

## Legislation Text

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File #: AI 13-1507, Version: 1

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**Consider EAA staff recommendation to authorize the General Manager to submit the EAA 2018 Edwards Aquifer Habitat Conservation Plan (EAHCP) Annual Work Plans to the EAHCP process.**

### STAFF RECOMMENDED MOTION:

Move the Executive Committee recommend the board authorize the General Manager to submit the EAA 2018 EAHCP Annual Work Plans to the EAHCP process.

### SUMMARY:

The purpose of this agenda item is for the Executive Committee to consider an EAA staff recommendation to submit the EAA 2018 EAHCP Annual Work Plans to the EAHCP process.

In accordance with the HCP Funding and Management Agreement (FMA), all parties to the EAHCP are required to submit work plans and budgets for each of the conservation activities for which it is assigned by the EAHCP. All work plans are due to the Implementing Committee on April 15. These work plans will be reviewed by the HCP Science Committee in early May and will then be approved by the Implementing Committee on June 15. The EAHCP Program Manager will submit the final approved work plans to the EAA General Manager for consideration in the development of the 2018 budget.

The primary purpose of the work plan development process is to serve as the initial planning tool for the following year's budget and implementation logistics, and therefore, do not contain the specific detail found in the funding applications. Ultimately, the work plans become the basis for competitive procurement processes used by the parties to secure contractors.

The EAA is responsible for 10 work plans in 2018, which are summarized below. Copies of the draft work plans will be provided to the committee during the meeting.

### **Program Administration**

The Program Administration work plan will outline the activities and budget for EAHCP staff for 2018, including facilitation and support for the Science Committee, the Science Review Panel, adaptive management, permitting, annual reporting, and other assigned duties.

### **Biological Monitoring**

The Biological Monitoring work plan will include all work incorporated into the program as identified in the EAHCP and conducted historically by the EAA. Specifically, this work plan will include the Biological Monitoring of both Spring systems, and Critical Period Monitoring.

### **Applied Research**

The Applied Research work plan will contain descriptions of research projects whose total cumulative budget will not exceed \$425,000. The Science Committee is involved in the development of the projects and will review the final experimental design and methodology of the research projects.

### **Ecological Modeling**

Completion of the Ecological Model will be realized in April 2017. Future use of the Model will include assisting in the Adaptive Management process of Phase II.

### **Voluntary Irrigation Suspension Program Option (VISPO)**

The VISPO work plan details staff activities for 2018 to administer the 40,921 acre-feet enrolled through irrigation forbearance agreements.

### **Regional Water Conservation Program (RWCP)**

With the execution and implementation of the contract with SAWS in 2016, the RWCP will have effectively met its conservation goal by 2020. The Regional Water Monitoring Committee submitted a letter to the Implementing Committee communicating the finalization of the RWCP in the fall of 2016.

With the payment of \$950 per acre-foot of water conserved that has been used as a standard for other RWCP participants, the contract will cost \$18,631,400 while sharing the remaining 9,800 acre-feet into the Groundwater Trust necessary to complete the 10,000-acre-foot goal.

As part of this contract, SAWS is obligated to transfer to the EAA groundwater trust half of the water saved under this program. SAWS will provide a total of three summary reports capturing and quantifying yearly milestones.

### **Refugia**

The Refugia work plan will outline the design and construction of additional infrastructure to support Refugia operations, establish the level of Refugium efforts, and identify research to be conducted to ensure the viability of the species in the refugia.

### **Water Quality**

The Water Quality work plan describes the monitoring program created in 2014 with the selection of SWCA Environmental Consultants. SWCA was contracted to conduct and implement the water quality monitoring program. EAA staff was to provide program oversight and technical assistance.

### **Aquifer Storage and Recovery (ASR)**

The ASR contract between EAA and SAWS will continue to be implemented. EAA will become the primary leasing agent for ASR leases and will continue providing SAWS with notices of availability of HCP groundwater as these rights are acquired. In 2018, staff will continue to implement strategies, to encourage greater participation in the leasing/forebearance program.

### **Stage V Critical Period Management (CPM)**

The CPM work plan will cover activities associated with the implementation of Stage V reductions of 44% to municipal, industrial and irrigation permit holders in both pools of the Edwards Aquifer who are authorized to withdraw more than 3 acre-feet per year.

If authorized by the board at the April 11 meeting, staff will submit the work plans to the EAHCP Program Manager by April 15. In May, the Science Committee will be asked to review and approve the following, science-based, draft work plans:

- Biological Monitoring
- Applied Research
- Ecological Modeling
- Refugia
- Water Quality

The Implementing Committee will review and approve the work plans by June 30, and submit the final recommended work plans to the EAA for development of the 2018 proposed budget. Through the budget adoption process, and consideration of the final work plans and associated contracts, the EAA committees and board will make the final determination on the 2018 EAHCP work plans.

#### M/WBE PARTICIPATION:

This agenda item does not involve the procurement of goods or services by the EAA and, therefore, this section is not applicable.

#### STRATEGIC PLAN REFERENCE:

This agenda item supports the EAA's policy direction as set forth in the EAA 2016-20 Strategic Plan: Goal A. Sustain Federally Protected Aquifer-Dependent Species.

#### FISCAL IMPACT:

None at this time. Although staff will seek the board's authorization to submit work plans to the Implementing Committee, the fiscal impact of these plans will be known when the board ultimately approves the contracts and 2018 Funding Applications associated with implementing the work plans.