



Edwards Aquifer Authority

900 E. Quincy
San Antonio, TX 78215
EdwardsAquifer.org

Meeting Minutes

EAHCP Science Committee

Wednesday, April 27, 2022

9:00 AM

The Meadows Center

A meeting of the Science Committee of the Edwards Aquifer Habitat Conservation Plan will be held on the date, time, and location stated above.

AGENDA

1. Call to Order

Chad Furl, EAHCP Chief Science Officer, called the meeting to order at 9:00 AM. Committee Members Present: Tom Arsuffi, Jacquelyn Duke, Charles Kreidler, Conrad Lamon, Chad Norris, Butch Weckerly, and Jack Sharp. Janis Bush was unable to attend.

2. Public Comment

There were no citizens who requested to address the Science Committee.

3. Program Announcements

3.1

- Hydrologic update
- Science Committee Membership
- Science Committee Vacancy Work Group
- Technical Services for USFWS ITP Renewal Application Contract

Hydrologic update

Current hydrologic conditions are below long-term averages for this time of year. Recharge for calendar year 2021 was provided by the USGS and amounts were below average. There will be no ASR forbearance in 2023. Low water levels could potentially trigger VISPO programs in October. The region is approximately 5-7 inches below the average precipitation.

Science Committee Membership

Chad Furl introduced the newest member of the Science Committee, Nathan Bendik. Nathan is a salamander expert that works for the City of Austin in the Watershed Protection Department, he has almost two decades of experience with central Texas salamanders.

Science Committee Vacancy Work Group

The Work Group is seeking two new members to fill the positions vacated by Glenn Longley and Jackie Poole. New members will be appointed by the Stakeholder Committee in October. Members discussed a need for the following expertise: fish, hydrological modeling, climate change, land-use planning, or submerged aquatic

vegetation.

Technical Services for USFWS ITP Renewal Application Contract ICF has been contracted by EAA to assist with a 6-year process to renew the Incidental Take Permit (ITP). The first phase of permit renewal starts with the "Listen and Learn" workshops. These Work Shops will cover four topics: permit renewal approach, biological goals and objectives, climate change, and conservation measures.

4. Approval of Minutes

4.1 Approval of previous Science Committee meeting minutes.

- February 15, 2022

A motion was made by Jack Sharp, seconded by Jacquelyn Duke, to approve the meeting minutes from February 15, 2022.

5. Reports

5.1 Receive report from Chad Furl, EAHCP Chief Science Officer, on amendments to the Biological Monitoring Program.

The Springflow Habitat Protection (SHP) Work Group prioritized several questions related to data collection and monitoring plans during low-flow conditions. Chad Furl presented an overview of the SHP Work Group monitoring questions and how the biological monitoring program currently addresses, or will be amended to address, the SHP questions.

5.2 Receive report from Chad Furl, EAHCP Chief Science Officer, on the 2023 Edwards Aquifer Authority Work Plan.

Chad Furl presented an overview of the 2023 Edwards Aquifer Authority Work Plan which includes operations related to the refugia program, VISPO, ASR leasing and forbearance, water quality monitoring, biological monitoring, applied research and program administration.

5.3 Receive report from Melani Howard, City of San Marcos Habitat Conservation Plan Manager, on the 2023 City of San Marcos Work Plan.

Melani Howard presented an overview of the 2023 City of San Marcos (COSM) Work Plan activities. Featured activities included Texas wild-rice (TWR) enhancement, non-native plant management, management of floating plant mats and littler, control of non-native species, native riparian restoration, management of recreation in key areas, impervious cover and water quality protection, and HHW management.

There will be no active planting of TWR in 2023, TWR has not been planted between Spring Lake Dam to IH-35 since 2017. COSM was awarded a grant from the Army Corps of Engineers that covered planting of TWR below IH-35. COSM also received additional grants for native riparian restoration. Sessom Creek bank stabilization has started and work will continue into 2023. COSM is relocating wastewater lines that were exposed above the creek, HCP work will cover stabilization of highly eroded parts of

the creek and help reduce sediment transport and deposition in the San Marcos River.

5.4 Receive report from Mark Enders, City of New Braunfels Watershed Program Manager, on the 2023 City of New Braunfels Work Plan.

Mark Enders presented an overview of the 2023 City of New Braunfels (CONB) Work Plan. Featured activities included Old Channel flow split management, aquatic vegetation restoration and maintenance, non-native animal species control, gill parasite monitoring, litter and floating vegetation management, native riparian habitat restoration, and impervious cover and water quality protection.

5.5 Receive report from Chad Furl, EAHCP Chief Science Officer, on the performance of EAHCP water quality modeling during 2014 low-flow periods.

Chad Furl presented an overview of the performance of EAHCP water quality modeling during 2014 low-flow period. The Spring flow Habitat Protection Work Group requested that the EAHCP examine the performance of the QUAL2E water quality model during drought conditions in 2014. The study found that the Hardy model overestimates maximum temperatures and underestimates dissolved oxygen. Overall, this study found that environmental conditions for fountain darters were resilient during the 2014 period.

6. Individual Consideration

6.1 Receive report from Melani Howard, City of San Marcos Habitat Conservation Plan Manager, and consider recommendation to approve routine adaptive management to add additional native aquatic plants to the list of submerged aquatic vegetation restoration plants.

*Melani Howard presented a routine adaptive management request to the Science Committee to add two new native aquatic species, *Heteranthera dubia* (stargrass) and *Myriophyllum heterophyllum*, as acceptable species for submerged aquatic vegetation restoration for fountain darter habitat in the San Marcos River. Recent monitoring has shown a reduction in the biological diversity of native aquatic vegetation within the San Marcos River, adding these species will help improve diversity and establishment of fountain darter habitat in the San Marcos River. Melani presented results from a recent study that assessed competition between stargrass, Texas wild-rice (TWR), and *Hydrilla*. Results showed that stargrass did not out-compete TWR and reduced the growth of *Hydrilla*. Some members expressed concerns that stargrass grows too aggressively and may out-compete other native plants, thus reducing biodiversity. One member noted removal efforts of stargrass in a different river due to the species displacing other natives and creating a monoculture.*

Citing concerns for expansion of *Heteranthera dubia* and loss of biodiversity, the Committee was reluctant to recommend *Heteranthera dubia* for planting. Members decided to postpone the motion to recommend adding the new species to the list of submerged aquatic vegetation restoration plants.

7. Future Meetings

The next meeting of the Science Committee will be on September 15, 2022.

8. Questions from the Public

There were no comments from the public.

9. Adjourn

There being no business to discuss, the meeting adjourned at 12:10 PM.

Kristina Tolman
Habitat Conservation Plan Coordinator

This meeting of the Science Committee of the Edwards Aquifer Habitat Conservation Plan complies with Section 7.9.3 of the Funding and Management Agreement (FMA), an interlocal agreement made pursuant to Texas Government Code Chapter 791 by and among the Edwards Aquifer Authority (EAA), the City of New Braunfels (New Braunfels), the City of San Marcos (San Marcos), the City of San Antonio acting by and through its San Antonio Water System (SAWS), Texas State University, and the Guadalupe-Blanco River Authority (GBRA).