

2021 PROGRESS REPORT

Quarter: (circle one) 2021 1st 2021 2nd 2021 3rd 2021 4th

Grant Program, Number and Title: GSA 00046 / **Eastern Box Turtle Status Assessment, Conservation Plan, and BMPs.**

Organization: The Mid-Atlantic Center for Herpetology and Conservation

Project Leader: Lori Erb and Brandon Ruhe

Abstract: Please provide a short (1-2 paragraphs) abstract that addresses EACH of the following: the objectives of your project, accomplishments to date, future plans and timelines with an estimate for when the project will be completed.

The objective of the Eastern Box Turtle (EBT) project is to develop a status assessment and conservation plan for the EBT to advance conservation efforts for this species. Accomplishments during this quarter includes the completion of three conference calls with the Eastern Box Turtle Steering Committee (EBT SC), discussing the potential for research on DOD properties to evaluate the effect of fire on EBT, corresponding with volunteer surveyors to answer questions and holding trainings, corresponding with the RCN pollinator group lead and NJ pineland experts to coordinate on development of best management practices for management of xeric habitats, assisting researchers with study design for independent research related to the EBT, downloading and organizing 2020 field season data, survey planning for the 2021 field season, developing a sampling plan for the genetic subproject, compiling and administrative actions (e.g., backing up files, drafting reports).

During the next quarter, we plan to hold monthly calls, continue the development of a population assessment regional database, coordinate with volunteer surveyors to prepare for the 2021 field season, continue to enter, organize and perform quality control the 2020 data, conduct population assessment surveys in MD and PA, and continue to compile and summarize historical data and literature on prescribed fires and its potential effects on box turtles and their habitat.

Were planned goals/objectives achieved last quarter? Yes

Progress Achieved: (For each Goal/Objective, list Planned and Actual Accomplishments)

- Organized and lead 3 monthly conference calls with the Eastern Box Turtle RCN Steering Committee and drafted meeting notes.
- Conducted 7 meetings with my Co-PI to coordinate projects and actions.
- Conducted numerous meetings/calls with project partners (volunteer surveyors, DOD, etc), particularly about population monitoring, effects of fire on EBT and a research proposal.
- Conduced two volunteer surveyor meetings.
- Applied for state and park permits.
- Planned for spring surveys.
- Developed a site distribution plan for genetic sampling across the northeast.
- Coordinated with the pollinator group.
- Attended a webinar by Katie Stovall on the effect of fire on EBT.
- Attended a webinar on prescribed fire and expanding the burn window.

- Assisted volunteer surveyors with survey planning and research on EBT.
- Organizing and entering 2020 box turtle data MACHAC collected.
- Compiled and QCed the regional monitoring data from all states in 2020.
- Reviewed a manuscript on EBT population monitoring.
- Requested access to VA and MD data (Herp Mapper, iNaturalist, VA Herp Society and MD Biodiversity Project).
- Made revisions to the population monitoring protocol and field forms.
- Continued to collect and review literature for xeric habitat BMPs.
- Drafted and released an announcement for a seasonal assistant.
- Developed a request for rehabber data on box turtles.
- Meeting planning and prep.

Difficulties Encountered: None.

Activities Anticipated Next Quarter:

- Hold monthly conference calls with the EBT SC.
- Provide assistance to surveyors and researchers as needed as they prepare for the 2021 survey season.
- Plan for the 2021 spring field season.
- Conduct surveys in PA and MD.
- Compile and clean the 2020 field season survey data from all states.
- Continue to collect information and literature on prescribed fire and develop an outline for prescribed fire BMP in box turtle habitat.
- Organize and back up files.
- Complete a quarterly report.

Expected End Date: The end date of the next quarter is June 30, 2021

Costs:

Total life to date expenses (include this quarter): \$42,389.47

Total Approved Budgeted Funds: \$68,499.72

Are you within the approved budget plan and categories? Yes

Signature:  Type text here

Date: 07/27/2021