

## **DRAFT PROPOSAL**

### **GENERAL CONSERVATION STRATEGY FOR THE SEP-HCP**

The general conservation strategy establishes the goals and objectives of the conservation program, including both biological and community considerations. The BAT has made preliminary recommendations for species-specific biological goals and objectives for CAC consideration. However, the CAC is charged with considering a broader set of issues, including the social, political, and financial implications of the plan.

The draft proposal outlined below identifies some of the community-based goals and objectives that the CAC may want to consider as part of the general conservation strategy for the SEP-HCP, in addition to the species-specific biological goals and objectives.

1. **REGIONAL CONSERVATION:** Design and implement a regional conservation program with a focus on habitat protection for the covered species and that supports the conservation of other regionally important natural resources.
  - a. Protect and manage sensitive native habitats for the golden-cheeked warbler, black-capped vireo, and other native species that depend on these habitats.
  - b. Protect and manage karst habitat, surface and subsurface drainage basins, and surface vegetative communities for sensitive karst organisms.
  - c. As part of this document, the proposed activities of CAC should contribute to recovery of the species.
  - d. Contribute to the protection of other important ecosystem functions, such as water quality and quantity in the Edward's Aquifer system, through biologically significant conservation actions for the covered species.
2. **SUPPORT CAMP BULLIS:** Support the military training mission at Camp Bullis by helping to alleviate local and regional endangered species issues.
  - a. Assist ESA compliance on private lands in the vicinity of Camp Bullis by facilitating the incidental take permit process.
  - b. Seek conservation partners and prioritize opportunities to protect and manage endangered species habitat in the vicinity of Camp Bullis.
3. **STAKEHOLDER INVOLVEMENT:** Seek input and buy-in from a wide spectrum of stakeholders during development and ongoing implementation of the SEP-HCP, including scientists, private landowners, business interests, environmental groups, government entities or agencies, and others.
  - a. Include a broad spectrum of stakeholder interests on SEP-HCP advisory committees and teams.
  - b. Establish advisory groups after permit issuance to provide feedback on plan implementation.
  - c. Enable and encourage formal, but flexible, partnerships with other jurisdictions in the Plan Area to cooperate on plan administration and implementation in regionally appropriate ways.
  - d. Share research results, monitoring data, and other planning information with the public to the extent practicable without compromising sensitive biological, personal, or property information.
4. **STREAMLINE PERMITTING:** Facilitate Endangered Species Act compliance for non-federal entities in the SEP-HCP Plan Area by streamlining the process for obtaining an incidental take permit.

- a. Establish a voluntary and regionally (or locally) administered option for obtaining incidental take authorization for projects in the Plan Area that is clear, certain, timely, and cost-effective.
  - b. Ensure that mitigation ratios and participation fees are based on sound biological rationale, consistent with the level of impact to the species.
  - c. Provide guidance to potential plan participants on avoiding or minimizing impacts to the species addressed in the plan to reduce mitigation obligations where practicable and appropriate.
5. **LOCALLY APPROPRIATE AND COST-EFFECTIVE IMPLEMENTATION:** Achieve regional conservation of endangered species using locally appropriate and cost-effective tools and approaches.
- a. Understand local community and landowner concerns regarding endangered species habitat protection, and prioritize the use of compatible land protection tools to build the SEP-HCP preserve system.
  - b. Seek voluntary, willing conservation partners for endangered species habitat protection and management.
  - c. Phase the **implementation** of the Plan to provide opportunities to review progress and adapt the conservation program to changing needs and circumstances over time.
  - d. Minimize administrative costs associated with Plan implementation through the use of efficient and effective practices.
6. **LEVERAGE RESOURCES:** Coordinate conservation planning for endangered species on a regional scale to take best advantage of available conservation opportunities.
- a. Pool available conservation resources from Plan partners, participants, and other sources as available to achieve biologically significant, regional conservation of endangered species.
  - b. Leverage available conservation resources with other programs active in the Plan Area to maximize the regional benefits of past, present, and future conservation efforts or opportunities.
  - c. Compliment other conservation efforts in the region (such as aquifer protection initiatives, scenic and cultural preservation, and parkland acquisition programs) and seek to avoid competition with complementary programs for conservation resources.

In addition to this general conservation strategy, the biological goals and objectives will further define the specifics of the operating conservation program with respect to the species addressed in the plan, such as the size and configuration of the preserve system.