

2009 State Wildlife Grant Proposal

Project Title: Implementation of State Wildlife Action Plan Strategies on Hobbs State Park-Conservation Area for CWCS Species of Concern in Oak Woodlands including Calcareous Glade Habitats.

Project Summary: This project seeks to develop a collaborative multi-partner prescribed fire coalition for the restoration of oak woodland and calcareous glade habitats structure and species composition at the Hobbs State Park –Conservation Area (HSPCA) in the Interior Highlands of the Ozark Plateau Ecoregion by implementing prescribed fire and conducting ecological monitoring for Arkansas Wildlife Action Plan animal Species of Greatest Conservation Need (SGCN) in order to measure progress toward desired ecological conditions.

Project Leader: McRee Anderson, Interior Highlands Fire Restoration Project Manager
The Nature Conservancy, Arkansas
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Phone: (870) 861-5131(office), (501) 804-3250 (Cell)
Email: wanderson@tnc.org

Project Partners: Mark Clippinger
Park Superintendent
Hobbs State Park -Conservation Area
Address: 1392 East Highway 12 Rogers, AR 72756
Phone: 479-789-2380
Email: Mark.Clippinger@arkansas.gov

Fred Sutton, Assistant Park Superintendent
Hobbs State Park -Conservation Area
Address: 1392 East Highway 12 Rogers, AR 72756
Phone: 479-789-2380
Email: fred.sutton@arkansas.gov

Budget Summary: Total Amount of Project Cost: \$36,900
Total Amount of SWG Requested: \$18,450 (50%)
Matching Funds from TNC and partners: \$18,450 (50%)

Start and End dates: August 1, 2009 – July 31, 2011

FUNDING PRIORITY ADDRESSED BY PROPOSAL

This project addresses a priority implementation action listed in Appendix A of the 2009 SWG Request for Proposals (RFP): 1) Habitat Management to maintain or increase quality oak woodlands including calcareous glades located throughout the project area. This project will accelerate implementation of the Hobbs State Park – Conservation Area (HSPCA) Fire Management Plan to restore oak woodlands and calcareous glades using collaborative multi-partner prescribed fire operations and monitoring. In addition, this project will begin reintroducing fire to fire-suppressed habitats to benefit Species of Greatest Conservation Need.

ECOREGION WHERE PROJECT WILL BE CONDUCTED

Restoration activities will be conducted in the Interior Highlands of the Ozark Plateau Ecoregion, within the Hobbs State Park- Conservation Area in Benton, Carroll and Madison Counties of Arkansas (Figure 1).

The Hobbs State Park-Conservation Area (HSPCA) covers 11,764 acres. This large tract of Ozark landscape consists of plateaus, ridges, valleys and streams with upland forests of pine, oak and hickory. In addition, numerous caves, springs, and karst features occur within the park. HSPCA is jointly managed by Arkansas State Parks, the Arkansas Natural Heritage Commission, and the Arkansas Game and Fish Commission.

PROJECT METHODS

Project partners will work collaboratively to implement the HSPCA 10 Year Fire Management Plan that was developed in 2002 and only partially implemented to date. This partnership will implement two cooperative multi-partner prescribed burns totaling 1,279 acres, conduct Post Burn Evaluations for each burn and conduct photo point monitoring pre/post burn at permanent macroplot locations with each burn unit. This project will focus on restoring oak woodlands and calcareous glade habitats.

Examination of aerial photos and General Land Office records indicate that the historical woodlands were much more open than today in the Hobbs State Park – Conservation Area. Prior to ownership most of the area's woodlands and glade communities were fire excluded for decades. This conversion from open to closed canopy negatively alters species composition, and adversely impacts herbaceous-layer plants and dependent animals. Hobbs State Park-Conservation Area began reintroducing fire to this area in spring 2002.

Measureable Outcomes

Measurable outcomes from this collaborative fire management partnership will be the continued implementation of the HSPCA Fire Management Plan to rapidly facilitate the promotion of suitable habitat for species-at-risk. The species-at-risk affected by this proposal occur in open and dry vegetation types typical of Arkansas woodland, savannas, prairies, and calcareous glades in the Interior Highlands of the Ozark Plateau Ecoregion. These species are dependent on open woodland structure and herbaceous understory habitat maintained by periodic fire during their life cycles. As a result of fire suppression,

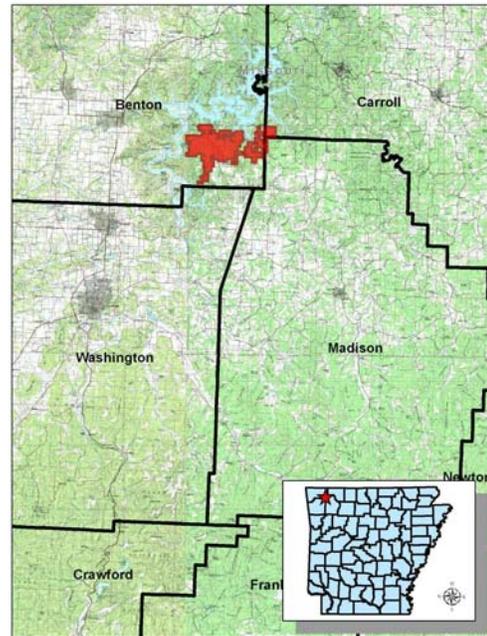


Figure 1. Hobbs State Park-Conservation Area.

most of this type of habitat has become increasingly limited due to densification of vegetation. In addition, most of the calcareous glade habitat has been encroached by surrounding vegetation including eastern red cedar. This current condition plays a large part in the loss or degradation of habitat suitable for oak woodland and calcareous glade dependent species-at-risk in this area (Table 1).

Table 1. Targeted Species of Concern in the Hobbs State Park-Conservation Area. (CWCS Database).

Class	Genus	Scientific_Name	Common Name	Rank
Insecta	<i>Speyeria</i>	<i>diana</i>	Diana fritillary	G3S2
Reptilia	<i>Eumeces</i>	<i>obsoletus</i>	Great Plains skink	G5S1
Reptilia	<i>Ophisaurus</i>	<i>attenuatus</i>	Western slender glass lizard	G5S3
Reptilia	<i>Sonora</i>	<i>Semiannulata</i>	ground snake	G5SH
Reptilia	<i>Terrapene</i>	<i>Ornate</i>	ornate box turtle	G5S2
Reptilia	<i>Crotaphytus</i>	<i>Collaris</i>	Eastern collared lizard	G5S3
Amphibia	<i>Rana</i>	<i>Sylvatica</i>	wood frog	G5S3
Aves	<i>Aimophila</i>	<i>Aestivalis</i>	Bachman's Sparrow	G3S3
Aves	<i>Thryomanes</i>	<i>Bewickii</i>	Bewick's Wren	G5S2
Aves	<i>Lanis</i>	<i>Ludovicianus</i>	Loggerhead Shrike	G4S3
Aves	<i>Pipilo</i>	<i>erythrophthalmus</i>	Eastern Towhee	G5S3
Aves	<i>Colinus</i>	<i>Virginianus</i>	Northern Bobwhite	G5S5

To restore the open habitats that species' identified by the Comprehensive Wildlife Conservation Strategies (CWCS) utilize requires establishing a suitable fire regime that promotes 'open' oak woodlands by reducing native and non-native vegetation encroachment in oak woodlands and calcareous glade habitat types. This project has selected 2,670 acres for prescribed fire and monitoring. Measurable actions include:

- Write burn plans for each burn unit.
- Install fire lines around burn units.
- Install photo points throughout burn units.
- Implement prescribed burns on 2,670 acres.
- Complete post-fire effects monitoring and After Action Reviews (AARs).
- Conduct photopoint monitoring after burns.

At the conclusion of this project, it is assumed that the improved habitat will be beneficial to the open habitat species' identified by the Comprehensive Wildlife Conservation Strategy. All data gathered from this project will be added to the CWCS database.

Monitoring

TNC's Arkansas Field Office utilizes a fire effects monitoring procedure to track attainment of fire. This monitoring includes tracking burn acreage and effectiveness in reaching fire management objectives. Burn plans developed for this project will incorporate specific measurable objectives that will be documented post fire. The post burn monitoring will be used to document immediate and mid term effects on the vegetation community. The fire severity is calculated from point transects through the burn unit. Post-burn monitoring information will include organic substrate consumption, understory vegetation consumption, scorch height, crown scorch percent, char height, and char degree. Once the post burn

monitoring is completed, the data will be incorporated into the long-term fire management plan to help management at HSPCA evaluate the long term goals and objectives of the fire management plan.

In addition to the fire effects monitoring, this project will conduct photo point monitoring pre/post burn at permanent macroplot locations with each burn unit. This qualitative photo point monitoring will be used to educate the public on how restoring fire adapted communities increase in biodiversity through time with the fire regime is restored. All photos will be stored at HSPCA.

Public Connection

The HSPCA is in the final phase of construction on the new Hobbs Visitor Center. This new facility will be open to the public and is expected to attract thousands of visitors monthly. The new Hobbs Visitor Center will provide a perfect venue to communicate the overall goals of the fire management program to the public. The facility will include several displays highlighting the importance of the fire adapted communities and the associated plant and animal species found at HSPCA. In addition, staff at HSPCA will offer guided hikes for the public to see first hand, the benefits of the collaborative fire management program.

Scientific Community Connection

This collaborative multi-partner conservation project will be a showcase on the ‘how to’ for collaborative fire management in Arkansas. Lessons learned throughout implementation of this project will be captured through photos, videos and datum gathered. Once completed, a detailed power-point presentation will be developed to share with the existing partnership as well as regional scientist and resource managers throughout Arkansas. It is anticipated that there will be several annual speaking engagements that project partners will have opportunity to share the outcomes of this effort.

Existing Resources and Partnerships

This project was selected because of the current collaborative fire management partnerships currently in place at HSPCA. Since 2002, park staff, Arkansas Forestry Commission, The Nature Conservancy and various volunteer fire departments have been continuing to implement the current fire management plan developed by HSPCA. This project seeks to facilitate the momentum within this diverse fire management coalition and will implement the current fire management plan to increase prescribed fire training opportunities for all partners involved.

This project aims to take advantage of the unique resources each partner brings to the table. The partnership that has been established will seek to develop new partners and increase current fire management expertise that will increase prescribed burning efforts, post burn evaluations and monitoring. If funded, the framework for developing a fully functional fire management program for HSPCA will be established.

Ice Storm Impacts and FEMA

During the week of January 27, 2009, a major ice storm hit the Interior Highlands including the HSPCA. This ice storm was a one hundred year event from personnel communications with the state meteorologist Joe Goudsward who works for National Oceanic and Atmospheric Association (NOAA) in Little Rock. The management at HSPCA has done a rapid assessment of the ice storm damage and has concluded that it is **very important to continue with the implementation of the fire management plan**. The decision of NOT burning areas impacted by the ice storm will significantly increase the negative impacts from a summer wildfire that under the right condition and with the current fuel loads per acre could significantly damage the overstory trees similar to the impacts of the Petit Jean State Park fire in 2001. Given the 100 and 1000 hour fuels scattered throughout the HSPCA from the recent ice storm, it is critical to maintain

the planned fire regime so that with each controlled burn, a portion of the heavy fuels on the ground are consumed with each burn. A fire regime that is maintained through time will reduce the hazardous fuel loads per acre with each burn. Excluding fire from areas impacted by the ice storm will prolong the risk of serious ecological damage from a summer wildfire for years to come.

The management at HSPCA is not aware of any FEMA dollars allocated to resource management operations which include implementing the fire management plan. Therefore, no FEMA dollars will be spent on any fire management related activities.

Deliverables Calendar

Implementation Tasks	2009 August - December	2010 January - August	2010 September - December	2011 January-July
Install firelines around burn units	X	X	X	X
Complete burn plans	X	X	X	X
Install permanent photo points		X		
Implement prescribed burn on 809 acres		X (March)		
Implement prescribed burn on 590 acres			X (Winter)	
Complete post fire effect monitoring		X	X	
Implement prescribed burn on 750 acres				X (Winter)
Implement prescribed burn on 530 acres				X (March)
Complete post burn photo point monitoring		X	X	X

Qualifications of Partnership

Mark Clippinger is the Hobbs State Park-Conservation Area Superintendent. Mark has over 20 years of experience at the park. Mark has been the active burn boss for the park for 5 years and continues to oversee day to day operation of the park.

Fred Sutton is the Hobbs State Park-Conservation Area Assistant Superintendent. Fred has been with the park for over 6 years and oversees the fire management plan and in charge of overseeing the fire program at the park. Fred also acts as the park burn boss.

McRee Anderson is the Interior Highlands Fire Restoration Project Manager for the Arkansas Chapter of The Nature Conservancy. McRee is currently a National Wildfire Coordinating Group (NWCG) certified RXB2 Burn Boss. McRee co-leads The Nature Conservancy's Prescribed Fire Program in the state and has been involved in fire management for 8 years.

**STATE WILDLIFE GRANT PROGRAM
SUBGRANT PROJECT BUDGET**

1. Budget summary

Budget Category	State Wildlife Grant Funds (Federal)	Cash Match (Non-Federal)	In-Kind Match (Non-Federal)	Total Project Cost
Salaries and Benefits	12,000.00		17,000.00	29,000.00
Contract Services			-	-
Supplies and Materials	750.00		1,450.00	2,200.00
Travel	2,250.00			2,250.00
Equipment	-	-	-	-
Indirect Costs (23%)	3,450.00			3,450.00
TOTAL	18,450.00	-	18,450.00	36,900.00

Detailed Budget Narrative

Salaries and benefits SWG \$12,000 ASP In-kind Match \$17,000 Total \$29,000

McRee Anderson, Fire Ecologist, The Nature Conservancy, will provide approximately 70 hours for overall project management, supervision, implementation, monitoring, and reporting. A prescribed burn crew of 4 crew members will provide approximately 7 days (\$1285/day) for implementing habitat treatments (prescribed burning). ASP will provide in-kind match for personnel time to implement the project. Salaries include fringe benefits and some overtime may be required.

Supplies SWG \$500 ASP In-kind Match \$1,450 Total \$1,950

Supplies include fuel for drip torches and chainsaws, batteries, monitoring equipment, and water and food supplies for field crews.

Travel SWG \$2,250 TNC Match \$0 Total \$2,250

Travel expenses include mileage reimbursement at 0.55 cents per mile for travel to and from the field site. It also includes costs for travel to meetings and presentation expenses.

Other SWG \$250 TNC Match \$0 Total \$250

Other expenses include providing occupancy, communication services, and training opportunities to support a prescribed burn crew.

Indirect Costs SWG \$3,450 TNC Match \$0 Total \$3,450

The Nature Conservancy has a current negotiated indirect cost rate of 23%. See attached letter for justification of rate.

February 10, 2009

Project or Contracting Officer
U.S. Government Agency

SUBJECT: Acceptance by U.S. Government Agencies of The Nature Conservancy's
Negotiated Indirect Cost Rate

Dear Conservation Partner:

I understand that you are working with the staff of our local office to finalize the terms and conditions of an agreement to provide government funding to support a conservation project. Because we occasionally receive questions regarding our indirect cost rate, I have prepared this letter of explanation.

Attached please find a copy of the most recent Negotiated Indirect Cost Rate Agreement (NICRA) letter from the U.S. Department of the Interior (Interior). Interior is The Nature Conservancy's cognizant agency for indirect cost rates and audit. The agency is our cognizant agency because they have consistently provided the largest dollar value of awards of Federal funding to the Conservancy, as compared to all other Federal agencies.

As our cognizant agency, Interior has the obligation and authority to negotiate and approve the indirect cost rates the Conservancy uses with all Federal agencies. 2 CFR 230 (formerly known as OMB Circular A-122), Attachment A, Section E, paragraph 2.a specifies that, "after a rate has been agreed upon, it will be accepted by all Federal agencies." Thus, the rates shown on the NICRA must be accepted by all Federal agencies.

We calculate our rates in compliance with the requirements of 2 CFR 230 and have had them audited by our external auditors on an annual basis. Our final audited rates are bound into the OMB Circular A-133 audit reports issued by PriceWaterhouseCoopers. After the rates are audited, we negotiate with Interior to approve the final rates and to secure new rates for the next fiscal year. The rates for the current fiscal year are to be used for new agreements and may need to be adjusted from year to year based on the negotiations with Interior.

Because we attempt to recover all of our actual costs when we undertake work that is funded by government agencies, one of The Nature Conservancy's standard operating procedures requires that all U.S. Federally-funded agreements contain a provision for recovery of our indirect costs at the rates shown in the most recent NICRA. To the extent allowed by state and local statute and agency regulations, we require our staff to negotiate for the inclusion of this same provision in state and locally-funded agreements, multilateral and bilateral agreements, as well as agreements from other national governments. Without such a provision, we are effectively prohibited from recovering all of our actual costs.

One final note of clarification regarding the base of application: it should be applied to all direct project costs, excluding the purchase price of any land interests. While I understand that some organizations have rates which apply to a base of direct salaries, the Conservancy's indirect cost rate has been calculated based upon, and should thus be applied to, total direct costs.

I hope this brief letter will enable you to understand why our indirect cost rate letter is from Interior and will allow you to include the appropriate recovery of indirect costs in your agreement with the Nature Conservancy. Should you have any further questions about the calculation, application or audit of the rates shown in the NICRA, please feel free to contact me directly at (703) 841- 4222 or by e-mail at htoma@tnc.org. You may also contact our Legal Counsel for Grants and Government Contracts, Susan Lauscher, at (703) 841-4849 or by e-mail at slauscher@tnc.org.

Thank you for your assistance in securing this valuable funding to further our mutual conservation objectives.

Sincerely,

A handwritten signature in black ink, appearing to read "Hilary C. Toma", with a horizontal line extending to the right.

Hilary C. Toma
Director, Grants Services

Enclosure

**Nonprofit Organization
Indirect Cost Negotiation Agreement**

EIN #: 53-0242652

Organization:

The Nature Conservancy
4245 North Fairfax Drive, Suite 100
Arlington, Virginia 22203-1606

Date: August 13, 2008

**Report No(s) .: 08-A-682(07F)
08-A-683(09P)**

Filing Ref.:
Last Negotiation Agreement
dated July 24, 2007

The indirect cost rates contained herein are for use on grants, contracts, and other agreements with the Federal Government to which 2 CFR 230 (OMB Circular A-122) applies, subject to the limitations in Section II.A. of this agreement. The rates are negotiated by the U.S. Department of the Interior, National Business Center, and the subject organization in accordance with the authority contained in 2 CFR 230.

Section I: Rates

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Type	Effective Period		Rate	Locations	Applicable To
	From	To			
Final	07/01/06	06/30/07	23.28% 1/	All	All Programs
Fixed Carryforward	07/01/08	06/30/09	23.28% 1/	All	All Programs

Fringe Benefit Rates

Final	07/01/06	06/30/07	40.00% 2/	All	Regular Fringes
Final	07/01/06	06/30/07	12.00% 3/	All	Short-Term Fringes
Final	07/01/06	06/30/07	12.00% 4/	All	Foreign Fringes
Provisional	07/01/08	06/30/09	41.00% 2/	All	Regular Fringes
Provisional	07/01/08	06/30/09	12.00% 3/	All	Short-Term Fringes
Provisional	07/01/08	06/30/09	13.00% 4/	All	Foreign Fringes

1/ **Base:** Total direct costs, less external transfers, the value of land sold or donated to government agencies and other conservation organizations. Equipment costs valued between \$5,000 and \$50,000 are included in the base limited to the first year of capitalization. **All subawards, regardless of dollar amounts, are included in the base.**

Note: TNC has agreed to make all reasonable efforts to implement the exclusion of the portion of subawards in excess of \$25,000 subject to a new system implementation in the FY 2011 rate negotiation.

2/ **Base:** Total salaries and wages for regular employees.

3/ **Base:** Total salaries and wages for short-term employees.

4/ **Base:** Total salaries and wages for foreign employees.

Note: The foreign fringes rate is applicable to benefits that are paid centrally by TNC's headquarters. Additional benefits are paid locally by TNC's foreign locations which are charged directly to government awards.

Treatment of fringe benefits: Fringe benefits applicable to direct salaries and wages are treated as direct costs; fringe benefits applicable to indirect salaries and wages are treated as indirect costs.

Treatment of paid absences: (a) For employees paid on TNC's U.S. payroll, the costs of vacation, holiday and sick leave pay are included in the organization's fringe benefit rate and are not included in the direct cost of salaries and wages. Claims for direct salaries and wages must exclude those amounts paid or accrued to employees for periods when they are on vacation, holiday or sick leave. Other paid absences are billed directly. (b) For employees paid on local payrolls in other country programs, paid absences are billed directly.

Section II: General

A. Limitations: Use of the rates contained in this agreement is subject to any applicable statutory limitations. Acceptance of the rates agreed to herein is predicated upon these conditions: (1) no costs other than those incurred by the subject organization were included in its indirect cost rate proposal, (2) all such costs are the legal obligations of the grantee/contractor, (3) similar types of costs have been accorded consistent treatment, and (4) the same costs that have been treated as indirect costs have not been claimed as direct costs (for example, supplies can be charged directly to a program or activity as long as these costs are not part of the supply costs included in the indirect cost pool for central administration).

B. Audit: All costs (direct and indirect, federal and non-federal) are subject to audit. Adjustments to amounts resulting from audit of the cost allocation plan or indirect cost rate proposal upon which the negotiation of this agreement was based will be compensated for in a subsequent negotiation.

C. Changes: The rates contained in this agreement are based on the organizational structure and the accounting system in effect at the time the proposal was submitted. Changes in organizational structure, or changes in the method of accounting for costs which affect the amount of reimbursement resulting from use of the rates in this agreement, require the prior approval of the responsible negotiation agency. Failure to obtain such approval may result in subsequent audit disallowance.

D. Fixed Carryforward Rate: The fixed carryforward rate is based on an estimate of the costs that will be incurred during the period for which the rate applies. When the actual costs for such periods have been determined, an adjustment will be made to the rate for future periods, if necessary, to compensate for the difference between the costs used to establish the fixed rate and the actual costs.

E. Agency Notification: Copies of this document may be provided to other federal offices as a means of notifying them of the agreement contained herein.

F. Record Keeping: Organizations must maintain accounting records that demonstrate that each type of cost has been treated consistently either as a direct cost or an indirect cost. Records pertaining to the costs of program administration, such as salaries, travel, and related costs, should be kept on an annual basis.

G. Reimbursement Ceilings: Grantee/contractor program agreements providing for ceilings on indirect cost rates or reimbursement amounts are subject to the ceilings stipulated in the contract or grant agreements. If the ceiling rate is higher than the negotiated rate in Section I of this agreement, the negotiated rate will be used to determine the maximum allowable indirect cost.

H. Use of Other Rates: If any federal programs are reimbursing indirect costs to this grantee/contractor by a measure other than the approved rates in this agreement, the grantee/contractor should credit such costs to the affected programs, and the approved rate should be used to identify the maximum amount of indirect cost allocable to these programs.

I. **Central Service Costs:** Where central service costs are estimated for the calculation of indirect cost rates, adjustments will be made to reflect the difference between provisional and final amounts.

J. **Other:**

1. The purpose of an indirect cost rate is to facilitate the allocation and billing of indirect costs. Approval of the indirect cost rate does not mean that an organization can recover more than the actual costs of a particular program or activity.

2. Programs received or initiated by the organization subsequent to the negotiation of this agreement are subject to the approved indirect cost rate if the programs receive administrative support from the indirect cost pool. It should be noted that this could result in an adjustment to a future rate.

3. New indirect cost proposals are necessary to obtain approved indirect cost rates for future fiscal or calendar years. The proposals are due in our office 6 months prior to the beginning of the year to which the proposed rates will apply.

Section III: Acceptance

Listed below are the signatures of acceptance for this agreement:

By the Nonprofit Organization:

By the Cognizant Federal Government Agency:

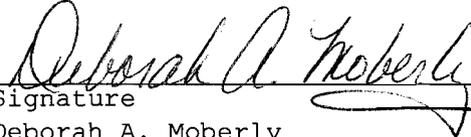
 /s/

Signature _____

Name (Type or Print) Stephen C. Howell

Title Chief Financial & Administrative Officer

Date 8/11/08

 /s/

Signature _____

Name Deborah A. Moberly

Title Indirect Cost Coordinator
Indirect Cost Services

Agency U.S. Department of the Interior
National Business Center

Date August 13, 2008

Negotiated by Elena Chan

Telephone (916) 566-7111