

IDAHO DEPARTMENT OF FISH AND GAME

Ed Schriever, Director

Project F16AF00885

Interim Performance Report



MK Nature Center

July 1, 2016 to December 31, 2019

Prepared by:

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Boise, Idaho

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State: Idaho

Grant Award Number: F16AF00885 Amendment 1

Grant name: ID – MK Nature Center

Report Period: July 1, 2018 - June 30, 2019

Report due date: September 28, 2019

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 white-tailed deer, cougar, black and grizzly bear, elk, caribou, pronghorn, bighorn sheep, greater 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 diversity of species that reside in or visit the Nature Center. Mule deer, red fox, mink, beaver, skunk, raccoon, 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 inform our visitors. Our “Native Plant Demonstration Area” illustrates some of the native and not so common Idaho plants while the “Habitat Improvement Project” (HIP) “garden” shows how modified agricultural 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. 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 4.6 acres at the MK Nature Center, and the North Idaho Fair Wildlife Education Center room each year for 3 years.

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 198 hours of volunteer time to assist with removal or restoration projects. These groups include, AmeriSource, MWI Animal Health, Wells Fargo, Deloitte, Idaho Native Plant Society--Pahove Chapter, Sagebrush Steppe Chapter Master Naturalists, Bishop Kelly High School, and Boise State University Leadership.

During the reporting period, nature center staff worked to maintain and improve habitat on the grounds. While removing invasive species is on-going, new plantings of species native to the northern Great Basin occurred on a regular basis. These plantings include native grasses, forbs, and shrubs depending upon the location on the grounds. Staff conducted intensive weeding in the native plant garden to eliminate competition from non-native species, and promote food and shelter values for pollinators and other wildlife living at the nature center. In addition, overgrowth of some shrubs such as dogwood was removed to open crowded habitat for better wildlife access, particularly riparian zone species such as beaver, mink and waterfowl.

The nature center acquired a full-body mount of a gray wolf during the reporting period. On display, this mount is a valuable teaching tool, helping visitors learn how to identify wolves and compare them to Idaho's other two wild canids.

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.

Panhandle region volunteers have maintained the Wildlife Education Center building for field trips. They also have facilitated the use of educational material off site. Staffing the facility with Master Naturalist Volunteers is still a goal, however department personnel transitions have delayed this process. In 2017 the North Idaho Wildlife Education Center focused educational outreach on Take Me Fishing/Family Fishing Waters. During the 2018 North Idaho State Fair the focus was on grizzly bear and black bear identification and 2019 focused on Citizen's Against Poaching (CAP) with the region 1 and 2 CAP trailer. Staff and Volunteers are currently working towards updating the Birds of Prey and Song Bird displays.

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 and or presentations will be provided at the MK Nature Center and at the Northern Idaho Fairgrounds by June 30 2019.

The Nature Center

During the reporting period, the nature center offered 159 educational opportunities to students and the general public. These included school programs, outreach events, evening lectures, on-site education booths and two large events. Combined, these opportunities were enjoyed by over 7,000 participants.

Eighty-nine 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 while also meeting state educational standards for grade and subject matter. These programs include Scat and Tracks, Adaptation Artistry, Wildlife Science, Bears of Idaho, Turkeys, Wild Canines of Idaho, Natural Resource Management, Beavers---Nature's Engineers, and others. 1,818 students participated in these programs during the reporting period.

Nature center staff and volunteers participated in 12 outreach events, reaching 1,908 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; Old Time Farm Days; Canyon County Action STEAM Day; and NRCS Conservation Field Days.

A total of 48 education booths were offered during the public school Spring Break and summer months, attracting 3,521 visitors. Booths offered on-site and staffed by Master Naturalist volunteers, included Scat and Tracks, Horns and Antlers, Wild Canines of Idaho, Bears of Idaho, Beaver, and Mustelids 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 Canines of Idaho provides pelts, mounts, plaster casts and photographs to help visitors learn to differentiate between the wolf, coyote and fox. The Horns and Antlers booth helps visitors learn

the difference between horns and antlers, and which big game species has which. With both beaver and mink living on the property during the reporting period, the booths devoted to these species were quite popular. Using pelts, skulls and other artifacts, visitors learned about adaptations of beaver and mustelids as well as their historic importance to the fur trade in Idaho.

The Evening Lecture Series was continued during the reporting period to provide wildlife-related programming to the general public. These programs were very well received, attracting 365 participants. Topics included Bears of Idaho; Citizen Science Data and Wildlife Management; A Public Lands Primer; and others.

A Spring Wildlife Celebration was held in late April, attracting 315 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; Idaho's Bears; 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, nature center staff began to track unguided groups at the nature center. Often, these are groups that were unable to attend a program due to the schedule being full. They are asked to let us know when they will visit so we can help direct them toward comparatively less busy dates and times. In SFY19, 63 unguided groups with 1,826 participants visited the nature center to tour the grounds and visitor's center, and learn about Idaho wildlife.

Interpretive signs written and developed during the previous reporting period were installed in September 2018. Nature center staff is receiving many positive comments from visitors. In addition, staff is noticing a great deal more visitor engagement with the signs in comparison to the old signage. This represents the culmination of a lengthy project for which WSFR funds were not utilized for graphic design and sign production but instead were utilized by nature center staff during the research and writing of sign text during the previous 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 hunters and anglers 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 North Idaho State Fair, ensures that the large number of Fair attendees who visit the Education Center have the opportunity to learn from these displays. Hunting, fishing and trapping regulations are always available at the North Idaho Wildlife Education center. In 2019 the CAP trailer was the prominent display and was well received by thousands of fair attendees. In 2018 the North Idaho State Fair reported just over 85,400 attendees and a new record high attendance was reported in 2019 with just over 98,200 attendees.

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; Life under the Snow---The Subnivean Zone; Wildlife Seen and Heard at the Nature Center; and Eggs! 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. Life under the

Snow---The Subnivean Zone helped visitors learn about this zone and its importance to many kinds of wildlife. Wildlife Seen and Heard at the Nature Center featured photos of many species of wildlife that has been seen, including typically nocturnal species such as beaver, fox, and bobcat. The Eggs! display provided information about eggs of a wide variety of wildlife, including waterfowl and upland game birds found in Idaho.

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.

This display area is 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).

During the reporting period, additional pelts of game animals and furbearers were added to those that visitors can touch. Additionally, puppets of a variety of species including moose, elk, bear, bobcat, coyote, wolf, otter, beaver and fox were added. These, along with pelts, are important learning tools for visitors, especially students. Folkmanis puppets are well-known for their realistic portrayal of animals which is why they were chosen for the interactive displays in this room.

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.

Personnel transitions, eliminations and program reorganizations have delayed the initiation of a Coeur d'Alene Master Naturalist Chapter with and emphasis being their staffing of the building and program.

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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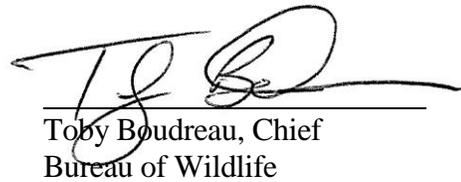
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FEDERAL AID IN WILDLIFE RESTORATION

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.

