

GRANT AGREEMENT PERFORMANCE REPORT

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

FROM: MARYLAND DEPARTMENT OF NATURAL RESOURCES
ANNAPOLIS, MD

GRANT AGREEMENT: W-64-T-18

GRANT TITLE: TECHNICAL GUIDANCE

TOTAL COSTS: \$259,334

JOB PERFORMANCE REPORT

State: Maryland

Project Title: Technical Guidance/Habitat Programs

Job No.: 320

Job Title: Wildlife Habitat Management Plans

Principal Investigator: Blizzard

Job Objective:

To prepare and distribute written habitat management plans to private, corporate and public landowners with an interest to create, enhance and manage habitat for various wildlife species or groups. Plan format may be site specific recommendations associated with a detailed map or more general, using written recommendations in letter form. Many plans will be prepared in concert with established USDA incentive programs such as the Conservation Reserve Program (CRP), Conservation Reserve Enhancement Program (CREP), Forest Stewardship (FSP), etc.

To coordinate the distribution of annual food plot seed and plant seedlings as an incentive to landowners conducting the practices contained in management plans.

Additionally, one of the most important aspects of habitat management is conducting effective follow-up monitoring to determine impacts on wildlife populations. Currently, this is done only through large scale surveys that follow wildlife trends on a regional or statewide basis.

Activities/Findings:

Wildlife habitat plans were written for private landowners throughout the state. Though plans focused on working in the agricultural landscape for wetland and grassland dependant species, most habitats/species were addressed to some degree. In nearly all plans, cost-sharing opportunities from various programs were used to assist landowners in funding habitat initiatives as this provides additional incentive to actively conduct recommended practices and usually provides for automatic evaluation (i.e. follow up to see if the practice was indeed done). As this job continues in future years it is reasonable to assume that wildlife populations will respond to habitat enhancement efforts.

We continued with the approach where we wrote plans for distribution to landowners for subsequent application to one where we prepare a plan and then work directly with the landowner to attempt to have the plan employed properly. We need this more focused approach to avoid churning out plans on paper that do not get applied on the ground. Our work with the landowners doesn't include physically assisting with the work; we simply maintain a closer and more constant relationship with them.

It is important to note the acreage total is only for those acres actually addressed, not the size of the tract reviewed for the plan. For example, a plan for a 10-acre warm season grass filter strip on a 300-acre farm would be tallied as 10 acres addressed, not 300.

A total of 83 plans were completed in FY 07. The overall goal of enhancing 2,500 acres annually was surpassed as 10,409 acres were addressed during the past year.

Reasons for deviations (if any):

The 2,500-acre goal was surpassed by 7909 acres. This is largely due to input on Chesapeake Forest. Another significant project is the spraying of the invasive plant, phragmites. This project continues to grow in popularity and, though it doesn't involve a complete wildlife management plan for the

entire tract involved, nevertheless is conducted under a plan to improve wildlife habitat on private land.

Recommendations for the continuation of the job:

Continue the job.

JOB PERFORMANCE REPORT

State: Maryland

Project Title: Technical Guidance/Wildlife Damage Management

Job Number: 545

Job Title: Wildlife Damage Management

Principle Investigator: Jayne

Job Objective:

To provide guidance to agencies, organizations and individuals for the resolution of human-wildlife (birds and mammals) conflicts, so as to maintain wildlife populations at biologically and socially acceptable levels.

Activity/Findings:

New reporting procedures and an improved software program now allow the Nuisance Wildlife Hotline Annual Reports to be available in time for the current year Federal Aid reports. Thus, this year's report will span a few years with the outcome of now using current fiscal year reports for the current Job Performance Report. The table below shows the number of calls received at the Nuisance Wildlife Hotline beginning in FY 04, the last year used for Federal Aid reporting, and ending in FY 07.

Fiscal Year	Number of Calls Received
2004	7,319
2005	5,850
2006	5,511
2007	8,776

Hotline staff provides technical assistance to help our citizen's deal with nuisance and damaging wildlife. All deer and bear complaints are referred to WHS personnel for handling. Wildlife field offices received half again as many complaints as the Hotline.

The total number of calls to the Hotline decreased significantly in 2005 and 2006, and then increased for 2007. We attribute this decline in recorded calls in FY 05 and FY 06 to several items; the most basic is a short term change in accounting for calls. This was due to a software change and resulting procedural change, both of which are now back to being compatible with how calls were recorded in FY 04 and earlier. Thus, the data for FY 07 can be compared with FY 04 and the resulting trend analyzed. No loss of service occurred. Also, we believe the call rates are reduced by an increased emphasis to put nuisance wildlife information on our website. Citizen use of the Internet continues to increase dramatically and is at least offsetting the past reliance on the telephone as the primary means to gain information and advice.

The number of deer complaints is trending downward in many counties, which is a welcomed indicator of a stabilizing deer population. Another is the significant reduction (33%) in the number of deer taken on Deer Management Permits (4,752 this past year vs. 7,178 the year prior). We will continue with our very liberal deer hunting bag limits again this year.

In contrast to the overall declining trend for other species, we saw an increase in the number of bear complaints (17%) and road strikes (30%) this

past year. This continually increasing trend reflects the growing population for this species, particularly in the eastern portion of its Maryland range.

The top 10 species for the number of complaints received (in descending order) are raccoons, red fox, groundhogs, gray squirrels, snakes, deer, opossums, coyotes, Canada geese and bats. As expected, the majority of these complaints continue to come from the suburban/urban counties (66%).

We consider this project very important for the technical and educational assistance it provides to thousands of Maryland citizens each year.

Reasons for deviations (if any):

None. New software allows for the Nuisance Wildlife Hotline data to reflect the current fiscal year rather than have a 2-year lag.

Recommendations for continuance of job:

This job should be continued. We expect human-wildlife conflicts will continue to be a serious issue as the landscape becomes more fractured and urbanized.