



Tier I Site Assessment

Main CSJ: 0204-01-063

Form Prepared By: Cox|McLain Environmental Consulting

Date of Evaluation: October 11, 2019

Project is classified as a Categorical Exclusion

Proposed Letting Date: March 2022

Project not assigned to TxDOT under the NEPA Assignment MOU

District(s): Austin

County(ies): Williamson

Roadway Name: US Highway (US) 79

Limits From: Interstate (I-) 35

Limits To: East of Farm-to-Market Road (FM) 1460

Project Description: See Attachment 1 in the Supplemental Attachments for a detailed project description.

The environmental review, consultation, and other actions required by applicable Federal environmental laws for this project are being, or have been, carried-out by TxDOT pursuant to 23 U.S.C. 327 and a Memorandum of Understanding dated December 16, 2014, and executed by FHWA and TxDOT.

1. No Is the project limited to a maintenance activity exempt from coordination?
<http://txdot.gov/inside-txdot/division/environmental/maintenance-program.html>
2. No Has the project previously completed coordination with TPWD?
3. Yes Is the project within range of a state threatened or endangered species or SGCN and suitable habitat is present?

***Explain:**

The proposed project is within range of, with potentially suitable habitat, for the following SGCNs: gravelbar brickellbush (*Brickellia dentata*), Texas almond (*Prunus minutiflora*), a mayfly (*Pseudocentropiloides morihari*), Bandit Cave spider (*Cicurina bandida*), Bone Cave harvestman (*Texella reyesi*) (also federally listed as endangered), an amphipod (*Stygobromus russelli*), Ezell's Cave amphipod (*Stygobromus flagellatus*), bifurcated cave amphipod (*Stygobromus bifurcatus*), Jollyville Plateau salamander (*Eurycea tonkawae*), southern crawfish frog (*Lithobates areolatus areolatus*), Texas garter snake (*Thamnophis sirtalis annectens*), Western Burrowing Owl (*Athene cunicularia hypugaea*), cave myotis bat (*Myotis velifer*), and plains spotted skunk (*Spilogale putorius interrupta*).

The proposed project is within range of, with potentially suitable habitat, for the following state-listed threatened species: timber rattlesnake (*Crotalus horridus*) and Wood Stork (*Mycteria americana*).

In April 2019, TPWD revised the Williamson County species list to include additional protected species. Environmental scoping for the proposed project was already complete at this time. Per the TxDOT and TPWD MOU, changes to TPWD county lists are not required to be considered in cases in which environmental scoping has already occurred prior to the revision of the lists. In addition, SGCNs are not afforded regulatory protection under state or federal law; therefore, potential impacts to recently added SGCN species are not evaluated in this analysis. The additional state-listed threatened or endangered species have been included.

Date [TPWD County List](#) Accessed: 8/14/17 and 9/20/19

Date that the NDD was accessed: June 25, 2019



What agency performed the NDD search? TPWD

NDD Search Results for EOIDs and Tracked Managed Areas

| EOID Number | Common Name | Scientific Name | Listing Status | Buffer Zone |
|-----------------------|-------------------------------------|---------------------------|----------------|-------------|
| 3626 | Jollyville Plateau salamander | <i>Eurycea tonkawae</i> | LT | 1.5 Mile |
| 10554 | Texas almond | <i>Prunus minutiflora</i> | SGCN | 1.5 Mile |
| 3207 | Rookery | NA | NA | 1.5 Mile |
| 11992 | Vertisol Blackland Prairie | NA | NA | 1.5 Mile |
| 7710, 7277, 7276, 835 | Bone Cave Harvestman | <i>Texella reyesi</i> | LE | 10 Mile |
| 10728 | Texas almond | <i>Prunus minutiflora</i> | SGCN | 10 Mile |
| 11993 | Vertisol Blackland Prairie | NA | NA | 10 Mile |
| 3598 | Little Bluestem-indian grass series | NA | NA | 10 Mile |
| 1937, 3586 | Invertebrate Cave | NA | NA | 10 Mile |

No Does the BMP PA eliminate the requirement to coordinate for all species?

Comments:

There are no BMPs for the Texas almond, gravelbar brickellbush, a mayfly, Jollyville Plateau salamander, an amphipod, Ezell's Cave amphipod, bifurcated cave amphipod, bandit cave spider, and Bone Cave harvestman.

4. No NDD and TCAP review indicates adverse impacts to remnant vegetation?

5. No Does the project require a NWP with PCN or IP by USACE?

6. No Does the project include more than 200 linear feet of stream channel for each single and complete crossing of one or more of the following that is not already channelized or otherwise maintained:

7. No Does the project contain known isolated wetlands outside the TxDOT ROW that will be directly impacted by the project?

8. Yes Would the project impact at least 0.10 acre of riparian vegetation?

*Explain:

Approximately 0.63 acres of Edwards Plateau: Floodplain Hardwood Forest would be impacted by the proposed project.



Tier I Site Assessment

9. Yes Does project disturb a habitat type in an area equal to or greater than the area of disturbance indicated in the Threshold Table Programmatic Agreement?

*Explain:

Approximately 0.63 acres (threshold 0.1) of Edwards Plateau: Floodplain Hardwood Forest would be impacted by the proposed project.

*Attach associated file of EMST output (Mapper Report or other Excel File which includes MOU Type, Ecosystem Name, Common/Vegetation Type Name) in ECOS

Excel File Name:

EMST_table_20191107

9.1. Yes Is there a discrepancy between actual habitat(s) and EMST mapped habitat(s)?

*Explain:

Small areas of fragmented, unmaintained vegetation, mostly along fence lines, by water features, or on the edge of the existing right-of-way, were classified as "Urban" on the EMST mapped vegetation. They were reclassified as a woodland or grassland vegetation type during the field investigation by a qualified biologist.

Attach file showing discrepancy between actual and EMST mapped habitat(s).

File Name:

Attachment 4
Attachment 5

Is TPWD Coordination Required?

Yes

Early Coordination

Administrated Coordination - Must be conducted through ENV-NRM

BMPs Implemented or EPICs included (as necessary):

-BMPs for the southern crawfish frog: Minimize impacts to wetland habitats including isolated ephemeral pools. Minimize the use of equipment in streams and riparian areas during construction. When possible, equipment access should be from banks, bridge decks, or barges. When temporary stream crossings are unavoidable, remove stream crossings once they are no longer needed and stabilize banks and soils around the crossing.

For projects within existing right-of-way (ROW) when work is in water or will permanently impact a water feature and potential habitat exists for the target species complete the following:

- a) Contractors will be advised of potential occurrence in the project area, and to avoid harming the species if encountered.
- b) Minimize impacts to wetland, temporary and permanent open water features, including depressions, and riverine habitats.
- c) Maintain hydrologic regime and connections between wetlands and other aquatic features.
- d) Use barrier fencing to direct animal movements away from construction activities and areas of potential wildlife-vehicle collisions in construction areas directly adjacent, or that may directly impact, potential habitat for the target species.
- e) Apply hydromulching and/or hydroseeding in areas for soil stabilization and/or revegetation of disturbed

areas where feasible. If hydromulching and/or hydroseeding are not feasible due to site conditions, using erosion control blankets or mats that contain no netting, or only contain loosely woven natural fiber netting is preferred. Plastic netting should be avoided to the extent practicable.

- f) Project specific locations (PSLs) proposed within state-owned ROW should be located in uplands away from aquatic features.
- g) When work is directly adjacent to the water, minimize impacts to shoreline basking sites (e.g., downed trees, sand bars, exposed bedrock) and overwinter sites (e.g., brush and debris piles, crayfish burrows) where feasible.
- h) Avoid or minimize disturbing or removing downed trees, rotting stumps, and leaf litter, which may be refugia for terrestrial amphibians, where feasible.
- i) If gutters and curbs are part of the roadway design, where feasible install gutters that do not include the side box inlet and include sloped (i.e. mountable) curbs to allow small animals to leave roadway. If this modification to the entire curb system is not possible, install sections of sloped curb on either side of the storm water drain for several feet to allow small animals to leave the roadway. Priority areas for these design recommendations are those with nearby wetlands or other aquatic features.

For projects that require acquisition of additional ROW and work within that new ROW is in water or will permanently impact a water feature, implement a – i above plus j – l below, where applicable:

- j) For sections of roadway adjacent to wetlands or other aquatic features, install wildlife barriers that prevent climbing. Barriers should terminate at culvert openings in order to funnel animals under the road. The barriers should be of the same length as the adjacent feature or 80 feet long in each direction, or whichever is the lesser of the two.
- k) For culvert extensions and culvert replacement/installation, incorporate measures to funnel animals toward culverts such as concrete wingwalls and barrier walls with overhangs.
- l) When riprap or other bank stabilization devices are necessary, their placement should not impede the movement of terrestrial or aquatic wildlife through the water feature. Where feasible, biotechnical streambank stabilization methods using live native vegetation or a combination of vegetative and structural materials should be used.

-Terrestrial Reptile BMPs for the Texas garter snake and timber rattlesnake: Apply hydromulching and/or hydroseeding in areas for soil stabilization and/or revegetation of disturbed areas where feasible. If hydromulching and/or hydroseeding are not feasible due to site conditions, utilize erosion control blankets or mats that contain no netting or contain loosely woven, natural fiber netting. Plastic netting should be avoided to the extent practicable. For open trenches and excavated pits, install escape ramps at an angle of less than 45 degrees (1: 1) in areas left uncovered. Visually inspect excavation areas for trapped wildlife prior to backfilling. Inform contractors that if reptiles are found on project site allow species to safely leave the project area. Avoid or minimize disturbing or removing downed trees, rotting stumps, and leaf litter where feasible. Contractors will be advised of potential occurrence in the project area, and to avoid harming the species if encountered.

-Bat BMPs for the cave myotis bat: For activities that have the potential to impact structures, cliffs or caves, or trees; a qualified biologist will perform a habitat assessment and occupancy survey of the feature(s) with roost potential as early in the planning process as possible or within one year before project letting. For roosts where occupancy is strongly suspected but unconfirmed during the initial survey, revisit feature(s) at most four weeks prior to scheduled disturbance to confirm absence of bats. If bats are present or recent signs of occupation (i.e., piles of guano, distinct musky odor, or staining and rub marks at potential entry points) are observed, take appropriate measures to ensure that bats are not harmed, such as implementing non-lethal exclusion activities or timing or phasing of construction. Exclusion devices can be installed by a qualified individual between September 1 and March 31. Exclusion devices should be used for a minimum of seven days when minimum nighttime temperatures are above 50°F AND minimum daytime temperatures are above 70°F. Prior to exclusion, ensure that alternate roosting habitat is available in the immediate area. If no suitable roosting habitat is available, installation of alternate roosts is recommended to replace the loss of an occupied roost. If alternate roost sites are not provided, bats may seek shelter in other inappropriate sites, such as buildings, in the surrounding area. See Section 2: Standard Recommendations for recommended acceptable methods for excluding bats from structures. If feature(s) used by bats are removed as a result of construction, replacement structures should incorporate bat friendly design or artificial roosts should be constructed to replace these features, as practicable. Conversion of property containing cave or cliff features to transportation purposes



should be avoided where feasible. Large hollow trees, snags (dead standing trees), and trees with shaggy bark should be surveyed for colonies and, if found, should not be disturbed until the bats are no longer occupying these features. Post-occupancy surveys should be conducted by a qualified biologist prior to tree removal from the landscape. Retain mature, large diameter hardwood forest species and native/ornamental palm trees where feasible. In all instances, avoid harm or death to bats. Bats should only be handled as a last resort and after communication with TPWD.

-BMPs for the plains spotted skunk: Contractors will be advised of potential occurrence in the project area, to avoid harming the species if encountered, and to avoid unnecessary impacts to dens.

-Bird BMPs for the Western Burrowing Owl and Wood Stork: Prior to construction, perform daytime surveys for nests including under bridges and in culverts to determine if they are active before removal. Nests that are active should not be disturbed. Do not disturb, destroy, or remove active nests, including ground nesting birds, during the nesting season. Avoid the removal of unoccupied, inactive nests, as practicable. Prevent the establishment of active nests during the nesting season on TxDOT owned and operated facilities and structures proposed for replacement or repair. Do not collect, capture, relocate, or transport birds, eggs, young, or active nests without a permit.

TxDOT Contact Information

Name: Hilda Ortiz

Phone Number: 512-832-7387

E-mail: hilda.ortiz@txdot.com



Suggested Attachments

Aerial Map (with delineated project boundaries)

USFWS T&E List

TPWD T&E List

Species Impact Table

NDD EOID List and Tracked Managed Areas (Required for TPWD Coordination)

EMST Project MOU Summary Table (Required for TPWD Coordination)

TPWD SGCN List

Photos (Required for TPWD Coordination)

Previous TPWD Coordination Documentation (if applicable)