

**BALCONES CANYONLANDS PRESERVE
LAND MANAGEMENT PLAN**

TIER II-C

SOUTH LAKE AUSTIN MACROSITE



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1.0 INTRODUCTION

Of the 10 macrosites in the regional permit area (Figure 1), the South Lake Austin 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 South Lake Austin macrosite represents approximately 16,397 acres delimited by Lake Austin on the north, RM 620 on the west, RM 2244 (Bee Cave Road) on the south, and Loop 360 on the east. There are 4,491 acres in this macrosite that are proposed to be protected in the BCP. The main benefits of the preservation of habitat within this macrosite would be those resulting from the protection of golden-cheeked warbler habitat. The South Lake Austin macrosite is of less importance for the black-capped vireo and karst invertebrates. Historic sightings of the vireo in this macrosite are limited to an area adjacent to the low water crossing road near Mansfield Dam and the Wolf Ranch. Very few outcrops of karst-forming Fredericksburg limestone occur in this macrosite, making it unlikely that karst invertebrates occur in the area. This macrosite includes agricultural and undeveloped land that supports habitat for the golden-cheeked warbler. Development in this macrosite is located primarily in the extreme northwestern portion, the extreme eastern portion, and along the highways. The undeveloped interior area of this macrosite contains golden-cheeked warbler habitat (USFWS 1996).

1.2 Current Preserve Land

Lands currently protected in the BCP in the South Lake Austin macrosite are summarized in 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 (PARD). The City of Austin (COA) is the primary owner of the preserve land in this macrosite. Private mitigation lands include lands owned by the Southwest Travis County Municipal Utility District (SWTC MUD) #5 (Lake Pointe development), Balfour (Baldwin) and Alta Vista (Schram Ranch) (managed by City of Lakeway).

The potential preserve unit identified in this macrosite delimits approximately 4,491 acres, much of which supports warbler habitat. Most of the higher-quality warbler habitat is concentrated within the forested canyons that characterize the area. The intervening plateau areas do not currently support warbler habitat due to previous clearing for livestock grazing. If managed as part of the preserve system, regenerated golden-cheeked

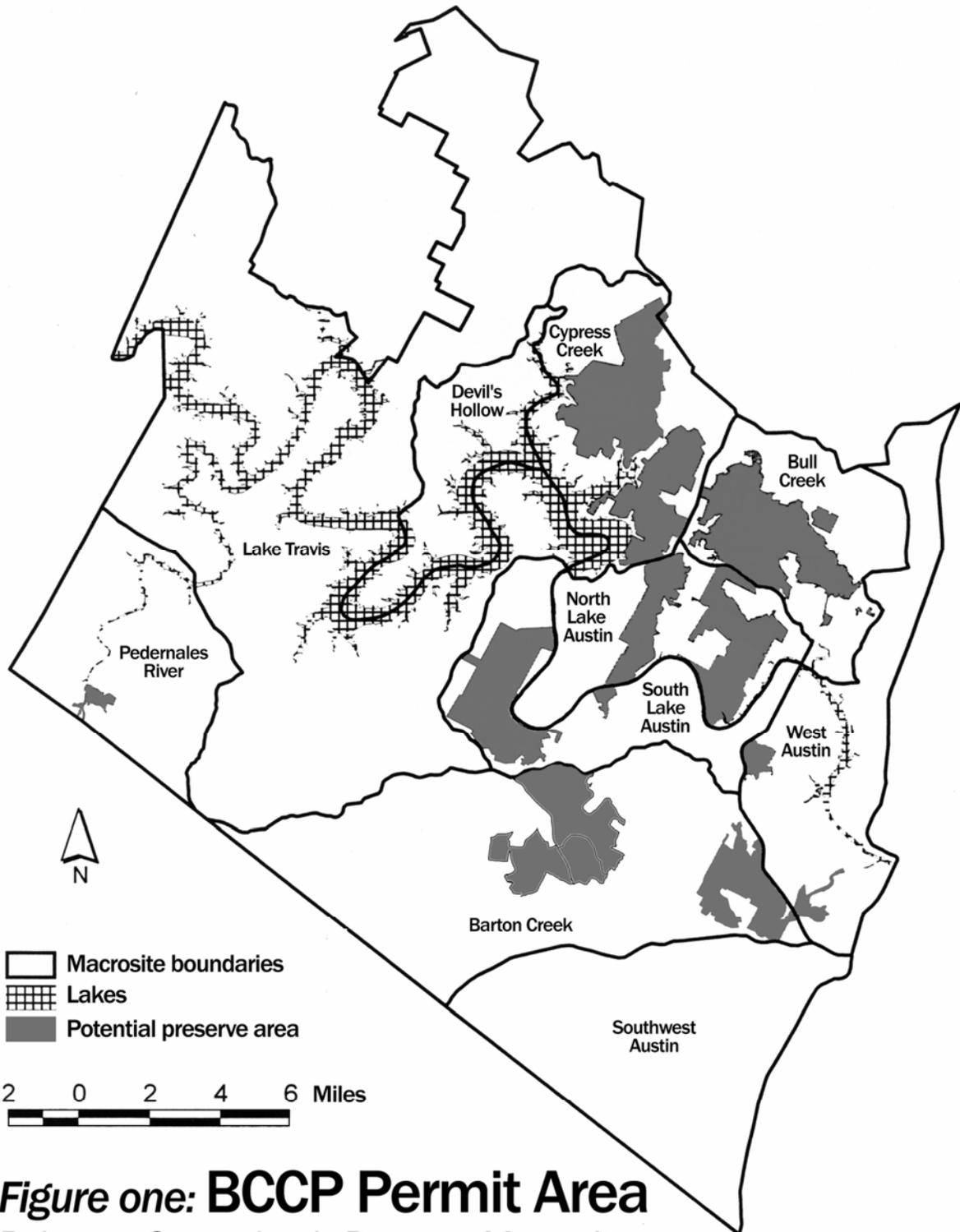


Figure one: BCCP Permit Area
Balcones Canyonlands Preserve Macrosites

warbler or black-capped vireo habitat on these uplands could provide additional habitat over the long term. There are Tier III reports for all protected tracts, except for Lake Pointe, Balfour and Alta Vista (Schram Ranch), 10(a) mitigation properties which have their own requirements with USFWS.

Table 1. BCP Land in the South Lake Austin Macrosite

Tract	Land Manager	Acreage
Balfour	Baldin Development	121
Bohls Ranch	COA	450
Commons Ford Park*	COA	115
Double J&T	COA	1,729
Lake Pointe, one Lk Pt. 1,2,3	SWTC MUD #5	147
Lake Pointe, one Lk Pt. 4	SWTC MUD #5	93
Medway Ranch	Travis County	344
Reicher Ranch	COA	820
Sansom	COA	13
Schram Ranch	City of Lakeway	198
South Lake Austin Macrosite total		
acreage		4,030
<i>Target preserve size</i>		4491
<i>Remaining acres to manage</i>		461

* Specifically designated undeveloped preserve land located within parks (which also contain developed parkland in other designated areas).

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

2.0 MACROSITE GOALS

2.1 Minimum Specifications for Preserve Acquisition/Protection

A minimum preserve area of 3,000 acres is recommended for this macrosite. This preserve should be no less than 3,000 feet wide at its narrowest point and should be configured so that greater than 20 percent of the area is within 330 feet of the perimeter (Figure 1). The South Lake Austin preserve unit is recommended to be situated 3.2 miles or less from the North Lake Austin preserve and 0.5 mile or less from the Barton Creek preserve (USFWS 1996).

2.2 Justification of Preserve Location

The potential preserve area offers protection for a portion of the warbler population south of the Colorado River and for adjacent land that can be managed for warblers. If the recommended minimum specifications are not achieved, acquisition of the canyons supporting warblers within the South Lake Austin macrosite should still be considered, due to their value as biological corridors linking preserve units in the Barton Creek and North Lake Austin macrosites. This area would provide some degree of mitigation for

take occurring outside of the preserve system, assuming that the warbler population increases as habitat improves within the preserve units. Canyons to the east are similar to those encompassed by the potential preserve and support suitable warbler habitat. However, they are surrounded by development to an extent that precludes any remediation of the fragmentation problem in this area (USFWS 1996).

2.3 Acquisition/Protection Goals

Acres currently protected	4,030
Remaining acres to be protected	<u>461</u>
Total needed in this macrosite	4,491

The additional 461 acres 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 BCP, 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.