

GRANT AGREEMENT PERFORMANCE REPORT

TO: U.S. FISH AND WILDLIFE SERVICE
DIVISION OF FEDERAL AID
HADLEY, MA

FROM: MARYLAND DEPARTMENT OF NATURAL RESOURCES
WILDLIFE AND HERITAGE SERVICE
ANNAPOLIS, MD

GRANT AGREEMENT: I-1-3 (7/1/2006-6/30/2010)

GRANT TITLE: LANDOWNER INCENTIVE PROGRAM, TIER 1

TOTAL COSTS: \$199,117.93

PERFORMANCE PERIOD: 7/1/2006-6/30/2007

PERFORMANCE REPORT

State: Maryland

Project Title: Landowner Incentive Program Tier 1: Administration of a private landowner assistance program to enhance, protect and restore habitats for species at risk in the state of Maryland.

Principal Investigator: McKnight

Time period: 7/1/2006-6/30/2007

Summary of Work Conducted:

In the past year, Maryland's Landowner Incentive Program (LIP) has gained momentum as more landowners and potential partner organizations learn about the program. We have been busy administering 22 landowner agreements, 18 of which were signed within this performance period (7/1/2006-6/30/2007). We have provided technical assistance to a total of 51 landowners, 14 that are continuing projects begun before 7/1/2006 and 37 new landowners. Landowner agreements have been signed with 22 of these 51 landowners. The remaining 29 have not yet signed an agreement, have decided to decline, are still in the review process, or were not approved for LIP funding. We have continued our targeted outreach to landowners having land within our target areas, and/or with habitat that may benefit our target species. This includes direct mailings to 491 landowners and phone calls to 73. Direct mailings included 45 letters to landowners with stream-front property on streams supporting the federally endangered dwarf wedge mussel, 45 letters to landowners with rare species or habitats in the Nassawango target area, 277 letters to landowners with potential to institute grassland restoration or fallow field maintenance, 26 letters to landowners with land near known populations of the federally threatened sensitive joint vetch, and 59 letters to landowners with rare species or habitats in the Nanjemoy target area. We have also updated our website with an interactive map showing locations and summaries of some of our 2006 projects. This outreach resulted in emails, calls or letters from 46 landowners interested in the program. We have also continued to refine our habitat restoration objectives and practices according to the goals of Maryland's Wildlife Diversity Conservation Plan, and in consultation with the specialist biologists and ecologists who work with us here in the Wildlife and Heritage Service. A more detailed description of the work we have accomplished in this performance period is given for each of our objectives below.

1. *Establish priorities for species and habitats at risk on private lands.*

We have refined our restoration goals and practices to be revised into our approved 2006 Tier 2 grant as follows:

- We expanded our list of species at risk by undertaking a detailed search of Natural Heritage Program spatial data to find all federal- or state-ranked species for which we have records post-1970 and which occur on private land within our target habitat types. We also incorporated selected species listed as GCN (greatest conservation need) in Maryland's Wildlife Diversity Conservation Plan in consultation with Heritage Program biologists. This resulted in expansion of our species list from 275 to 466 species.

- We defined specific goals for species within our list that are vulnerable to extinction on a global scale – that is those species ranked G1 (critically imperiled), G2 (imperiled) or G3 (very rare). We have records of where these species may be found and what habitat restoration is needed, and will target our outreach accordingly.
- We updated our points system for records of rare species on landowner properties to include points for GCN species that are not globally or state ranked.
- We added prescribed burning as an additional method within our approved practice of vegetation management.
- We developed a practice called ‘fallow field maintenance’, in consultation with our upland game bird biologist, to provide incentives for landowners to leave agricultural fields fallow for a period of three years in order to provide habitat for the Northern bobwhite quail, a GCN species, and other at-risk grassland bird species.
- We designed our Delmarva Fox Squirrel Woodland Stewardship Payment in order to provide incentives for landowners to maintain high-quality, old-growth forest stands inhabited by Delmarva fox squirrels in the southernmost counties of Maryland’s Eastern Shore.
- We officially incorporated biological monitoring as an approved practice in our Tier 2 grant in order to ensure that the benefits to species at risk will be measured for all LIP projects.

2. Partner with other agencies to develop strategies for outreach and habitat restoration practices.

In addition to our direct outreach to individual landowners, we continue to seek out partnerships with other agencies and organizations to assist us in landowner outreach, providing technical assistance, and carrying out habitat restoration projects.

- We emailed, phoned or sent letters to 81 potential partners directly. These included all county foresters and Natural Resources Conservation Service county offices, selected watershed associations, and regional land trusts.
- We received 7 calls or emails from potential partners interested in how they could work with LIP to help achieve their conservation goals.
- We gave presentations about LIP at 8 different meetings or workshops involving potential partners. These included a meeting of the Alliance for the Chesapeake Bay, a meeting with the Chesapeake Bay Trust, the Earth Day event at the Salisbury Zoo, the Dividing Creek Watershed Landowner’s Workshop, and the Northeastern Wildlife Federation annual conference.
- As a result of these efforts, we have had discussions about LIP with at least 16 different potential partner organizations during the past year, and have partnered directly with 8 of

them, including the Chesapeake Bay Trust, the Maryland DNR Forest Service, Chesapeake Bay Foundation, Maryland Ornithological Society, Maryland Audubon, Arlington Echo Outdoor Education Center, The Nature Conservancy and the Magothy River Land Trust. We also continue our established partnerships with USFWS biologists, Environmental Defense, USFWS Partners for Fish and Wildlife, Maryland Department of Agriculture and Watershed Restoration Services.

3. *Build a program for fairly and equitably delivering habitat restoration practices on the ground.* We continue to evaluate project applications using our ecologist review process to provide rankings and insight from expert ecologists both within Maryland DNR and outside the agency. Applications are reviewed as they are received, and we consistently complete reviews in less than our estimated 6-week timeframe.

Benefits to species at risk:

Bog turtles: As a result of our partnerships with USFWS, Environmental Defense, and NRCS, LIP has successfully implemented prescribed grazing to restore two bog turtle wetlands on private lands in Maryland, and has improved another through chemical treatment of invasive woody species. We are halfway to our goal of restoring six Maryland bog turtle wetlands.

Delmarva fox squirrels: Our work in developing the Delmarva Fox Squirrel Forest Stewardship Payment has led to targeted outreach to 62 potential landowners, and we are currently in the process of finalizing our agreement with the owners of the highest-ranking 50-acre forest parcel.

Grassland bird species: Our outreach to landowners with potential for grassland restoration has resulted in two projects involving warm season grassland establishment, which stand to benefit rare grassland birds including the grasshopper sparrow, Northern harrier, Northern bobwhite, Prairie warbler, Willow flycatcher, Worm-eating warbler, Kentucky warbler, Savannah sparrow, Vesper sparrow, Dickcissel, and field sparrow.

Sensitive joint vetch: Our targeted outreach to landowners with property near known populations of sensitive joint vetch resulted in a plan to treat non-native stands of *Phragmites australis* on private land in order to prevent it from taking over all suitable areas and threatening this highly rare annual plant.

Rare plants of a coastal plain seepage bog: Our partnership with the Arlington Echo Outdoor Education Center and the Magothy River Land Trust has resulted in a project to restore a privately owned bog and re-introduce three rare plant species that grew there historically: leatherleaf, brown-fruited rush and giant cane.

Summary: Technical Assistance Performance Measures:

For the period of 7/1/2006-6/30/2007:

landowners provided technical assistance WITHOUT a formal agreement: 29

landowners provided technical assistance WITH a formal agreement: 22

Deviations: None

Recommendations for the continuance of project: Continue project.