

ATTACHMENT 7
The National Academies of
SCIENCES • ENGINEERING • MEDICINE

Water Science and Technology Board
Division on Earth and Life Studies

Review of the Edwards Aquifer Habitat Conservation Program—Phase 3
Statement of Task

An ad hoc committee of the National Academies of Sciences, Engineering, and Medicine (NASEM) will conduct a study from 2014 to 2018 and issue three reports that review the many different scientific initiatives underway to support the Edwards Aquifer Habitat Conservation Plan (HCP). The Committee will focus on the adequacy of information to reliably inform assessments of the HCP's scientific initiatives, ensuring that they are based on the best-available science. In early 2015 the Committee issued its first report, which focused on hydrologic modeling, ecological modeling, water quality monitoring and biomonitoring, and the Applied Research Program. The Committee wrote an interim report on the ecological model in June 2016, and a second full report on the entire program in December 2016. The third and final report will focus on the relationships among proposed conservation measures (including flow protection measures and habitat restoration), biological objectives (such as water quality criteria, habitat condition, and specified spring flow rates), and biological goals (such as maintaining populations of the Covered Species). (The Biological Goals, which were agreed upon by the U.S. Fish and Wildlife Service, are considered fixed for the purposes of this study.) In particular, the Committee will determine, for each Covered Species in the EAHCP,

1. Whether the biological objectives in the EAHCP are highly likely, somewhat likely, or unlikely to achieve the related biological goals. If "highly likely," is the full complement of biological objectives necessary to meet the biological goals? If the biological objectives are "unlikely" to achieve the biological goals, recommend how the amounts/types of habitat and water quality objectives could be amended to achieve the biological goals.
2. Whether the conservation measures in the EAHCP are adequate to meet the biological objectives. Is the full suite of conservation measures necessary to meet the biological objectives? Additionally, if the conservation measures are not adequate, would the presumptive Phase II conservation measure or simple manipulation of a Phase I conservation measure achieve the biological objectives? If neither the Phase I conservation measures nor the presumptive Phase II conservation measure are likely to achieve the biological objectives, the committee will explain the extent to which the objectives are not likely to be achieved, and why.