

Meeting Minutes  
Houston Toad Advisory Committee  
April 22, 2010, 1 p.m.  
LCRA Lost Pines Scout Reservation, Bastrop

Advisory Committee members in attendance:

Mr. J.T. Dabbs  
Mr. Justin Dreibelbis  
Mr. Frank Monk  
The Honorable Maurice Pitts, Jr.  
Mr. David Wolfe

I. Call to Order and Welcome

Chair David Wolfe called the meeting to order at 1:10 p.m.

II. Review and approval of minutes from Jan. 27, 2010, meeting.

III. Review and approval of minutes from March 11, 2010, meeting.

Meeting minutes for both previous meetings (Jan. 27 and March 11) were approved in a single motion by Maurice Pitts, seconded by Frank Monk.

IV. State property tax provisions and appraisal requirements related to endangered species conservation; discussion and possible action.

Sharon Hersh with the Property Tax Division discussed House Bill 604 and its possible relevance for providing tax incentives to landowners for conserving endangered species habitat. Lower tax appraisals are allowed for land that is used for certain purposes, such as “wildlife management.” HB 604 amended Tax Code Section 23.51 to allow a new definition of wildlife management to include “actively using land to protect federally listed endangered species under a federal permit if the land is: (i) included in a habitat preserve and is subject to a conservation easement; or (ii) part of a conservation development under a federally approved habitat conservation plan...” effective Jan. 1, 2008. Thus, to be eligible a landowner must have both a permit and land in conservation easement. David Wolfe noted the only landowners he is aware of that are eligible for this tax appraisal are those participating in the Lost Pine HCP. However, there may be opportunities to increase landowner eligibility through Safe Harbor permits.

The committee will continue to consider this and other tax incentives for landowners that harbor Houston toad habitat. In addition, the committee sees a general need for educating the public and Appraisal District personnel of the tax incentives that are available for dealing with endangered species or their habitat.

- V. Development and discussion of recommendations to the Task Force as outlined in the charge to the committee; discussion and possible action.

David Wolfe discussed a draft set of recommendations to the Task Force that he developed prior to the meeting. Recommendations and information include a list and description of 10 programs (cost share and technical assistance, mitigation, and tax benefits); an initial description of the Houston Toad Cooperative Conservation Partnership; and several cost-efficient and effective recommendations for economic development and Endangered Species Act compliance. Committee members provided input on edits and additions to the draft.

- VI. Public comment

There was no public comment.

- VII. Next steps in work of advisory committee; discussion and possible action.

David Wolfe offered to update and expand the draft recommendations to the Task Force and will provide those updates to the Advisory Committee via e-mail. The next Advisory Committee meeting was scheduled for May 25 in Bastrop.

- VIII. Adjourn

The meeting was adjourned at 2:30 p.m.