2018 State Wildlife Grant Proposal

Ozark-St. Francis National Forests, Pleasant Hill Ranger District

Oak Woodland Restoration Proposal



Project Summary: - The Pleasant Hill Ranger District has 1,781 acres of lands restored to woodland tree density within Franklin County. Density of trees was reduced to basal areas of 35-50 ft²/acre with chainsaw falling through stewardship. These woodland restoration areas are contained in landscape scale prescribed fire units – with 3 year fire return intervals. In some of the woodland restoration areas, to expedite return to woodland structure and function, herbicide use would further reduce the component of woody species in the understory. This would provide for greater herbaceous species abundance and diversity, providing nesting, brooding and foraging benefits for several SGCN species, including pollinators.

Project Leader: Jeremy Everitts – District Biologist Arkansas National Wild Turkey Federation 770 Augusta Road Edgefield, SC 29824 (301) 667-1072 jeveritts@nwtf.net

Project Partner Name	Project Partner Affiliation	Project Partner Contacts
Greg Taylor	Ozark National Forest	(479)754-2864 ext. 2869
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McRee Anderson	The Nature Conservancy	(870)861-3131
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Benny Bowers	Arkansas Game & Fish Commission	(479)264-4861
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Project Budget:

Partner	Amount	Description			
State Wildlife Grant	\$55,440	Requested Funds			
National Wild Turkey Federation	\$6,560 \$1,000	Superfund 07/10/17 (matching) SWG Contract Inspection (matching)			
The Nature Conservancy	\$11,000	Staff Time for monitoring 2018, 2021, 2024, 2027 (matching)			
Arkansas Game & Fish Commission	\$1,200	Staff Time/Vehicle Cost (matching)			
USDA Forest Service TOTAL PROJECT AMOUNT	\$281,383 \$356,583	Federal Funds (not included as match)			

PROJECT STATEMENT (*Pleasant Hill Ranger District – Woodland Restoration Proposal*):

Project Need: There is a need to enhance plant and wildlife diversity by maintaining oak woodlands on public lands administered by the USDA Forest Service. Wildlife habitat exhibiting woodland structure and function has become increasing scarce on public lands. Lack of woodland habitat has led to a corresponding reduction in plant and wildlife diversity on public lands. This project will address the following priorities:

- 1) Improve habitat for woodland obligate species.
- 2) Maintain habitat for these species through use of periodic prescribed fire.

Purpose and Objectives:

The purpose of this project is to expedite the movement of wildlife habitat to the structure and proper functioning characteristic of woodlands. The first objective is to implement 668 acres of woodland habitat maintenance with herbicide application in fiscal years 2018 thru 2020. The second objective is to implement 14,384 acres of woodland habitat maintenance with prescribed fire in fiscal years 2018 thru 2020. Improvement of understory plant diversity and abundance with concomitant benefits to SGCN species would be monitored by existing vegetation monitoring plots. These plots are monitored cooperatively every three years by The Nature Conservancy (TNC) and the USDA Forest Service (FS).

Location:

The project would take place on public lands administered by the Ozark–St. Francis National Forests, Pleasant Hill Ranger District. The project area falls within the Boston Mountains Ecoregion (38). The majority of the project area is within Franklin County. A small portion of the project area is just across the county line in Johnson County (see map). Habitats targeted for improvement include: Ozark-Ouachita Dry Oak and Pine Woodland; Ozark-Ouachita Pine-Oak Forest-Woodland; and Ozark-Ouachita Prairie and Woodland.

Approach:

The Pleasant Hill Ranger District has 1,781 acres of lands restored to oak/pine woodland tree density within Franklin County. Previously, the density of trees in woodland areas was reduced to basal areas of 35-50 ft²/acre with chainsaw falling. This work was accomplished primarily as service work associated with Stewardship Contracts. Some glade and upland bog areas are included within these woodland restoration areas. These woodland restoration areas have been burned with prescribed fire 1-2 times each between 2013 and 2016. Additional maintenance with fire will commence in 2018 for these areas, each with multiple burns on a 3 year fire return interval, long-term. In some of the woodland restoration areas, to expedite return to woodland structure and function, herbicide use would further reduce the component of woody species in the understory. Hack & squirt/foliar application of triclopyr herbicide would be utilized on 668 acres of woodland restoration areas. Contracts for this work would be administered by the FS and NWTF. Prescribed fire would continue in the project area with 14,384 acres burned by the FS. Woodland restoration monitoring would occur in 2018, 2021, 2024 and 2027 through a cooperative effort by TNC and FS on established vegetation monitoring plots. Existing turkey and black bear population trend monitoring routes would continue to be run cooperatively by AGFC and the Forest Service.

Fiscal Year	Activity	Acres	Funding Source
2018	Woodland Herbicide Application	59	NWTF (match)
2018	Prescribed Fire	2,370	FS (non match)
2019	Woodland Herbicide Application	356	SWG (requested funds)
2019	Woodland Herbicide Application	253	FS (non match)
2019	Prescribed Fire	2,550	FS (non match)
2020	Prescribed Fire	9,464	FS (non match)

Timeline for Accomplishments (Vegetation Treatment)

Timeline for Accomplishments (Monitoring)

Fiscal Year	Fiscal Year Activity Ur		Funding Source
2018/2021/2024/2027	Vegetation Monitoring	15 plots/year	TNC (match)

Expected Results and Benefits:

Increased funding for this ongoing **project will be beneficial 24 SGCN species, including Diana fritillary, Monarch butterfly and other pollinators, Federally listed bat species, migratory passerine birds and Northern bobwhite quail.** Continuation of this project would result in woodland characteristics including open canopy conditions which are conducive to understory herbaceous vegetation used for cover and foraging. Woodland SGCN species which may benefit from this project are shown below.

Species of Greatest Conservation Need (SGCN) Boston Mountains (Ecoregion 38)

Ozark-Ouachita Dry Oak and Pine Woodland / Ozark-Ouachita Pine-Oak Forest-Woodland* / Ozark-Ouachita Prairie and Woodland**

	Species	Priority Score (1-100)	Habitat Weight	Global Rank	State Rank	Documented in Project Vicinity √
1	Ozark Big-eared Bat	80	suitable	G3G4T1	S1	V
2	Northern Long-eared Bat	63	suitable	G1G2	S1S2	V
3	Indiana Bat	62	suitable	G2	S1	V
4	Linda's Roadside Skipper	38	optimal	G2G3	S1S3	habitat present
5	Little Brown Bat	33	suitable	G3	S3	V
6	Bachman's Sparrow	33	marginal	G3	S3B	habitat present
7	Bewick's Wren	29	optimal	G5	S1B, S2N	habitat present
8	Eastern Small-footed Bat	27	suitable	G4	S1	V
9	Diana Fritillary*	25	optimal	G3G4	S2S3	V
10	American Woodcock**	24	suitable	G5	S2B, S3N	V
11	Outis Skipper	23	suitable	G3G4	S3	habitat present
12	Eastern Spotted Skunk	21	suitable	G4	S2S3	V
13	Bell's Roadside Skipper	21	optimal	G3G4	S3S4	habitat present
14	Golden-banded Skipper	21	optimal	G4	S2S3	habitat present
15	Sharp-shinned Hawk	19	marginal	G5	S3	V

16	Eastern Whip-poor-will	19	optimal	G5	S3B	V
17	Chimney Swift*	19	suitable	G5	S3B	V
18	Yellow-billed Cuckoo	19	suitable	G5	S3B	V
19	Northern Bobwhite	19	optimal	G5	S3	V
20	Purple Finch	19	suitable	G5	S3N	V
21	Leonard's Skipper	19	suitable	G4	S3	habitat present
22	Cobweb Skipper	19	suitable	G4	S3	habitat present
23	W. Diamond-backed	17	suitable	G5	S2S3	V
	Rattlesnake					
24	Monarch Butterfly	15	suitable	G4	S4	V

*Intergrades/overlaps with Ozark-Ouachita Dry Oak and Pine Woodland habitat type

**Glade and upland bog areas present in portions of Ozark-Ouachita Dry Oak and Pine Woodland – suitable for this species

Budget:

Partner	Contribution	Activity	Planned Date
NWTF (match)	\$4,560	Herbicide Contract - 59 acres (Superfund)	Summer 2018
	\$2,000	Opening Maintenance – 25 acres (Superfund)	Summer 2018
	\$1,000	SWG Contract Inspection	Summer 2019 Summer 2020
The Nature Conservancy (match)	\$11,000	Staff Salary, vehicle cost, database entry – monitoring 15 plots (5 inside, 10 more in vicinity)	2018,2021,2024,2027
Arkansas Game and Fish Commission (match)	\$1,200	Staff Salary and vehicle cost – monitoring and contract inspection	2018, 2019
TOTAL Non-Federal Matching Funds	\$19,760	36% non-federal match to reque	ested SWG funds
USDA Forest Service	\$281,383	RX Fire – 2,370 ac \$40,290	Spring 2018
(non-match)		Herbicide Contract – 253 ac. - \$34,155	Summer 2019
		RX Fire – 2,550 ac. – \$43,350	Spring 2019
		Rx Fire – 9,464 ac \$160,888	Spring 2020
		Monitoring - \$2,700	2018,2021,2024,2027
State Wildlife Grant	\$55,440	Herbicide contract - 356 acres	Summer 2019
(requested)			Summer 2020

Qualifications of Project Leader and Project Partners:

Jeremy Everitts (Project Leader)

Jeremy received his B.S. degree in Wildlife and Fisheries Sciences from The Pennsylvania State University in 2007 and his M.S. degree in Biology from Arkansas State University in 2011. After graduating, he worked as the Assistant Wildlife Biologist in Fairfax County, Virginia. Since December 2013, he has served as the District Biologist for the National Wild Turkey Federation and is responsible for all conservation activities within the state of Arkansas. Jeremy is a Certified Wildlife Biologist. His main responsibilities involve implementing and managing Wildlife Stewardship Project Agreements with the U.S. Forest Service and overseeing state Superfund Grants with partners in like the Arkansas Game and Fish Commission, U.S. Forest Service, Arkansas Natural Heritage Commission, Arkansas Forestry Commission, U.S. Army Corp of Engineers, and U.S. Fish and Wildlife Service.

Greg Taylor (Project Partner)

Greg received his B.S degree in Wildlife and Fisheries Biology from Kansas State University in 1989. Since 2003, he has served as the District Wildlife Biologist for the Ozark National Forest, Pleasant Hill Ranger District. His responsibilities on the Ranger District include, ecosystem restoration, wildlife habitat improvement, NNIS treatment, TES and NEPA compliance and wildlife monitoring. Prior work experience includes: habitat and fuels management, and TES/NEPA compliance with the George Washington-Jefferson National Forest in Virginia (2001-2003); and, fire suppression, habitat and fuels management and ecosystem restoration with the Bureau of Land Management in California, Arizona and Utah (1988-2001).

McCree Anderson (Project Partner)

McRee Anderson is the Nature Conservancy's Interior Highlands and Fire Restoration Programs Director in Arkansas and the former Planning Director for the Shortleaf Pine Initiative. In addition, he is the South-Central Leader for the Fire learning Network, with landscape-scale project sites totaling 500,000 acres. As Arkansas' Program Director, he co-manages the Arkansas Fire Program, conducting 10,000 acres of fire annually. McRee is Co-Chair of the Ozark Quachita Highlands Collaborative, bringing together regional partners to address forest health issues related to altered fire regimes. McRee is a founding member of the Arkansas Prescribed Fire Council, currently serving as Chairman. McRee is involved with international fire, woodlands and savanna management issues in Colombia and Zambia. McRee received a Master's degree in Natural Resources from Portland State University and is a RXB2 burn boss.

Benny Bowers (Project Partner)

Benny Bowers began work with the Arkansas Game and Fish Commission in 2006 as a Wildlife Technician on the Mount Magazine Ranger District. He became a Biologist in 2011. He is currently the AGFC Biologist for the White Rock Wildlife Management Area on the Pleasant Hill and Boston Mountain Ranger Districts and the Lee Creek WMA in Northwest Arkansas. He received a B.S. Degree in Fisheries and Wildlife in 1998 from Arkansas Tech University in Russellville, Arkansas. Since 2006 has worked cooperatively with the Mount Magazine, Boston Mountain, and Pleasant Hill Ranger Districts on several wildlife management projects across the forest including early successional habitats, glade restoration, and open land management.

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