

2020 PROGRESS REPORT

Quarter: (circle one)

2020 1st

2020 2nd

2019 3rd

2020 4th

Grant Program, Number and Title: GSA 00074 - Conservation Plan for the Blanding's Turtle and associated Species of Conservation Need in the Northeastern United States

Organization: Oriante Society

Project Leader: Kiley Briggs

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 main priority for the current phase of the project was to strategize conservation priorities at the selected sites and initiate conservation efforts where possible. Despite planned meetings and site-visits in several states being canceled due to the present pandemic, we were able to make progress in several areas. First, very productive meetings were held remotely with partners from New York to begin strategizing nest site management and land acquisition priorities for two Blanding's Turtle sites in the Saint Lawrence River Valley. Those meetings culminated in the board of the Saint Lawrence Land Trust giving the go-ahead to pursue funding to purchase high priority parcels in at least one of the Blanding's Turtle sites. At least one major landowner in that area is willing to sell high priority parcels and we will be working with Dr. Glenn Johnson as needed to assist with funding proposals and to determine which parcels are the highest priorities to conserve. Similar meetings to prioritize land conservation and nesting habitat management also took place with the Thousand Island Land Trust for an additional site farther west.

Several meetings were held to finalize site selection and begin discussion of habitat restoration priorities in Massachusetts, bringing the number of sites we will focus on in that state up to three (a fourth may be added in the near future). At one site we had planned to coordinate and lead a work day to patch a section of fencing along a major highway that prevents Blanding's Turtles from venturing onto the road during the nesting season, but unfortunately coronavirus infection rates in that county remain high (and are rising), so it is now likely that the work day will be postponed until 2021.

Recently we also began a discussion with the Northeast Blanding's Turtle Working Group to decide the best format and target audience for printed documents outlining best management practices for Blanding's Turtle habitat.

Were planned goals/objectives achieved last quarter?

Mostly. The second quarter of each year is intended to be fairly light in terms of progress on this RCN grant due to busy spring field schedules among ourselves and all of our state partners involved in this project. Despite meetings and site visits being cancelled due to the coronavirus, we were able to move the project along to a satisfying degree and are optimistic that the pace of progress will accelerate over the summer. One aspect of the project (maintaining and updating a geospatial database) we have been unable to work on due to the database not yet being ready for use (it is being developed by a different contractor). In recent meetings it sounded as if the geospatial database will be ready very soon, and in the meantime we are keeping track of the necessary

information in a spreadsheet.

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

- Finalized site selection
- Continued site-specific planning sessions (remotely)
- Began discussions about the format and target audience of best management practice documents
- Produced maps to assist with conservation planning in New York

Difficulties Encountered:

Site visits, in-person meetings, and a high priority work day to patch a section of fencing are all on hold due to the pandemic.

Activities Anticipated Next Quarter:

- Possible site visits to St. Lawrence Valley of New York to prioritize parcels being considered for acquisition
- Additional site-specific planning sessions (online format)
- Begin creation of BMP documents

Expected End Date:

March 2022

Costs:

Total life to date expenses (include this quarter):

Total Approved Budgeted Funds:

Are you within the approved budget plan and categories? YES

Signature:

A handwritten signature in black ink, appearing to be 'K. R.', written in a cursive style.

Date: July 30, 2020