

**BALCONES CANYONLANDS PRESERVE
LAND MANAGEMENT PLAN**

TIER II-C

WEST AUSTIN MACROSITE



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TABLE OF CONTENTS

1.0 INTRODUCTION _____ **1**

1.1 Macrosite Description _____ **1**

1.2 Current Preserve Land _____ **1**

2.0 MACROSITE GOALS _____ **3**

2.1 Minimum Specifications for Preserve Acquisition/Protection _____ **3**

2.2 Justification of Preserve Location _____ **3**

2.3 Acquisition/Protection Goals _____ **4**

3.0 LITERATURE CITED _____ **5**

LIST OF TABLES

Table 1: BCP Land in the West Austin Macrosite _____ **3**

LIST OF FIGURES

Figure 1: BCCP Permit Area Balcones Canyonlands Preserve Macrosites _____ **2**

1.0 INTRODUCTION

Of the 10 macrosites in the regional permit area (Figure 1), the West 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 West Austin macrosite is generally delimited by Loop 360, U.S. Highway 183, and Mesa Drive on the west and the MOPAC Railroad on the east. It is much more heavily influenced by urbanization than other macrosites. This macrosite includes approximately 22,599 acres in the vicinity of West Lake Hills and west Austin. There are 462 acres which are proposed for protection and currently protected in the BCP for the golden-cheeked warbler, black-capped vireo, karst invertebrates, and bracted twistflower. Preservation in the West Austin macrosite includes the Wild Basin Wilderness Preserve, Vireo Preserve, Ullrich Water Treatment Plant Habitat Management Area, Mount Bonnell Park, and a small part of the Barton Creek Greenbelt. There are ten caves protected under the permit in this macrosite.

1.2 Current Preserve Land

The currently preserved land in the West Austin macrosite is summarized in Table 1. The City of Austin (COA) and Travis County (TC) are owners of the preserve tracts in the West Austin macrosite. COA lands are managed by the Wildland Conservation Division of Austin Water Utility (AWU) or the City of Austin Parks and Recreation Department (PARD). Wild Basin Wilderness Preserve is owned by Travis County and managed by the Committee for Wild Basin Wilderness.

The major part of the Barton Creek Greenbelt and all of the Barton Creek Wilderness Park is located in the Barton Creek macrosite. Though the eastern part of the Barton Creek Greenbelt is located geographically in the West Austin macrosite, because the Greenbelt and Wilderness Park are administered as a unit, they will be discussed in the Barton Creek Macrosite Tier II report (and not discussed in this West Austin macrosite report). It is necessary to look at the Tier II Barton Creek Macrosite and West Austin Macrosite report maps to see both the eastern and western parts of the Greenbelt. There are Tier III reports for all protected tracts.

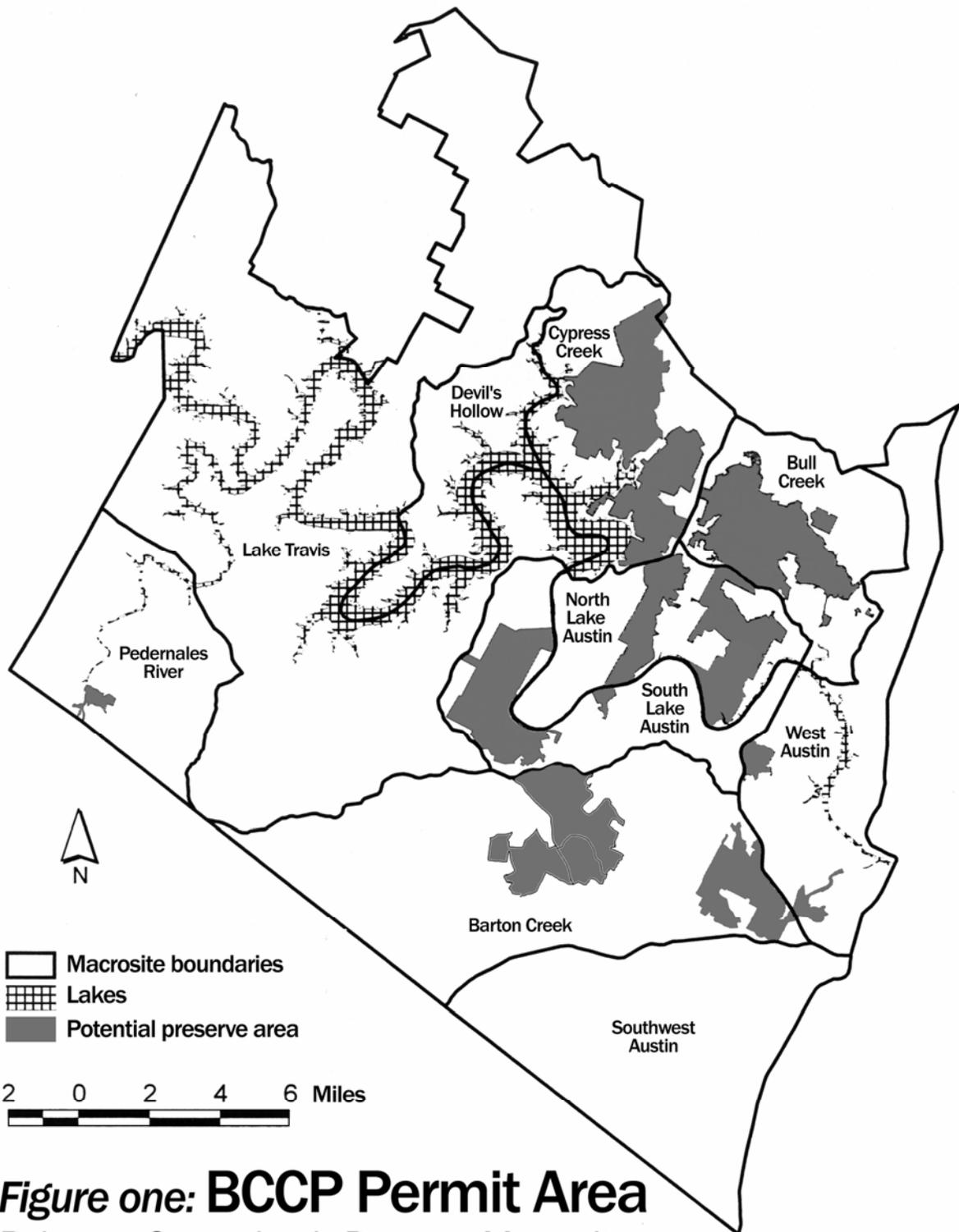


Figure one: BCCP Permit Area
Balcones Canyonlands Preserve Macrosites

Table 1. BCP Land in the West Austin Macrosite

Tract	Land Manager	Acreage
Mount Bonnell	COA	3
Ullrich WTP Habitat Management Area	COA - WW	18
Vireo Research	COA	214
Wild Basin Wilderness Preserve	Travis County	227
West Austin Macrosite total acreage		462
<i>Target preserve size</i>		462
<i>Remaining acres to manage</i>		0

2.0 MACROSITE GOALS

2.1 Minimum Specifications for Preserve Acquisition/Protection

No additional land is targeted for acquisition in this macrosite (Butler/EH&A Team 1992, USFWS 1996) with the possible exception of caves. The acquisition or other protection of land in the Northwood and McNeil Cave Cluster would be important if funds and willing sellers are available.

2.2 Justification of Preserve Location

This macrosite is considered to be of high importance for karst invertebrates and the black-capped vireo, and of moderate importance for the bracted twistflower, with overall preserve viability low. Potential preserve areas for birds in this macrosite are small, fragmented, and surrounded by development. Although it is possible to buffer existing preserve lands listed above, it may be impossible to reverse the negative impact of urbanization on populations of the species of concern. This effect is of particular concern regarding the long-term management prospects for the black-capped vireo, golden-cheeked warbler, and bracted twistflower (USFWS 1996).

Although additional habitat for species of concern occurs within this macrosite, the cost, degree of fragmentation, and extent of surrounding urbanization preclude considering additional acquisition for preserves. However, consideration should be given to such habitat areas, particularly if they support species of concern and an opportunity for inclusion in the preserve occurs. An example of such an area is a 215-acre parcel, the Brightleaf State Natural Area (Lucas tract), which has historically supported golden-cheeked warblers in close proximity to the City of Austin and was recently obtained by TPWD. This site has been used for avian and botanical research for approximately 40 years, and is unique within the permit area for the bird census data that has been generated. It would continue to be valuable for research relevant to the BCCP (Butler/EH&A Team 1992, USFWS 1996).

2.3 Acquisition/Protection Goals

Acres currently protected	462
Remaining acres to be purchased	<u>0</u>
Total needed in this macrosite	462

There are no current plans to acquire additional preserve land in this macrosite except for land in cave clusters.

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.