



City of San Antonio

Agenda Memorandum

File Number:18-4644

Agenda Item Number: 2.

Agenda Date: 8/14/2018

In Control: Southern Edwards Plateau Habitat Conservation Plan Coordinating Committee

DEPARTMENT: Development Services

SUBJECT:

Discussion and possible action relating to the establishment of the proposed Panther Springs Karst Fauna Area (KFA) preserve in Panther Springs Park, a City of San Antonio owned public park.

BACKGROUND INFORMATION:

Panther Springs Park is a City of San Antonio owned public park which has karst features which are known to be occupied by protect karst invertebrate species within its borders. Over the past several months, city staff from the Development Services Department and the Parks and Recreation Department, as well as the SEP-HCP consultant, have been working with the U.S. Fish and Wildlife Service (USFW) as well as area neighborhood stakeholders to establish the KFA preserve and the final management plan.

The potential Preserve will add another layer of protection to 90 acres of the existing 291 acre park. The creation of this 90 acre Panther Springs Preserve will generate approximately 450 Endangered Species Credits that will be used to protect this proposed preserve and assist in creating additional preserves.

DSD staff met the Parks Department and discussed the possibility of establishing the preserve. Additionally, both DSD and Parks staff met with representatives from the Wilderness Oaks Alliance (WOA) and Friends of Panther Springs Park (Friends) on April 10, 2018, and June 5, 2018. Also present at the June 5, 2018, meeting were representatives from USFW. Working in partnership with the WOA and the Friends, DSD agreed (and USFW concurred) to the following conditions with relation the establishment of the preserve:

1. Access to existing trails.

Access to or use of the existing trails by park visitors will not now, nor at any time in future, be prohibited as a result of establishment of the KFA Preserve associated with the Southern Edwards Plateau Habitat Conservation Plan in Panther Springs Park. This condition does not apply to maintenance, repair, and/or construction activities by the City, or its representatives, which may impact accessibility based on the nature of the work to be performed. When the trail maintenance, repairs, and/or construction activities are completed, normal trail(s) access will be restored.

2. Construction of future trails as identified on the Panther Springs Park Master Plan (including the Trail Nodes and the YMCA Trail).

The preserve establishment will not encumber or inhibit the construction of planned future trails, trail nodes, and the YMCA Trail as shown on the Panther Springs Park Master Plan Phases I and II (see **Attachment 2**). Nodes may be defined as park benches, exercise equipment, and/or shade shelters on new or existing concrete or cement pads.

3. Existing use such as mountain biking activities.

Existing use of designated hike and bike trails and mountain biking activities on informal natural surface trails will not now, nor at any time in the future, be encumbered by the establishment of the KFA preserve. No trails or development will be allowed within 360 feet of the protected karst feature (occupied cave).

4. Development of future new trails, entrances, and other park amenities outside of the KFA preserve will not be affected by the establishment of the KFA preserve (see Attachment 1).

5. Any proposed future changes to the Panther Springs KFA preserve by the city, state, and/or the U.S. Fish and Wildlife Service will be presented to and reviewed by the Wilderness Oak Alliance and the Friends of Panther Springs Park before any future changes to the KFA are approved or implemented.

These conditions were formalized in a letter provided to the WOA and the Friends on June 26, 2018.

In addition, as a part of the establishment of the preserve, the SEP HCP has agreed to reserve 90 of the approximately 450 credits expected to be generated from the establishment of the preserve at Panther Springs Park for the exclusive use or assignment of the Parks Department. A memo has been provided to Parks staff for this purpose.

The Parks and Recreation Board formally endorsed the creation of the preserve at their July 23, 2018, meeting.

ISSUE:

Should the KFA preserve at Panther Springs Park be established, a portion of the revenues generated from the sale of credits would be used for annual funding, management, and monitoring of endangered species at the parks including:

- Biological survey
- Inspection/monitoring of fire ants and treatments, to include cricket counts
- Develop cave reclamation and restoration plan (potential removal of the trash from within the cave)
- Retrofitting of current cave grate to add an access door so that the cave can be accessed for annual monitoring and restoration activities

Additional revenues generated will be utilized for the protection of additional lands through the establishment of other preserves.

ALTERNATIVES:

The Coordinating Committee could choose to not move forward with creation of the preserve, however, doing

so would result in there being no public preserves in the plan yet.

RECOMMENDATION:

Staff recommends the establishment of the KFA preserve in Panther Springs Park.