

Salado Project Strategy Meeting  
August 21, 2009  
U.S. Fish and Wildlife Service – Austin Ecological Services Office

Attendees:

Mike Rhodes, Texas Department of Transportation (TxDOT)  
Andy Gluesenkamp, Texas Parks and Wildlife Department (TPWD)  
Stirling Robertson, TxDOT  
Paige Najvar, U.S. Fish and Wildlife Service (USFWS)  
Allison Arnold, USFWS  
Alisa Shull, USFWS  
Stacy Roberts, USFWS

Purpose of meeting and project overview – TxDOT will be rebuilding IH-35 through the Village of Salado in Bell County, Texas. This work will include replacing 4 bridges that cross Salado Creek (two mainlane bridges and two frontage road bridges). Permanent drainage basins will be installed to control stormwater runoff into Salado Creek. Presently, there are no permanent water quality control mechanisms at this location. TxDOT expects full containment of runoff through the use of the drainage basins, but will later clarify containment capabilities under flooding situations.

Drill shafts (approximately 30-36 inches in diameter) will be needed for the new bridge columns, which may affect hydrology downstream of the project site. Although no boring is expected to occur in-stream, the USFWS asked TxDOT to provide more information on the surface feature and hydrological effects of drill shafts when they proceed to the design phase of the project. USFWS would like TxDOT to provide an assessment of effects of the project to the recharge features, specifically including effects to surface features that may be hydrologically connected to water flowing out of springs occupied by the salamander.

The project is currently in the schematic phase. The next phase is the design phase. Construction of this project is expected to begin in 3 years.

Status of candidate species in Bell County – TxDOT indicated that the Jollyville Plateau salamander (*Eurycea tonkawae*) is on the USFWS county-by-county list for Bell County. USFWS will look into this to make sure it is correct. The Salado salamander (*Eurycea chisolmensis*) is a candidate species that occurs in Bell County. The USFWS has given the Salado salamander a listing priority number of 2. A candidate species is a species that the USFWS has sufficient information to warrant listing as threatened or endangered under the Endangered Species Act of 1973, as amended. There is a possibility this species could be listed as threatened or endangered before the initiation of this transportation project.

Recent field surveys for the Salado salamander – There are currently two recently confirmed populations of the Salado salamander. One occurs at Big Boiling Springs within the Village of Salado, which is located downstream of the project site. The other population was recently discovered (August 2009) by Andy Gluesenkamp on the Solana Ranch in Bell County located on a tributary of Rumsey Creek. TPWD also visited the Roberston Plantation in Bell County,

located just west of the project site. Salado salamanders are historically known to occur on the Robertson Plantation, but no surveys have occurred there in many years. The Robertson Plantation is protected as a historic site in Texas. Given the ongoing drought, the springs are not flowing at the Robertson Plantation, as reported by Andy Gluesenkamp based on a visit to the property in August 2009. Surveys will resume there when springflows return.

Potential conservation measures – Meeting participants discussed the possibility of developing a Candidate Conservation Agreement (CCA) for TxDOT's activities in Bell County. A CCA would outline what measures TxDOT could take to improve the status of the Salado salamander. This document could include measures to protect water quality and quantity for the species and the identification of additional populations. Conservation efforts outside of TxDOT's purview could be included with the addition of other signatories to the CCA, such as TPWD.

Critchfield Springs, which is located approximately 120 yards downstream from Big Boiling Springs, may be a possible restoration site. It is located on private property, but the landowners seem willing to help with conservation based on conversations Andy Gluesenkamp has had with the landowners. Andy Gluesenkamp has also discussed the possibility of conducting habitat restoration efforts with officials at the Village of Salado. Village officials are interested in enhancing the aesthetic value of the land around Big Boiling Springs. There may be a possibility to continue working with them.

Andy Gluesenkamp also mentioned that a significant threat to the Salado salamander is the amount of quarries located within the watershed. He also mentioned that the Village of Salado relies on septic systems. USFWS suggested that TPWD consider developing a programmatic Candidate Conservation Agreement with Assurances (CCAA) to cover the full range of the Salado salamander and the contributing watershed.

Action items:

- After the project moves into the design phase, TxDOT will provide projected containment capabilities of the water quality mechanisms that will be installed for the new project.
- After the project moves into the design phase, TxDOT will provide an assessment of effects of the project to the recharge features, specifically including effects to surface features that may be hydrologically connected to water flowing out of springs occupied by the salamander.
- USFWS will look into the county-by-county list to make sure the Jollyville Plateau salamander should be included in the list of species for Bell County.



"Michael Rhodes"  
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>  
09/17/2009 03:14 PM

To "Stirling Robertson" <SROBER2@dot.state.tx.us>,  
<Alisa\_Shull@fws.gov>, <Allison\_Arnold@fws.gov>,  
<Paige\_Najvar@fws.gov>,  
cc  
bcc  
Subject Re: draft final mtg notes for Aug 21 mtg

Paige,

I think your notes look fine. Thank you for preparing them.

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>>> <Paige\_Najvar@fws.gov> 9/17/2009 8:29 AM >>>

Here is the latest version of the August 21st meeting notes. Let me know if anyone has any additional comments.

Thanks,

Paige

(See attached file: Aug 21 mtg notes final.docx)

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