



City of San Antonio

Agenda Memorandum

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Agenda Item Number: 3

Agenda Date: December 14, 2023

In Control: Audit Committee

DEPARTMENT: Office of the City Auditor

DEPARTMENT HEAD: Kevin Barthold

COUNCIL DISTRICTS IMPACTED: Citywide

SUBJECT:

Acceptance of the Office of the City Auditor Report AU23-008 Audit of DSD Southern Edwards Habitat Conservation Plan (SEP-HCP).

SUMMARY:

Determine if the Southern Edwards Plateau Habitat Conservation Plan (SEP-HCP) is in compliance with habitat conservation for endangered species.

BACKGROUND INFORMATION:

Background

The SEP-HCP is an interlocal plan to conserve endangered species in coordination with Bexar County. In December 2015, the U.S. Fish and Wildlife Service (USFWS) approved the Plan and in January 2016, a joint 30-year Incidental Take Permit was issued. This permit authorizes a limited amount of incidental taking of nine federally listed endangered species within the

jurisdictions of Bexar County and surrounding counties. The SEP-HCP is a voluntary, alternative method of achieving compliance with the Endangered Species Act (ESA). Participating in the Plan helps promote regional conservation, streamlines endangered species permitting, and acts as mitigation insurance for development projects.

Application fees are \$2,500 and mitigation fees are dependent on the number of acres covered and/or preservation credits purchased. The program has approved and enrolled 36 applications since inception. During FY 2023, six enrollments were completed, and fees received were approximately \$149,000.

DSD SEP-HCP and Fiscal staff handle the program's day-to-day activities. Additionally, a biologist has been engaged to obtain biological information for each application and prepare an annual report for the USFWS. Furthermore, there is a Coordinating Committee that carries out essential functions such as final application and annual report approval. Finally, DSD Inspectors monitor development projects and inform SEP-HCP staff if there are any issues with non-compliance.

Scope & Methodology

The audit scope included the compliance, expense allowability, applications, and reporting for the SEP-HCP for fiscal years 2022 and 2023.

Conclusions

The SEP-HCP is in compliance with the USFWS conservation requirements for endangered species. Annual reports are presented to the Coordinating Committee for proper consideration and approval. SEP-HCP applications are properly reviewed, approved, and enrolled requirements are completed. Additionally, application and mitigation fees are correct and reconcile. Finally, program expenses are allowable and adequately supported.

We make no recommendations to DSD management; consequently, no management responses are required.

ISSUE:

This item is presented for acceptance by the Audit Committee.

FISCAL IMPACT:

NA

ALTERNATIVES:

NA

RECOMMENDATION:

Staff recommends acceptance of this report.