



EAHCP STEWARD

News from the Edwards Aquifer Habitat Conservation Plan - July 2022



Listen Up!

EAHCP designs a series of stakeholder meetings to begin permit renewal process.

The phrase “listen up” is often used to get the attention of an audience, but the actual definition of the declaration is to “listen carefully and pay close attention.” And that is exactly what the staff and consultants for the Edwards Aquifer Habitat Conservation Plan (EAHCP) are preparing to do with their upcoming “Listen and Learn” series of stakeholder meetings.

“These meetings, which start next month, will be one of the first major steps we take in preparing for our incidental take permit (ITP) renewal application,” said EAHCP Program Manager Scott Storment. “Our current permit is for 15 years and expires in early 2028. We are anticipating applying for a longer-term permit this next time around and that is one important component of our application we will want some stakeholder thoughts on. In fact, the whole first night of interaction will be focused on the approach we take in applying for our ITP renewal.”

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Storment explained that the sessions will be designed a little differently than the traditional public hearing where the audience is seated auditorium style and then asked to make comments at a central microphone to a panel of people who are just taking in the comments.

“We definitely want these four meetings to be extra interactive, so we will be setting up the meeting space to be more of an open house



ICF staff at a public workshop they conducted on a previous project.

setting. We are planning to set up displays around the room where visitors can come and learn about specific topics and ask questions of the subject matter experts. There may be a presentation or two from staff along the way, but we’re really wanting to give our stakeholders those one-on-one opportunities which we think will provide a more valuable experience for both attendees and our staff as well. We’ve been working closely with our new consultant team from ICF to help us not only get the experience right but also ensure that we cover the appropriate topics which will be central to what the U.S. Fish and Wildlife Service, which manages our permit, wants us to adequately cover in our renewal document.”

ICF has already completed a number of projects for the EAHCP. They were involved with a strategic planning approach for the upcoming permit renewal application and then helped develop a permit options analysis report. ICF also worked on the 2020 and 2021 EAHCP annual reports. Their corporate headquarters is in Fairfax, Virginia and they maintain another 75 offices around the world. Lucas Bare will be ICF’s project manager for the EAHCP ITP renewal project. Lucas is part of ICF’s Environment and Planning division. Within this division, he is one of about 25 professionals that comprise ICF’s Habitat Conservation Planning and Implementation Practice that specializes in Endangered Species Act compliance.

“Part of our work is developing and implementing habitat conservation plans and we have experience with those programs across the country,” Bare noted. “We’ve also worked on other habitat conservation plans in Texas such as the Balcones Canyonlands Conservation Plan and prepared a similar permit options report for them a number of years ago. So, we not only bring national expertise to the Edwards Aquifer HCP, but we’re very familiar with these types of programs in Texas as well.

“As part of that first public EAHCP stakeholder meeting, we’ll want to learn what attendees think are the past program achievements that we should build on along with what program components can be enhanced to make them more effective and cost efficient, as well as more durable as we look to the long

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term after 2028 when the existing permit expires. Then there are topics such as the various endangered species covered in the EAHCP and whether new covered species should be added to the scope of the program's protection or maybe some that might be taken off the list. So, while we will be looking for some general type of feedback from stakeholders, we'll also want to get into the specifics during these sessions."

Session two in the series will highlight the biological goals and objectives of the current EAHCP. Bare underscored that this will be a very important meeting for the permit renewal planning. He explained that a habitat conservation plan, according to US Fish and Wildlife Service policy, needs to have biological goals and objectives for that HCP's covered species. Those biological goals and objectives set the foundation for the conservation strategies for the protected species. Additionally, he said staff will be particularly interested in hearing what stakeholders think have worked well with the current program, what aspects of the program might be tweaked for improvements and maybe some ideas that could be implemented given the fact that the EAHCP permittees will be seeking authorization for a longer term in the next round of permitting.



Scott Storment



Lucas Bare

"I know that our staff and Lucas and his team are really looking forward to these sessions," Storment concluded. "We will have an opportunity to lay out a detailed vision for the application renewal process and stakeholders will be able to weigh in on those ideas in a one-on-one type of situation with team members. The topics for the four meetings will be diverse and we know some people will choose to attend the sessions they want to provide specific comments on, and some people will want to be at all of the meetings. Either way is great for us. Finally, we want people to be prepared for those sessions, so we are going to be making workshop materials, feedback forms and other information available before the meetings begin. While we are planning other opportunities for the general public and EAHCP stakeholders to provide feedback, these first few sessions are really opportunities for people to shape the direction of our application document. And, we'll be there to listen carefully to every word spoken. That will give us our best opportunity for success when we submit our renewal application to the U.S. Fish and Wildlife Service in the next few years."

Here are the four Listen and Learn meetings that are planned. Meeting materials are available online at www.edwardsaquifer.org/habitat-conservation-plan/permit-renewal.

Workshop 1: Permit Renewal Approach

Tuesday, August 2, 2022, 3:30 PM – 6:30 PM
Norris Conference Center
618 NW Loop 410, Suite 207, San Antonio, TX 78216

Workshop 2: Biological Goals and Objectives

Tuesday, August 30, 2022, 3:30 PM – 6:30 PM
Medina County Fair Hall
733 FM 462 North, Hondo, TX 78861

Workshop 3: Climate Change and System Vulnerability

Thursday, September 22, 2022, 3:30 PM – 6:30 PM
Dunbar Recreation Center
801 W. MLK, San Marcos, TX 78666

Workshop 4: Conservation Measures

Tuesday, October 4, 2022, 3:30 PM – 6:30 PM
New Braunfels Civic Center – Garden Room
375 S Castell Ave, New Braunfels, TX 78130

EAHCP STEWARD SHORT TAKES

Upcoming EAHCP Meetings

EAHCP Implementing Committee Meeting

Date: August 18, 2022

Time: 10:00 AM

Location: Edwards Aquifer Authority

Budget Work Group Meeting #2

Date: July 29, 2022

Time: 10:00 AM

Location: Edwards Aquifer Authority

San Marcos Prospect Park Work Day Set for Saturday, August 13

The next volunteer workday at Prospect Park in San Marcos is scheduled for Saturday, August 13, from 7 a.m. - 9 a.m. Volunteers will continue removing nonnative invasive species – primarily ligustrum. Tools will be provided, but please bring a water bottle. The group will meet at 1410 Progress St. Additional parking will also be available on Columbia Ave. and Wall St.

You can get more information [here](#). Please RSVP [here](#).