2020 PROGRESS REPORT

Quarter: (circle one)   (2020 1ˢᵗ)   2020 2ⁿᵈ   2020 3ʳᵈ   2020 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 2020, 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. We made major changes to the sampling protocol and field forms, and have made those updates available at northeastturtles.org. We planned to have in-person field training session in the southern (Lori) and northern (Patrick) portions of the region; however, these were canceled due to complication associated with COVID-19. Instead, we held a webinar (primarily led by Lori, with contributions from myself) to provide an overview of the project as well as monitoring protocol. We also held a conference call to discuss the development of a monitoring protocol tailored specifically for fire-managed areas. In addition to refining the sampling protocol, we finalized a complementary opportunistic genetic sampling protocol that could potentially, if desired, be implemented in conjunction with surveys. Lastly, we have continued to communicate with lead state agency biologists about coordinating regional survey protocol training workshops for volunteers and agency biologists.

At the end of the first quarter 2020, occurrence data had been received from all states, with pending data acquisition from a single non-government database. Despite these outstanding data, I have begun to develop a species distribution model for the Northeast. We are continuing to search for high-quality regional data layers that will be used in future modeling exercises. Immediate next steps will be to (1) continue to collect available occurrence data from throughout the Northeast, (2) search for relevant data layers until analyses are completed, (3) continue development of the regional species distribution model, (4) coordinate with state agencies regarding the 2020 field season, 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
- Collaborated with MACHAC and ATO to refine the regional population monitoring protocol

- Collect occurrence data from all states
- Gathered regional data layers for use in future modeling for this project
- Conducted QA/QC for regional database
- Began species distribution model development

Difficulties Encountered: N/A

Activities Anticipated Next Quarter:
- Continue to hold monthly conference calls
- Collect data from remaining sources (e.g., Herp Mapper, personal datasets, and new records from states)
- Continue to gather regional data layers
- Continue development of species distribution model
- Begin to develop public communications materials

Expected End Date: February 28, 2023.

Costs:

Total life to date expenses (include this quarter): $32,930.98 (including match)

Total Approved Budgeted Funds: $68,500

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

Signature:

Date: 5/31/2020