



# United States Department of the Interior

FISH AND WILDLIFE SERVICE  
Office of the State Administrator  
8027 Exchange Drive  
Austin, Texas 78754  
512 927-3557



JUL 16 2008

The Honorable Glenn Hegar  
P.O. Box 12068  
Capitol Station  
Austin, Texas 78711

Dear Senator Hegar:

It is my pleasure to report the significant progress made by the Edwards Aquifer Recovery Implementation Program (RIP) since its first meeting held in February 2007. Your leadership through Senate Bill 3, which established timelines and milestones, has undoubtedly helped the RIP stay focused and make its amazing progress.

Since the RIP began, it has completed a Memorandum of Understanding, which has been signed by its participants; assembled its steering committee; hired Dr. Robert Gulley as the program manager; and has assembled several subcommittees, including the science subcommittee, which is making progress toward its 2008 deadlines, the outreach subcommittee, and the recharge subcommittee. These significant accomplishments are due to the commitment and hard work of all stakeholders involved in the RIP, combined with your support and leadership. Additionally, the RIP has been able to utilize practices and procedures of similar RIPs. Other RIPs have been very successful in securing Federal funds for implementing recovery actions. I hope the Edwards Aquifer RIP will successfully seek Federal funding in the near future.

As you may know the U.S. Fish and Wildlife Service attended a structured decision making workshop in February 2008 at the National Conservation Training Center to establish a structured process that would allow the Service to work with the RIP to determine take and jeopardy levels for the listed species. The structured decision making process by nature is an open and inclusive process that involves stakeholders in the decision making process. The Service believes that it would be advantageous for the RIP to utilize this process to maintain the open, inclusive, and collaborative nature of the RIP. Structured decision making will increase the RIP's long-term success through buy-in of all stakeholders as it moves forward in developing the Habitat Conservation Plan for the Edwards Aquifer.

I would like to thank you again for your support and leadership of the RIP through Senate Bill 3 and I look forward to working with you in the future.

Sincerely,

Joy E. Nicholopoulos  
Texas State Administrator

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