Dear Sir or Madam:

The U.S. Fish and Wildlife Service (Service) is requesting your agency’s review and comment on the issues under your purview that could be affected by the issuance of an incidental take permit, under the Endangered Species Act of 1973, as amended, to Bexar County, Texas (applicant). The incidental take permit is for the proposed Southern Edwards Plateau (SEP) Regional Habitat Conservation Plan (RHCP), which includes Bexar and surrounding counties and would authorize incidental take of federally listed species resulting from residential, commercial, and other development activities within the plan area. On April 27, 2011, the Service published a Notice of Intent to prepare a draft Environmental Impact Statement (EIS) in compliance with the National Environmental Policy Act of 1969. The purpose of the EIS is to evaluate the impacts of, and alternatives to, the proposed issuance of the incidental take permit. The public comment period is now open and a series of five public scoping meetings have been held throughout the proposed plan area.

We welcome your agency’s comments, and have attached the Notice of Intent, which describes the project and the permit area in more detail. All meeting materials provided at the public scoping meetings are available at www.sephcp.com, click the “eis and nepa process” link. We would appreciate receiving your comments no later than August 22, 2011, either in writing to our address above, or by email to FW2_AUES_Consult@fws.gov. Please feel free to contact Christina Williams at 512-490-0057, extension 235 with any questions or comments.

Sincerely,

[Signature]

Adam Zerrenner
Field Supervisor

Enc: Notice of Intent for the proposed Southern Edwards Plateau Regional Habitat Conservation Plan
August 2, 2011

Mr. Adam Zerrenner
Field Supervisor
U. S. Fish and Wildlife Service
10711 Burnet Road, Suite 200
Austin, TX 78758

Re: Notice of Intent for the proposed Southern Edwards Plateau Regional Habitat Conservation Plan

Dear Mr. Zerrenner:

The Natural Resources Conservation Service (NRCS) would like to thank the U.S. Department of the Interior Fish and Wildlife Service (FWS) for the opportunity to comment on the notice of intent for the proposed Southern Edwards Plateau Regional Habitat Conservation Plan (HCP).

We support the development of the HCP proposed in the notice of intent and will help however we can with the plan and its implementation. NRCS works closely with the scientific and academic communities to develop plans of action to conserve, enhance, and restore the habitats for listed endangered species. These actions are taken in cooperation with private landowner and managers in a voluntary manner to apply those conservation practices that provide the most benefit to species and reduce loss due to habitat degradation.

Should you require any additional information or have additional questions, please contact Susan Baggett at 254-742-9805.

Sincerely,

Salvador Salinas

SAVLADOR SALINAS
State Conservationist

cc: Susan Baggett, SRC, NRCS, Temple
Russell Castro, Biologist, NRCS, Temple
August 16, 2011

Mr. Adam Zerrenner
Fish and Wildlife Service
10711 Burnet Road, Suite 200
Austin, TX 78758

RE: Southern Edwards Plateau Regional Habitat Conservation Plan

Dear Mr. Zerrenner:

On behalf of Commissioner Patterson, I would like to thank you for the opportunity to comment on the draft Southern Edwards Plateau Regional Habitat Conservation Plan proposed by Bexar County, and the intent by the Service to prepare an Environmental Impact Statement (EIS). As you may know, the General Land Office (GLO) is responsible for managing state owned land dedicated to the Permanent School Fund (PSF). This includes protecting the natural resources of these lands for all Texans, and maximizing revenue to support public education. The GLO agrees that there should be steps taken to protect the threatened and endangered species within the plan area, and understands the need to streamline the Endangered Species Act take permitting process. However there are many state owned assets within the area covered by the draft plan, and the GLO is concerned how the draft plan may affect the ability to generate revenue for the PSF with these assets. The draft plan includes the statement “The alternative plan would allow authorization of all anticipated incidental take for the covered species across the entire plan area (excluding Comal County, since a separate plan would cover this area) over the next 30 years.” This potential limitation on responsible development could greatly impact the ability of the GLO to generate revenue for the PSF and fund public education. The GLO requests that the EIS specifically addresses the plans impact to the PSF and the ability to generate revenue to support public education. The GLO also requests to be involved in the further development and implementation of the Southern Edwards Plateau Regional Habitat Conservation Plan, and to be invited to participate in any further meetings to discuss the proposed plan.

If you have any additional questions or concerns, please contact Ned Polk at (512) 463-5030 or by e-mail at ned.polk@glo.texas.gov.

Sincerely,

Rene D. Truan
Deputy Commissioner
General Land Office
August 17, 2011

James V. Cannizzo, Attorney Advisor, Camp Stanley (Army Material Command, AMC) and Retained Army Functions at Fort Sam Houston and Camp Bullis

Adam Zerrenner, Field Supervisor
U.S. Fish and Wildlife Service
Austin Ecological Services Office
10711 Burnet Road Suite 200
Austin, Texas 78758

Dear Mr. Zerrenner,

Thank you for the opportunity to respond to your July 22nd, 2011 letter requesting comments on the proposed Southern Edwards Plateau Habitat Conservation Plan (HCP) and notice to prepare an Environmental Impact Statement. As a federal agency, we will not be covered by the incidental take provisions the plan is expected to result in, however, we support the plan because we believe it will provide a streamlined method for management of development around Camp Bullis and Camp Stanley which should result in a higher rate of compliance by nonfederal parties.

We are aware of only two site specific habitat conservation plans ever being done in the Bexar County area (La Cantera development for Bexar County listed Karst Invertebrates and Lumbermans/PGA Village for Golden-cheeked Warbler, GCWA). With many thousands of acres of development occurring in the Bexar County area, it is likely many developments ignored or otherwise avoided performing species mitigation. We believe this development is displacing GCWA onto our military installations. Having a streamlined means of complying as has been the case with a regional HCP in Travis County since 1996 should encourage more developers to comply with the Endangered Species Act. We hope that having a regional HCP will stop the net loss of habitat in this area and result in some mitigation being done.

Camp Bullis and Camp Stanley cannot and should not alone bear the burden of compliance with the Endangered Species Act. We are becoming the “lone island of refuge” for these species. The populations of GCWA on Camp Bullis have dramatically increased the past several years. On Bullis we have gained approximately 1,250 acres of occupied habitat the last four years, including over 416 more occupied acres in 2011. In addition to more areas being occupied, GCWA population densities have increased.

Points of contact are Matthew Lucas Cooksey, Camp Bullis Wildlife Biologist at (210) 295-7889 or me at (210) 295-7082/9830.

Sincerely,

James V. Cannizzo
Administrative and Civil Law Advisor
March 17, 2015

Office of the Staff Judge Advocate

Public Comments Processing, Attn: FWS-R2-ES-2014-0053
Division of Policy and Directives Management
U.S. Fish and Wildlife Service; MS: BPHC
5275 Leesburg Pike
Falls Church, VA 22041-3803

To whom it may concern,

Thank you for the opportunity to comment on the Southern Edwards Plateau Habitat Conservation Plan (SEPHCP) and draft Environmental Impact Statement (EIS). As a federal agency, we will not be covered by the incidental take of this plan, however, we support the plan because we believe it will provide a streamlined method for management of development around Camp Stanley and Camp Bullis which should improve compliance by nonfederal parties.

We are aware of only a handful of site specific habitat conservation plans and Section 7 consultations ever being done in Bexar County. With tens of thousands of acres of development occurring in the county, it is questionable whether many developers complied with performing endangered species mitigation. We believe development is displacing Golden-cheeked Warbler (GCWA) onto our military installations. Having a streamlined means of complying, as has been the case with a regional HCP in Travis County since 1996, should encourage more developers to comply with the Endangered Species Act. We hope that having a regional HCP will stop the net loss of habitat in the overall area and result in more mitigation being done.

We are concerned that the Biological Advisor Team’s (BAT’s) recommendation for a specific percentage of GCWA habitat to be obtained within Bexar County is not in the draft plan or EIS. We understand the cost realities over the BAT’s figure of 60% may make the plan too expensive to implement, but believe some minimal percentage (such as 30% within Bexar County and 5 miles surrounding) is needed so that it doesn’t end up that all the mitigation is done outside of Bexar County. Doing so would leave Camp Stanley and Camp Bullis (and Government Canyon State Natural Area, a few city owned parks and Proposition 1 tracts and a few tracts Camp Bullis helped set up as mitigation properties) as the only remaining GCWA habitat in Bexar County.

Sincerely,

James V. Cannizzo
Attorney Advisor, Camp Stanley (Army Material Command, AMC) and Retained Army Functions at Fort Sam Houston and Camp Bullis