

**Edwards Aquifer Habitat Conservation Plan
Drought Contingency Meeting Summary
San Marcos Activity Center
September 3, 2013, 9:00am**

Introduction

- The Drought Contingency meeting included participants from City of San Marcos (COSM), Texas State University (TXST), City of New Braunfels (CONB), contractors performing the mitigation in the Springs communities, and HCP Science Committee members.
- Nathan Pence, HCP Program Manager, discussed Section M.1. and M.2. of the Incidental Take Permit (ITP) which address the issue of suspending conservation measures within each system if spring flows are less than 130 cubic feet/second (cfs) in the Comal Springs system and 120 cfs in the San Marcos Springs system.
- USFWS maintains that these low flow triggers for suspension of work should be adequately considered.
- San Marcos/TXST and New Braunfels are required to provide memos to the USFWS outlining their individual methodologies and rationale in continuing to implement conservation measures during periods of low flow.
- The primary purpose of this meeting is to provide the discussion points for the USFWS memos.

Update on Current Springflows and Aquifer Condition

- San Marcos Springs Daily Reading was 108 cfs, and the Ten Day Average was 108 cfs
- Comal Springs Daily Reading was 128 cfs, and the Ten Day Average was 129 cfs
- J-17 Well Daily Reading was 631.7 ft., and the Ten Day Average was 633.2 ft.

Probability of Triggering VISPO in 2014 Presentation

EAA staff presented a study based on the probability that the elevation of the J-17 well would be below 635 feet on October 1, 2013. To calculate the probability, well data collected since the Drought of Record (1950's) was analyzed.

- Typically, September of any given year is the highest gaining month primarily due to cessation of irrigation pumping in the western counties.
- Currently, J-17 level is significantly lower than previous years at this time
- Need at least 2 feet of gain in the elevation during September not to go below the trigger of 635 feet and trigger Voluntary Irrigation Suspension Program Option (VISPO).
- Based on past data, there is a 67% chance that we will see the needed gain in J-17.
- However, there are no precipitation events projected in the near future

Audience members asked several questions related to the data and also to possible correlations of spring flows based on the well elevation in J-27 (Uvalde well). Also discussed were issues surrounding increased pumping rates since the drought of record and the associated impacts to gains/losses in J-17. Discussion followed.

Discussion of the Comal Spring System

City of New Braunfels staff discussed the current activities occurring in and around the water in the Comal system. At this time, the only activity taking place is the Native Vegetation Restoration project which is occurring in Landa Lake and being conducted by BIO-WEST.

EAA staff presented the most recent Biological Monitoring Report as submitted by BIO-WEST and then opened the discussion to the participants.

Participant's role is to discuss current conservation measures and potential impacts and offer alternatives, if necessary, to meet the conditions in the ITP.

- TPWD staff did not voice any concerns with the current revegetation activities
- BIO-WEST staff reiterated that current activities are restoration focused and are beneficial to the ecosystem in general. Discussion followed
- In regards to work on the culverts controlling flow into the Old Channel, New Braunfels staff responded that construction designs had begun and contractors were providing bids. This action was identified as a priority and should be expedited, if possible. Discussion followed.
- Several audience members voiced concerns regarding timely data collection and potential loss of habitat and species of concern. BIO-WEST staff responded that they are conducting continuous monitoring in several areas; and that although habitat is declining in response to low flows, the Comal system is still doing well and sampling has resulted in several invertebrate species still present in the springs.

Overall, there was general agreement among participants that current activities were having a net positive impact to species and/or the ecosystem; and that the City of New Braunfels should continue restoration work while continuing to monitor impacts. It was also agreed that decisions concerning the species and their habitat during severe drought should be made primarily based on real time water quality data and habitat conditions, rather than a set flow trigger.

Discussion of the San Marcos Spring System

San Marcos City staff discussed current conservation measures occurring in the San Marcos system.

- Currently, there is non-native vegetation removal occurring in the permitted areas
- Conservation Crews are formed and working towards public education and conservation implementation
- Designated State Scientific Areas have been created to protect Texas Wild Rice
- Contractors are still working on resolving issues related to sediment removal
- Contractors are conducting litter removal and vegetation mat removal
- Elephant ear removal is occurring along the banks

EAA staff presented the most recent Biological Monitoring Report as submitted by BIO-WEST and then opened the discussion to the participants.

- TX State staff/Contractors noted that there have been minimal impacts related to sediment
- TX State staff/Contractors also felt that vegetation removal activities could be increased

- TX State staff/Contractors discussed a method to reduce dislodged vegetation moving from Spring Lake to downstream areas
- BIO-WEST staff agreed that there was an advantage to removing vegetation during low flows
- It was determined that vegetation mat removal from TWR stands be updated to protect TWR during drought.
- Need to monitor turbidity and related impacts resulting from sediment removal. Discussion followed.
- Audience members expressed concern to erosion on the banks due to minimal vegetation, asked if it was possible to install erosion control devices to reduce sediment from parking areas into the river. TX State staff responded that a Master Drainage Plan was currently being developed that would address erosion and runoff issues.
- TPWD staff would like to see educational signage in Spanish

Overall, there was general agreement among Participants that current activities were not having significant negative impacts to species and/or the ecosystem; and that the City of San Marcos should continue restoration work while continuing to monitor impacts. It was also agreed that decisions concerning the species and their habitat during severe drought should be made primarily based on real time water quality data and habitat conditions, rather than a set flow trigger.

Attendees:

NAME	REPRESENTING
Rick Illgner	EAA
Mark Telzron	Sea World
Janelle Baca	Sea World
Chris Abernathy	EAA
Julia Vellez	SARA
Roger Biggers	NBU
Cindy Loeffler	TPWD
Chad Norris	TPWD
Ed Oborny	BIO-WEST
Thom Hardy	Texas State
Carl Adkins	Self
Bob Wolf	Self
Gena Leathers	DOW
Todd Votteler	GBRA
Ray Joy Pfannstiel	Guadalupe County Farm Bureau
Melani Howard	COSM-TX State
Tom Taggart	COSM
Tyson Broad	Sierra Club
George Ozuna	USGS
Patrick Shriver	SAWS
Darren Thompson	SAWS
Louisa Eclarinal	CPS Energy
Cary Betz	TCEQ
Ken Ostrand	USFWS

Jay Hildago	Public
Glen Longley	TX State
Nathan Pence	EAA
Cheryl Gilpin	Self
Dianne Wassenich	Self
Zac Martin	CONB
Steve Ramsey	CONB