

2021 PROGRESS REPORT

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

Grant Program, Number and Title: RCN, GSA 00047; Eastern Box Turtle Status Assessment, Conservation Plan, and Best Management Practices.

Organization: H. Patrick Roberts (Independent Contractor)

Project Leader: H. Patrick Roberts

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 this project is to develop a status assessment and conservation plan for the Eastern Box Turtle (*Terrapene carolina carolina*) in the northeastern United States. This contract with the Wildlife Management Institute was executed at the very end of the first quarter of 2019. As a result of this delayed start, the timeline for the initial objectives of this project was shifted forward accordingly.

During the first quarter of 2021, Lori Erb (of MACHAC) and I held monthly Steering Committee calls in January, February, and March to discuss progress toward the overarching goals and objectives of the project. During this quarter, we updated the population monitoring protocol and added these new documents to the northeastturtles.org website. We also updated the structure of the website to be more streamlined for volunteer use. I developed presentation that included summary statistics for the 2020 sampling season. Our second (February) Steering Committee meeting was a joint conference call that also included volunteer surveyors from throughout the region. This conference call, and an additional call for those that could not meet during the week, was intended to provide an overview of the 2020 sampling effort, summarize 2020 data collected, review any recent changes to the protocol, and address any questions or concerns from volunteers. We acquired additional eastern box turtle records from the MD Biodiversity Project and Virginia Herpetological Society and incorporated these data into the regional database. These records fill in data-deficient gaps in our dataset and we anticipate they will facilitate refinement of the regional SDM, which is currently underway. I also reached out to organizations throughout the region and requested existing mapping protocols to inform the standardized mapping protocol that will be used for development of the regionwide Conservation Area Network. Last, we continued to collect literature related to BMPs, the status assessment, and the conservation plan.

Immediate next steps will be to (1) continue to refine species distribution models and develop a methods document, (2) make progress on BMP materials, (3) continue to develop a standardized population mapping protocol, (4) assist volunteers and state agency surveyors, and (5) continue to hold monthly conference calls. We expect to complete this project by February 2023.

Were planned goals/objectives achieved last quarter? Yes.

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

Planned and accomplished:

- Monthly conference calls

- Continued to collect occurrence data
- Communicated with Julian Avery and graduate student about use of regional data for a graduate research project
- Collected literature related to prescribed fire and eastern box turtles
- Continued to refine species distribution models
- Began development of regional population mapping protocol

Difficulties Encountered: None.

Activities Anticipated Next Quarter:

- Continue to hold monthly conference calls
- Provide assistance to volunteers and agency biologists that are conducting surveys
- Continue to refine species distribution models and develop methods document
- Continue to develop BMP materials
- Continue development of regional population mapping protocol

Expected End Date: February 28, 2023.

Costs:

Total life to date expenses (include this quarter): \$38,528.86 (without match)

Total Approved Budgeted Funds: \$68,500

Are you within the approved budget plan and categories? Yes.

Signature: 

Date: 04/30/21