

GRANT AGREEMENT PERFORMANCE REPORT

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

FROM: MARYLAND DEPARTMENT OF NATURAL RESOURCES
ANNAPOLIS, MD

GRANT AGREEMENT: W-64-T-20

GRANT TITLE: TECHNICAL GUIDANCE

TOTAL COSTS: \$344,641

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 letterform. 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 of writing plans for distribution to landowners for subsequent application rather than preparing a plan and then work directly with the landowner in an 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 landowners does not 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, we tally as 10 acres a plan for a 10-acre warm season grass filter strip on a 300-acre farm, not 300.

We completed 98 plans in FY 09. We addressed 7,846 acres in FY 2009, surpassing the overall goal of enhancing 2,500 acres annually.

Reasons for deviations (if any):

We surpassed the 2,500-acre goal by 5,346 acres. This project continues to remain strong due to an increase in habitat plans on private

lands. Plans include prescribed burn plans, which benefit wildlife habitats as well as a strong planning effort on public lands not directly managed by the Wildlife and Heritage Service. Additionally, we completed plans for 4 sites consisting of 845 acres of new or reclaimed mine lands.

Recommendations for the continuation of the job:

Continue the job.

JOB PERFORMANCE REPORT

State: Maryland

Project Title: Technical Guidance/Habitat Programs

Job No.: 321

Job Title: Upland Game Bird Habitat Management

Principal Investigator: Long

Job Objective:

To provide technical guidance and advice to managers of private and non-WMA public lands to establish, restore, and/or manipulate suitable habitat for upland game birds. Although the total acres affected will vary depending on landowner interest and cooperation, attempts will be made to provide recommendations to a minimum of 20 landowners managing a total of 1000 acres annually.

Activities/Findings:

Wildlife & Heritage Service (WHS) staff provided technical guidance and advice to private landowners and non-WMA public land managers throughout the state in FY 09. Most plans focused on establishing and maintaining early-successional habitat for northern bobwhite. However, we also assisted managers with an interest in woodcock and/or ruffed grouse.

We made many recommendations regarding upland game habitat remotely via phone or email, but the acreages affected are difficult to tally and therefore not reported. WHS staff conducted site visits for a portion of the properties and completed 13 plans affecting 815 acres in FY 09. It is important to note the acreage total includes the actual acreage of habitat created or managed, not the total size of the property.

Practices implemented in the plans included native grass establishment and maintenance, field border establishment, shrub and hedgerow establishment, prescribed burning, fallow disking, and edge feathering. We also provided supplemental advice to many landowners regarding methods to census quail populations and issues surrounding pen-raised quail releases.

Reasons for deviations (if any):

We did not meet the objective of providing recommendations to 20 landowners totaling 1,000 acres annually when only counting in-person recommendations. We likely met the objective when incorporating recommendations and advice delivered remotely in the totals. We believe a decline in interest occurred in recent years in managing cropland for upland game due to high grain prices and limited availability of cost-competitive programs. Requests for information and assistance anecdotally seemed lower than in previous years.

Recommendations for the continuation of the job:

Eliminate this job and incorporate into Job 320 titled Wildlife Habitat Management Plans. The objectives and approach of this job overlap substantially with Job 320. In future years, performance reporting of job 320 should include activities conducted under this 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 with the goal of maintaining wildlife populations at biologically and socially acceptable levels.

Activity/Findings:

The table inserted below shows the number of calls received at the Nuisance Wildlife Information Hotline over the last 3 years. The number of calls received in 2009 is up slightly (6%) from the same figure for 2008.

Year	Number of Calls Received
2007	8,776
2008	8,642
2009	9,140

Hotline staff provide technical assistance to help citizens deal with situations where wildlife are creating a nuisance or causing property damage. Hotline staff refer all deer and bear complaints to Wildlife and Heritage Service (WHS) personnel for resolution. We estimate that the WHS field offices collectively receive approximately half as many complaints as the Hotline.

The number of deer complaints increased in many counties this year, largely due to volatile commodity prices and a concomitant decrease in producer tolerance to crop loss. Although the number of deer taken on Deer Management Permits (DMP) remains well below the 2003 peak of 13,327, we experienced a 20% increase in 2008 over 2007. We will continue to offer very liberal deer hunting bag limits with the goal of decreasing or at least stabilizing herd levels.

Year	DMP Kill
2006	4,752
2007	5,612
2008	6,722

We saw an increase in the number of bear complaints (24%) and road strikes (27%) this past year. Two individual bears that wandered well out of current occupied range in 2008 accounted for much of the increase in complaints. One bear traveled extensively in Southern Maryland during 3 weeks in August. A second bear spent nearly 8 months on the Eastern Shore. WHS staff captured both bears and relocated them to occupied bear range in Western Maryland. As the bear population extends eastward these trends will likely increase.

Bear Data	2006	2007	2008
Bear Complaints	357	296	367
Bear Road Kill	52	41	52

WHS collaborated with USDA Wildlife Services staff to offer a resident Canada goose depredation permit for farmers receiving damage to commercial agricultural crops. WHS made this permit available for the first time during the 2008 growing season. Permit holders took 130 resident Canada geese via this permit in 2008 and 279 in 2009. Reported take by individual permittees ranged from 1 to 60 birds in 2009 with 21 of the 29 permit holders actually killing geese.

Year	# Canada Geese Taken
2008	130
2009	279

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.

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.