

IDAHO DEPARTMENT OF FISH AND GAME

Ed Schriever, Director

Project F19AF00859

**Final Performance Report
Wildlife Restoration and Basic Hunter Education**



MK Nature Center

July 1, 2019 to June 30, 2020

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Boise, Idaho

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State: Idaho
Grant Award Number: F19AF00859
Grant name: ID – MK Nature Center
Report Period: July 1, 2019 - June 30, 2020
Report due date: September 28, 2020

Strategy 1. Coordination and Administration
Standard Objective: Administer one grant by June 30, 2020

Results: Completed the administration and coordination of activities necessary to meet the requirements of the grant. These functions included budget management; program and project planning and reporting; meeting attendance; and supervision and training of staff and volunteers.

Strategy 2. Facilities/Areas O&M
Standard Objective(s): Operate and maintain one facility with 4.6 acres of habitat and one 3,500 square foot visitor's center (MK Nature Center). Operate and maintain one 2,520 square foot education center (North Idaho Wildlife Education Center) by June 30, 2020.

Results:
MK Nature Center: Maintenance of nature center interpretive signage and displays was conducted during the grant period. Because the signage is new, sign maintenance primarily consisted of cleaning the sign faces and posts as well as trimming back encroaching vegetation. Two signs required fence re-routing to make the signs more easily accessible to visitors. This work was done on previously disturbed habitat areas and with the use of hand tools. Several taxidermy mounts displayed in the visitor's center were relocated into the Theodore Roosevelt display.

Operation of the MK Nature Center building were adjusted to temporarily accommodate a Licensing Sales Desk. The building lobby was remodeled to include a separate sales room, with it's own public entry. Maintenance costs of the building were paid in proportion to the area devoted to license sales.

The existing raptor mew underwent a significant remodel to house and provide enrichment for the nature center's non-releasable, USFWS-permitted education bird, a peregrine falcon. Volunteers from Micron Technologies completed this work and the remodeled space now allows visitors to better see the bird to learn about falcons and falconry. Hand tools were used for this project.

Maintenance and habitat improvement projects on the nature center grounds continued through the grant period. Non-native species continue to be removed and replaced with plant species native to the northern Great Basin and southwest Idaho. Volunteers donated 220 hours of assistance to these habitat-related projects. These volunteers came from a variety of organizations including the Sagebrush Steppe Chapter Master Naturalists, Micron Technology, Pahove Chapter of Idaho Native Plant Society, and members of the general public.

North Idaho Wildlife Education Center Ten new bird displays were created at the Education Center to help visitors learn more about the variety of adaptations found in bird families, including waterfowl and upland game birds. Existing displays were maintained during the grant period.

Strategy 3. Outreach/Communication

Standard Objective 1: Participate in or sponsor 250 events by June 30, 2020.

Results:

Statewide staff participated in a total of 104 events.

MK Nature Center: During the reporting period, the nature center offered 91 educational opportunities to students and the general public. These included school programs, outreach events, evening lectures, and on-site education booths. Combined, these opportunities were enjoyed by 5,324 participants.

Forty-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 on what 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. A total of 1,255 students participated in these programs during the reporting period.

Nature center staff and volunteers participated in seven outreach events, reaching 817 students. These included STEM events at area schools; Old Time Farm Days; and Northwest Nazarene University's Science Expo.

Education booths continued to be extremely popular with walk-on visitors during July and August. A total of 30 booths were offered, attracting 3,030 visitors. The booths were staffed primarily by Master Naturalist volunteers. Topics included Wild Canines of Idaho, Wild Cats of Idaho, Mustelids, Beaver, and Sage Grouse. The booths included hands-on activities and artifacts such as pelts, skulls, plaster casts of tracks, antlers, scat, and other items. In addition, take-home information such as coloring sheets and outdoor scavenger hunt sheets were offered. The booths help visitors learn more about Idaho's wildlife, wildlife management efforts, wildlife identification and adaptation, and wildlife-related activities such as hunting, wildlife viewing, and citizen science opportunities.

The Evening Lecture Series held in the autumn and winter attracted 222 participants. Four programs were offered including Bird Identification (including waterfowl and upland game birds); Sage Grouse---Life History and Management; An Evening with a Conservation Officer; and Wildlife Management Strategies as illustrated by work on short-eared owls in Idaho.

A Spring Wildlife Celebration was planned for early May, but was cancelled due to the COVID19 pandemic. More on that at the end of this report.

Nature center staff continued to track visits by unguided groups. During the reporting period, 38 groups with a total of 1,017 participants visited the nature center.

North Idaho Wildlife Education Center During the reporting period, 11 off-site education programs were presented to elementary and middle school students as well as adult learners.

These programs provided information on the wildlife of northern Idaho and the habitats they depend upon. A total of 240 students participated in these programs. In addition, a two-day basic Project WILD workshop was held for 20 teachers at the education center.

During the five days of the North Idaho Fair, approximately 50,000 attendees visited the Education Center, viewing the various wildlife-related displays.

Standard Objective 2: Produce 1 kiosk by June 30, 2020.

Results:

Planning and coordination efforts for this project at the MK Nature Center were completed during the reporting period. Due to COVID19 statewide stay-at-home orders and re-opening phases, progress on this project stalled for several months. At the end of the fiscal year, the final process in preparation for gathering construction bids was imminent. This project is now scheduled to be completed in late 2020, pending COVID19 restrictions.

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

The nature center's education efforts were impacted significantly by the COVID19 pandemic. In mid-March, Idaho schools went on Spring Break and never re-opened for in-person instruction. On March 25, a statewide stay-at-home order was given by Idaho's governor and the nature center building closed and remained closed to the public through the end of the state fiscal year on June 30, 2020. All previously scheduled spring school programs were cancelled. This amounted to 76 cancelled programs for 3,455 students. Groups that had scheduled programs in June also cancelled, and we received few calls to schedule additional programs in June. Volunteer efforts also ceased during this time, impacting several habitat projects on the nature center grounds. As mentioned above, the Kiosk project was also impacted, delaying the start of that endeavor.

In spite of the dire circumstances, nature center staff was able to provide some education opportunities to walk-on visitors. During the stay-at-home order, the nature center grounds remained open for walk-on visitors. Since the order did not preclude the public from venturing outdoors for exercise, the nature center was a popular destination. In fact, trail counter data showed that the facility received just under 22,000 more visitors between January – May of 2020 than during that same timeframe in 2019. Since many visitors were parents anxious to supplement their children's online coursework, staff made a variety of things available including grade-level appropriate scavenger hunt sheets for students. These worksheets helped students use their observation skills to find wildlife, evidence of wildlife, habitat elements, and other natural observable items around the nature center. Staff also put together a "30 Things to Do and Discover at the MK Nature Center" brochure to both celebrate the facility's 30th anniversary and provide additional engagement for visitors. This proved to be a very popular item and is available as a hard copy, printable download, and mobile-friendly version. Staff also produced several short videos highlighting some of the most popular program concepts for use by teachers and parents. In addition, essential staff members interacted (at appropriate physical distances) with visitors to answer questions and provide information as they conducted necessary daily maintenance work on the nature center grounds.

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

30 Things to Do and Discover at the MK Nature Center brochure

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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.

