

Work Plan
for the
Hays County Habitat Conservation Plan

Prepared for:

County of Hays
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Prepared by:

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1.0 Introduction

In the heart of central Texas, Hays County is part of the Balcones Canyonlands region of the Edwards Plateau, and is home to a diverse community of native wildlife and plants. The limestone hills and valleys in the area support dense woodlands and open savannas of live oak, Ashe juniper, and honey mesquite, and are home to the federally endangered golden-cheeked warbler (*Dendroica chrysoparia*) and black-capped vireo (*Vireo atricapilla*), in addition to a number of other rare and common terrestrial species. Spring-fed waterways dissect the hills and provide recharge to the Edwards Aquifer. A wide variety of aquatic species, several of which are federally threatened or endangered, depend on the quality and quantity of water collected by these drainages.

Hays County is also midway between two major metropolitan areas, the City of Austin and the City of San Antonio, in an area that has experienced rapid population growth over the past decade. The population of Hays County increased by 49 percent between 1990 and 2000. Land development has and will continue to accompany population growth. Already, the rural character of the county is losing ground to new subdivisions, commercial property, and other developed land uses. The platting and construction of residential subdivisions is quickly fragmenting the large and contiguous patches of juniper-oak woodland habitat that are most valuable for endangered wildlife.

Hays County must serve the needs of its growing constituency with responsible economic development, good public infrastructure, and open space recreation opportunities. The citizens, landowners, and elected officials of Hays County also desire to conserve habitat for endangered species and protect water resources. The County recognizes that a coordinated regional habitat conservation plan (HCP) would be the most efficient and effective way to meet the varied needs of both people and sensitive wildlife. Toward this end, the Commissioners' Court approved a grant application to the U.S. Fish and Wildlife Service (USFWS) for an HCP planning grant in April 2005.

The USFWS responded very favorably to the County's grant application, awarding \$753,750 to the County to develop a local HCP. The award was announced in September 2005, and was the largest HCP planning grant to a county in 2005. The federal award requires a non-federal match of \$251,250, which can be through County in-kind services and private mitigation funds. The Texas Parks and Wildlife Department (TPWD) administers the grant for the USFWS, under an interlocal agreement approved by the TPWD and Hays County in May 2006.

This work plan describes the work that will be performed to complete the plan and obtain an approved permit. Briefly, the grant funding will be used to evaluate the needs, costs, and benefits of a plan and develop a recommendation for a locally appropriate conservation plan. Further, grant funds will be used for vetting the analysis and recommended conservation strategies with stakeholders, seeking additional biological review, and developing a complete habitat conservation plan (HCP) and National Environmental Protection Act (NEPA) documentation. The package will be submitted with an application for an Endangered Species Act (ESA) section 10(a) incidental take permit for Hays County. The HCP will protect rare species and habitat in Hays County, and provide a locally developed, simplified process for landowners and public entities to deal with complex endangered species issues.

2.0 Purpose and Organization

On the following pages are a detailed task list (Table 1), estimated project schedule (Figure 1), and estimated budget (Table 2). The work plan includes six discrete project phases, each concluding with a major project milestone. Primary and supporting responsibility for completion of each task in the work plan by the major project participants (i.e., Hays County, members of the consultant team, and the USFWS) have been identified. A preliminary schedule for completion of the project is included that envisions permit issuance by the end of 2008. A preliminary budget for the project has also been included that breaks down the total project budget by phase.

This work plan will serve as the basis for a common understanding of the anticipated sequence of work for all project participants, including interested citizens, landowners, County staff, the Biological Advisory Team, the Citizens Advisory Committee, the Commissioners' Court, and the consultant team. It is intended to help guide participants towards the successful completion of all planning steps and documents that are necessary to obtain the permit. The work plan incorporates all of the elements listed in the original grant application and the subsequent interlocal agreement between Hays County and the Texas Parks and Wildlife Department.

Each project phase shown on the following tables and figure is detailed in its component tasks, and concludes with substantive deliverables relevant to the habitat conservation planning process. The task list, schedule, and budget are inclusive of all subcontractors under the consultant team. The schedule shown is ambitious, but feasible, considering the multitude of issues, stakeholders, permitting requirements, and agency requirements. A major objective of this work plan is to show all project participants the importance of their role in helping complete the HCP on schedule. Despite an anticipated permit issuance at the end of 2008, the consultant team anticipates assisting Hays County with identifying conservation opportunities during the HCP development process that will help make permit implementation easier.

The consultant team is tasked with reviewing progress at the end of each phase, to reassess actual progress on the work, schedule, and budget, and to report to the Commissioners' Court. Phase reports will describe actual progress and any unanticipated project needs; however, the total budget is fixed and the County and consultants are committed to completing the full project scope within budget.

3.0 References

Hays County Conservation Planning Grant Application. Prepared by Loomis Austin, Inc. and Smith-Robertson. Submitted April 2005.

Interlocal Agreement between Texas Parks and Wildlife Department and Hays County. May 8, 2006. Contract No. 157923.

Hays County Habitat Conservation Plan Project Overview (Microsoft Powerpoint Presentation). Prepared by Loomis Austin, Inc. and Smith-Robertson. October 2006.

Hays County HCP Work Plan

Table 1. Detailed task list and estimated schedule for completion of the Hays County Habitat Conservation Plan*.								
Phase	Task	Description/Subtasks	Primary Responsibility	Supporting Responsibility	Estimated Start Date	Estimated End Date	Actual Start Date	Actual End Date
Phase 1: Project Organization								
<i>Phase Deliverables: Updated work plan, schedule and budget for entire project; stakeholder outreach summary; legal requirements summary</i>								
	Engage consultant teams		HC	SR / LAI	5/8/2006	9/12/2006		
	Develop detailed work plan, schedule, budget; submit to Comm Court		LAI / SR	HC	9/12/2006	10/17/2006		
	Comm. Court approval of detailed work plan and contract amendments		HC		10/24/2006	10/24/2006		
	Early coordination with USFWS, TPWD, other agencies		LAI / SR	HC	5/8/2006	10/24/2006		
	Early coordination with stakeholders (potential CAC & BAT members)		LAI (BAT) / SR (CAC)		5/8/2006	10/24/2006		
	Compilation of studies and literature		LAI	SR	9/12/2006	10/24/2006		
	Summary of legal requirements		SR		5/8/2006	10/24/2006		
Phase 2: Project Development and Community Guidance								
<i>Phase Deliverables: Establishment of Advisory Committees; Establishment of Public Outreach Program; NEPA Scoping; General strategy/Framework for HCP</i>								
	Formation of CAC		SR / HC	LAI				
		Identify potential members of Citizens Advisory Committee			10/24/2006	4/6/2007		
		Develop protocol for CAC formation and participation (organization, purpose statement, procedures, etc.)			10/24/2006	4/6/2007		
		Appointment of CAC members by Commissioners' Court			3/26/2007	4/6/2007		
	Formation of BAT		LAI	SR / HC				
		Identify potential members of Biological Advisory Team			10/24/2006	4/6/2007		
		Develop protocol for BAT formation and participation (organization, purpose statement, procedures, etc.)			10/24/2006	4/6/2007		
		Appointment of BAT members by Commissioners' Court			3/26/2007	4/6/2007		
	Develop Public Outreach/Participation Process		LAI	SR / HC	10/24/2006	1/16/2007		
		Develop protocol and format for public outreach program (website, newsletters, postings, meetings, minutes)						
		Prepare initial materials about project (i.e., fact sheet, project summary, etc.) for general distribution and web site						
	Baseline Data Acquisition and Preliminary Analysis		LAI	SR / HC / FWS				
		Gather and prepare baseline information			10/24/2006	12/8/2006		
		Gather baseline data (GIS, socioeconomic, land use, ownership, spp occurrences/habitat, future development)						
		Collect current state of the species information; Hays County information						
		Identify existing conservation programs and regulatory mechanisms for conservation.						
		Identify potential covered activities and develop initial estimate of take/impacts to covered species			12/8/2006	1/26/2007		
		Identify covered public and private activities likely to result in take and to be covered by HCP.						
		Describe and model anticipated take/impacts from covered activities.						
		Identify other projects contributing to cumulative impacts; estimate cumulative impacts to species						
		Prepare summary of baseline data and preliminary analysis			1/26/2007	2/23/2007		
	Initial Strategy/Framework Development		LAI / SR	HC / FWS	10/24/2006	4/6/2007		
		Identify HCP goals and objectives/purpose and need						
		Conservation goals and objectives; biological goals and objectives; purpose and need						
		Project scope (permit area, permit duration, permit applicants/partners)						
		Legal and political framework						
		Relationship and coordination with other regional programs						
		Prepare initial recommendations for conservation program	LAI	SR / HC / FWS	2/23/2007	4/6/2007		
		Identify and analyze opportunities for protection/enhancement/creation of habitat-related resources.						
		Identify and analyze opportunities for avoidance and minimization of impacts.						
		Solicit guidance from BAT, CAC, FWS, & TPWD on conservation strategy/framework (single meeting for presentation to both stakeholder groups)	LAI (BAT) / SR (CAC)	HC	4/6/2007	6/19/2007		
	NEPA Scoping Process		LAI	SR / HC / FWS				
		File Notice of Intent and begin public comment period (60 days)			3/9/2007	4/6/2007		
		Scoping Meeting			4/10/2007			
		Collect guidance from public on scoping and conservation strategy/framework (begin 60 day comment period).			4/6/2007	6/5/2007		
		Prepare summary of scoping comments			6/5/2007	6/19/2007		

Hays County HCP Work Plan

Phase	Task	Description/Subtasks	Primary Responsibility	Supporting Responsibility	Estimated Start Date	Estimated End Date	Actual Start Date	Actual End Date
	Prepare RFQ for Economist, advertise, select.		SR / HC	LAI	2/23/2007	3/23/2007		
	Project management							
	Project Administration		LAI / SR		10/24/2006	6/26/2007		
	Meetings and Coordination, Team		LAI / SR	HC	10/24/2006	6/19/2007		
	Meetings and Coordination, Committees		LAI (BAT) / SR (CAC)	HC	10/24/2006	6/19/2007		
	Meetings and Coordination, Public		LAI / SR	HC	10/24/2006	6/19/2007		
	Phase Progress Report		LAI / SR	HC	6/19/2007	6/26/2007		
	Phase 3: Prepare Conceptual Draft HCP				6/26/2007	9/7/2007		
	<i>Phase Deliverable: Conceptual Draft HCP</i>							
	Prepare Conceptual Draft of HCP				6/26/2007	8/31/2007		
	Prepare complete (but preliminary) draft of HCP		LAI	SR / HC				
	Plan introduction (goals/objectives, purpose/need, legal framework, plan area/permit duration, process, etc.)		SR	LAI / HC				
	Environmental setting		LAI	SR				
	Covered species		LAI	SR / HC				
	Covered activities		SR	LAI / HC				
	Expected take and impacts		LAI	SR				
	Conservation Plan		LAI	SR / HC				
	Implementation		SR	LAI / HC				
	Funding		SR / ECON	LAI / HC				
	Alternatives (prelim impacts, etc...)		LAI	SR				
	Coordination, Preparers, References, Appendices, Glossary, etc...		LAI	SR				
	Review and input from Economic Analyst on financial impacts and funding plan for HCP		ECON	LAI / SR	6/26/2007	8/31/2007		
	Prepare PDEIS baseline sections and develop alternatives		LAI	SR / HC / FWS	6/26/2007	8/31/2007		
	Project management							
	Project Administration		LAI / SR					
	Meetings and Coordination, Team		LAI / SR	HC	6/26/2007	9/7/2007		
	Meetings and Coordination, Committees		LAI (BAT) / SR (CAC)	HC	6/26/2007	8/31/2007		
	Meetings and Coordination, Public (incl. outreach)		LAI / SR	HC	6/26/2007	8/31/2007		
	Phase Progress Report		LAI / SR	HC	8/31/2007	9/7/2007		
	Phase 4: Committee/Agency Review and HCP Revision				9/7/2007	4/4/2008		
	<i>Phase Deliverables: Second Draft HCP; Third Draft HCP</i>							
	First round of review and revision							
	Present Conceptual Draft HCP (First Draft) to CAC, BAT, FWS, TPWD, etc.		LAI (BAT) / SR (CAC)	HC	9/10/2007	9/14/2007		
	Committee/Agency review and comment				9/14/2007	10/26/2007		
	Reconcile comments and revise HCP (Second Draft HCP)		LAI	SR / HC	10/26/2007	12/7/2007		
	Second round of review and revision							
	Present Second Draft to CAC, BAT, FWS, TPWD, etc.		LAI (BAT) / SR (CAC)		12/10/2007	12/14/2007		
	Committee/Agency review and comment				12/14/2007	2/1/2008		
	Reconcile comments and revise HCP (Third Draft HCP)				2/1/2008	3/14/2008		
	Solicit approval from Committees and Comm. Court to proceed with Final Draft HCP		LAI / SR	HC	3/14/2008	4/1/2008		
	Continue PDEIS preparation		LAI	SR	9/7/2007	4/1/2008		

Figure 1. Estimated schedule for completion of the Hays County Habitat Conservation Plan (Oct. 16, 2006).

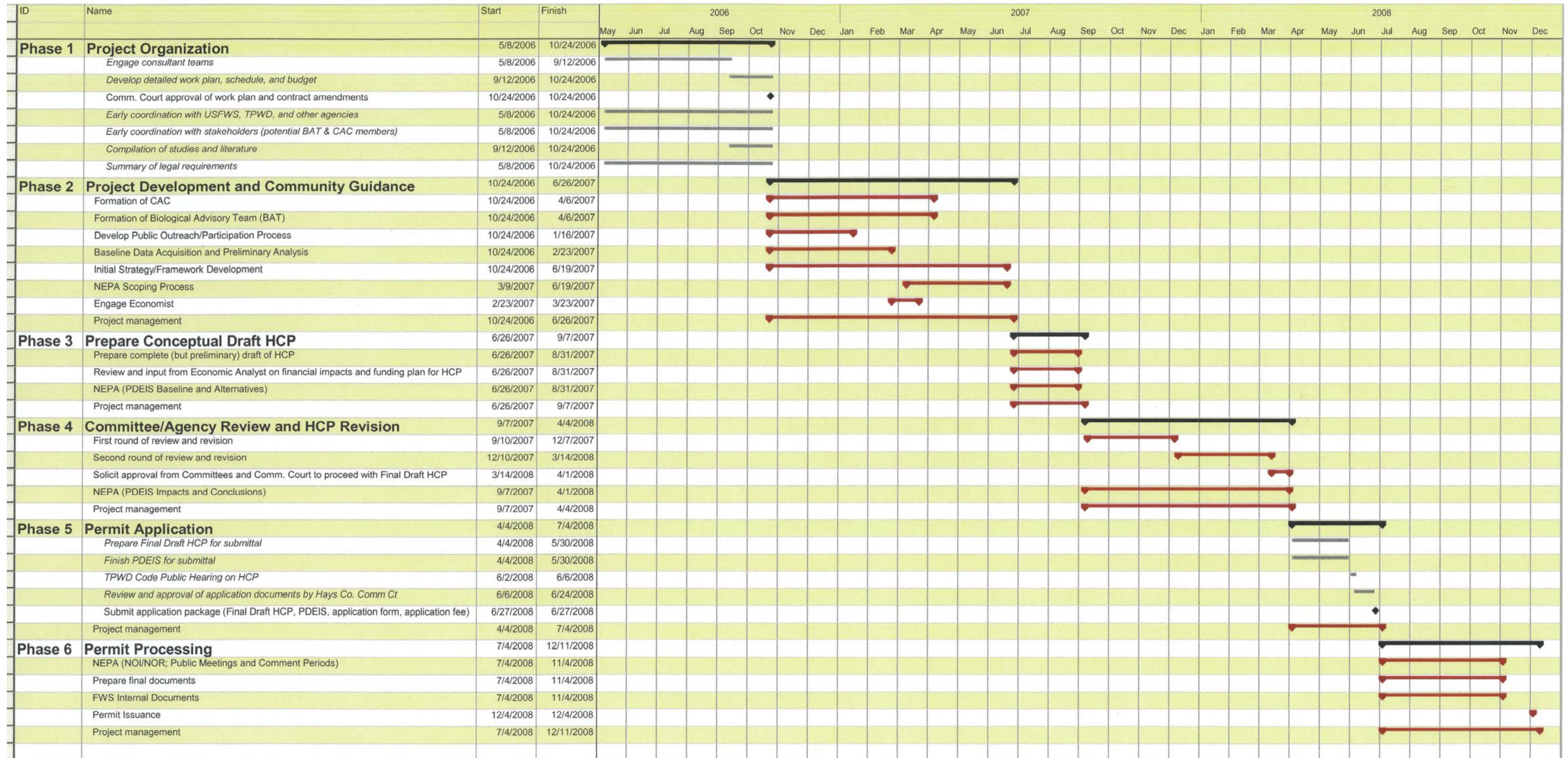


Table 2. Estimated budget, by phase, for completion of the Hays County Habitat Conservation Plan*.

Phase	Estimated Budget (\$)					Phase Totals
	Loomis Austin	Smith-Robertson	Economist	County In-Kind	Contingency	
Phase 1: Project Organization	15,000	70,000	0	(as needed)	(as needed)	85,000
Phase 2: Project Development and Community Guidance	135,900	65,000	0	(as needed)	(as needed)	200,900
Phase 3: Prepare Conceptual Draft HCP	86,880	40,000	45,000	(as needed)	(as needed)	171,880
Phase 4: Committee/Agency Review and HCP Revision	156,420	80,000	25,000	(as needed)	(as needed)	261,420
Phase 5: Permit Application	47,400	40,000	5,000	(as needed)	(as needed)	92,400
Phase 6: Permit Processing	32,400	30,000	5,000	(as needed)	(as needed)	67,400
Total Project**	474,000	325,000	80,000	51,000	70,000	1,000,000

* Estimated budget for each project phase is subject to reallocation, as needed, to complete the project. Subconsultants to LAI and SR are included in budget estimates.

** Total includes federal funding of \$753,750 and a local match of \$251,250.