

**BALCONES CANYONLANDS PRESERVE  
LAND MANAGEMENT PLAN**

**TIER III**

**CITY OF AUSTIN  
EMMA LONG METROPOLITAN PARK  
NORTH LAKE AUSTIN MACROSITE**



Prepared by Balcones Canyonlands Preserve Staff

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## **1.0 BACKGROUND INFORMATION ON EMMA LONG METROPOLITAN PARK**

All previous background information for the Emma Long tract can be found in the first five-year set of three volumes entitled *Balcones Canyonlands Preserve Land Management Plans* (August 1999). The property is dedicated parkland owned by the City of Austin. The following reflects immediately available information. All Deeds of Record are on file at the City of Austin's Austin Water Utility Wildland Conservation Division Office, the Austin Parks and Recreation Department (PARC), and the Travis County Courthouse.

## **2.0 MANAGEMENT PROGRAM**

### **2.1 Plan Administration**

See Tier II-B Plan Administration for a description of the City of Austin's Austin Water Utility Wildland Conservation Division as a managing entity, and for descriptions of staffing levels, equipment inventory, budget and annual reports as they pertain to the City of Austin's management of the BCP.

### **2.2 Management Goal**

#### ***2.2.1 Primary Management Goal***

The primary goal for the BCP portion of the Emma Long Metropolitan Park tract is to protect and conserve the endangered species listed in the Preserve permit and to reduce human disturbances to endangered species habitats.

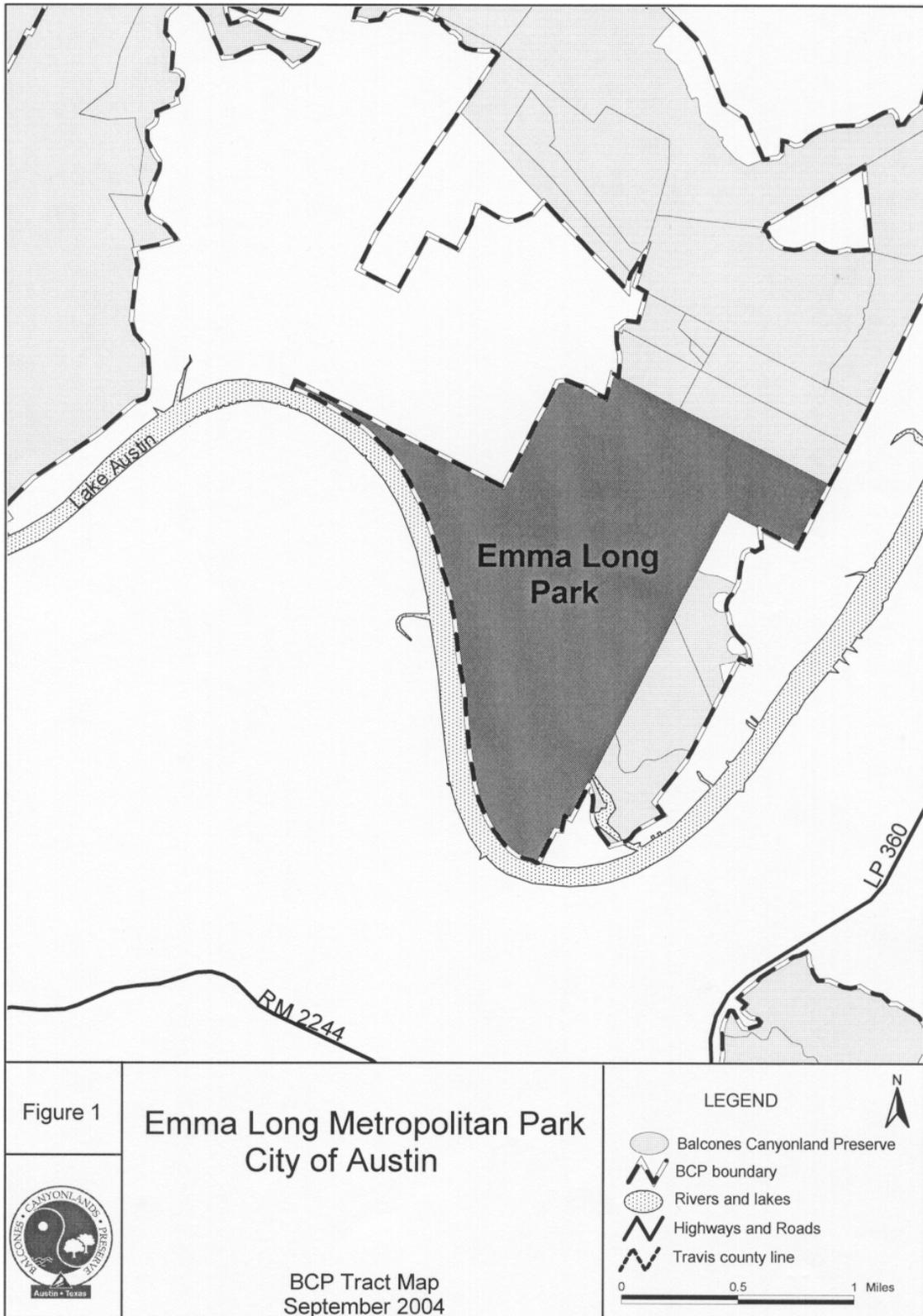
##### ***2.2.1.1 Golden-cheeked Warbler***

Monitoring of the GCWA on Emma Long will be conducted annually in order to assess population and productivity trends and distribution. Within an 830-acre portion of the total 950 acres designated for the BCP, the City of Austin's Wildland Conservation Division will continue to allow hiking only. No dogs, on or off leash, are allowed in the BCP portion of the park, except in designated parking areas. Motorized and mountain bike access will be restricted to the Motorcycle Use Area and will not be permitted in the remaining portion of the preserve acreage. No additional trails or extensions of existing trails are authorized anywhere in the BCP preserve area. Oak wilt will be monitored and controlled as feasible.

##### ***2.2.1.2 Black-capped Vireo***

Not applicable.

**FIGURE 1: LOCATION MAP**



### 2.2.1.3 Federally Listed Karst Species

Not applicable

### 2.2.2 Secondary Management Goals

PARD will honor previous commitments to special user groups and provide reasonable access to them, while complying with federal permit requirements to protect endangered species and species of concern.

## 2.3 Issues

### *Motorcycles and bicycles*

PARD has previous commitments to special user-groups, which are discussed elsewhere in this document. Conflicts with endangered species management, as well as vandalism of trees, rock ledges and man-made features, will be addressed per the management objectives discussed below in Section 2.4.

In general, problems arise when cyclists with beginner or intermediate level skills attempt the high difficulty level trails in the Motorcycle Use Area. Considerable vandalism of trees has occurred in recent years as mountain bicycling has increased at the site. Cyclists have used chainsaws, hand-held saws, and sledge hammers to lower the trail difficulty to their skill level and to make the trails more compatible with bicycle use rather than motorcycles. Other riders have opened new trails at will. These activities have vandalized park resources such as trees and rock ledges, as well as injuring wildlife habitat. Man-made features such as signs, barriers, and Porta-Potties are also regularly vandalized.

Meetings with representatives of the user groups to seek assistance in reducing the problems addressed above will be initiated by PARD and BCP staff. Emma Long Metro Park is not sufficiently staffed to prevent these occurrences, but a greater effort will be needed to fund and implement procedures and infrastructure, such as fencing, signs, and entryways to reverse this trend.

### *Oak Wilt*

Oak wilt surveys were conducted on Emma Long in spring and summer 2004. new and previously mapped oak wilt centers were located. Several very large live oak wilt centers exist. Disease centers are not exhausted of host trees, thus the spread of oak wilt remains a major problem. Surveying for oak wilt will continue annually and previously located centers will be monitored annually. Control will be implemented as is feasible.

## 2.4 Management Objectives

Tier II objectives for the North Lake Austin Macrosite include protection of endangered species and species of concern and their habitats. This will be accomplished by: (1) enforcing regulations, managing public access and securing boundaries; (2) management of habitat

through vegetation monitoring and water quality protection; (3) monitoring endangered species; (4) enhancement of habitat; and (5) public education and outreach. The goals and objectives of the Macrosite and this unit will be implemented through the objectives and activities listed below.

**1. Protect natural resources from direct human impact.**

- a. Initiate steps to curb vandalism in the Motorcycle Use Area and to reduce use impacts on the habitat.
  - Close GCWA habitat to all uses other than hiking on approved trails and motorcycle and bicycle-riding in the Motorcycle Use Area.
  - Secure the boundaries as needed with fencing and signs and use interior fencing where needed.
  - Post educational and restriction signs along the roads, parking areas, hiking trail entrances, and at the motorcycle area.
  - Conduct surveys to determine current use levels in the Motorcycle Use Area.
  - Patrol the perimeter and interior of the unit routinely, handling problems as needed.
  - Train visitor management staff on how to answer visitors' questions about endangered species and about special management issues.
  - Apply for grant money to fund these and other mitigating measures.
  - Limit the number of cars in the parking lot of the Motorcycle Use Area to prevent overuse of the area.

**2. Monitor endangered species and species of concern per established protocols.**

**3. Monitor and manage vegetation and problem animals**

- a. Develop a fire control plan with the appropriate fire control district and determine when, where and how to suppress wildfires.
- b. Annually survey for and suppress oak wilt.
- c. Control brown-headed cowbirds, feral hogs and other nuisance domestic and feral animals as needed.
- d. Survey annually for aggressive non-native plant species and remove as needed.

These objectives and activities are grouped into four categories (vegetation, animal, physical and visitor-related) with assigned action dates in the following five-year timeline:

**Table 1: Objectives**

<b>Activities</b>	<b>04</b>	<b>05</b>	<b>06</b>	<b>07</b>	<b>08</b>
<b>Vegetation Management</b>					
Control non-native plant species	X	X	X	X	X
Survey for and suppress oak wilt	X	X	X	X	X
Monitor vegetation	X	X	X	X	X
<b>Animal Management</b>					
Monitor GCWA population	X	X	X	X	X
Control brown-headed cowbirds and other nuisance animals	X	X	X	X	X
<b>Physical and Cultural Management Procedures</b>					
Develop and implement fire control plan	X	X	X	X	X
<b>Visitor Management/Education</b>					
Reduce vandalism and impacts on habitat at Motorcycle Use Area and Turkey Creek Trail	X	X	X	X	X

## 2.5 Implementation Strategies

All implementation will follow applicable BCP guidelines and other accepted procedures in use by USFWS, Texas Parks and Wildlife Department, Texas Forest Service, Natural Resources Conservation Service, Structural Pest Control Board of Texas, City of Austin's Austin Water Utility, and the Austin Parks and Recreation Department. All pesticide applications are performed under the direction of a licensed non-commercial pesticide applicator.

Authorized staff may access the preserve by the most appropriate method, including by foot, motorized vehicle, on horseback or bicycle. Vehicles are restricted to existing roads unless specifically approved by the land manager. Springs and spring runs are restricted to foot access only.

## 2.6 Public Access

Hiking is permitted on established, designated trails on the BCP portion of Emma Long. A nature trail for hiking only follows Turkey Creek west of the park road, and turns north into upland areas. No mountain bikes are permitted to access this area. This trail had been designated by the Parks and Recreation Department in November 1994 as a "off leash" area for dogs. The August 1999 edition of the BCP Land Management Plan voided that designation. The current document continues the stated restriction, no dogs are allowed in the BCP portion of the park, except in designated parking areas. Mountain biking and motorcycles are permitted in the designated Motorcycle Use Area only. No other recreational uses are allowed in the preserve. All visitors must stay on marked trails. See Tier II-A, Chapter 12: Public Access for more details.

### **3.0 MONITORING**

The City of Austin will monitor and evaluate habitat management in accordance with procedures as defined in Tier II-A Management Handbook. Evaluation and reporting procedures will comply with applicable portions of the Tier II-B Plan Administration.