

Final Abstract

Final Report Approved on September 24, 2024

M.L. 2021 Project Abstract

For the Period Ending June 30, 2023

Project Title: Restoring Upland Forests for Birds

Project Manager: John Haben

Affiliation: American Bird Conservancy - Great Lakes Program

Mailing Address: Natural Resources Conservation Service Duluth Field Office 4850 Miller Trunk Hwy

City/State/Zip: Duluth, MN 55811

Phone: (952) 388-8431

E-mail: JHaben@abcbirds.org

Website: <https://abcbirds.org/>

Funding Source:

Fiscal Year:

Legal Citation: M.L. 2021, First Special Session, Chp. 6, Art. 6, Sec. 2, Subd. 08f

Appropriation Amount: \$193,000

Amount Spent: \$16,753

Amount Remaining: \$176,247

Sound bite of Project Outcomes and Results

American Bird Conservancy (ABC) restored 12 acres of deciduous forest in partnership with Aitkin, Beltrami and Cass Counties, utilizing science-based Best Management Practices to rejuvenate non-commercial stands for focal wildlife species. The outcomes of this project will be shared on the ABC website.

Overall Project Outcome and Results

The purpose of this project was to help northern Minnesota counties (Aitkin, Cass, Beltrami) manage their upland timber sites during a period when stumpage prices were at a level that made small scale habitat projects not commercially viable. While assisting the counties, the goal of this project was to create early successional forest habitat and to improve the overall quality of timber stands. This project was implemented by respective counties providing American Bird Conservancy (ABC) with projects lacking market interest. ABC would then put these projects out for bid, accepting the best offer from contractors.

Ultimately, this project resulted in only 12 acres of early successional habitat created in Aitkin County, because of a considerable increase in stumpage prices while this project was active. Since county partners are required to consider

bids received as a result of the increased stumpage price, the need for any supplemental funding to complete projects has been greatly reduced.

Additionally, the land commissioners from two of the three partnering counties, Aitkin County and Cass County, as well as multiple foresters integral in the development and implementation of projects associated with this grant, have since moved on or retired from their positions. As a result, multiple county partners lack the capacity to assist ABC with the identification of alternate project sites that might be viable options for this project.

During this process, ABC maintained positive relationships with partners and developed fresh relationships with the new land commissioners, constantly communicating about project goals and challenges as they arose. This continual communication and a shared interest in the conservation and societal goals of this project has laid the groundwork for future collaborations to make Minnesota public areas more resilient.

Project Results Use and Dissemination

Activities associated with this effort will be shared on ABC's website. An in-person event was held August 2-3, 2022 at Pineridge Grouse Camp in Grand Rapids, MN to educate county partners and local constituents on the importance of creating early successional habitat. This event helped demonstrate the importance of forest management and developing early successional habitat to the attendees, which included county, USFS, NRCS, RGS employees, and private landowners.



Environment and Natural Resources Trust Fund

M.L. 2021 Approved Final Report

General Information

Date: November 8, 2024

ID Number: 2021-084

Staff Lead: Noah Fribley

Project Title: Restoring Upland Forests for Birds

Project Budget: \$193,000

Project Manager Information

Name: John Haben

Organization: American Bird Conservancy - Great Lakes Program

Office Telephone: (952) 388-8431

Email: JHaben@abcbirds.org

Web Address: <https://abcbirds.org/>

Project Reporting

Final Report Approved: September 24, 2024

Reporting Status: Project Completed

Date of Last Action: September 24, 2024

Project Completion: February 28, 2023

Legal Information

Legal Citation: M.L. 2021, First Special Session, Chp. 6, Art. 6, Sec. 2, Subd. 08f

Appropriation Language: \$193,000 the first year is from the trust fund to the commissioner of natural resources for an agreement with the American Bird Conservancy to restore deciduous forest in partnership with Aitkin, Beltrami, and Cass Counties using science-based best management practices to rejuvenate noncommercial stands for focal wildlife species.

Appropriation End Date: June 30, 2024

Narrative

Project Summary: ABC will restore a minimum of 300 acres of deciduous forest in partnership with Aitkin, Beltrami and Cass Counties, utilizing science-based BMPs to rejuvenate non-commercial stands for focal wildlife species.

Describe the opportunity or problem your proposal seeks to address. Include any relevant background information.

This pilot project supports ongoing efforts to restore and enhance breeding habitat for Golden-winged Warbler (GWWA), American Woodcock (AMWO) and Ruffed Grouse (RUGR) on publicly-protected lands in Minnesota, benefiting associated deciduous forest wildlife.

GWWA and AMWO are species of greatest conservation need (SGCN) in the Minnesota Wildlife Action Plan. Range-wide habitat loss from land use change and forest fragmentation led to GWWA population declines of approximately 68% over the past 50 years and, in 2011, considered for listing under the Endangered Species Act. Approximately half of the GWWA global population breeds in Minnesota forests. AMWO populations declined over the last quarter century by 1-2% per year. AMWO is on the 2016 North American Bird Conservation Initiative State of the Birds Watch List, which identifies species in danger of extinction without conservation action.

Partners at the Aitkin, Beltrami and Cass County Land Departments have begun identifying timber stands on county-administered lands that are on the verge of being classified as non-forests. In some cases, these stands are approaching <10% canopy cover with poor-quality (low density, wind-damaged, shrub-dominated), requiring non-commercial treatments to restore their biological, ecological and economic functions. We will address these problems, restoring these forests to support focal bird species.

What is your proposed solution to the problem or opportunity discussed above? Introduce us to the work you are seeking funding to do. You will be asked to expand on this proposed solution in Activities & Milestones.

This pilot project will restore and enhance habitat in deciduous forest stands through non-commercial management, using GWWA science-based best management practices (BMPs). Project operations will remove a component of woody vegetation with limited wildlife value to create high-quality early successional habitat (ESH) featuring denser, healthier young aspen and/or mixed hardwood regeneration, while retaining the component of internal stand structure required by ESH SGCN.

Target sites currently have limited wildlife benefits and timber potential. They contain low tree volume with an understory composed of dense shrubs, deadfall/blowdown and limited advanced regeneration. Left untreated, managers cannot mimic natural disturbance or promote healthy succession through commercial timber sale.

Primary project costs include hiring contractors to implement mechanical sheering and remove trees that are inhibiting regeneration and/or have little wildlife value, while retaining healthy trees as residual internal structure and promoting healthy stand regeneration. When necessary, contractors may also perform additional non-commercial treatments such as soil scarification or planting to promote tree regeneration and limit shrub competition in some stands. Additional funds would support ABC's project management and planning costs, including final site identification, project design, partner coordination, and contractor management, plus related in-state travel to execute activities and evaluate results.

What are the specific project outcomes as they relate to the public purpose of protection, conservation, preservation, and enhancement of the state's natural resources?

This pilot project will produce high-quality ESH habitat on a minimum of 300 acres for 10+ years. Previous monitoring of similar ABC forest projects observed a GWWA occupancy rate of 90%, with 0.32 pairs/acre and 1.5 juveniles/pair during each breeding season. Therefore, we estimate this project will support breeding habitat for approximately 86 GWWA breeding pairs, adding 129 juveniles/year to a globally imperiled population. Furthermore, ABC monitoring has also

shown habitat treated using GWW BMPS to benefit associated ESH SGCN including AMWO, Veery, Black-billed Cuckoo, White-throated Sparrow, Rose-breasted Grosbeak and Sedge Wren.

Project Location

What is the best scale for describing where your work will take place?

Region(s): Central, NE, NW,

What is the best scale to describe the area impacted by your work?

Region(s): NW, NE, Central,

When will the work impact occur?

In the Future

Activities and Milestones

Activity 1: Complete Habitat Restoration on a Minimum of 300 acres in Collaboration with Beltrami, Aitkin and Cass County Land Departments

Activity Budget: \$193,000

Activity Description:

Objective: Convert low-quality deciduous forest sites into high-quality ESH that serves the breeding-season needs of focal bird species.

Task 1: Site Assessments

In collaboration with County natural resource staff, the ABC project manager will evaluate prospective project sites using GWWA and AMWO BMPs to assess habitat suitability and restoration goals. GIS research and in-person site visits will be key phases in this process. We will update the parcel table within the work plan regularly as final site selections are made.

Task 2: Management Plan Development and Engagement of Contractors

ABC staff will develop stand-level management plans for implementing restoration activities and engage qualified, local forestry contractors to conduct treatments through a competitive bidding process.

Task 3: Implementation of Restoration

Selected contractors will execute non-commercial timber harvest, mechanical brush sheering activities and additional operations if necessary in accordance with site management plans, using focal species BMPs to produce breeding habitat, while implementing strategic silvicultural planning to promote future forest productivity.

Task 4: Evaluation of Results

We will visit sites within 14 days of treatments and again one year post-treatment to assess conditions and vegetative regeneration. Once complete, ABC will develop a summary of results to share with partners.

Activity Milestones:

| Description | Approximate Completion Date |
|---|-----------------------------|
| Complete habitat restoration strategies, management plans and identify contractors for Year One projects | December 31, 2021 |
| Complete first season of frozen-ground treatments | March 31, 2022 |
| Site selection complete | November 30, 2022 |
| Restoration treatments complete on all sites (300+ acres) | March 31, 2024 |
| Complete initial surveys of stands to assess early regeneration results and compile results for reporting | June 30, 2024 |
| Conduct workshop to share results and promote effective management planning and implementation strategies with partners | June 30, 2024 |

Project Partners and Collaborators

| Name | Organization | Role | Receiving Funds |
|-------------------|---------------------------------|---|-----------------|
| Dick Moore | Beltrami County Land Department | Collaboration on project planning and development. Execution of habitat improvements on County-held lands. Long-term management of project sites. In-kind support for implementation through staff time and equipment. | No |
| Kirk Titus | Cass County Land Department | Collaboration on project planning and development. Execution of habitat improvements on County-held lands. Long-term management of project sites. In-kind support for implementation through staff time and equipment. | No |
| Rich Courtemanche | Aitkin County Land Department | Collaboration on project planning and development. Execution of habitat improvements on County-held lands. Long-term management of project sites. In-kind support for implementation through staff time and equipment. | No |

Dissemination

Describe your plans for dissemination, presentation, documentation, or sharing of data, results, samples, physical collections, and other products and how they will follow ENRTF Acknowledgement Requirements and Guidelines.

ABC will offer milestone reports as the proposal is accepted and as the work begins. This will be available on the ABC website, social media, E-news and other sources available to Minnesotans. The milestones will include photos, videos and interviews with partners and or contractors who are doing the work. ABC will periodically check the project sites and examine the habitat as it progresses to report on the successes. ENTRF will be acknowledged as each milestone is reported.

Long-Term Implementation and Funding

Describe how the results will be implemented and how any ongoing effort will be funded. If not already addressed as part of the project, how will findings, results, and products developed be implemented after project completion? If additional work is needed, how will this work be funded?

ABC has implemented a successful, landscape-scale GWWA/AMWO habitat management program in Minnesota since 2013, leveraging private, state and federal funding. Based on extensive experience restoring ESH, we anticipate little additional, ongoing management for restored project sites will be required.

Utilizing experience gained from this pilot project, ABC will continue to work with cooperation of Cass, Aitkin, and Beltrami counties and engage additional collaborative partners to identify sites that will benefit from similar restoration activities. We will pursue alternative funding sources to continue these restoration efforts in the future.

Budget Summary

| Category / Name | Subcategory or Type | Description | Purpose | Gen. Ineligible | % Benefits | # FTE | Classified Staff? | \$ Amount | \$ Amount Spent | \$ Amount Remaining |
|---|--|--|---------|-----------------|------------|-------|-------------------|------------------|-----------------|---------------------|
| Personnel | | | | | | | | | | |
| Brandon Whitton -- Grants and Finance Manager | | Financial management, contracts and reporting | | | 26.35% | 0.03 | | \$2,000 | - | - |
| Duane Fogard | | Field Forester | | | 26.35% | 0.24 | | \$15,000 | - | - |
| John Haben | | Project Manager | | | 26.35% | 0.6 | | \$31,225 | - | - |
| | | | | | | | Sub Total | \$48,225 | \$9,709 | \$38,516 |
| Contracts and Services | | | | | | | | | | |
| TBD | Professional or Technical Service Contract | Contractors will execute forestry treatments including brush sheering, non-commercial timber harvest and other stand improvements to restore parcels to benefit birds and other wildlife. Contract costs are estimated at a rate of \$475 per acre to complete improvements on 300 acres. Costs savings would be applied to complete additional acres. | | | | 1.44 | | \$142,500 | \$6,300 | \$136,200 |
| | | | | | | | Sub Total | \$142,500 | \$6,300 | \$136,200 |
| Equipment, Tools, and Supplies | | | | | | | | | | |
| | | | | | | | Sub Total | - | - | - |
| Capital Expenditures | | | | | | | | | | |
| | | | | | | | Sub Total | - | - | - |
| Acquisitions and Stewardship | | | | | | | | | | |

| | | | | | | | | | | |
|---------------------------------|-----------------------------|--|---|--|--|--|--------------------|------------------|-----------------|------------------|
| | | | | | | | Sub Total | - | - | - |
| Travel In Minnesota | | | | | | | | | | |
| | Miles/ Meals/ Lodging | 1848 miles annually at \$.575 per mile for two years | For ABC project manager and field staff travel to assess sites, meet with partners, manage contractors and evaluate results | | | | | \$2,125 | \$744 | \$1,381 |
| | | | | | | | Sub Total | \$2,125 | \$744 | \$1,381 |
| Travel Outside Minnesota | | | | | | | | | | |
| | | | | | | | Sub Total | - | - | - |
| Printing and Publication | | | | | | | | | | |
| | Printing | 750 pages annually at \$.10 per page for two years | Printing and copying expenses for contract administration and reports | | | | | \$150 | - | \$150 |
| | | | | | | | Sub Total | \$150 | - | \$150 |
| Other Expenses | | | | | | | | | | |
| | | | | | | | Sub Total | - | - | - |
| | | | | | | | Grand Total | \$193,000 | \$16,753 | \$176,247 |

Classified Staff or Generally Ineligible Expenses

| Category/Name | Subcategory or Type | Description | Justification Ineligible Expense or Classified Staff Request |
|---------------|---------------------|-------------|--|
|---------------|---------------------|-------------|--|

Non ENRTF Funds

| Category | Specific Source | Use | Status | \$ Amount | \$ Amount Spent | \$ Amount Remaining |
|------------------|---|---|----------------------------|-----------------|-----------------|---------------------|
| State | | | | | | |
| | | | State Sub Total | - | - | - |
| Non-State | | | | | | |
| Cash | Aitkin County Land Dept. revenues | To support contractor costs for forest restoration activities. | Secured | \$10,000 | - | \$10,000 |
| In-Kind | Aitkin County Land Department | Aitkin County will provide staff time in the amount of \$15,000 to support forest management treatments producing high-quality breeding habitat for Golden-winged Warbler, American Woodcock and Ruffed Grouse on other lands owned by the county during the project period. An additional \$5,000 will support direct administration of this project over a two-year period. | Secured | \$20,000 | \$410 | \$19,590 |
| In-Kind | Beltrami County Land Department | Beltrami County will provide staff time in the amount of \$14,000 to support forest management treatments producing high-quality breeding habitat for Golden-winged Warbler, American Woodcock and Ruffed Grouse on other lands owned by the county during the project period. An additional \$6,000 will support direct administration of this project over a two-year period. | Secured | \$20,000 | \$251 | \$19,749 |
| In-Kind | ABC revenues generated through fundraising and non-state grant support. | For partner engagement, staff supervision and oversight of project activities by ABC Great Lakes Regional Vice President. Match calculated based on 2% overall effort per year for two years (\$4,400) plus \$600 in travel expenses. | Secured | \$5,000 | - | \$5,000 |
| Cash | Cass County Land Dept. | Cass County will provide \$10,000 in matching funds to support forest management treatments producing high-quality breeding habitat for Golden-winged Warbler, American Woodcock and Ruffed Grouse on other lands owned by the county during the project period. Cash contributions to facilitate implementation of project activities. | Secured | \$10,000 | \$729 | \$9,271 |
| | | | Non State Sub Total | \$65,000 | \$1,390 | \$63,610 |
| | | | Funds Total | \$65,000 | \$1,390 | \$63,610 |

Acquisition and Restoration

Parcel List

| Name | County | Site Significance | Activity | Acres | Miles | Estimated Cost | Type of Landowner | Easement or Title Holder | Status of Work |
|--------------------------|-------------------------|--|-------------|------------|----------|------------------|-------------------|--------------------------|----------------------------|
| Aitkin County Land Dept. | Aitkin | Forest sites present potential for high quality breeding habitat for ESH SGCN focal species after restoration. | Restoration | 100 | - | \$47,500 | Public | | No Longer Being Considered |
| Beltrami | Beltrami | Sites present potential for high quality ESH | Restoration | 20 | - | \$9,500 | Public | | No Longer Being Considered |
| Cass County Land Dept. | Cass | Forest sites present potential for high quality breeding habitat for ESH SGCN focal species after restoration. | Restoration | 100 | - | \$47,500 | Public | | No Longer Being Considered |
| Chippawa National Forest | Beltrami, Cass, Itasca, | Sites present potential for high quality ESH. | Restoration | 80 | - | \$38,000 | Public | | No Longer Being Considered |
| Totals | | | | 300 | 0 | \$142,500 | | | |

Restoration

1. Provide a statement confirming that all restoration activities completed with these funds will occur on land permanently protected by a conservation easement or public ownership.

All restoration activities associated with this project will take place on permanently protected, publically-owned lands managed by the Aitkin, Beltrami and Cass County Land Departments.

2. Summarize the components and expected outcomes of restoration and management plans for the parcels to be restored by your organization, how these plans are kept on file by your organization, and overall strategies for long-term plan implementation.

Each individual project plan will feature a description of current stand conditions detailing tree species, size class and density, while identifying site productivity limitations and desired future stand condition after project implementation. This plan will include the forest management prescriptions that contractors will use to complete the project. Aerial photo maps, and digital maps will be created and given to the contractor to be used with GPS technology to delineate sites. On-site boundary marking and tree marking will also be completed in advance of bid solicitation. ABC and County partners will keep and share planning materials for each project before and after implementation. ABC will save and maintain these files on its secure electronic file server for permanent future access. It is our belief that completion of this project to restore a minimum of 300 acres of degraded forest stands in Aitkin, Beltrami and Cass Counties will create a management template and generate interest from additional county, state, non-profit and tribal partners in the region to implement similar activities in their managed forests. ABC or its collaborative partners may then seek future alternative funding to implement similar restoration after the present project is completed.

This forest restoration pilot project would be an additional component to a landscape-level effort on the part of ABC and numerous private and public collaborative partners in Minnesota and throughout the Great Lakes Region to restore and enhance high quality early successional breeding habitat for GWWA, AMWO and other priority forest bird species. Since 2013, ABC has partnered with private landowners and public agency partners throughout northern Minnesota to complete 11,388 acres of high quality early successional habitat projects to restore and enhance breeding habitat for GWWA, AMWO, and associated early successional habitat species. This initiative includes two phases of grant funding via the Minnesota Outdoor Heritage Fund (MN OHF), as well as funding through the Natural Resources Conservation Service (NRCS) Regional Conservation Partners Program (RCPP), National Fish and Wildlife Foundation, and numerous private donations. To date, ABC has completed ESH projects in partnership with 11 Minnesota DNR Offices, seven Minnesota Counties, two USFWS National Wildlife Refuges, Chippewa National Forest, and the Red Lake Band of Chippewa. Furthermore, ABC is engaged in an ongoing, full-life cycle conservation initiative spanning North, Central and South America to complete habitat conservation for GWWA and associated migratory bird species.

ABC is currently in the final phases of leading a five-year RCPP project in the Great Lakes funded by the NRCS that assists early successional project planning on private lands. Finally, our efforts to enhance ESH on public lands in Minnesota received a third phase of funding from the MN OHF. This will extend our successful, existing public and private lands programs through 2025, sustaining our complimentary programs in the region and providing ongoing capacity to develop new projects that meet our goals for bird habitat conservation.

3. Describe how restoration efforts will utilize and follow the Board of Soil and Water Resources “Native Vegetation Establishment and Enhancement Guidelines” in order to ensure ecological integrity and pollinator enhancement.

Minnesota DNR Ecological Classification System and Native Plant Community database will be used to prescribe and support stand-level management. Included in these interpretations are soil surveys, natural disturbance regimes, stand dynamics, growth states, tree behaviors, seasonal operability and general species-specific forest health information. ABC lead project manager Kevin Sheppard is trained in the use of these resources through the Sustainable Forest Education Cooperative.

4. Describe how the long-term maintenance and management needs of the parcel being restored with these funds will be met and financed into the future.

Parcels restored through this project will serve as high-quality early successional habitat benefitting focal species and related species for a period of approximately 10 years. Beyond that point, forest parcels will begin to succeed and be managed to maturity with maintenance supported in part by timber harvest revenue from other county-managed land. The BMPs utilized to benefit wildlife through this project also will improve the structure and composition of forested sites to restore commercial value, supporting the management of these and other county forests in the future. Sites restored through similar techniques in North Central Minnesota in the 1970s, for example, are now fully functioning forest ecosystems providing habitat for a broad array of wildlife.

5. Describe how consideration will be given to contracting with Conservation Corps of Minnesota for any restoration activities.

The Conservation Corps of Minnesota (CCM) will be contacted and this correspondence catalogued according to established LCCMR protocols. Due to the heavy equipment operation required to implement this project, it is ABC's experience that CCM may not have the personnel or equipment necessary to complete the work identified in this proposal. However, CCM will be given appropriate consideration on projects for which they demonstrate the required technical expertise, equipment and capacity.

6. Provide a statement indicating that evaluations will be completed on parcels where activities were implemented both 1) initially after activity completion and 2) three years later as a follow-up. Evaluations should analyze improvements to the parcel and whether goals have been met, identify any problems with the implementation, and identify any findings that can be used to improve implementation of future restoration efforts at the site or elsewhere.

ABC and partners will complete evaluations on parcels where restoration activities have been implemented 1) initially after completion and 2) three years after implementation to assess longer-term results. Evaluations will analyze improvements to the parcel and assess progress in achieving project goals, as well as identifying any problems with implementation, and highlighting findings that can be used to improve implementation of future restoration efforts at the site or on similar sites.

Attachments

Required Attachments

Map

File: [888dbffb-305.pdf](#)

Alternate Text for Map

The map shows a selection of proposed publicly-held parcels in Aitkin, Beltrami and Cass Counties that would specifically benefit from forest restoration activities to produce priority habitat for GWWA, AMWO, RUGR, and other focal wildlife species. A subset of targeted parcels have been identified and maps will be available to the Council at time of a potential hearing. We presently have limited access to county parcel shapefiles due to COVID-19....

Financial Capacity

File: [c41afb3f-bd3.pdf](#)

Board Resolution or Letter

| Title | File |
|----------------------------|----------------------------------|
| ABC Draft Board Resolution | 9f3b5e34-743.pdf |

Supplemental Attachments

Capital Project Questionnaire, Budget Supplements, Support Letter, Photos, Media, Other

| Title | File |
|---|-----------------------------------|
| Natural Resources Research Institute Letter of Support | 22fb40ef-46e.pdf |
| Cass County Letter of Support | 94693ff8-f89.pdf |
| Aitkin County Letter of Support and Match Commitment | 07cae74b-822.pdf |
| Beltrami County Letter of Support and Match Commitment | 3cba6c3c-d69.pdf |
| Cass County Match Commitment | 280be644-8a2.pdf |
| ENRTF Background Check Certification Form | 25fb2046-feb.pdf |
| Updated Final Project Map | ce13f349-22f.pdf |
| Project Specific Site Map_ Completed Aitkin Restoration Project | 22de4be0-932.pdf |
| Project Challenges Explanation | 0a9a7a5e-5ba.docx |
| Final Report Abstract | 2235a7e8-a76.docx |

Difference between Proposal and Work Plan

Describe changes from Proposal to Work Plan Stage

Added one sentence to description of Activity #1 about update of parcel table following completion of site selection.
Changed staff responsible for project due to staff turnover.

Additional Acknowledgements and Conditions:

The following are acknowledgements and conditions beyond those already included in the above workplan:

Do you understand and acknowledge the ENRTF repayment requirements if the use of capital equipment changes?

N/A

Do you agree travel expenses must follow the "Commissioner's Plan" promulgated by the Commissioner of Management of Budget or, for University of Minnesota projects, the University of Minnesota plan?

Yes, I understand the Commissioner's Plan applies.

Does your project have potential for royalties, copyrights, patents, sale of products and assets, or revenue generation?

No

Do you understand and acknowledge IP and revenue-return and sharing requirements in 116P.10?

N/A

Do you wish to request reinvestment of any revenues into your project instead of returning revenue to the ENRTF?

N/A

Does your project include original, hypothesis-driven research?

No

Does the organization have a fiscal agent for this project?

No

Work Plan Amendments

| Amendment ID | Request Type | Changes made on the following pages | Explanation & justification for Amendment Request (word limit 75) | Date Submitted | Approved | Date of LCCMR Action |
|--------------|-------------------|---|--|-----------------|----------|----------------------|
| 1 | Amendment Request | <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Project Collaborators - Project Manager Info • Acquisition and Restoration - Parcel List • Activities and Milestones • Budget - Personnel • Budget - Travel and Conferences • Budget - Non-ENRTF Funds Contributed | <p>Kevin Sheppard was an employee of ABC, and a participant under this grant when it began. Kevin has left ABC and Jack Haben has filled his position; hence, we request that Jack be added so he can fulfill the grant tasks.</p> <p>The remaining acres left to fulfill the grant will require adding an extra winter for loggers to harvest timber from the bided areas, which will increase interest and likelihood that more areas and acres.</p> | July 9, 2022 | Yes | August 29, 2022 |
| 2 | Project Manager | <p>Previous Manager: Duane Fogard (dfogard@abcbirds.org) New Manager: John Haben (JHaben@abcbirds.org)</p> | Change in personnel at American Bird Conservancy | August 26, 2022 | Yes | August 26, 2022 |
| 3 | Completion Date | <p>Previous Completion Date: 06/30/2024 New Completion Date: 02/28/2023</p> | LCCMR Completion Date change to get projects that finished prior to final reporting functionality being available in the online. See Activity Log for notes on final report approval. | May 23, 2023 | Yes | May 23, 2023 |

Status Update Reporting

Final Status Update July 7, 2023

Date Submitted: June 5, 2023

Date Approved: June 9, 2023

Overall Update

ABC has created 12 acres of ESH habitat in partnership with Aitkin County. This project was completed by John K. Benson of Benson Excavating and Logging (Address: 27643 Partridge Ave, Aitkin, MN 56431). However, multiple challenges have resulted in ABC and the partnering counties of Aitkin, Cass, and Beltrami to reconsider further pursuit of projects in the remaining grant period. ABC has worked with county partners and LCCMR staff to attempt to address these issues, but have concluded that due to shifting economic realities making targeted projects commercially viable, this project is not presently feasible as a standalone habitat management approach. As a result, ABC and the partnering counties will halt pursuit of further projects. ABC will work with LCCMR staff to provide a final report that better describes the challenges and the good faith effort to address them. All county partners have indicated that they are interested in maintaining this conservation partnership and will continue to work with ABC on habitat projects in the future.

Activity 1

Task 1:

ABC completed site assessments for targeted project areas. However, stumpage prices increased considerably since that time, resulting in projects becoming commercially profitable. This reality precluded the need for supplemental funding to assist implementation, and county partners expressed a need to bid them out with other timber sales, rather than have them paid to be completed. This is relevant because targeted projects fall on school trust lands, for which there is a fiduciary responsibility to generate revenue. ABC and our county partners continued to work together to identify alternative projects, but possible alternatives fell outside targeted habitat types and/or did not fulfill the ecological requirements or management guidance outlined in our work plan.

Task 2:

Due to rising stumpage prices, competition for loggers also increased, resulting in little or no interest from loggers to complete non-commercial projects due to the present rate of return on commercial sales and the need to complete projects in a timeline that is shorter than they are required to fulfill for a traditional timber harvest. Though market volatility is expected in the coming months and stumpage prices may fall again, it is unlikely this will occur before the end of the grant period.

Dissemination

ABC will share the outcomes of this grant on the ABC website. However, due to the implementation challenges described herein, there is limited information to share associated with project outcomes.

Status Update Reporting

Status Update June 1, 2023

Date Submitted: June 5, 2023

Date Approved: June 9, 2023

Overall Update

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Due to rising stumpage prices, competition for loggers also increased, resulting in little or no interest from loggers to complete non-commercial projects due to the present rate of return on commercial sales and the need to complete projects in a timeline that is shorter than they are required to fulfill for a traditional timber harvest. Though market volatility is expected in the coming months and stumpage prices may fall again, it is unlikely this will occur before the end of the grant period.

Dissemination

ABC will share the outcomes of this grant on the ABC website. However, due to the implementation challenges described herein, there is limited information to share associated with project outcomes.

Additional Status Update Reporting

Additional Status Update February 7, 2023

Date Submitted: March 27, 2023

Date Approved: March 27, 2023

Overall Update

ABC has created 12 acres of ESH habitat in partnership with Aitkin County. This project was completed by John K. Benson of Benson Excavating and Logging (Address: 27643 Partridge Ave, Aitkin, MN 56431). However, multiple challenges have resulted in ABC and the partnering counties of Aitkin, Cass, and Beltrami to reconsider further pursuit of projects in the remaining grant period. ABC has worked with county partners and LCCMR staff to attempt to address these issues, but have concluded that due to shifting economic realities making targeted projects commercially viable, this project is not presently feasible as a standalone habitat management approach. As a result, ABC and the partnering counties will halt pursuit of further projects. ABC will work with LCCMR staff to provide a final report that better describes the challenges and the good faith effort to address them. All county partners have indicated that they are interested in maintaining this conservation partnership and will continue to work with ABC on habitat projects in the future.

Activity 1

Task 1:

ABC completed site assessments for targeted project areas. However, stumpage prices increased considerably since that time, resulting in projects becoming commercially profitable. This reality precluded the need for supplemental funding to assist implementation, and county partners expressed a need to bid them out with other timber sales, rather than have them paid to be completed. This is relevant because targeted projects fall on school trust lands, for which there is a fiduciary responsibility to generate revenue. ABC and our county partners continued to work together to identify alternative projects, but possible alternatives fell outside targeted habitat types and/or did not fulfill the ecological requirements or management guidance outlined in our work plan.

Task 2:

Due to rising stumpage prices, competition for loggers also increased, resulting in little or no interest from loggers to complete non-commercial projects due to the present rate of return on commercial sales and the need to complete projects in a timeline that is shorter than they are required to fulfill for a traditional timber harvest. Though market volatility is expected in the coming months and stumpage prices may fall again, it is unlikely this will occur before the end of the grant period.

Dissemination

ABC will share the outcomes of this grant on the ABC website. However, due to the implementation challenges described herein, there is limited information to share associated with project outcomes.

Status Update Reporting

Status Update December 1, 2022

Date Submitted: December 20, 2022

Date Approved: December 28, 2022

Overall Update

ABC has created 12 acres of ESH habitat in partnership with Aitkin County. This project was completed by John K. Benson of Benson Excavating and Logging (Address: 27643 Partridge Ave Aitkin, MN 56431). However, multiple challenges have resulted in ABC and the partnering counties of Aitkin, Cass, and Beltrami to reconsider further pursuit of projects in the remaining grant period. ABC has worked with County partners and LCCMR staff to attempt to address these issues, but have concluded that, due to shifting economic realities making targeted projects commercially viable, this project is not presently feasible as a standalone habitat management approach. As a result, ABC and the partnering counties will halt pursuit of further projects. ABC will work with LCCMR staff to provide a final report that better describes the challenges and the good faith effort to address them. All county partners have indicated that they are interested in maintaining this conservation partnership and will continue to work with ABC on habitat projects in the future.

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Dissemination

ABC will share the outcomes of this grant on the ABC website. However, due to the implementation challenges described herein, there is limited information to share associated with project outcomes.

Status Update Reporting

Status Update June 1, 2022

Date Submitted: June 1, 2022

Date Approved: July 1, 2022

Overall Update

We have created 12 acres of ESH habitat and are in the contracting process for 59 more acres out of a goal of 300 acres.

Activity 1

Site selection has been completed on 256 acres. We have created 12 acres of ESH habitat and are in the contracting process for 59 more acres out of a goal of 300 acres. Contractors are being identified for year two projects. We are identifying additional project acres with partners. We have partly completed items #4 - 6 in the milestone list.

Dissemination

ABC will offer milestone reports as the proposal is accepted and as the work begins. This will be available on the ABC website, social media, E-news and other sources available to Minnesotans. The milestones will include photos, videos and interviews with partners and or contractors who are doing the work. ABC will periodically check the project sites and examine the habitat as it progresses to report on the successes. ENTRF will be acknowledged as each milestone is reported. At this point, it is too early to disseminate as we just completed our first small project this spring.