

Fort Hood Recovery Credit System
For the
Golden-Cheeked Warbler
Executive Summary

The Fort Hood recovery credit system is a system whereby DOD/Fort Hood is able to acquire recovery credits for the endangered Golden-cheeked Warbler. These recovery credits will be acquired through conservation and management actions on private lands. Through a cooperative agreement with a state agency, DOD/Fort Hood will be able to fund both fixed-term contracts and permanent easements with private landowners for the conservation and management of Golden-cheeked warbler habitats. By defining conservation units based on area, location and proximity to other populations of the species, the system will allow DOD/Fort Hood to accumulate recovery credits for use in offsetting future habitat loss on the installation. These recovery credits will be held in an account by a non-profit cooperating entity, which has the responsibility of implementing the program on behalf of DOD/Fort Hood and maintaining the account balances, all subject to verification and/or audit by the U.S. Fish and Wildlife Service and Fort Hood. With funding from DOD/Fort Hood, the cooperating entity is also responsible for conducting implementation and effectiveness monitoring. Following a three-year “proof-of-concept” period, the entire program will be reviewed considering the results of the monitoring program with any revisions needed to be made at that time.

The program includes the following critical elements:

- permanent loss of habitat must be offset by permanent protection credits, while temporary habitat loss may be offset by credits obtained via term agreements with landowners;
- both permanent and term credit agreements will require active habitat enhancement and management to ensure a net benefit for the target species;
- for term agreements a model similar to certain farm bill conservation programs, with up front payments and annual payments for habitat enhancement, as well as an easily understandable contractual agreement for the landowner is likely to help create a vibrant credit system; and
- under Texas law, landowners who request it may be provided with certain confidentiality assurances, which may increase participation.