

include: (1) Canyon Ranch (including Canyon Ranch Pit, Fat Man's Nightmare Cave, and Scenic Overlook Cave and the surrounding approximately 30 ha (75 ac) within critical habitat Unit 1e, as proposed; (2) Helotes Blowhole and Helotes Hilltop caves and the surrounding approximately 10 ha (25 ac), within Unit 3 as proposed; (3) John Wagner Cave No. 3 and the surrounding approximately 1.6 ha (4 ac), within Unit 6 as proposed; (4) Hills and Dales Pit and the surrounding approximately 28 ha (70 ac), within Unit 8 as proposed; and (5) Madla's Cave and the surrounding approximately 2 ha (5 ac), within Unit 17 as proposed.

We believe that the La Cantera HCP meets the three criteria used by the Service to determine if a plan provides adequate special management or protection to a listed species. First, the HCP provides a conservation benefit to the species through the protection of eight caves, each occupied by one or more of the three listed species covered under the HCP. The various management actions (e.g., installation of security fences, controls on numerous potential human impacts, fire ant control and treatment program) will provide conservation benefits. Second, the HCP provides assurance that the conservation management strategies and actions will be implemented. These caves and associated management areas are protected, in perpetuity, by appropriate legal mechanisms, and will be managed, in perpetuity. The HCP provides assurances that the conservation strategies and actions will be implemented by outlining a schedule of management and monitoring activities to be conducted at each karst management area. Also, based on our review of available information, estimates, and budgets, La Cantera committed to provide funding for all management, monitoring, repair, and adaptive management actions described in the HCP up to an aggregate of \$38,032 per year, as adjusted for inflation. Third, to provide assurances that the conservation strategies and measures will be effective, the HCP was developed on the basis of the best available information, and La Cantera is required to conduct periodic surveys of the cave environment, as well as the surface plant and animal community to determine the status of these environments and the need for adaptive management. If monitoring or other information indicates that the goals or requirements of the HCP are not being met, then adjustments will be made as appropriate. La Cantera is required to submit a report of all management and

monitoring activities conducted each year to the Service annually.

For the reasons described above, the five karst management areas established by La Cantera and being provided for under their HCP are not included in this designation of critical habitat because they are receiving adequate special management considerations and protection, and therefore do not meet the definition of critical habitat as stated in section 3(5)(A)(i) of the Act.

#### *Camp Bullis Conservation Plan for Karst Species*

During the comment period for the proposed designation of critical habitat, the U.S. Army Garrison, Fort Sam Houston submitted a "Management Plan for the Conservation of Rare and Endangered Karst Species, Camp Bullis, Bexar and Comal Counties, Texas," for the 23 caves on Department of Defense (DOD) property that are known to contain listed karst species. These 23 caves were included within Units 10 and 11 of the proposed designation of critical habitat. The Camp Bullis conservation plan calls for the following special management considerations and protection:

- The Army will identify karst management areas (KMAs) and determine the appropriate size and shape of each KMA necessary to incorporate the biological and physical components needed for the conservation of the species (e.g., cave footprint, surface and subsurface drainage areas associated with the occupied cave, cave cricket foraging area, surface plant and animal community). The KMAs will be preserved in perpetuity within the limits possible through the authority of Camp Bullis and its operational and mission requirements. The Plan stipulates that should Camp Bullis ever be transferred in whole or in part, local Army officials will request that the Secretary of the Army, or other appropriate authority, review and incorporate provisions from this management plan into the property disposal procedures in order to transfer responsibility for appropriate management of any former Camp Bullis karst management areas to all subsequent owners by deed recordation or other binding instrument.

- Fire ants will be controlled. Only boiling water will be used up to 50 m from a cave's footprint, chemical fire ant bait or boiling water, if feasible, will be used between 50 and 150 m, and "broadcasting" of bait may be used at distances greater than 150 m. Pesticide and fertilizer use will be prohibited within KMAs unless specifically authorized. Special management will

protect important sources of nutrients for KMAs, prevent siltation and/or entry of other contaminants into KMAs, prevent vandalism, dumping of trash, and unauthorized entry into caves. Certain caves may require cave gates and/or security fences.

- In addition, the Army will: (1) Continue conducting karst and biospeleological surveys; (2) complete hydrogeologic studies on KMAs; (3) continue studies on the ecology of karst species; (4) develop educational programs to raise awareness and encourage protection of karst ecosystems by Camp Bullis personnel and the public; (5) monitor all KMAs to determine success or failure of management actions; and (6) document all fauna and flora encountered during monitoring. Monitoring will occur every 1–3 years based on changes in the extent that Camp Bullis uses areas in or around the cave.

- Finally, only native xeriscape plants will be used to landscape for new construction within 150 m of a KMA. Two of the caves are near the boundary of Camp Bullis. We intend to form a partnership with Camp Bullis and the private landowners to gain their support for protecting the habitat that is on private lands near these caves.

In addition to the activities outlined in their plan, Camp Bullis began conducting surveys for cave and karst features and karst fauna in 1993 and plans to complete karst surveys of the entire approximately 28,000-acre installation in 2003. Camp Bullis submitted a draft karst management plan to us in 1999 and has been implementing measures to conserve listed karst invertebrate species since then. These measures include, but are not limited to, control of red-imported fire ants, control of unauthorized access through cave gating, and limiting training activities in areas around occupied caves. The 2002 karst management plan, received and approved by the Service during the comment period, includes these and additional measures to conserve the listed species and their ecosystems on Camp Bullis.

Based on our evaluation of the Camp Bullis conservation plan for the karst invertebrates, we find that it provides adequate special management considerations and protection for the species occurring within Units 10 and 11 that were proposed for designation as critical habitat. We believe that Camp Bullis' karst management plan (Plan) meets the three criteria used by the Service to determine if a plan provides adequate special management or protection to a listed species. The Plan