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Service Approves City of San Antonio and Bexar County Plan to Conserve Nine Federally Listed Species

Habitat Conservation Plan will minimize impacts from development

Today, the U.S. Fish and Wildlife Service (Service) announced the approval of the Southern Edwards Plateau Habitat Conservation Plan (SEP HCP) and incidental take permit covering commercial and residential development and infrastructure projects in the City of San Antonio and Bexar County, Texas. Landowners and developers who have projects impacting nine federally protected threatened and endangered species and their habitat now have a streamlined process for complying with the Endangered Species Act (ESA).

The Service, City of San Antonio, and Bexar County, worked together to develop a plan that minimizes and mitigates the impacts of infrastructure and commercial and residential development on the golden-cheeked warbler, black-capped vireo, Government Canyon Bat Cave spider, Madla Cave meshweaver, Braken Cave meshweaver, Government Canyon Bat Cave Meshweaver, Helotes mold beetle, and two ground beetle species, each of which has no common name (*Rhadine exilis* and *Rhadine infernalis*) in one of the fastest growing areas of the country. The associated incidental take permit authorizes the incidental take of these federally listed species for 30 years. The SEP HCP and associated permit cover lands within Bexar County and the City of San Antonio's jurisdictional boundaries.

The development of the SEP HCP represents over five years of public involvement including the Biological Advisory Team and Citizen Advisory Committee meetings convened by the City of San Antonio and Bexar County and the Service's public meetings and public comment periods. Over 100 comments were received during the three month public comment period. Many of the comments submitted provided extensive feedback on both the draft SEP HCP as well as the draft Environmental Impact Statement (EIS). The Service worked closely with the applicants and interested community members throughout the process, and the final SEP HCP and EIS are the product of this collaborative public process.

“The Regional Habitat Conservation Plan for the Southern Edwards Plateau demonstrates the commitment of the City of San Antonio and Bexar County to protecting imperiled species and the unique landscapes of Central Texas while addressing the economic needs of one of the fast growing areas in the country,” said Benjamin Tuggle, the Service's Southwest Regional Director. “By maintaining open space, protecting water quality and providing landowners and businesses with a

streamlined ESA process, the city and county are ensuring that the area can thrive economically and provide an attractive and healthy community for residents.”

Under the ESA, the Service has developed a number of tools, including HCPs, which provide businesses, landowners and state and local governments with the ability to continue their activities while ensuring the protection of listed species. Regional HCPs can cover multiple species, areas and activities, thereby providing a streamlined ESA process that minimizes the time and costs associated with developing individual plans.

You may obtain copies of the EIS and SEP HCP online at www.sephcp.com and the Service’s website at <http://www.fws.gov/southwest/es/AustinTexas/>. For further information on how to obtain or review copies of these documents see the *Federal Register* notice at <http://www.fws.gov/southwest/index.html>.

America’s fish, wildlife, and plant resources belong to all of us, and ensuring the health of imperiled species is a shared responsibility. We’re working to actively engage conservation partners and the public in the search for improved and innovative ways to conserve and recover imperiled species.

The U.S. Fish and Wildlife Service works with others to conserve, protect, and enhance fish, wildlife, plants, and their habitats for the continuing benefit of the American people. For more information on our work and the people who make it happen, visit <http://www.fws.gov/>. Connect with our [Facebook page](#), follow our [tweets](#), watch our [YouTube Channel](#) and download photos from our [Flickr page](#).

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