

# 2020 PROGRESS REPORT

Quarter: (circle one)      2020 1<sup>st</sup>      2020 2<sup>nd</sup>      2020 3<sup>rd</sup>      2020 4<sup>th</sup>

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, 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, 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 regional database, assist surveyors with pre 2021 field season needs, continue to enter, organize and perform quality control the data MACHAC collected in 2020, compile and clean the 2020 field season data from all the states, and continue to compile 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 RNC Steering Committee and drafted meeting notes.
- Conducted two 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 and the potential effects of fire on the Eastern Box Turtle.
- Assisted volunteer surveys with data entry questions.
- Corresponded with Elizabeth Crisfield, lead of the pollinator RNC group, to discuss the xeric habitat BMP.
- Participated in one meeting with NJ pineland experts to discuss pine barren management, specifically fire management.
- Communicated with Julian Avery on several occasions about the potential to collaborate on a project to assess sexual dimorphism and shell pattern and how they relate to environmental variables.
- Assisted the Baltimore Zoo with a survey/research design.
- Collected recent literature related to fire and the EBT.

- Participated in two AZA SAFE project calls to discuss finding housing for confiscated box turtles.
- Attended a webinar on opening the burn window for use of fire as a management tool.
- Downloaded and organized 2020 field season data.
- Reviewed PA rehabilitator data.
- Organized and back up files.
- Drafted a quarterly report.

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.
- Continue to enter, organize and perform quality control on the 2020 field season data collected by MACHAC.
- 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.
- Work with project partners to assist with the development of a grant pre-proposal to investigate the effects of fire on Eastern Box Turtles on DOD properties.
- Organize and back up files.
- Complete a quarterly report.

Expected End Date: The end date of the next quarter is March 31, 2021

Costs:

Total life to date expenses (include this quarter): \$38,058.99

Total Approved Budgeted Funds: \$68,499.72

Are you within the approved budget plan and categories? Yes

Signature: *Brandon M. Rule*

Date: 2/08/2021