

Control Number: 37778



Item Number: 150

Addendum StartPage: 0

SOAH DOCKET NO. 473-10-2461
PUC DOCKET NO. 37778

APPLICATION OF LCRA TRANSMIS-
SION SERVICES CORPORATION TO
AMEND ITS CERTIFICATE OF CON-
VENIENCE AND NECESSITY FOR THE
TWIN BUTTES TO MCCAMEY D 345-KV
CREZ TRANSMISSION LINE IN TOM
GREEN, IRION, AND SCHLEICHER
COUNTIES, TEXAS

BEFORE THE

STATE OFFICE OF

ADMINISTRATIVE HEARINGS

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PUBLIC UTILITY COMMISSION
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DIRECT TESTIMONY AND EXHIBITS OF H.R. WARDLAW III

ON BEHALF INTERVENOR WARDLAW BROTHERS RANCH, LTD.

1
2
3
4
5 **DIRECT TESTIMONY OF H.R. WARDLAW III**
6

7 **QUESTION:** State your name, age and place of residence.

8 **ANSWER:** H.R. Wardlaw III, 66 years of age, permanent resident in San Angelo, TX
9

10 **QUESTION:** What is your occupation?

11 **ANSWER:** I am a retired attorney whose only practice of law currently consists of dealing
12 with legal issues of various businesses which I own, including Wardlaw Brothers Ranch, LTD.
13 (WBR). I am currently engaged in ranching operations, usually working at the ranch 5 or 6 days
14 a week. Over the last 5 years our records show that I spent more than 125 days each year
15 working on brush control and wildlife conservation.
16

17 **QUESTION:** Where is the property of WBR located?

18 **ANSWER:** This rectangular shaped property of 10,000 acres is located ten (10) miles west
19 of San Angelo on the north and south sides of FM 853 and on the east side of Burma Road , in
20 Tom Green County, Texas. The south boundary of this property adjoins the Middle Concho
21 River on its north bank for a distance of approximately 2.3 miles.
22

23 **QUESTION:** What is the ownership history of this ranch?

24 **ANSWER:** This ranch was acquired more than 80 years ago by Dr. H.R. Wardlaw and his
25 wife, Blossie, and has been operated as a working sheep and cattle ranch ever since. I have
26 been an owner for more than 40 years. The ranch is currently owned as a Texas Family Limited
27 Partnership, with Warren P. Wardlaw and H.R. Wardlaw III being the General and Limited
28 Partners, equally.
29

30 **QUESTION:** What is the conservation and wildlife preservation history of the ranch?

1 **ANSWER:** In the 1930s, the first white tail deer in West Texas were brought to the ranch
2 from the King Ranch in south Texas. In the 1950s, programs were instituted to remove most of
3 the cedar and prickly pear. Also during the severe drought in the 1950s, the ranch was placed in
4 a State of Texas Wildlife Preserve to protect the wildlife. In the 1960s, the ranch was one of the
5 first ranches in West Texas to employ aerial spraying to combat the spread of mesquite trees
6 that sap precious water from West Texas lands. Participation in these brush control and wildlife
7 conservation programs has continued through today. Among the programs in which WBR has
8 participated are the State of Texas North Concho River Brush Control program, the State of
9 Texas Middle Concho Watershed Brush Control program, the Federal Riparian Buffer program,
10 the Natural Resources Conservation Service EQUIP program, NRCS Conservation Stewardship
11 Program and the Federal Rolling Plains Quail preservation program (with 5 current programs
12 now active).

13 In connection with such wildlife and brush control conservation programs, WBR received the
14 2003 Area Conservation Rancher of the Year Award from the Tom Green County Soil and Water
15 Conservation District. WBR's conservation operations have been the subject of articles in the
16 Texas A&M University Texas, Water Resources Institute magazine (*tx H20*), the *Ranch and Rural*
17 *Living* magazine and *Livestock Weekly*.

18 As a result of such continuous conservation activities for more than 50 years, WBR is widely
19 recognized as one of the finest and most highly improved ranches in the State of Texas.

20
21 **QUESTION:** What are the surface characteristics of the ranch, including its topography?

22 **ANSWER:** The lands of WBR have diverse topography and other surface characteristics. The
23 1,900 acre river pasture south of FM 853 consists primarily of rolling plains with many mature
24 pecan trees located along the Middle Concho River and along Brushy Creek, with a number of
25 large live oak trees also located along the creek. North of FM 853, the south half of the ranch
26 primarily consists of rolling plains interspersed with many miles of live oaks which line Brushy
27 Creek and its branches. The north half of the ranch located north of FM 853 consists of gently
28 rolling hills and heavy live oak cover.

29
30 **QUESTION:** Which of the LCRA TSC Proposed Transmission Line Alternate Routes and
31 segments in this proceeding should be selected by the Public Utility Commission?

32 **ANSWER:** The Public Utility Commission should select Route TM6 (as hereinafter modified
33 by two proposed modified line segments). Route TM6, as modified, is superior to the other

1 alternate routes in most or all of the important PUC criteria. The important criteria which
2 supports the selection of Route TM6, as modified, are as follows:

- 3 1. TM6 is much less costly.
- 4 2. TM6 is much shorter in length.
- 5 3. TM6 follows more highway ROW.
- 6 4. TM6 follows more transmission line ROW (T-429).
- 7 5. TM6 follows more property lines (except for TM8).
- 8 6. TM6 crosses the Middle Concho River at a dry river bed with an existing low water
9 crossing nearby; whereas, the other routes cross the Middle Concho River at points
10 where the normal flow of the river exists.
- 11 7. TM6 has less right angle or greater turns than TM3, TM4, TM5 and TM7.

12
13 **QUESTION:** Where are the two proposed modified line segments located that are referred to
14 in the previous answer?

15 **ANSWER:**

16
17 1. Line segment a13 can be improved on its south and middle portions by moving such
18 segment approximately 500 ft. to the west from and parallel to FM 2335 (moves more
19 than 500 ft. away from the habitable structures located on the east side of FM 2335).
20 This proposed modified line would begin at the south boundary line of the M.D. Bryant
21 Estate and travel north to US Hwy 67. At US Hwy 67 this proposed modified line
22 segment would turn in a northeasterly direction through the Joseph Lee Collins tract
23 back to existing line segment a13.

24
25 2. Line segment a13 can be improved on its north portion by turning the proposed
26 modified line segment to the east at the most westerly northwest corner of the J. Stokes
27 Tract a13-003 and thereafter traveling east along the north line of the said J. Stokes
28 Tract a13-003 to a point in the east line of said Tract for a distance of approximately
29 3,750 ft. Thereafter, the proposed modified line segment would turn north along the
30 east line of Tract a13-003, also along the east line of Surveys 830 and 871 (Slaughter
31 Interests, LTD Tract a7-007 and an unnumbered tract) to a point where line segment a7
32 intersects the east line of Tract a7-007 for a distance of approximately 11,000 ft. See
33 Exhibit 1 with map depicting the proposed modified line segment (a13A) marked in
34 green attached to this testimony.

35
36
37
38 **QUESTION:** How would Route TM6 be improved by the two proposed modified line
39 segments referred to in the previous question?

1
2 **ANSWER:** Moving line segment a13 at least 500 ft. west of FM 2335 would cause this line
3 segment to be more than 500 ft from all habitable structures located on the east side of
4 FM 2335.

5
6 The second proposed modified line segment (a13A) would provide the following important
7 improvements to the line segment a13 in that it:

- 8 1. Avoids the Slaughter headquarters house with Historic Marker (habitable
9 structure #4 LCRA map Sheet 1 of 4).
- 10 2. Avoids traveling through the middle of the 800 acre Slaughter river tract south of
11 the Middle Concho River and reduces landowner damages.
- 12 3. Travels along the east property line of Slaughter lands, north and south of the
13 Middle Concho River, for a distance of approximately 11,000 ft.
- 14 4. Crosses the dry Middle Concho River at a point below and east of the ending
15 point of its normal flow and at a point near an existing low water crossing.
- 16 5. Avoids crossing the Middle Concho River at its deepest and widest point
17 designated in line segment a8 of LCRA Preferred Route TM5.
- 18 6. Travels approximately 1.9 miles more along property lines north of US Hwy 67
19 than LCRA TSC line segment a13.
- 20 7. Causes much less damage to the environment and ecology in the area of the
21 Middle Concho River.
- 22 8. Stays completely along boundary lines of the landowners.

23
24 **QUESTION:** Are you personally familiar with the lands crossed by Routes TM5, TM6 and TM8
25 and their locations and boundary lines and if so, how well do these 3 lines utilize property
26 lines and the existing 138 KV transmission line (T-429)?

27
28 **ANSWER:** Yes, I have been for many years personally familiar with all of the ranches and
29 properties located between the Twin Buttes Station and the north bank of Dove Creek and with
30 their locations and boundaries. I am not generally familiar with many of the ranches and
31 properties located south of Dove Creek.

32
33 Beginning at FM 853 at line segment a8 of Route TM5 and continuing southerly with line
34 segments a12 and a14 to the north bank of Dove Creek, Route TM5 is a dismal failure in that it
35 only follows property lines for an approximate distance of 1 mile (Roach-Caldwell and Roach-
36 M.D. Bryant Estate property lines), out of a total distance of approximately 12.4 miles.

37
38 Route TM6, between FM 853 and Dove Creek, utilizes approximately 6.8 miles of property
39 lines, within an additional approximate 2.7 miles of property lines utilized if intervenor's
40 proposed modified line segment a13A, along Stokes north line (tract a13-003) and Slaughter
41 east line (Surveys 830 and 871 (a7-007), is utilized. Route TM6 also utilizes an additional
42 approximate 2.8 miles of the existing 138 KV transmission line (T-429 on line segment a7)
43 that TM 5 does not use.

1 Route TM 8, between FM 853 and Dove Creek, utilizes approximately 8.1 miles of property
2 lines.

3
4 In summary, between FM 853 and Dove Creek, property lines and T-429, are utilized for a
5 distance of 1 mile for TM5 Preferred Route; 9.6 miles for Route TM6, plus an additional 2.8
6 miles if proposed modified route a13A is used; and 8.1 miles for Route TM8.

7
8 From the Twin Buttes Station to FM 853, Route TM5, line segment a6 utilizes .8 mile of
9 property line along the south line tract a5-004 (Doss) and 1 mile of property line along the
10 west side of tract a7-001 (Weatherby). However, the location of these lines are NOT beneficial
11 to the respective landowners, but are detrimental to them because they create an additional
12 line on each property (in addition to T-429) and another line across the fence. It would be
13 preferable for the new transmission line to follow the existing 138 KV line (T-429) across these
14 2 properties.

15
16
17 **QUESTION:** What objections does WBR have to any of the LCRA TSC alternate routes
18 proposed in this proceeding that are based upon a possible adverse affect on the property of
19 WBR?

20
21 **ANSWER:** WBR has objections to some of the LCRA TSC proposed routes based on the
22 following adverse effects on its property:

- 23
24 1. Line segment a4 of Routes TM1 and TM2 travels over hills that appear to have
25 commercial limestone mining potential similar to the nearby Turner Pit owned and
26 operated by CSA Materials. Line segment a4 crosses hills that have potential for wind
27 turbine development. Line segment a4 would adversely impact the airstrip of WBR if
28 the segment is moved further to the south. Line segment a4 travels more than 7 miles
29 across WBR lands including more than 3 miles along highly improved lands east of
30 the Burma Road. The rangelands on the west side of the Burma Road are
31 unmaintained and heavily infested with brush, have an existing power line running
32 the entire length and are a much better location for line segment a4.
- 33
34 2. Line segment a8 of Routes TM3, TM4, TM5 and TM7 crosses the Middle Concho
35 River at a bend in the river at its deepest point with one of the largest and thickest
36 Pecan tree mott on the river and with no low water crossing within a mile. The reason
37 that the river at this point is deep and wide is that a dam nearby and downstream
38 backs up the normal flow of the river. A power line crossing the Middle Concho
39 River at this point would have serious environmental and ecological consequences,
40 including problems with the endangered Concho mussel referenced in the June 2,
41 2009 Texas Parks and Wildlife letter to Mr. Derek Green of PBS&J. This poor
42 location for a river crossing is magnified by the fact that the LCRA TSC can cross the
43 dry river bed of the Middle Concho River below the end of its normal flow, on line
44 segment a13. See Exhibit 2 for photos of the dam and photos of the Middle Concho
45 River at and near the proposed crossing point for line segment a8 taken in 2008.

- 1
- 2 3. WBR lands along the Middle Concho River crossed by line segment a8 are fenced to
- 3 prevent any disturbance of the river bank area and to preserve the natural state of the
- 4 river banks. These fenced areas are part of the Federal Riparian Buffer Program in
- 5 which WBR on the north side of the river and Blake L. Duncan on the south side of
- 6 the river are participants. See Exhibit 3 for a copy of the Riparian Buffer Program
- 7 maps for WBR and Duncan.
- 8
- 9 4. WBR is one of only a few ranches in the area selected to participate in the U.S.
- 10 Department of Agriculture Rolling Plains Quail Program designed to arrest the severe
- 11 decline of bobwhite quail in the United States in the State of Texas. WBR's lands in
- 12 the program (1,500 acres in its river pasture), through which line segment a8 would
- 13 travel, would be adversely affected by the clearing done in connection with the
- 14 transmission line ROW. The ROW clearing would cause the destruction of quail
- 15 habitat including nesting and loafing cover and the loss of quail feed in the easement
- 16 area. Such ROW clearing is not only detrimental but antithetical to the survival of
- 17 bobwhite quail. See Exhibit 4 for a copy of the USDA Rolling Plains contract. See
- 18 Exhibit 5 for a copy of a recent article in the Austin American Statesman concerning
- 19 the severe decline of the bobwhite quail population in the United States.
- 20
- 21 5. The highest and best use of the 1,900 acre river pasture of WBR, south of FM 853, is
- 22 for river front subdivision. This tract has approximately 2.3 miles of river front on the
- 23 Middle Concho River and is located only 10 miles from San Angelo. The 2.5 miles L-
- 24 shaped segment, a8 will severely damage the market value of this tract (in a 7 figure
- 25 range) in the opinion of the MAI Real Estate Appraiser employed by WBR. It is
- 26 important to note that WBR has ingress and egress to its 1,900 acre river tract only
- 27 through its north and west sides. Both of these sides would be mostly traversed and
- 28 sealed off by L-shaped line segment a8 so that a person entering this tract would be
- 29 required to travel under the transmission lines and across the ROW easement.
- 30
- 31 6. WBR strongly makes the point that if a line segment or route must turn somewhere,
- 32 the turn should NEVER be made at a point which seals off a river tract, both from a
- 33 point of fairness and a point of increased cost to the rate payers. The location and L-
- 34 shaped configuration of line segment a8 effectively places TWO LINES on the same
- 35 tract, with one line being through the middle of the tract, creating another question of
- 36 fairness to the landowner.
- 37
- 38

39 **QUESTION:** What objections does WBR have to any of the LCRA TSC alternate routes

40 proposed in this proceeding that are based upon a possible adverse affect on the community in

41 general?

42

43

44 **ANSWER:** The location of the LCRA TSC Preferred Route TM5 line segment a8 would have

45 2 detrimental affects upon the community in general, as follows:

46

- 1 1. By crossing the Middle Concho River at this location, according to the June 2, 2009
2 Texas Parks and Wildlife letter there could be serious environmental and ecological
3 consequences to the area, including the endangered Concho mussel which produces
4 Concho Pearls in one of the few freshwater pearl locations in the United States. San
5 Angelo has had for more than 40 years a substantial jewelry trade revolving around
6 the Concho Pearl.
7
8 2. Blake L. Duncan operates a hunting lodge (habitable structure #3 on LCRA map
9 Sheet 1 of 4) immediately south of the Middle Concho River, which is within 500 ft.
10 of line segment a8. Most of his hunters (almost 200 annually) are from out of state
11 and travel to San Angelo by air. The Adobe Hunting Lodge operations of Mr. Duncan
12 generate substantial revenues for the City of San Angelo and the area ranches where
13 the hunting occurs. The operations of Adobe Hunting Lodge would clearly be
14 affected by the proximity of a transmission line which is part of Preferred Route TM5
15 and Routes TM3, TM4 and TM7.
16

17 **QUESTION:** Does this conclude your testimony?

18 **ANSWER:** Yes, it does.
19
20

21 STATE OF TEXAS

22 COUNTY OF TOM GREEN

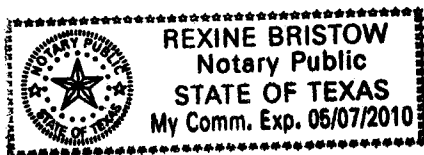
23 BEFORE ME this day appeared, H.R. Wardlaw III, who, being duly deposed upon his oath, stated as follows:

24 My name is H.R. Wardlaw III. I am over the age of eighteen (18) and fully competent to give this affidavit.

25 The foregoing testimony (and any exhibits) offered by me are true and correct, and any opinions contained in this
26 testimony are, to the best of my knowledge and belief, accurate, true and correct.
27


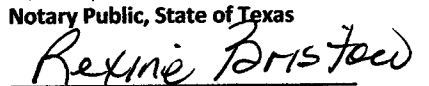
28 
29 H.R. Wardlaw III
30

31 SWORN TO AND SUBSCRIBED before me this 12 day of March, 2010.
32



34 My Commission Expires:
35
36
37
38

39 5-7-10
40
41

38 
39 Notary Public, State of Texas
40 
41 Printed Name of Notary

12

a13A

SEE PARCEL
DETAIL MAP 2.1

A13

SEE PARCEL
DETAIL MAP 2.2

A15

A14

SEE PARCEL
DETAIL MAP 2.3

EXHIBIT 1

A8

A9

A1-000

SURVEY

871

A13

A8

a13A

SURVEY

830

A13-000

EXHIBIT 2

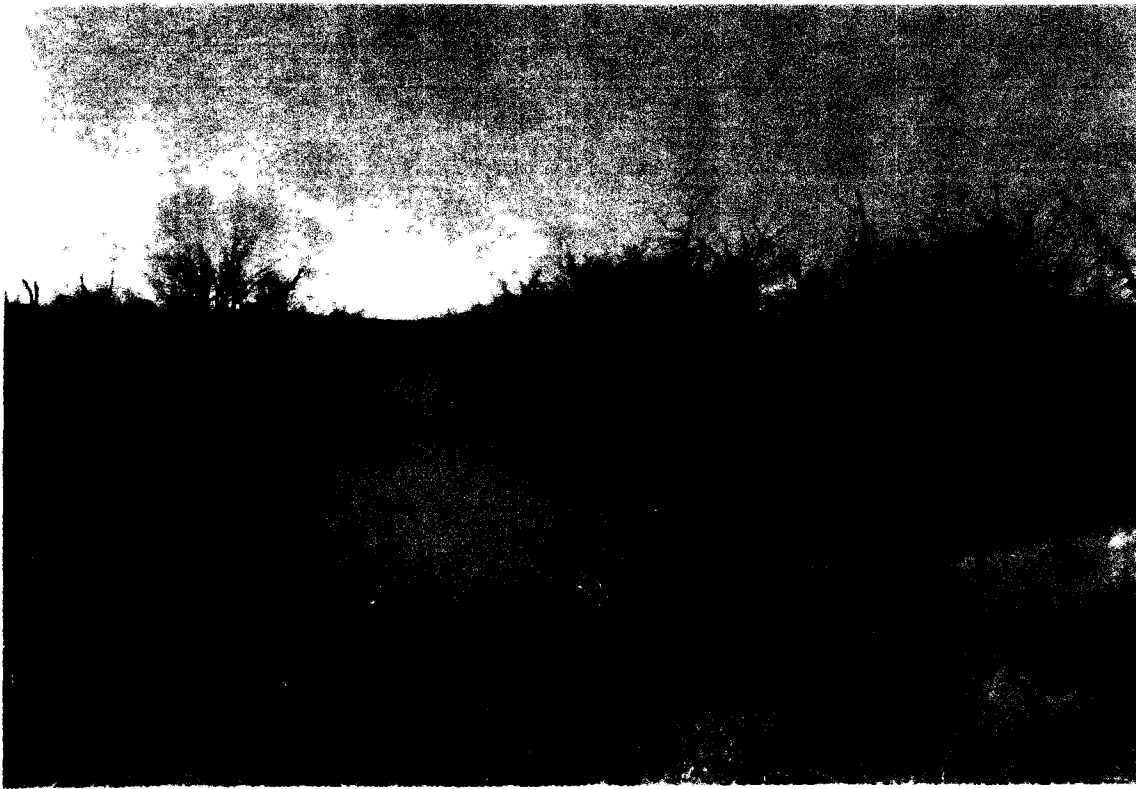


Top Photo: Dam across Middle Concho River, below line segment a8
of LCRA TSC Preferred Route5, between Duncan and WBR

Bottom Photo: Middle Concho River backed up above dam
below line segment a8 river crossing



EXHIBIT 2



**Bend of Middle Concho River at the river crossing of line segment a8
of LCRA TSC Preferred Route 5**

WARDLAW RANCH
Tom Green SWCD #248
Date: 06/23/2003

EXHIBIT 3

Conserva



Conservation Plan Map

BLAKE L. DUNCAN

Tom Green SWCD #248

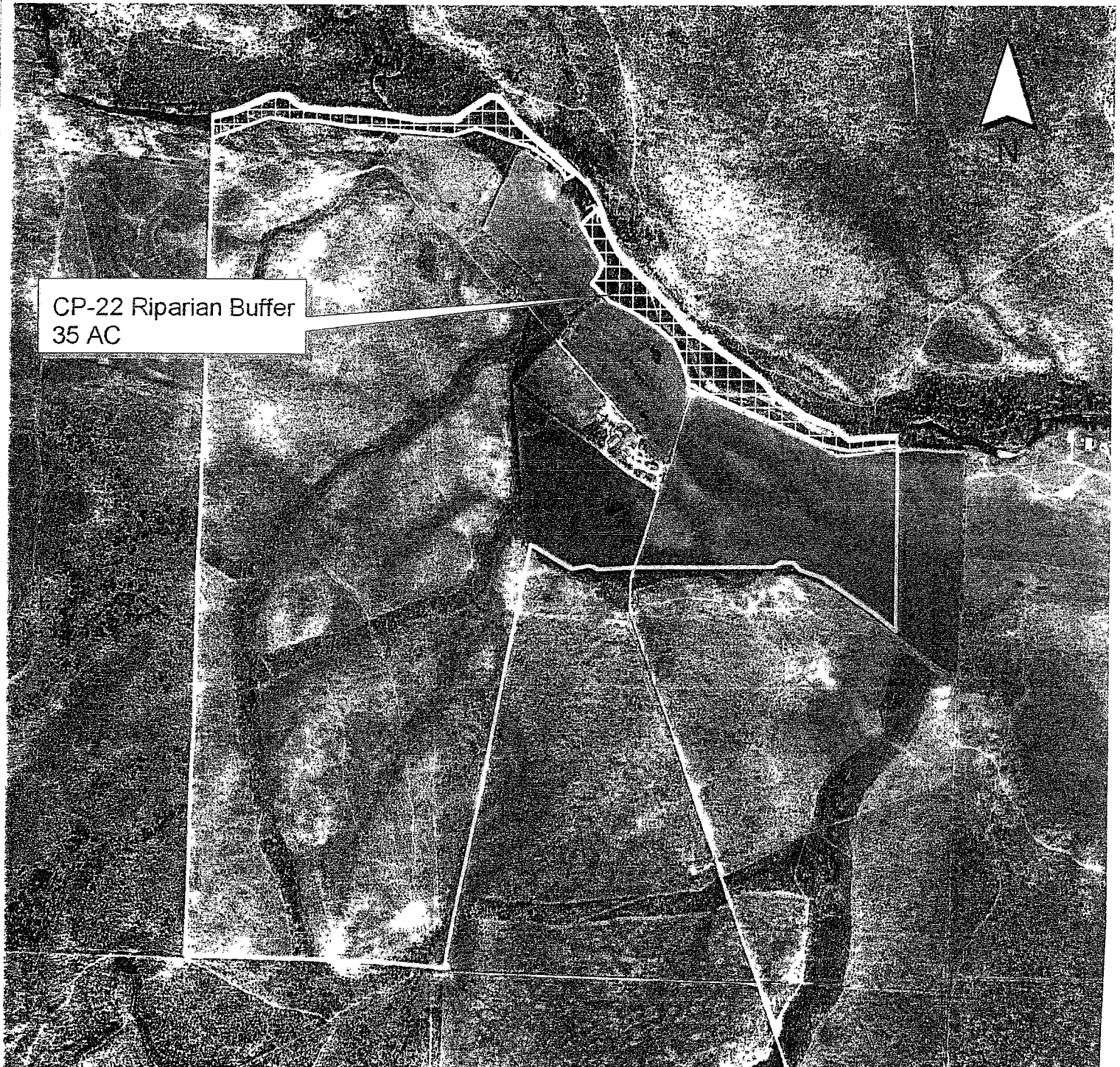
Date: 06/13/2003

San Angelo Service Center

USDA - NRCS

Assisted by Chad Ellis

EXHIBIT 3



Legend

Planned Land Units

Buffer2.shp

buffer



Polygon

concho

2000

0

2000

4000 Feet



CONSERVATION PLAN OR SCHEDULE OF OPERATIONS

NRCS-CPA-1155
OMB 0578-0013 Expires 9/30/09

PARTICIPANT WARDLAW BROTHERS RANCH	COUNTY AND STATE TOM GREEN County, TX	PROGRAM AND CONTRACT NUMBER EQIP 2002 7474420772D	SUBACCOUNT Rolling Plains Quail 07
LAND UNITS OR LEGAL DESCRIPTION Farm:2926 Tract(s):2177.		WATERSHED North Concho	ACRES 1535
		EXPIRATION DATE 9/30/2012	

Contract Item 1: PRESCRIBED GRAZING-528(528)

Practice Lifespan: 5 years

Status: Planned 2008

Existing Bobwhite quail habitat is inadequate due to less than 250 potential nesting sites of mid and tall warm-season bunch grasses per acre. Adequate nesting is defined as at least 500 potential nest sites per acre. Pasture deferment for the enrolled acreage is required. The first growing season rest will be between April 1 and November 15, 2007. The second growing season rest will be between April 1 and November 15, 2008. Dormant season grazing after November 15th is permitted if determined on the NRCS prescribed grazing plan. The prescribed grazing incentive of \$5 per enrolled acre will be paid at the end of each of these rest periods. In the 5th year of the program (2011) landowners are eligible for an additional one time payment of \$5 per enrolled acre for the enrolled acreage if they have successfully carried out all of the grazing management provisions AND if they have followed an NRCS prescribed grazing plan AND a TPWD approved wildlife plan. THIS IS A 6 YEAR PLAN THAT LANDOWNERS AGREE TO CARRY OUT PRESCRIBED GRAZING THAT FAVORS QUAIL. Offered acreage must be fenced and watered to carry out prescribed grazing. Offered acreage will be restricted from the use of Picloram (Tordon 22k or Summit) for the duration of the 6 year contract.

Fields:

Tract: 2177 Fields: 14, 15;

Contract Item	Planned Conservation Treatment	Planned Amount	Unit Cost	Cost Share Rate/Method	COMPLETION SCHEDULE AND ESTIMATED COST-SHARE OR PAYMENT BY YEAR				
					2008	2009	2010	2011	
1	PRESCRIBED GRAZING-528(528)	1535 ac			7,675				
1a	Prescribed Grazing Incentive	1535 ac.	\$5,0000/ ac.	FR1	7,675				

Notes: 'Flat rates are the incentive payment amounts determined necessary to encourage adoption of conservation practices and are not based on cost share rates.

Contract Item 2: PRESCRIBED GRAZING-528(528)

Practice Lifespan: 5 years

Status: Planned 2009

Existing Bobwhite quail habitat is inadequate due to less than 250 potential nesting sites of mid and tall warm-season bunch grasses per acre. Adequate nesting is defined as at least 500 potential nest sites per acre. Pasture deferment for the enrolled acreage is required. The first growing season rest will be between April 1 and November 15, 2007. The second growing season rest will be between April 1 and November 15, 2008. Dormant season grazing after November 15th is permitted if determined on the NRCS prescribed grazing plan. The prescribed grazing incentive of \$5 per enrolled acre will be paid at the end of each of these rest periods. In the 5th year of the program (2011) landowners are eligible for an additional one time payment of \$5 per enrolled acre for the enrolled acreage if they have successfully carried out all of the grazing management provisions AND if they have followed an NRCS prescribed grazing plan AND a TPWD approved wildlife plan. THIS IS A 6 YEAR PLAN THAT LANDOWNERS AGREE TO CARRY OUT PRESCRIBED GRAZING THAT FAVORS QUAIL. Offered acreage must be fenced and watered to carry out prescribed grazing. Offered acreage will be restricted from the use of Picloram (Tordon 22k or Summit) for the duration of the 6 year contract.

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Contract Item	Planned Conservation Treatment	Planned Amount	Unit Cost	Cost Share Rate/Method	COMPLETION SCHEDULE AND ESTIMATED COST-SHARE OR PAYMENT BY YEAR				
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2a	Prescribed Grazing Incentive	1535 ac.	\$5,0000/ ac.	FR1	7,675				

Notes: 'Flat rates are the incentive payment amounts determined necessary to encourage adoption of conservation practices and are not based on cost share rates.

EXHIBIT 4

Survey: Texas hunters concerned about quail population

Bad times for state's quail, turkey could be just around bend

North Texas dove hunters would like a second season late in the year. Hunters in the south want to keep the second season they have. And quail hunters would support lower bag limits.

"So what's your point?" you might ask. The point is these are results from a recently completed game bird hunter survey conducted by the state and Texas Parks and Wildlife, and this information will be used to develop wildlife conservation and management plans in the years ahead.

How much weight the survey will have on state decision making depends, in part, on federal government and the weather. The feds control migratory bird hunting, and Texas rainfall levels affect how and where quail and wild turkeys breed and re-populate.

"We have periodically conducted mall surveys to test where our various hunter groups stand on issues being informally or formally discussed," said Vernon Bevell, program director for small game at TPWD. Bevell presented the survey results to Parks and Wildlife commissioners in late January.

"Clearly, our goal is to seek as much feedback as we can get (from hunters and advisory committees) and see where that logically takes us over the next one to three regulatory change cycles," Bevell said.

Bevell is retiring at the end of March, so he won't be around to be involved in any changes that might result from hunter attitudes toward season lengths and bag limits. But some of the survey results are eye-opening in the things that hunters said about their game bird of choice. For instance:

■ Fifty-six percent of



Mike Leggett AMERICAN-STATSMAN

Working bird dogs such as these haven't had much to do in Texas in the last couple of years because of poor quail production. The Texas



MIKE LEGGETT

North Zone dove hunters favored some kind of late season hunting segment. That seems surprising since most of the birds typically have left North Texas by Christmas, but could reflect warmer temperatures, later migration flights. It also might signal boredom and a desire to do something.

■ Virtually 100 percent of South Zone dove hunters want their late season segment, which currently opens on Dec. 26 and runs into mid-January. The only

disagreement seemed to be just how long the late season should run.

■ Quail hunters are concerned about the future of the bird and 86 percent of those surveyed said they had joined some kind of conservation organization. They also said they would support smaller bag limits and even closed seasons in counties with marginal populations.

The increasingly desperate plight of wild bobwhite quail in Texas — which along with Oklahoma is the final U.S. battleground for saving the little birds — obviously has hunters thinking about the future, and that's good. Some 58 percent of those surveyed said closing seasons in counties with troubled populations would be good. And a surprising 87 percent of hunters said

Parks and Wildlife Department is researching hunter attitudes on ways to improve all kinds of bird hunting in the state.

they could be happy with daily quail bag limits of 12 or fewer birds, rather than the current statewide limit of 15 quail per day. Of course, if nobody kills 15 quail per day, it doesn't really matter what the limit is. You can't kill them if you can't find them and quail, mostly because of an extended drought, are really hard to find in Texas right now.

We've moved into a wet period and that means too many of us tend to forget that bad times for quail and turkeys could be just around the corner. "Both quail and turkeys need two good years of reproduction this spring and next," Bevell said. "If that happens, TPWD needs to take that into account during regulatory discussions, but if it does not happen because we slip back into hot dry

times again, I suspect many of our conservation-minded bird hunters will start asking what we are planning to do. I know some have suggested as much to me already."

Actually, maybe waiting for the next drought is the wrong approach to take. We seem to be headed for good production in quail and turkeys this year, so perhaps TPWD should move ahead of that curve, especially in terms of reducing bag limits, especially for quail.

Bag limits always have been seen as a non-factor in terms of quail mortality. The old saw says that 80 percent of them die every year no matter what. But what if we could save a few by cutting the limit to 12 or even 10 birds? The hunters surveyed said they would be amenable to

OUTDOORS ■ NOTES

Hunters spend big on international trips

Southwick Associates, which surveys hunters and anglers, says a half million U.S. hunters spent \$3.6 billion on international trips during the last three years.

Southwick Associates, which was founded in 1989, says a current survey shows hunters spent an average of \$6,718 during each trip during this period.

Southwick, which is headquartered in Florida, reports that Canada was the most popular destination and that Africa attracted about a quarter of those surveyed.

Mexico attracted 9 percent of the hunters and South America 7.6 percent.

Cost of the hunts and travel, as well as regulations on gun imports were cited as the most common barriers to international hunting travel.

Upcoming events

Saturday, Feb. 13

Young Life Austin family night at Dell Diamond, 4:30-7:30 p.m. Speaker: David Morris on deer hunting. Family events available. See www.deertournament.com or call (512) 265-8345.

Wednesday, March 3

Central Texas Safari Club social, 6:30 p.m. at Steiner Ranch Steak House, 5424 Steiner Ranch Blvd. Contact Brian Hoover (512) 454-4653 or Leann Collins (512) 773-5674.

— Mike Leggett

that change, but we can't test the theory without doing it when there are plenty of quail. We know they're disappearing in Texas, but we don't really know why. We know they've been virtually eliminated in the eastern states, but we don't really know why. We know quail could be doomed, if we don't do something. So let's do something. mleggett@statesman.com