

NOTE: T-46 covers this project too. It is attached at the end of this document.

**FINAL PERFORMANCE REPORT
South Carolina State Wildlife Grant T-10-P-1**

Landscape Planning for Priority Wildlife Species on Agricultural Lands
June 2, 2006 – September 30, 2009

GRANT OBJECTIVE

Build capacity for the delivery of technical guidance to private landowners and agricultural producers resulting in habitat enhancements and restoration for priority wildlife species identified in South Carolina's Comprehensive Wildlife Conservation Strategy.

ACTIVITY OVERVIEW

Three wildlife biologists (Cory Drennan, Evan Myers, and Margaret McElveen) were hired on June 2, 2006. These positions are located in county USDA (Natural Resource Conservation Service - NRCS) Service Center offices as their home county and cover 23 surrounding counties. Krista Noel was hired March 17, 2008 to replace Margaret McElveen, who resigned December, 2007. Evan Myers resigned September 5, 2008 and Cory Drennan resigned January 1, 2009. Due to state budget and grant cuts, these two positions have not been filled.

Since June 2006, these four wildlife biologists have written 189 Conservation Plans affecting 136,393 acres in all counties assigned to them. They have conducted 37 programs for 2,108 participants. Eight news releases and three brochures have been written and disseminated to the public. Due to location in state, two of the wildlife biologists conducted spring and fall call counts for CP33 and one conducted transects for painted buntings for a total of 140 call or transect points. One of the biologists also participated in the Christmas Bird Count.

South Carolina Department of Natural Resources and the Natural Resources Conservation Service are very pleased with this program. These wildlife biologists have made a positive impact on the ground for wildlife utilizing Farm Bill programs and have strengthened relationships between the two agencies as well as private landowners.

Total expenditures for 10/1/08-9/30/09 period: \$37,630.29

Total expenditures to date: \$ 294,520.00 (grant contract is closed)

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Small Game Project

FINAL PERFORMANCE REPORT
South Carolina State Wildlife Grant T-46 (F06AF00027)
Habitat Improvement for Grassland Birds
October 1, 2006 – September 30, 2012

GRANT OBJECTIVES

Improve grassland bird habitat on Oak Lea Wildlife Management Areas (WMA), Bland Tract WMA, and Tuomey Tract WMA by developing and implementing various management strategies (e.g., burning, mowing, disking, fallow buffers, fallow fields, longleaf pine and native grass establishment) and monitor bird population responses.

ACTIVITY OVERVIEW:

Activities associated with the grant are described below, according to the original tasks and subtasks in the Project Statement for this grant.

Tasks

I. Hire a wildlife technician to implement grassland bird habitat improvements on Oak Lea, Bland and Tuomey WMA's and monitor grassland bird responses.

Activity: Two full-time and one hourly employee worked as the dedicated wildlife technician throughout the life of this grant. Thomas Edward Laney worked in this position January 1, 2007 until July 2009 when he took a permanent position within the agency. A part-time temporary technician was utilized from July 2009 to December 2010 until SCDNR was able to fill the position with a full-time wildlife technician. Jason S. Davis was selected in November 2010. He began work on December 2, 2010. Jason S. Davis worked in this position until July 2012 when he decided to return to school to advance his education. Existing SCDNR staff and a part-time hourly continued with the field activities until the end of the grant period.

Significant deviations: None

II. Implement habitat improvements beneficial to grassland birds on project areas.

Activity:

On Oak Lea WMA, there were 137 acres winter disked to improve brood rearing habitat. Twenty-three miles of firebreaks maintained and 10 miles installed. Two hundred and forty-five acres were burned to improve native grass habitat. Seventy-one miles of roads were mowed to facilitate management and recreational access and 2 miles of roadway refurbished. One hundred and nineteen acres of quail plots were disked, fertilized and planted in small grains for quail and songbirds. Thirty-five acres of small grains were planted adjacent to the existing dove field. Seven hundred and seventy-five acres were disked, fertilized, planted and maintained as a single 137 acre dove field. One hundred and eighty-eight acres adjacent to and within the dove field were maintained as fallow land for quail and grassland birds. Fifty-two acres of field borders were reclaimed, 27

lespedeza patches and 3 logging decks were mowed and converted to native warm season patches. Twenty-five hundred soft mast seedlings were planted. Herbicide was applied to 6 acres of Bermuda grass (*Cynodon dactylon*).

On Bland Tract WMA, 139 acres were winter disked to improve brood rearing habitat. Forty acres of wheat were planted for quail and songbirds along roadsides. One hundred and thirty-six acres of quail plots were disked, planted and maintained. Three hundred and ninety-six acres were disked, fertilized, planted and maintained as a single 84 acre dove field. Twenty four miles of firebreaks were maintained. Four hundred and forty-two acres were burned to improve native grass habitat. Herbicide was applied to 112 acres to control Bermuda grass (*C. dactylon*). One hundred and seven acres adjacent to and within the dove field were maintained as fallow land for quail and grassland birds. Twenty-seven patches of lespedeza were mowed. Sixteen acres of roadside was converted to wheat and native grass areas. One hundred soft mast seedlings were planted.

On Tuomey Tract WMA, 220 acres were disked to improve quail and songbird habitat. Two hundred and eight acres were planted to enhance food sources available to quail. Seventy-seven acres were planted in small grains for quail and songbirds. Nineteen miles of roads were mowed and maintained to facilitate management. Four hundred and fifty acres were disked, fertilized, planted and maintained as a single 75 acre dove field. Five hundred and sixty acres were burned to improve native pyrophytic species. Thirty-six hundred soft mast seedlings and 400 hardwood mast trees were planted.

Significant deviations: None

III. Monitor grassland bird responses to habitat management

Activity: Fall quail covey counts were conducted on Oak Lea WMA, Bland Tract WMA, and Toumey Tract WMA in either October or November each year. Survey points were established on all 3 tracts and summer quail and songbird surveys were conducted in July. These call counts were continued annually to monitor impacts of management activities on quail and grassland birds. Dove banding was conducted each year as part of the eastern management unit project. Quail banding occurred the first year with walk in trap sites to monitor impacts of hunting on the population.

Significant deviations: None

Estimated Federal Cost (Oct. 1, 2006 to Sept. 30, 2012): \$250,667.70