

**IDAHO DEPARTMENT OF FISH AND GAME**

**Virgil Moore, Director**

**Project F16AF00885**

**Interim Performance Report**



**MK Nature Center**

July 1, 2016 to June 30, 2019

Prepared by:

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September 2018  
Boise, Idaho

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**State:** Idaho

**Grant Award Number:** F16AF00885

**Grant name:** ID – MK Nature Center

**Report Period:** July 1, 2017 - June 30, 2018

**Report due date:** September 28, 2018

**Approach:**

The MK Nature Center (Nature Center) consists of a 3,500 square foot visitor center and 4.6 acres of wildlife habitat in downtown Boise, the capital city and largest population base in Idaho. We maintain signs and displays in the building and on the grounds and periodically create additional interpretive signage.

The Nature Center previously had a “gallery” dedicated in large part to Idaho native game and non-game species including, Mule and whitetail deer, cougar, black and grizzly bear, elk, caribou, pronghorn, bighorn sheep, sage grouse and others. This room was transformed into “The Theodore Roosevelt Room” under the previous grant agreement. We maintain and periodically upgrade display materials in this room.

Nature Center acreage, which consists primarily of native plants and a centrally located 550’ man-made stream, provides an example of well-managed habitat: the proof is in the number and diversity of species that reside in or visit the Nature Center. Mule deer, red fox, mink, beaver, skunks, raccoons, various wading birds and waterfowl, numerous songbirds, and several species of native fishes are commonly seen. In addition, our native landscaping and food plot development are lessons in wildlife management. We periodically add some strategically placed signs to our vegetation management plots to explain and to enlighten our visitors. Our “Native Plant Demonstration Area” illustrates some of the native and not so common Idaho plants and “Habitat Improvement Project” (HIP) “garden” shows how modified agriculture practices can help support wildlife. Both these areas are target sites for further interpretive signs.

A substantial portion of the Nature Center has been invaded by non-native species, including elm, black locust, matrimony vine, and walnut. Wildlife and Sportfish Restoration (WSFR) funding is used for native habitat restoration activities. As we go about this restoration, it will be a great demonstration project for our visitors.

We provide scheduled educational programs for about 10,000 students, parents and teachers each year. In addition we provide educational events such as International Migratory Bird Day, Spring Wildlife Celebration and others. These programs and events include a wide variety of subject matter and activities as allowed, encouraged, and provided for under the WSFR outreach guidelines. Subject matter includes, wildlife biology, ecology and management, the North American Model, natural history of game animals, hunting and fishing, and other wildlife related subjects. We integrate messages about Wildlife Restoration funding and activities into every outreach program performed by staff.

North Idaho Fair Wildlife Education Center (Wildlife Center located at the Kootenai County Fairgrounds in Coeur d’Alene, Idaho).

The North Idaho Fair Wildlife Education Center is operated and maintained by the Idaho Department of Fish and Game and located on the grounds of the Kootenai County Fairgrounds in Coeur d' Alene, Idaho. The center is filled with displays and interpretive signage allowing visitors to learn about Idaho's wildlife. In FY 2018, the building was visited by tens of thousands of people during the North Idaho State Fair. It is consistently one of the popular exhibit spaces during the fair each year.

**Expected Results:**

The objective for both the MK Nature Center and North Idaho Fair Wildlife Education Center is to deliver a clear and concise message about the sportsman as conservationist and how those contributions have advanced wildlife management and conservation. To that end, information about the Wildlife and Sportfish Restoration Program as well as the North American Model of Wildlife Conservation will be provided to visitors to increase their understanding. This will be accomplished through:

- Increased interpretive signage at both facilities
- Inclusion of the sportsman as conservationist message in interpretive programming at both facilities, including summer youth camps at the North Idaho Fair Wildlife Education Center
- Restoration of native landscaping at the MK Nature Center
- Maintenance of the Theodore Roosevelt Room at the MK Nature Center

**If the work in this grant was part of a larger undertaking with other components and funding, present a brief overview of the larger activity and the role of this project.**

N/A

**Describe how the objectives were met.**

**Objective Statement:** Maintain MK Nature Center facility and grounds; including development and maintenance of native habitat plantings and Wildlife Education Center at the North Idaho Fair Facility.

The MK Nature Center (Nature Center)

Work to maintain and improve wildlife habitat at the nature center is on-going. Removal of non-native species such as black locust, Chinese elm, cheatgrass and others occurs on a routine basis. During the reporting period, a number of community organizations donated 180 hours of volunteer time to assist with removal or restoration projects. These groups include Leadership Boise, AmeriSource, MWI Animal Health, Apple Earth Day, Go Wireless and one Eagle Scout project directed toward habitat improvement.

The nature center's indoor facility is maintained to enhance the visitor experience by freshening old exhibits and offering rotating displays about wildlife in the main display room. Visitors enjoy the Theodore Roosevelt Room's wildlife diorama of native Idaho wildlife, including pronghorn, elk, grizzly bear, sage-grouse, mountain lion, Rocky Mountain Bighorn Sheep, mountain goat and others. The new "hunting cabin" display has proven to be very popular, providing visitors with information about Idaho's hunting heritage. Please see the discussion below and attached photos regarding this new display.

## The North Idaho Wildlife Education Center

In July of 2017 we began a renovation of the displays and storage areas in the Wildlife Education Center which temporarily curtailed its use for school field trips. Also, health related issues of our Wildlife Educator reduced use. However, we began and continue to actively facilitate a 'Coeur d'Alene' Chapter of Master Naturalist volunteers. We expect this corps of volunteers will provide staffing for field trips onsite and facilitate taking educational materials to schools in the Region.

**Objective Statement:** Raise the level of awareness and knowledge of their visitors relative to the PR Act, the North American Model of Wildlife Management, native habitat, and the ecology of some of Idaho's game species. Two hundred programs will be provided at the MK Nature Center and at the Northern Idaho Fairgrounds annually.

## The Nature Center

During the reporting period, the nature center offered 122 educational opportunities to students and the general public. These included school programs, outreach events, evening lectures, on-site education booths and one large event. Combined, these opportunities were enjoyed by over 5,000 participants.

Ninety school programs helped students learn about the concepts of habitat, adaptation, predator/prey relationships, niche, wildlife management, Idaho wildlife, ecosystems, wildlife-related recreation and much more. Teachers choose programs based upon which will best enhance their curriculum and meet state educational standards for grade and subject matter. These programs include Scat and Tracks, Adaptation Artistry, Wildlife Science, Bears of Idaho, Turkeys, Wild Dogs of Idaho, Natural Resource Management, Beavers---Nature's Engineers, and others. 1,972 students participated in these programs during the reporting period.

Nature center staff and volunteers participated in seven outreach events, reaching 1,735 participants. These included STEM events at area schools to help encourage students to enjoy science and explore science-related careers (booths provided a wildlife focus); International Museum Day; Wells Fargo Green Team Event; Silver Sage Girl Scout Council Girl Scout Open House; and Backcountry Hunters and Anglers conference.

Sixteen education booths were offered during the summer months, attracting 559 visitors. Offered on-site and staffed by Master Naturalist volunteers, topics included Scat and Tracks, Horns and Antlers, and Wild Dogs of Idaho. The Scat and Tracks booth helps visitors learn how to identify the tracks and scat of many of Idaho's most common wildlife, including big game species. Wild Dogs of Idaho provides pelts, mounts, plaster casts and photographs to help visitors learn to differentiate between wolves, coyote and fox. The Horns and Antlers booth helps visitors learn the difference between horns and antlers, and which big game species has which.

An Evening Lecture Series was initiated during the reporting period to provide wildlife-related programming to the general public. These programs were very well received, attracting 441 participants. Topics included Idaho Bears; A day in the life of a wildlife veterinarian; History and management of the Morley Nelson Snake River Birds of Prey Conservation Area; Habitats of the Boise Foothills; and others.

A Spring Wildlife Celebration was held in late April, attracting 548 visitors of all ages. Various booths were set up on the nature center grounds, providing opportunities for visitors to learn about a wide range of wildlife-related topics. Popular booths included plaster casting of animal tracks; bows and arrows; wildlife observation at the pond; bird banding; and retrieving dog demonstrations. The nature center partners with a number of local organizations to offer this event. These groups include Golden Eagle Audubon, Intermountain Bird Observatory and the Treasure Valley Retriever Club.

During the reporting period, the nature center, in partnership with the Friends of the MK Nature Center, undertook a complete renovation of all the interpretive signs on the facility grounds. The current signs were dilapidated and outdated. New signs will be completed and installed during FY19, but all written and graphic design work was completed during the reporting period. Signs include a variety of topics to help visitors learn more about Idaho's wildlife and its vibrant outdoor heritage. While no WSFR funds were used for the graphic design and production of the signs, research and interpretive writing of specific signs was conducted by nature center staff during the current reporting period.

#### The North Idaho Wildlife Education Center

The Wildlife Center's past visitation and popularity with school groups make it a good location to increase messaging about the sportsman as conservationist. Signage about how sportsmen contribute to wildlife conservation as well as information on the North American Model of Wildlife Conservation will be more prominently displayed. Visitation during the Kootenai County Fair, ensures that the large number of Fair attendees who visit the Education Center have the opportunity to learn from these displays.

**Objective Statement:** Develop kiosk interpretive displays annually.

#### The Nature Center

Four exhibits were displayed in the MK Nature Center's kiosk during the reporting period---Stay Safe; Wear Hunter Orange; Conifers and Their Habitats; Beavers---Nature's Engineers; and Pollinators. The Stay Safe---Wear Hunter Orange kiosk provided information about the importance of wearing hunter orange clothing when hunting. The differences between how humans and wildlife see this color were illustrated. The Conifers and Their Habitats exhibit identified Idaho's most common conifer species and the wildlife habitat they create across the state. Beavers---Nature's Engineers was especially pertinent because a family of beaver took up residence on the nature center pond in the autumn. The display included a diorama of a beaver pond and included information about how beaver alter and create habitat for a wide variety of wildlife species. The Pollinator Kiosk encouraged visitors to plant for pollinators and raised awareness of the importance of pollinators to humans and wildlife. This display was offered to help celebrate Pollinator Week in Idaho, but was up for much of the summer.

Most nature visitors stop by the kiosk to view the displays because it is located right along the main trail on the nature center grounds. School groups also stop to look at the kiosk when the topic fits in with their study focus.

The North Idaho Wildlife Center (does not maintain an interpretive kiosk)

**Objective Statement:** Update existing Hunting Heritage Display with current photographs, statistical information, and narrative by 30 June 2019.

The replacement of the Hunting Heritage Display was completed in August 2018. The entire room was renovated to resemble a hunting cabin of yesteryear. The room contains a kitchen area with a hand-pump and food preparation table complete with recipes for wild game. Children, in particular, enjoy playing in the kitchen, pretending to pump water and prepare food. A faux fireplace and lantern lights add to the atmosphere along with windows backed by photos of Idaho landscapes that are changed seasonally. Pelts of Idaho furbearers decorate the walls and traps hang from the ceiling. Head mounts of a mule deer and a white-tailed deer are also on the walls. Interpretive text is included and provides information on hunter education; the important role of hunters and hunting to wildlife conservation; and the tradition of hunting and trapping in Idaho.

This new display has been immensely popular with visitors. While no exact counts have been made, nearly every visitor to the nature center spends time in this new display. Nature center staff has received many positive comments from visitors, including teachers who appreciate the look back into Idaho history that their students experience (Idaho history is taught in fourth grade).

**Discuss differences between work anticipated in the grant proposal and what was actually carried out with Wildlife and Sport Fish Restoration (PR) grant funds.**

No differences occurred between work anticipated and what actually occurred at the MK Nature Center.

**List any publications or in-house reports resulting from this work.**

No publications or in-house reports were produced as a result of this work.

**Name, title, phone number, and e-mail address of person compiling this report:**

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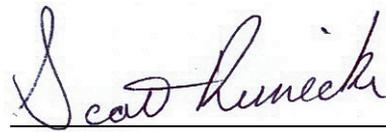
Submitted by: IDAHO DEPARTMENT OF FISH AND GAME

Approved by:



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Toby Boudreau  
Federal Aid Coordinator



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Scott Reinecker, Chief  
Bureau of Wildlife

## FEDERAL AID IN WILDLIFE RESTORATION

The Federal Aid in Wildlife Restoration Program consists of funds from a 10% to 11% manufacturer's excise tax collected from the sale of handguns, sporting rifles, shotguns, ammunition, and archery equipment. The Federal Aid program then allots the funds back to states through a formula based on each state's geographic area and the number of paid hunting license holders in the state. The Idaho Department of Fish and Game uses the funds to help restore, conserve, manage, and enhance wild birds and mammals for the public benefit. These funds are also used to educate hunters to develop the skills, knowledge, and attitudes necessary to be responsible, ethical hunters. Seventy-five percent of the funds for this project are from Federal Aid. The other 25% comes from license-generated funds.

