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MEMORANDUM

TO: The Honorable Lisa Birkman
Williamson County Commissioner,
Precinct 1
and
President of Williamson County
Conservation Foundation

The Honorable Tom McDaniel
Williamson County Commissioner,
Precinct 3
and
Vice President of Williamson County
Conservation Foundation

FROM: Alan M. Glen
David Hartman

REF: Williamson County Conservation
Foundation, Regional Habitat
Conservation Plan; File # 9482-2

DATE: 15 February 2005

RE: Williamson County Regional Habitat Conservation Plan; Quarterly Report to
Williamson County Commissioners Court

A. Background.

In September 2003, the Williamson County Conservation Foundation (Foundation) was awarded a \$200,000.00 federal grant from the U.S. Fish and Wildlife Service (USFWS) to develop a draft conceptual Williamson County Regional Habitat Conservation Plan (RHCP), including conducting numerous pre-permit application activities and related items. The conceptual RHCP was completed and delivered to the Texas Parks and Wildlife Department (TPWD) and the Foundation in November 2004.

In September 2004, the Foundation was awarded an approximately \$1,000,000.00 federal grant from the USFWS to complete and process the final RHCP, Environmental Impact Statement (EIS), and section 10(a) permit application in order to effectively and efficiently implement the Foundation's conservation actions. A Preliminary Work Plan (Work Plan) covering items necessary to complete the RHCP was approved by the Williamson County Commissioners Court on November 23, 2004. The Work Plan requires quarterly reports to the Court of progress in developing and completing the RHCP. Accordingly, the following provides the quarterly report for the 1st quarter of 2005, describing major tasks completed since approval of the Work Plan by the Court.

B. Report.

This section sets forth a general schedule outlining upcoming tasks to complete the RHCP. Next, this section provides an update of tasks that have been performed since approval of the Work Plan.

1. *General Schedule of Tasks, Early 2005.*

In December 2004, the RHCP consultant team developed a general schedule of tasks to be completed in the first several months of 2005. The committees required to participate in the RHCP will be established in the following order: 1) Citizen's Advisory Committee (CAC), 2) Biological Advisory Team (BAT), and 3) Agency Work Group. An organizational meeting of all committees will be held by April/May 2005.

A rough draft of the RHCP will be completed by March 2005, to be circulated among the CAC, BAT, and Agency Work Group. At least one meeting will be held of each of the foregoing committees prior to public scoping meeting, which is targeted for April/May 2005. The committees will complete reviewing the RHCP by August 2005, and drafting the Environmental Impact Statement will begin August 2005.

2. *Progress Report/Update on Tasks Pursuant to the Work Plan.*

(a) Public/Landowner Outreach.

Connie Watson coordinated development of a brochure that provides background regarding the Foundation and its conservation activities, the significant natural resources of the County, and an overview of RHCP development and benefits to the County from RHCP development. AusTex printing is scheduled to print brochures the week of February 7, 2005. In addition, the website designer, Bassett Enterprises, is developing a website containing more information regarding the Foundation and the RHCP. This website will soon be available for viewing at www.wilco.org/wccf.

On January 12, 2005, Alan Glen presented the Work Plan and discussed the conservation activities of the Foundation at the Georgetown Conservation Subdivision Workshop held at Southwestern University. This workshop was attended by more than 100 key individuals from throughout Williamson County. Smith|Robertson has contacted Ronnie Leps, Texas Agricultural Extension Service, and Harry Savio, Home Builder's Association of Greater Austin, regarding providing a similar presentation and outreach to members of these key stakeholder groups.

(b) Committee Process, Agency Coordination.

Citizen's Advisory Committee. Duane Schlitter, TPWD, has been nominated by the Department to serve on the CAC. In addition, it is anticipated that invitations will be sent out the week of February 7, 2005, requesting key persons to serve on the CAC.

Biological Advisory Team. Pursuant to state law, TPWD will appoint a representative to serve on the BAT, and that individual will serve as Chair of the BAT. Currently, TPWD is still determining who will be their representative to the BAT. In addition, it is anticipated that invitations will be sent out in February 2005 requesting key scientists to serve on the BAT.

Agency Coordination. In December 2004, Smith|Robertson and Aci Consulting met with key TPWD representatives to update them on the Foundation background and the RHCP effort. In January 2005, David Hartman, Connie Watson, Annette Todd, and Jim Rodgers met with TPWD representatives to discuss the parameters by which County staff will provide in-kind services as part of the local match for the federal USFWS grant, as set forth in the Work Plan. In addition, USFWS and TPWD representatives have been participating in the monthly Foundation Board meetings.

(c) RHCP Development.

Smith|Robertson has been working with TPWD on a contract with the Foundation that would reflect the federal grant for the RHCP. Smith|Robertson has prepared and distributed a draft outline for the RHCP, a summary describing provisions contained in other RHCPs throughout the United States, and is working on a review and summary of cases across the nation where RHCPs have been challenged. In addition, Smith|Robertson has prepared a draft Federal Register Notice of intent to prepare an Environmental Impact Statement and notice of public scoping meeting for the RHCP. Aci Consulting has prepared a draft of Chapter Three, Natural and Historic Setting, of the RHCP. They have prepared maps of the Northern Edwards Aquifer Zones, Potential GCW habitat, known cave locations, and watersheds of Williamson County. Aci Consulting has also met with USFWS and shared all known cave locations throughout the County, and will prepare new maps based on this information.

Very truly yours,

Alan M. Glen
David Hartman