

A Successful Golden-cheeked Warbler Conservation Bank in Central Texas, Hickory Pass Ranch

By:

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aci consulting



Discussion Topics

- Introduce my background
- Golden-cheeked warbler (GCW) natural history
- Central Texas regional growth
- Species conservation land
 - Balcones Canyonlands Nat. Wildlife Refuge (BCNWR)
 - Balcones Canyonlands Conservation Plan (BCCP)
 - Hickory Pass Ranch



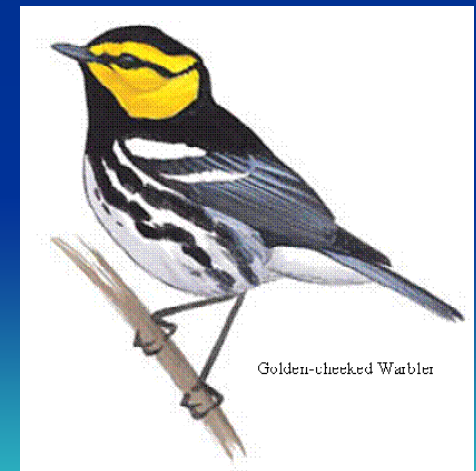
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- Environmental consulting firm based in Austin, Texas
- Kevin Ramberg, Senior Biologist, permitted by USFWS to survey GCW
- Hickory Pass Ranch Scientific Advisory Board



Golden-cheeked Warbler

- *Dendroica chrysoparia*
- Migratory warbler range (Southern Mexico-Texas)
- Seasonal occupation in Texas (March-June)
- Size: 4.5-5 inches & wingspan: 8 inches
- Bright golden-yellow cheek & distinct black eyeline
- Listed Endangered May 4, 1990 [55 FR 18844]



Golden-cheeked Warbler

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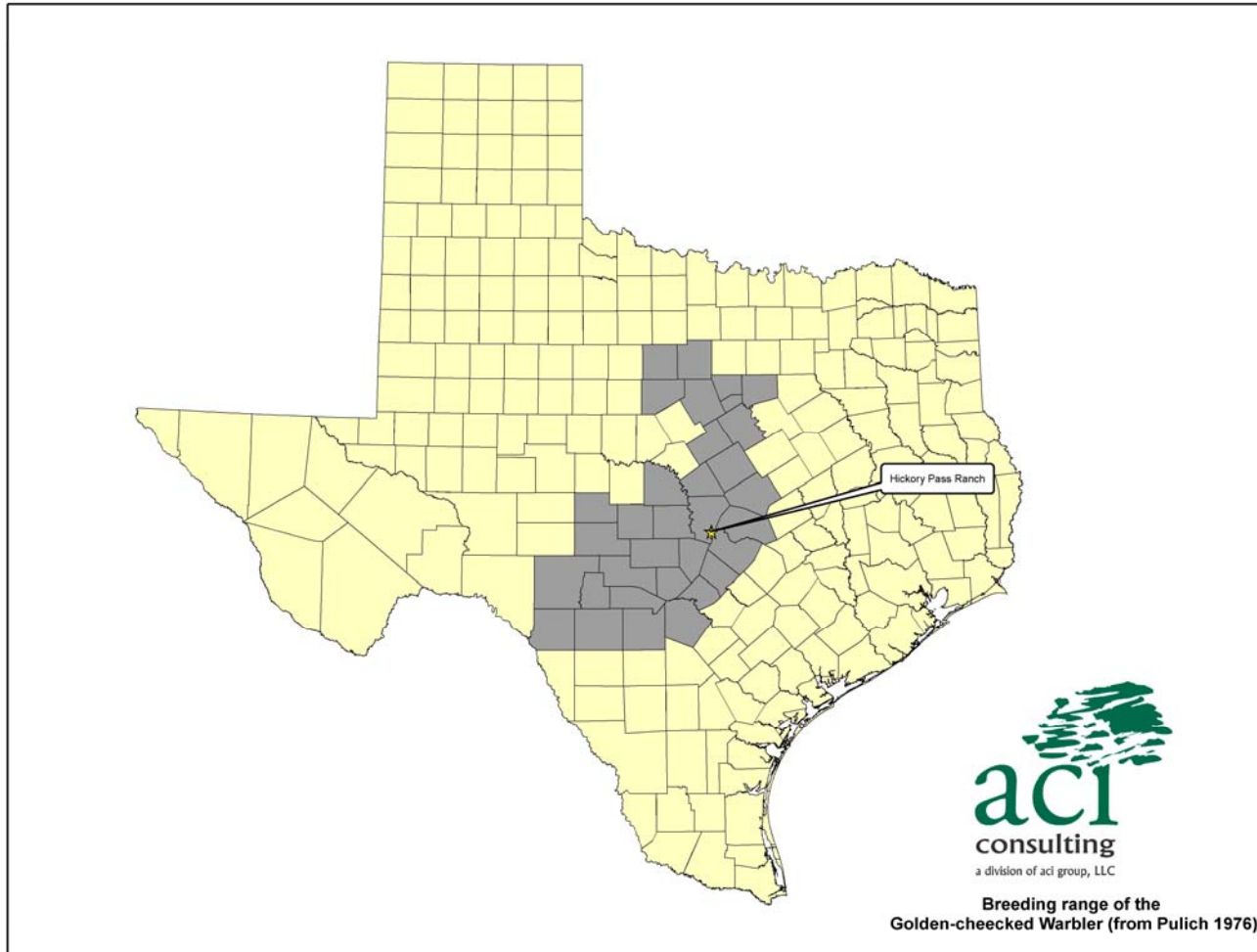
GCW Threats

GCW Recovery Plan (USFWS 1992)

- Primary-Habitat loss & fragmentation
- Loss of winter & migratory habitat
- Destruction of oaks- oak wilt & over browsing
- Nest parasitism by brown-headed cowbird



GCW Breeding Range



GCW Habitat

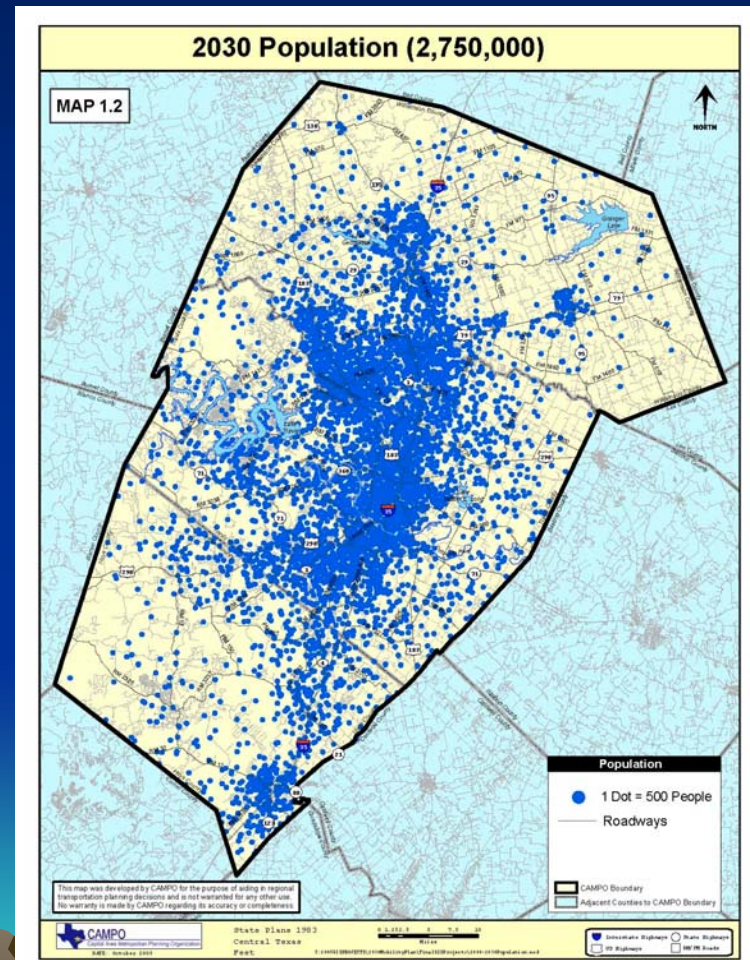
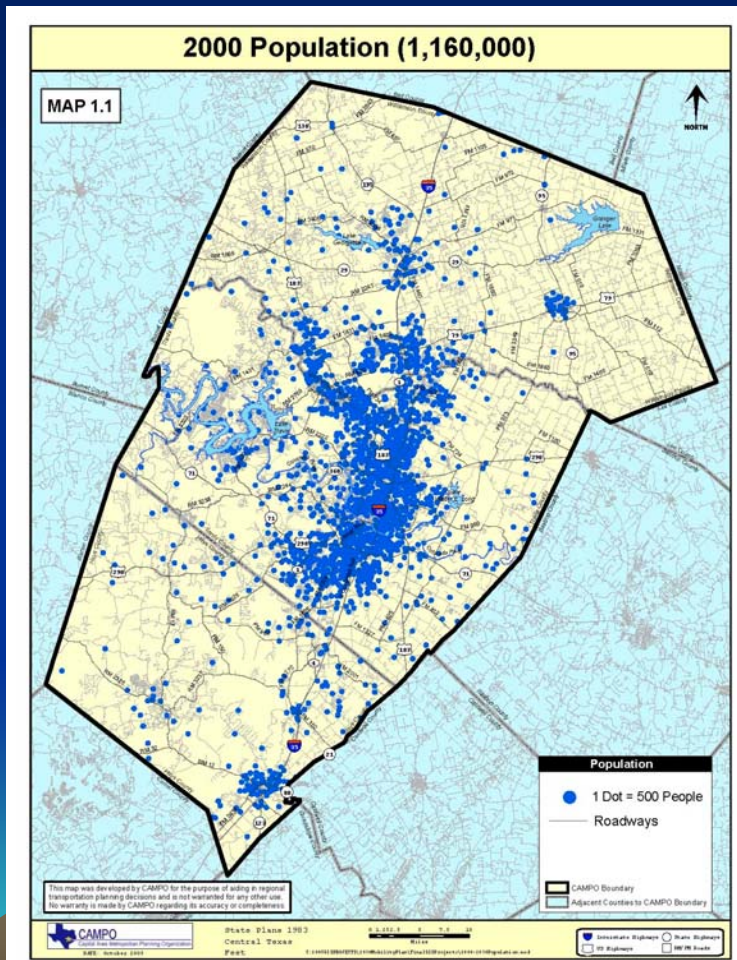
- Mixed mature Ashe juniper / deciduous woodland
- Canopy cover (50-100%) (Aldredge et al. 2002)
- Higher vegetative species diversity
- Equates to hill country canyonlands (west of IH-35 corridor)
- Patch sizes vary dependent on quality of habitat some studies show 12 acres associated with other optimal habitat to 56 acres (Arnold et al. 1996)



Typical GCW Habitat



Central Texas Population Growth (CAMPO 2005)

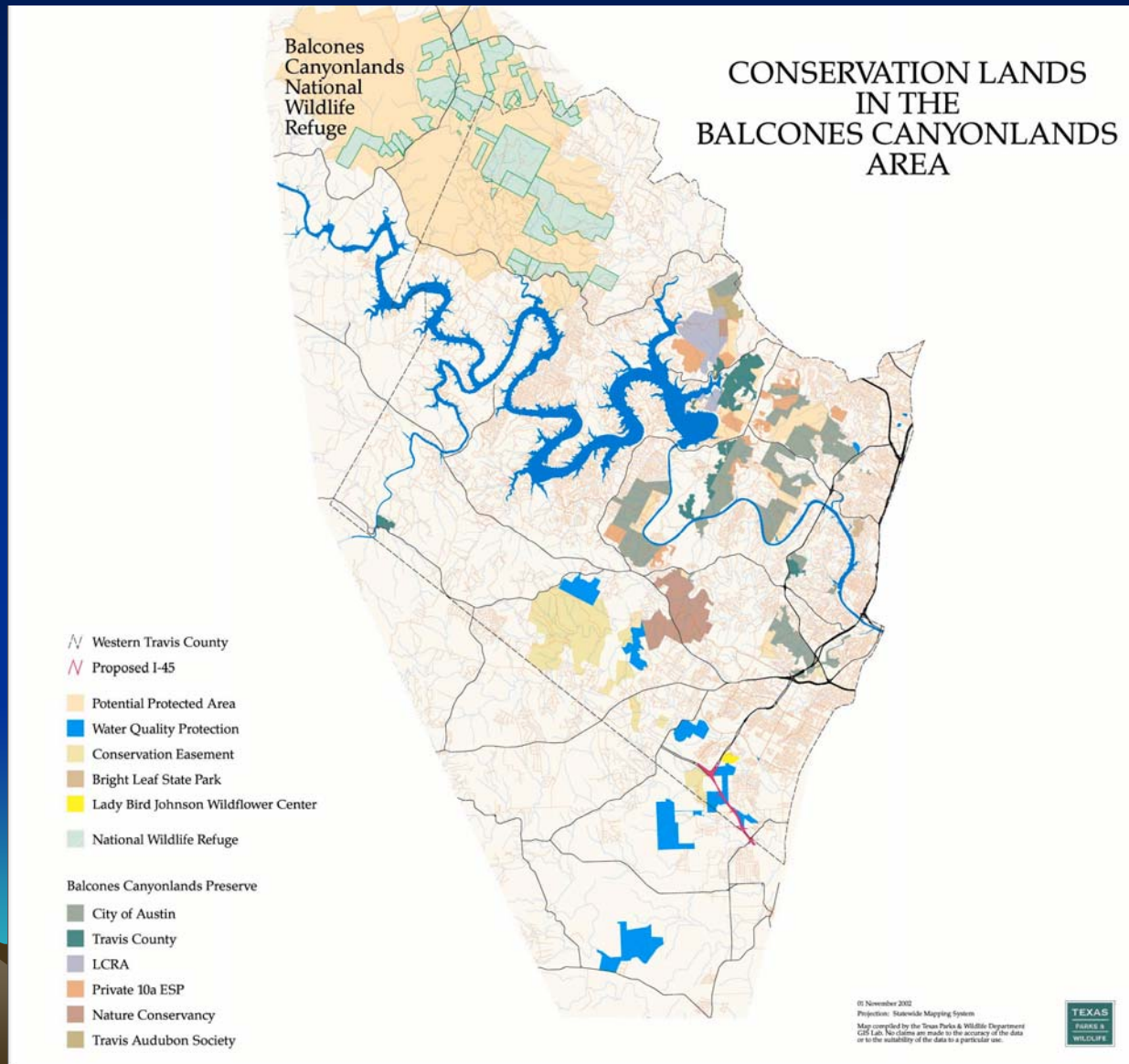


GCW Conservation Lands

- Balcones Canyonland National Wildlife Refuge (Travis and Burnet Counties)
- Balcones Canyonland Preserve (Travis County)
- Various independent Section 7 Consultations and Section 10 (a)(1)(B) permits
- Hickory Pass Ranch (Travis and Burnet Counties)



Central Texas Preserved Land



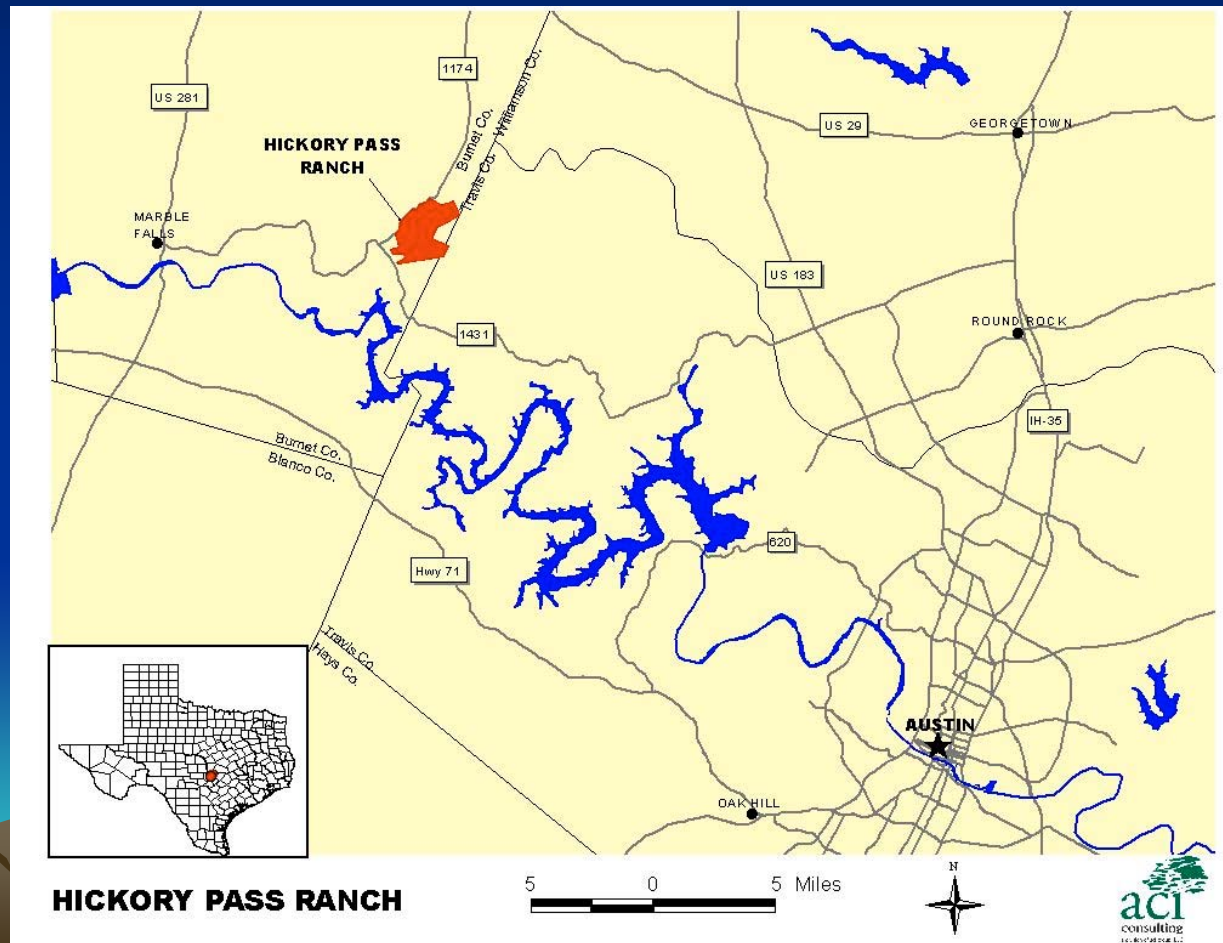
GCW Habitat Mitigation Options

- Central Austin (Travis County) Balcones Canyonlands Conservation Plan (a RHCP)
- Outside BCCP service area
 - Section 7 own mitigation
 - Section 10 (a)(1)(B) own mitigation
- Hickory Pass Ranch
 - Service area Burnet, Blanco, Williamson and parts of Travis and Hays Counties

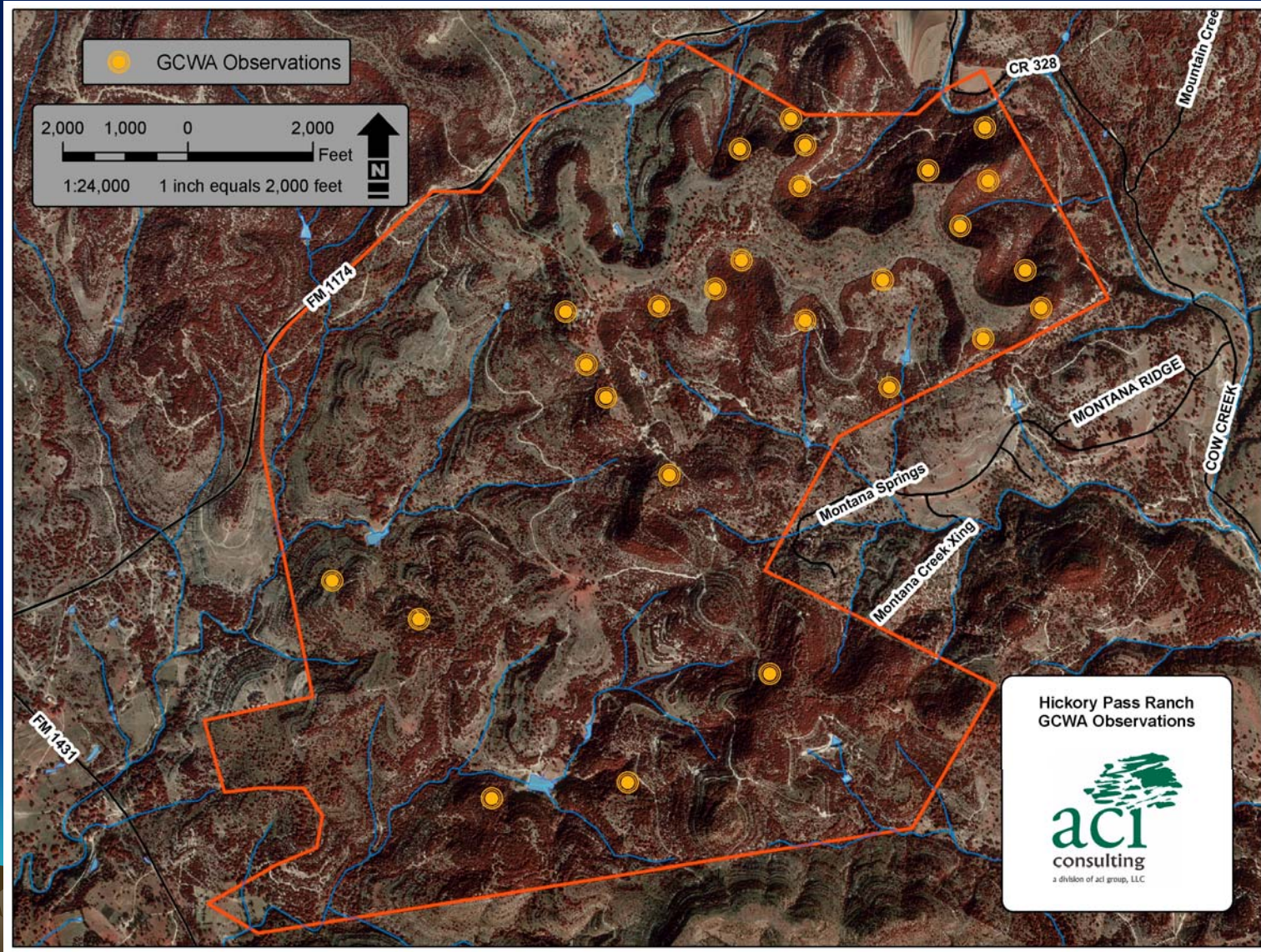


Hickory Pass Ranch

- 3000 acres within BCNWR acquisition area.



GCW on HPR



HPR Mitigation Credits

- USFWS/HPR Conservation Bank Agreement signed April 4, 2002
- USFWS conservation easement
- 816 credits used to date / 1584 in inventory
- Credit purchasers:
 - Williamson County (225 credits)
 - Texas Turnpike Authority / CTRMA (153 credits)
 - Private development in Williamson & Burnet (473 credits)



HPR Operation/Maintenance

- O/M procedures modeled after successful BCNWR techniques
 - Overseen by Scientific Advisory Board
 - Plateau clearing for groundwater quantity/quality
 - Deer hunting (for browse pressure control)
 - Grazing of cattle away from optimal habitat during breeding season
 - Cowbird trapping during breeding season



Future Plans on the HPR

- Adaptive management based on the successes of BCNWF
- Permanent GCW censusing plots (100 acres)
 - Good
 - Marginal
- Control burns on cleared plateaus
- Active intensive cattle grazing/ rotation
- Observation decks



Keys to HPR Success

- Conservation of GCW within BCNWR acquisition area (proximate to macro site)
- Market driven
- Simplified/quantified mitigation process for credit purchasers
- Only GCW bank in service area



References

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