

2021 PROGRESS REPORT

Quarter: (circle one)

2021 1st

2021 2nd

2021 3rd

2021 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 primary areas of focus this quarter were to complete drafts of Best Management Practice (BMP) documents outlining management guidelines in forestry, recreational, and nesting habitat settings and to meet with partners in each state to plan site visits and management priorities for the following quarter. We completed a draft BMP brochure intended for use by landowners to help them improve Blanding's Turtle habitat primarily in forested settings (apart from needing to replace images), and made significant progress in drafting a much more detailed booklet that will be distributed to land managers, foresters, conservation organizations, land trust, and government biologists that operate in areas critical to Blanding's Turtle conservation. The booklet draft is approximately 75% complete and the next major step for both the booklet and brochure is to replace placeholder images sourced online with those that will be taken by Oriante staff or members of the Northeast Blanding's Turtle Working Group. Concurrent to this, we also reviewed and provided thorough feedback on detailed draft BMP guidelines that are in revision and were the basis for what we outline in the brochure and booklet.

We also held a handful of video conference meetings with partners in New York, New Hampshire, and Massachusetts to plan necessary site visits this spring that will be used to help guide habitat management efforts that may take place later this year. Chiefly, these meetings focused on where nesting habitat site visits and assessments are most needed, either because little is known about where Blanding's Turtles currently nest at a given site or because many years have passed since the last round of habitat management. In New Hampshire, these talks also included a board member from the Fremont School Administration Unit (SAU), which owns significant nesting habitat that may one day be developed into a new high school, but that had not previously been roped into conversations about the importance of Blanding's Turtle conservation on-site. The result of these meetings will be followup visits to sites in the spring to rank nesting habitat locations and restoration need with possible on-the-ground management to take place later in the year. We also met with MassDOT and USFWS to plan a volunteer work day to patch fencing meant to deter gravid Blanding's Turtles from nesting along Route 2 at Oxbow National Wildlife Refuge.

The project is still on course for completion in March 2022.

Were planned goals/objectives achieved last quarter?

Yes. Draft BMP documents were completed (and nearly completed), and the meetings we held were very productive and have allowed us to hit the ground running in the second quarter.

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

- Goal: Completed draft BMP brochure and booklet. Accomplishment: Completed draft brochure, nearly completed draft booklet.
- Goal: Planning sessions in NY, MA, and NH to strategize site visits, habitat assessments, and volunteer work days next quarter. Goal was fully accomplished.

Difficulties Encountered:

This quarter marked an end to difficulties encountered the previous several quarters in which travel across state lines was problematic and state partners were, at times, difficult to coordinate with due to complicated schedules caused by the pandemic.

Activities Anticipated Next Quarter:

- Volunteer work day to patch fencing along Rt. 2 at Oxbow NWR
- Assess available nesting habitat at the Cranberry Creek site in upstate NY.
- Assess nesting habitat restoration need and feasibility at a variety of sites within two focal core areas in MA.
- Potential nest site monitoring in NH
- Presentation to Fremont SAU school board
- Additional attempts to open a line of communication with the New Market Conservation Commission in NH
- Plan landowner outreach in Dutchess County NY (potentially) and around Unkety WMA in MA

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:



Date: April 30, 2021