

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 priorities for the current phase of the project were to continue strategizing conservation priorities at the selected sites and to begin the production of Best Management Practice (BMP) documents for landowners and habitat managers. In New York, we hosted a conservation planning session for one site in Dutchess County with six partners including NYSDEC, Hudsonia, The Wetlands Trust, and the New York Department of Parks and Recreation. One major goal of this meeting was to get a variety of partners thinking about and managing the resident Blanding's Turtles as one interconnected population rather than as three separate populations, and we also decided on some initial conservation actions that can be implemented in the summer if inter-state travel is possible at that time. In Maine we also hosted a land protection subcommittee meeting to identify a handful of parcels to target landowner outreach in the coming months. Additional follow-up meetings were held with partners in Massachusetts and New Hampshire.

Production of BMP documents continued, with a brochure draft targeted to landowners being released to the Northeast Blanding's Turtle Working Group for review and comments in mid-December. We also began drafting a more detailed BMP booklet intended for use by conservation organizations, private foresters, land trusts, etc.

Were planned goals/objectives achieved last quarter?

Mostly, however the present pandemic continued to inhibit progress on any aspect of the grant requiring travel to other states. For example, effecting repairs to a fence that stops turtles from crossing a busy highway in Massachusetts is deferred until the spring or summer of 2021, as well as visiting sites to ground truth potential locations for nest site management. We are optimistic that these components of the project can be resumed by early summer.

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

- Initial site-specific planning sessions completed for the final sites
- Land protection subcommittee formed for one site in Maine and first meeting held
- Continued planning conservation actions at selected sites – on schedule. Several on-the-ground restoration activities planned for 2021 (contingent on travel restrictions).
- Produced draft BMP brochure for landowners and began drafting BMP booklet for land

managers.

Difficulties Encountered:

Site visits, in-person meetings, and two fence or retaining wall maintenance projects on hold until travel outside of Vermont can occur without the need to quarantine afterwards.

Activities Anticipated Next Quarter:

- Finalize BMP brochure (except for images), Complete draft of BMP booklet
- Continue meeting with state biologists and partners to plan and prioritize conservation actions
- Enter site information into geospatial database if it is ready for use before the end of the quarter
- Develop 2021 nest site monitoring strategy for select sites

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: January 25, 2021