



**UNITED STATES OF AMERICA
DEPARTMENT OF THE INTERIOR
FISH AND WILDLIFE SERVICE
ENDANGERED SPECIES PROGRAM**

TELEPHONIC INTERVIEW (Time 4:49)

**BOY SCOUTS OF AMERICA/CAPITAL AREA COUNCIL SAFE HARBOR
AGREEMENT: HOUSTON TOAD (HOST SARAH LEON WITH JT DABBS)**

This transcript was produced from audio provided by FWS Endangered Species Program

P R O C E E D I N G S

(Music plays.)

MS. LEON: It's going to be a challenge to prevent the Houston toad, an endangered species, from getting snuffed out. In a state where 94 percent of the land is privately owned, the survival of this rare toad may just depend on the active involvement of landowners in East Central Texas. Luckily, for the toad, three landowners in Bastrop County have all ready risen to the occasion and several more are now showing an interest in programs to help benefit the species.

Hello, there. This is Sarah Leon for the U.S. Fish and Wildlife Service and I'm on the phone today with JT Dabbs, Scout Executive for the Capital Area Council in Boy Scouts of America, headquartered in Austin, Texas. Hi, JT, how are you today?

MR. DABBS: I'm great, Sarah.

MS. LEON: Now, JT, I understand that the Lost Pines Scout Reservation is one of three properties currently enrolled in a Safe Harbor Agreement to help benefit the Houston toad, is that right?

MR. DABBS: Yes, Sarah, that's right. We entered into that agreement about three years ago.

MS. LEON: All right. And how many acres have the Boy Scouts reserved for habitat improvement to help benefit the toad?

MR. DABBS: Our Lost Pines Scout Reservation is about 600 acres and then, in addition to that, our property, Griffith League Scout Ranch, which is also in Bastrop County, actually has the Houston toad and it's about 5,000 acres on that property.

MS. LEON: So what prompted the Scouts to take on this sort of thing?

MR. DABBS: Well, several years ago we found out there were Houston toads on our Griffith Scout League property as we entered into all of our agreements and incidental take permit and all the things we did with Fish and Wildlife. We looked at the Safe Harbor Agreement and thought it would be something that would be very proactive for us to do and fits into our mission and outdoor ethics and the environment and teaching our young people about the outdoors. So we continued and did those sorts of things. We were able to enter into the agreement and had an opportunity to make a difference, so that's what we're trying to do.

MS. LEON: All right. So, like you said, for about three years now you've been working with the U.S. Fish and Wildlife Service and other agencies, like Texas Parks and Wildlife and the Environmental Defense Fund, to facilitate habitat improvements to help recover the Houston toad, is that right?

MR. DABBS: That's right. We are using the opportunity at the camp with service projects from scouts and volunteers to do some habitat improvements. Everything from removal of species of plants, like Yaupon, that are not great areas for the Houston toad. Then, also, looking at some controlled burning of some of the property that we've done in conjunction with the Environmental Defense and some dollars that they were able to get through a grant. Looking at those sorts of things on the property.

MS. LEON: All right. And I feel like in Texas especially, many landowners have the reservations with entering an agreement with federal government. They don't like to be told or have the federal government suggesting how they should manage their land. So can you tell us about some of the initiatives you're involved in to help landowners realize how setting some land aside and doing habitat improvements can not only benefit the toad, but them as well?

MR. DABBS: Yes. Sarah, that's a great question. There are misconceptions about the endangered species and Endangered Species Act. People are scared sometimes, just as a landowner, what if they find an endangered species on our property then what happens. What we're doing locally in Bastrop County is trying to be proactive in doing things. We're looking at how can we help landowners. Since we are a landowner, we're very interested in that. How can we help landowners understand what they should do, what they shouldn't do, and provide resources. If they're in one of the counties that has known Houston toad population, then they will know what are the things they should be doing and what help is available for them in the county and the county leadership and doing that.

So we're looking at some different things in terms of education, information, public forums, those sorts of things as people look at that. So they can see that this is a positive step and something they can do and should do to help with certain species and helping to impact them on a positive way.

MS. LEON: Well, thank you so much, JT, for taking the time today to tell us a little bit more about your Safe Harbor Agreement and the sorts of activities that are going on in Bastrop County to encourage landowners to help this endangered species, so thank you for that.

MR. DABBS: Sure, Sarah. Our pleasure. Appreciate the opportunity.

MS. LEON: For the U.S. Fish and Wildlife Service, this is Sarah Leon. Thanks for listening.