

## 5.0 CONCLUSIONS

### 5.1 Streamlining

The [TEAP](#) effort supports streamlining and the [EO 13274](#) by providing a tool agencies can use to rapidly assess some of the environmental impacts of large projects, including transportation projects. The [TEAP](#) accomplishes one of the goals of [TERS](#), which is to develop an ecosystem-based tool to assist in identifying important ecological areas in the state for use in the planning of large scale projects. It may also aid in alternatives analysis, some compensatory mitigation, and preservation.

Another goal of the [TERS](#) is to improve the overall quality of agency decision-making, with respect to the environmental concerns, in the state of Texas. The information provided by [TEAP](#) better informs agencies facilitating better decisions.

### 5.2 Next Steps

Large-scale projects present many special problems. The following are obstacles to achieving adequate mitigation of environmental impacts: 1) They often affect diverse habitats, land forms and watersheds, 2) Adequate amounts or types of lands needed for appropriate compensatory action may not be easily accessible, and 3) They may intersect numerous regulatory agency jurisdictions that must be addressed ([Reid and Murphy 1995](#)). Linear projects are a special challenge because the avoidance of impacts in one segment may define the impact in the next. Identification of the most important resources present for an entire project is a tool

that can be used to avoid impacts, minimize impacts, identify potential compensatory mitigation, and select the least environmental damaging project alternative.

Large projects such as [IH69](#), challenge agency staffing, funding, and the ability to provide timely decisions if conducted in a “business-as-usual” manner. Regulatory agency authority and policy may or may not provide guidance to deal with the demands associated with very large and complex projects.

In the past, impacts of public works projects have not been evaluated on an ecoregion scale in Texas. Inclusion of ecoregion information, such as that found in the [TEAP](#), into the planning process of large public works projects facilitates project impact analysis and the mitigation of impacts while realizing conservation of ecologically important lands. This tool may help streamline the project development process through early identification of project impacts, and enhances the capability of avoidance and minimization of those impacts.

[TEAP](#) has great potential for enhancing environmental impact analysis. However, it still needs to be validated. [TEAP](#) should be updated approximately every two years to maximize utility. This will allow the performance of trend analysis as new data becomes available. The results described in this report can be used in discussions for mitigation opportunities and identification of key locations for more effective species protection ([Abbitt et al. 2000](#)). For example, [TEAP](#) information can be of assistance in locating, designing and establishing mitigation areas, mitigation banks, or other conservation areas. Finally, [TEAP](#) identifies strategic indicators that can be modified in subsequent iterations, can be compared across time periods, can potentially serve as reference points for project and long range planning, and can provide supplemental data to aid in regulatory discussions. [TEAP](#) is not designed to take the

place of agency policies and procedures, but to be a supplemental information tool to aid in agency decision making.