

Minutes
Interagency Task Force on Economic Growth and Endangered Species
April 28, 2010, 10 a.m.
LBJ State Office Building, Room 114

I. Call to Order and Welcome by Chair, Comptroller Susan Combs

II. Review and approval of Feb. 11, 2010, minutes

The minutes from the Feb. 11, 2010, meeting were reviewed by the group and approved with no changes.

III. Discussion of outreach efforts on endangered species; Endangered Species 101 presentation and frequently asked questions

Staff is preparing an Endangered Species 101 presentation to share with city and community leaders on information communities should know about the Endangered Species Act. The presentation is expected to be complete by mid-summer. The task force website will be updated to include frequently asked questions on endangered species issues, as well as programs and resources for species of interest.

IV. Update on the progress of the advisory committees on species of interest

Lesser Prairie-chicken – Discussed the request from the Lesser Prairie-chicken Advisory Committee that the task force send a letter to the Texas Public Utility Commission (PUC) highlighting the overall economic considerations in developing Competitive Renewable Energy Zones transmission lines as they relate to the Lesser Prairie-chicken. The task force will review the draft letter to the PUC and provide feedback on sending the letter.

Houston Toad – The Houston Toad Advisory Committee is on track to complete recommendations before the requested deadline.

Freshwater Mussels – The Fish and Wildlife Service (FWS) will review 11 petitioned mussels in 3 packages focusing on 5 Central Texas species first, East Texas mussels in fiscal 2012 and Rio Grande mussels in fiscal 2014. The group discussed whether an official Freshwater Mussel committee is needed or if there should be a focus on having one or two wider stakeholder meetings in summer 2010. The group also discussed creating an online discussion group and linking it to the task force website. Task force members will review the status of activities since the Texas Parks and Wildlife Department (TPWD) meeting in January 2010 to determine the status of the projects and provide feedback.

V. Discussion of activities related to the whooping crane

The FWS staff provided an update on the efforts relating to the whooping crane and mentioned the lawsuit against the Texas Commission on Environmental Quality regarding

whooping cranes. The FWS is developing a community-based program to address efforts for conservation and recovery of the whooping crane.

VI. Update on the Golden-cheeked Warbler status review

The Texas A&M Institute of Renewable Natural Resources announced that the scientific assessment has been completed. The Golden-cheeked Warbler recovery team is currently reviewing all aspects of the recovery effort.

VII. Update on status of mitigation efforts at Camp Bullis

The group heard an update on the April 1, 2010, meeting with city, county, TPWD, conservation organizations and Camp Bullis staff regarding the needs of Camp Bullis to acquire mitigation credits. Additional assistance is needed to help fund thinning efforts in the next year. A field tour at Camp Bullis will be held on May 27, 2010, for stakeholders interested in assisting with the thinning effort.

VIII. Briefing on third party analysis of Recovery Credit System

Robertson Consulting provided a briefing on the results of the Third Party Evaluation of the Recovery Credit System Proof of Concept. The full document can be found at www.snrobertson.com/images/final_rcs.pdf.

IX. Discussion of next steps in development of the Recovery Credit System (RCS)

The group discussed how the state can move forward on working with the RCS as a tool for endangered species recovery statewide. Fort Hood requested that the task force assist the installation in finding fifty acres of permanent mitigation credit under the RCS. The task force discussed the possibility of using state lands to meet this request, as well as the possibility of forming a Fort Hood Advisory Committee. The task force will provide feedback on the multiple options that could be used to meet this request.

X. Public Comment

XI. Discussion of next steps in working with endangered species in Texas that impact economic development

The next meeting of the Interagency Task force on Economic Growth and Endangered Species was tentatively scheduled for a date to be determined in summer 2010.

XII. Adjourn