edge impacts resulting from existing development, roads, and other rights-of-way represent a challenge to management for the species of concern in this area (USFWS 1996).

2.3 Acquisition/Protection Goals

Acres currently protected	7,803
Remaining acres to be protected	<u>308</u>
Total needed in this macrosite	8,111

The 308 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/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.

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.

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