

Biological Goals Subcommittee

Meeting #1
Meeting Minutes
February 2, 2023

1. Confirm attendance

All Subcommittee members were in attendance via Microsoft Teams.

2. Meeting logistics

Mark Enders, Biological Goals Subcommittee Chair, provided an overview of meeting logistics, points of contact and introduced the members of the Subcommittee.

3. Overview of the Biological Goals Subcommittee Charge and meeting process.

Mark Enders presented the charge and the major elements of the Subcommittee. The primary focus of this Subcommittee is to: 1) Review the current EAHCP Biological Goals and the HCP Handbook; 2) Develop initial biological goal recommendations; 3) Finalize biological goal recommendations and 4) Approve the Biological Goals Subcommittee Report for the EAHCP Permit Renewal Contractor (ICF) and the EAHCP Committees.

4. Presentation on the USFWS Habitat Conservation Planning and Incidental Take Permit Processing Handbook – Chapter 9.1: Biological Goals.

Olivia Ybarra, HCP Coordinator, provided an overview of the HCP Handbook as it pertains to the development of biological goals. Olivia highlighted the hierarchy of biological goals, biological objectives, and conservation measures in the context of the EAHCP. Additionally, Olivia noted that, in accordance to the HCP Handbook, biological goals should be broad, succinct statements that reflect the purpose and vision of the EAHCP. Examples of species and habitat based biological goals were also provided.

5. Review and discussion of the current EAHCP Biological Goals.

The Subcommittee received a summary of the current EAHCP Biological Goals. It was noted that the current goals are very quantified, measurable, and specific. According to the HCP Handbook, the current biological goals reflect the elements of a biological objective rather than a goal. Chad Furl, EAHCP Chief Science Officer, reminded the Subcommittee that the details of the biological objectives will be discussed at a subsequent Biological Objectives Work Group. Myron Hess asked if there were any specific recommendations on the Covered Species that will be included in the renewed Incidental Take Permit. Chad Furl responded that, for the purpose of the biological goals development exercise, the current

Covered Species will be the primary focus, with the exception of the San Marcos Gambusia and the Comal Springs salamander. If additional species are added to the Covered Species list after the biological goals are developed, the Biological Goals Subcommittee may reconvene to consider those species as they relate to the biological goals.

EAHCP staff provided suggested biological goals developed using the guidelines from the HCP Handbook and several biological goals that were provided during the Listen and Learn Workshop series. Olivia Ybarra noted that Covered Species can be grouped into categories to help develop broad biological goal statements.

Chad Furl added that the HCP Handbook does not specify the number of goals an HCP should contain. Grouping species, rather than developing a goal per species, may be a more efficient and effective approach. The Biological Objectives Work Group will then review these goals and expand on the approach to achieve each goal.

6. Discussion to identify the type of Biological Goal(s) to proceed with.

The HCP Handbook suggests biological goals can be habitat or species based. Olivia Ybarra presented examples of each type of goal that are currently being implemented in other HCPs.

Jacquelyn Duke noted that the recommendations of “genetically diverse population of Texas wild-rice” might be too specific. Chad Furl reminded the group that the Biological Objectives Work Group will add the details of how to achieve the Biological Goals.

Kevin Mayes suggested adding a geographic component to a biological goal statement. For example, “maintaining Texas wild-rice in the San Marcos River from Spring Lake to the confluence with the Guadalupe River”. Kevin also noted that when using words like “adequate” in reference to water quality standards, it is important to reference the TCEQ water quality guidelines.

Kimberly Meitzen noted the successes of the fountain darter and Texas wild-rice and suggested goals that go beyond the current geographic range for the Covered Species and suggested that future biological goals acknowledge the current long-term biological goal reaches.

The Subcommittee was reminded that the current biological goals that were originally approved by the USFWS do not align with the structure of a biological goal as described in the most up to date HCP Handbook. In summation, the current biological goals are written closer to what biological objective statement.

7. Questions from the public

There were no questions from the public.

8. Future meetings

Meeting #2 will be held on February 16, 2023, from 2:00PM - 4:00PM at the Meadows Center for Water and the Environment.

9. Adjourn

Pending Approval