



## Taking the High Road in Seizing the Middle Ground

*National HCP Coalition Urges HCP Collaboration of Environmental, Development Interests*



There was a time in the not too distant past that the proponents of property rights and environmental protections were like oil and water. And while most of those battles were played out in the court system, attempts to prevent those legal struggles in the first place were not the norm. However, that combative dynamic is seeing a shift toward parties trying to balance the needs of both sides of the equation before the drawing of legal swords begins.

One promising indicator of such a shift is the formation of

the National Habitat Conservation Plan (HCP) Coalition. In 2015, a small group of HCPs and federal officials gathered at the U.S. Fish and Wildlife Service's National Conservation Training Center to discuss the idea and merits of collaboration among all stakeholders in the development and implementation of Habitat Conservation Plan programs. The following year, the first National HCP Coalition conference was held.

"This past year, more than 100 people attended the national conference, and we were certainly pleased to be there representing the Edwards Aquifer Habitat Conservation Plan (EAHCP)," said EAHCP Habitat Conservation Manager Jamie Childers. "The group included not only people with HCPs from about 35 states, but there were representatives from the U.S. Fish and Wildlife Service who regulate Habitat Conservation Plans there as well. The mix of attendees made for a lively and very productive conference. Essentially, the Coalition is working to spread the word on the benefits of HCPs by focusing on balancing the needs of protecting endangered habitats and species with development that drives local and regional economies."

## National HCP Coalition - Continued

The eight stated goals of the National HCP Coalition include issues relating to creating awareness about the value of HCPs to finding the means to effectively streamline planning, implementing and regulatory compliance processes. Additionally, the Coalition wants to serve as the primary place for HCP teams around the country to share their success stories and as a mentor for new HCP administrators.

“In my role with the EAHCP, I get very focused on the science of our work,” said EAHCP chief science officer Dr. Chad Furl. “However, when you are in a meeting of regulators and administrators along with the science people, you really come away with a better perspective of just how many moving parts there are to a successful HCP and why it is critically important that collaboration is the rule rather than the exception.”

The National HCP Coalition underscores Furl’s thoughts about collaboration in a “lessons learned” page on their website. Under the title “Start Slow to Go Fast,” they relate the story of the startup of the Santa Clara Valley HCP in California. It advises the parties developing an HCP should establish clear and consistent parameters and goals for the project and include informational and organizational elements. Also, this process needs to involve key stakeholders to ensure there is a process for resolving regional conflicts and a management system before moving forward.

“The ‘start slow’ topic at this year’s conference really made an impression on me in understanding how laying important groundwork and program governance for implementing an HCP can actually make things go a lot smoother with regulators and overall execution of the program down the road,” Childers noted. “It’s a marathon not a sprint. The EAHCP is the perfect example of that. It took a long time to get our current permit and it was issued for 15 years. When this permit concludes, we are most likely going to apply for a permit that covers us for decades.”

“Both Jamie and I are relatively new to the Edwards Aquifer Habitat Conservation Plan and one of the things we are thankful for is that there is such a long history of research and science that our HCP is built on,” Furl explained. “At the national conference we heard from HCPs just starting out and the struggles they were facing in creating that strong foundation on which to base their programs. We are very fortunate that the EAHCP has a solid governing structure, engaged stakeholders willing to work together and a deep set of data to work from. Those are the keys to our current successes which also gives us confidence we will be able to earn a lengthy renewal in 2028 as Jamie alluded to.”

The 2020 National HCP Coalition conference is going to be held in Austin in the fall. The EAHCP’s Scott Stormont and Olivia Ybarra will be on the planning committee for that gathering of national HCP participants.

“We encourage all of our stakeholders to make plans to attend the next HCP conference given its proximity to the Edwards Region,” Childers said. “There are many different perspectives included in the development and operation of an HCP. And it is quite fascinating to hear the views of folks from varying backgrounds and how they came together to get to a win-win solution. I know the opportunity I had to be at the last conference and hearing those different views will make me a better administrator for the EAHCP. So, that’s why I think our stakeholders should be in Austin for the 2020 National HCP Coalition conference if at all possible.”

You can learn more about the National HCP Coalition at [www.nhcpcoalition.org](http://www.nhcpcoalition.org). On the site, the EAHCP is referenced in the HCP Coalition success stories. You can read that article at [www.nhcpcoalition.org/success-stories/the-edwards-aquifer-hcp-texas/](http://www.nhcpcoalition.org/success-stories/the-edwards-aquifer-hcp-texas/).





# EAHCP STEWARD SHORT TAKES

## Thank You Steve Raabe!



At the December EAHCP Joint Meeting, the group of stakeholders took a few minutes to congratulate Steve Raabe on his retirement from the San Antonio River Authority. Additionally, Raabe was recognized for his years of service to the formation and implementation of the Edwards Aquifer Habitat Conservation Plan and the protection of the threatened and endangered species. Pictured are Myron Hess, left, who is the chair of the Stakeholders Committee, and Steve Raabe.

## Sessom Creek Workday Set for Saturday, Jan. 18

The next Sessom Workday is scheduled for Saturday 1/18 from 9-11 am. Tasks include removing invasive ligustrum, constructing contour terracing, dragging small brush to be chipped, pulling invasive seedlings, broadcasting native seed and removing trash. Meet at the Vie Lofts (formerly Ella Lofts) parking lot, 817 Chestnut St. or along street. Please wear closed toed shoes. Tools will be provided. Pizza will be served afterwards by our sponsor Pie Society. RSVP to [eweeks@sanmarcostx.gov](mailto:eweeks@sanmarcostx.gov).

## Short Takes - Continued

### MLK Day Jan. 20

The Edwards Aquifer Authority will be closed on Monday, Jan. 20 in observance of Martin Luther King, Jr. Day.

### EAHCP Committees Meeting Schedule for 2020



#### 2020 EAHCP COMMITTEE DATES

##### IMPLEMENTING COMMITTEE DATES

DATE	COMMITTEE	LOCATON	TIME
January 30, 2020	Implementing	EAA	10:00 AM
August 20, 2020	Implementing	EAA	10:00 AM

##### JOINT IMPLEMENTING AND STAKEHOLDER COMMITTEE DATES

DATE	COMMITTEE	LOCATON	TIME
March 19, 2020	Joint SH-IC	EAA	10:00 AM
May 21, 2020	Joint SH-IC	EAA	10:00 AM
October 8, 2020	Joint SH-IC	EAA	10:00 AM
December 17, 2020	Joint SH-IC-SC	EAA	10:00 AM

##### SCIENCE COMMITTEE DATES

DATE	COMMITTEE	LOCATON	TIME
February 26, 2020	Science	COSM	9:00 AM
April 29, 2020	Science	COSM	9:00 AM
September 10, 2020	Science	COSM	9:00 AM
December 17, 2020	Joint SH-IC-SC	EAA	10:00 AM

