

Minutes
Interagency Task Force on Economic Growth and Endangered Species
June 24, 2010 – 1:00 p.m.
LBJ State Office Building, Room 114

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

The meeting was called to order by Comptroller Combs at 1:02 p.m.

II. Review and approval of April 28, 2010, minutes

The minutes from the April 28, 2010, meeting were reviewed by the group and approved with no changes.

III. Update on progress on species of interest; discussion of and possible action.

Cary Dupuy provided an update to the task force on the activities of the advisory committees related to the species of interest. The Lesser Prairie-Chicken (LPC) Advisory Committee continues its work reviewing programs available to assist in management of the LPC and discussing recommendations on how best to conserve the species in lieu of federal regulation. The committee will meet on June 29, 2010 to further discuss recommendations.

The Houston Toad Advisory Committee provided final recommendations to the task force. Several members of the advisory committee were present at the meeting to answer questions from the task force. The task force will review the recommendations and take action on implementation steps at the next meeting.

The task force discussed development of a Freshwater Mussel Summit that will be held to provide information relating to the freshwater mussels that are being reviewed for possible federal listing. The event will provide interested parties information on the ecology of the mussels, the process U.S. Fish and Wildlife Service will use to review the petition, research needs and conservation opportunities for the mussels, and potential impact to the state if the mussels are listed.

A report was provided on the field tour held at Camp Bullis on May 27, 2010, to provide information on the funding needs of the installation to assist in thinning habitat areas. Camp Bullis estimates there is a need for \$1 million for thinning efforts to utilize mitigation credits gained this year.

IV. Activities related to the whooping crane; discussion and possible action.

The task force agreed to submit input to the U.S. Fish and Wildlife service as part of the 5-year review for whooping cranes. Additionally, the task force discussed working on an economic analysis of the impact of reallocating water rights in the Guadalupe Basin to provide additional freshwater inflows for the whooping crane. The task force then heard

additional information regarding the development of the community based planning effort Texas A&M University is undertaking under a contract with the U.S. Fish and Wildlife Service. The task force is supportive of this effort and will work to encourage participation in future meetings of this group.

- V. Consideration of approaches to assist Fort Hood in acquiring permanent mitigation take; discussion and possible action.

The task force discussed the need to develop all options available to earn permanent mitigation credit under the Recovery Credit System. Several working groups will continue efforts to develop the system using private lands as well as state owned lands. An additional working group led by the Texas Department of Agriculture will review the recommendations provided by the third party analysis of the Recovery Credit System and update the framework of the system as needed. The task force agreed to draft a letter to the U.S. Fish and Wildlife Service requesting clarification on the use of state owned lands to obtain permanent mitigation credit under the Recovery Credit System.

- VI. Review of draft outline for report to Legislature; discussion and possible action.

Under the legislation creating the task force, a report is required to the Legislature no later than Jan. 15, 2011. This report should provide information on the activities of the task force and the status of efforts to mitigate harm to and efforts toward recovery of endangered species at Camp Bullis. The task force reviewed an outline for the report and discussed components that should be included. Each task force member was requested to provide information on the costs their agency incurs to work with endangered species.

- VII. Public Comment

- VIII. Next steps in working with endangered species in Texas that impact economic development; discussion and possible action.

A special presentation was made to recognize Joy Nicholopoulos for her service as the Texas State Administrator with the U.S. Fish and Wildlife Service.

The task force heard from U.S. Fish and Wildlife Service staff about the possible impacts to species as a result of the Gulf oil spill. The task force discussed following this issue closely and providing economic analysis on issues that might arise if needed.

The next meeting of the Interagency Task Force on Economic Growth and Endangered Species was tentatively scheduled for the end of August. Further discussion on permanent Recovery Credit System programs will be held at this next meeting.

- IX. Adjourn

The meeting was adjourned at 2:09 p.m.