

GRANT AGREEMENT PERFORMANCE REPORT

TO: U.S. FISH AND WILDLIFE SERVICE
SPORT FISH & WILDLIFE RESTORATION
HADLEY, MA

FROM: MARYLAND DEPARTMENT OF NATURAL RESOURCES
ANNAPOLIS, MD

GRANT AGREEMENT: W-64-T-19

GRANT TITLE: TECHNICAL GUIDANCE

TOTAL COSTS: \$175,000 estimated

JOB PERFORMANCE REPORT

State: Maryland

Project Title: Technical Guidance/Habitat Programs

Job No.: 320

Job Title: Wildlife Habitat Management Plans

Principal Investigator: Stonesifer

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. This more focused approach avoids churning out plans on paper that do not get applied on the ground. Our work with 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 652 plans were completed in FY 08. The overall goal of enhancing 2,500 acres annually was surpassed as 10,939 acres were addressed during the past year.

Reasons for deviations (if any):

The 2,500-acre goal was surpassed by 8,439 acres. This is largely due to a significant project that includes spraying of the invasive plant, phragmites on public and private lands. This project continues to grow in popularity with 600 plans written and implemented 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. Additionally, 2 significant plans were written and implemented to restore and protect marshland habitat were completed totaling 6,547 acres.

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:

The table inserted below shows the number of calls received at the Nuisance Wildlife Hotline over the last 5 years, beginning in FY 04 and ending in FY 08. The number of calls received in FY 08 is down slightly from the same figure for FY 07.

Fiscal Year	Number of Calls Received
2004	7,319
2005	5,850
2006	5,511
2007	8,776
2008	8,642

The total number of calls to the Hotline decreased significantly in 2005 and 2006 and then increased for 2007 and 2008. 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 recording in FY 04 and earlier. Thus, the data for FY 07 and FY 08 can be compared with FY 04 and the resulting trend analyzed. No loss of service occurred.

Hotline staff provide technical assistance to help citizens deal with situations where wildlife are creating a nuisance or causing property damage. 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 number of deer complaints increased in many counties this year, largely due to significantly increased commodity prices and a concomitant decrease in producer tolerance to crop loss. Although the long term trend in deer taken on Deer Management Permits remains downward, we experienced an 18% increase in 2007 over 2006. Nevertheless, the DMP take in FY 07 remains 36% below the 5-year average. We will continue with our very liberal deer hunting bag limits again this year with the goal of decreasing or at least stabilizing herd levels.

Deer Data	FY 06	FY 07	5-Year Average
DMP Kill	4,752	5,612	8,708

We saw a decrease in the number of bear complaints (17%) and road strikes (21%) this past year. The number of complaints is 8% below the 5-year average and reflects a trend of growing acceptance of this species in our western counties. The road kill figure for 2007 is almost identical to the 5-year trend. As the bear population extends eastward these trends will likely increase.

Bear Data	FY 06	FY 07	5-Year Average
Bear Complaints	357	296	321
Bear Road Kill	52	41	40

The Wildlife and Heritage Service collaborated with USDA Wildlife Services staff to offer a resident Canada goose depredation permit for farmers receiving damage to commercial agricultural crops. This permit was available for the first time during the 2008 growing season. A total of 130 resident Canada geese were taken via this permit in 2008. Reported take by individual permittees ranged from 3 to 56 birds with 7 of the 13 permit holders actually killing geese.

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 in last year's report and we will proceed with a one year lag for future reports.

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.