



November 13, 2020

Greetings, residents of Woods of Greenshores:

We have heard from several of our neighbors recently about the fence being installed along the boundaries of Woods of Greenshores Phase 2. This is a project managed by Travis County Natural Resources on property we purchased for protection as part of the Balcones Canyonlands Preserve (BCP). We fence BCP lands to prevent trespassing or other common illegal activity such as dumping, which helps protect the preserve's important habitat.

Staff from Travis County Natural Resources manages the contractors' work to ensure that it is done with environmental sensitivity. The work is conducted during a window from September through February to avoid disturbing the endangered golden-cheeked warbler, which is wintering in Mexico and Central America during this time. We monitor projects to minimize damage, protect large trees, and clear the least amount of vegetation to get the job done.

The fencing crew is clearing juniper trees (a.k.a. cedars) and then mulching them onsite with a skid steer attachment. Very few, if any, oaks are removed during this clearing process. Onsite broadcasting of the mulched material in sensitive areas protects the "critical root zone" of heritage trees. The time spent with equipment in these areas is limited and the level of impact is minimal in terms of soil compaction. Many miles of fencing have been constructed in this manner along BCP tract boundaries with no signs of tree mortality.

In response to a citizen's request on November 10th, the City of Austin Development Services Department conducted a site inspection on November 12th. The inspector stated:

*"I have visited the site and seen the clearing taking place. I spoke with _____ * who works for Hill Country Fence. They have been hired by Travis County to erect a fence along their property line. He said they are clearing a path 8 feet wide and have been instructed to not cut any trees over 8" in diameter. When asked, he said if they reach a larger tree, they go around it. All cutting is being done by hand and they are mulching what they cut. I saw one worker with a chainsaw. I walked the line for a ways and saw no evidence of larger trees being cut down. The vast majority of cut trees were cedars. No evidence of violation was found."*

We hope this addresses any concerns you may have about the work being done and its impacts on overall forest health.

* name redacted to protect the employee's privacy

Please be advised that Travis County is in the process of acquiring the cul-de-sac buildouts at the end of Aemilian Way and Arion Circle. Once completed, a fence matching the existing neighborhood fencing will be installed in that area.

We know that some residents have accessed Emma Long Park through the Woods of Greenshores Phase 2 property in the past. While we understand this is a convenient way to reach Emma Long Park, we ask that you observe the BCP access restrictions and please use authorized park entrances instead. While we certainly do not want things to reach this level, please be aware that going through the BCP is considered to be illegal trespassing, and legal action can be taken if these guidelines are not followed.

To give you some background, Travis County Natural Resources manages approximately 12,300 acres of the BCP to comply with the Balcones Canyonlands Conservation Plan and the terms of an endangered species take permit issued by the U. S. Fish and Wildlife Service. This permit required the creation of the BCP to protect eight endangered species and 27 species of concern in exchange for allowing development in endangered species habitat in western Travis County. The eight protected species identified in the permit are the golden-cheeked warbler, the recently delisted black-capped vireo, and six karst invertebrates that live in caves. Other species protected on the preserve include the threatened Jollyville Plateau salamander and several rare plants. By protecting the most vulnerable species – the first to become endangered or threatened – we can help protect the entire ecosystem of the Balcones Canyonlands, which is home to many species found nowhere else on earth.

For more information about the Balcones Canyonlands Preserve, public access areas, educational programs, or volunteer opportunities on the preserve, check out www.traviscountytx.gov/bcp and www.austintexas.gov/BCPstory.

If you have concerns or questions that were not addressed in this letter, please feel free to contact Travis Clark, Tract Manager (travis.clark@traviscountytx.gov) or Linda Laack, Natural Resources Field Supervisor (linda.laack@traviscountytx.gov). We hope you have a peaceful and safe holiday season.



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