

2019 PROGRESS REPORT

Quarter: (circle one) 2019 1st 2019 2nd 2019 3rd 2019 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 third quarter of 2019, Patrick Roberts and Lori Erb (of MACHAC) held monthly Steering Committee calls in July, August, and September to discuss progress toward the overarching goals and objectives of the project, particularly the continued development of an Eastern Box Turtle (EBT) standardized monitoring protocol, preparation for the development of EBT habitat management guidelines, and formation of the EBT Working Group. In an effort to gauge the relative interest and availability for collaboration on this project (particularly sampling) Patrick Roberts and Lori Erb contacted state agency leads throughout the region and summarized their responses. Following this effort, Patrick, Lori, and Lisabeth Willey (ATO) developed a survey to collect information that would inform the standardized monitoring protocol development as well as the regional understanding (e.g., distribution, status, habitat associations) of the species throughout the region. The results of this survey were summarized and reported to the Steering Committee in September. The EBT monitoring protocol is currently being revised to reflect the survey results and pilot surveys conducted during the summer. Eastern Box Turtle related fire management literature was compiled to support and inform the future development of management guidelines.

To date, occurrence data has been received from the Massachusetts, Rhode Island, Maine, New York, Maryland, District of Columbia, Delaware, Virginia, and West Virginia. We are continuing to contact and work with the remaining state agencies as well as other organizations and individual researchers to build this regional occurrence database. We are currently searching 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) begin to develop public communications materials, (4) establish the EBT Working Group framework, 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
- Coordinated with state agencies to implement the protocol in a subset of states in the Northeast
- Continued to request occurrence data from state agencies
- Gathered regional data layers for use in future modeling for this project

Difficulties Encountered: N/A

Activities Anticipated Next Quarter:

- Continue to hold monthly conference calls
- Work with remaining state agencies to develop data-sharing agreements for occurrence data
- Continue to develop the regional occurrence database
- Continue to gather regional data layers
- Establish the EBT Working Group
- Begin to develop public communications materials

Expected End Date: February 28, 2023.

Costs:

Total life to date expenses (include this quarter): \$19,758.7 (including match)

Total Approved Budgeted Funds: \$68,500

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

Signature: 

Date: 10/13/2019