

State Wildlife Grant Program

State of Illinois

Annual Report

Date: July 15, 2009

Reporting Period: May 1, 2008 – April 30, 2009

Project Number: T-11-P-1

Project Title: Project Administrator - Cache River Watershed Scale Restoration Project, Union, Johnson, Alexander and Pulaski Counties, Illinois.

Project Leader: Jody Shimp, Regional Administrator, Illinois Department of Natural Resources, Region V

Approach:

Job 1.1 Coordinate all activities associated with the Cache River Basin Study, data collection, needs assessment, and grant writing/administration

a. Become familiar with the goals and objectives of the Cache River Joint Venture Partnership.

-review selected (provided by the JVP) reports and documents related to restoration, preservation and management of land administered by the Cache River Joint Venture Partnership

Completed first year

-Interview selected agencies, organizations, groups and individuals that have been instrumental in the preservation, restoration and management of land within the Cache River Joint Venture Project Area.

Completed. Activities to support this included:

COORDINATED A COMMUNITY ASSESSMENT/MARKETING GRANT WITH SOUTHERN ILLINOIS UNIVERSITY-CARBONDALE: This technical report is divided into two parts. *Part One* describes the *Community Partnership Assessment* study conducted on the Cache River Wetlands in southern Illinois. It is organized in four sections: (1) the study background and objectives, (2) a driving theoretical framework, (3) the study methodology, (4) selected study findings, and (5) conclusions. *Part Two* is a *Community Partnership-Building Handbook*, which complements the partnership assessment but is designed as a standalone document. The handbook provides a series of recommendations to natural resource managers interested in creating or sustaining community-based partnerships in conservation. The overriding goals of this project were threefold:

- **To assess community capacity for engagement in conservation and restoration,**
- **To identify constraints to and opportunities for developing community-based conservation partnerships, and**

- **To provide natural resource managers with “best partnership practices” for inspiring and facilitating partnerships with local communities in conservation and restoration.**

CONDUCTED INTERVIEWS OF CITIZENS COMMITTEE TO SAVE THE CACHE BOARD MEMBERS PAST AND PRESENT and VARIOUS CONSERVATION ACTIVE INDIVIDUALS.

Coordinator conducted interviews with each of the past and present Citizens Committee to Save the Cache Board Members and other members of the community who were active in the conservation discussion but not board members. The interviews were used to assess views of the restoration alternatives and project success. This proved to be a valuable dialogue with the community and established many productive working relationships.

CONDUCTED INTERVIEWS WITH VARIOUS AGENCY STAFF. Coordinator conducted interviews with various agency and non-profit partner staff, ranging from very active participants in the project to lesser active participants. The interviews were used to determine ways to expand existing support to achieve conservation goals. The result has been a more engaged, focused collaboration among the agencies and non-profits working together – not limited to members of the Cache River Wetlands Joint Venture Partnership – to restore the Cache.

OUTREACH STRATEGY: Conceived, developed and executed an outreach strategy for the most influential people in the watershed that are key to the project’s success.

DEVELOPED AND PLANNED A STRATEGY FOR REVITALIZING THE FRIENDS OF THE CACHE ORGANIZATION. The coordinator continues to work with U.S. Fish Wildlife Service, Illinois Department of Natural Resources and board members of the friends group to develop a plan to revitalize and strengthen the organization. The Coordinator attended a national friends conference spring 2009 that was held in Washington, DC, which generated new ideas for group management. The friends group anticipates having its first-ever election this fall.

DEVELOPED AND PLANNED A KEY OUTREACH EVENT: Conceived, developed and assisted with the execution of an outreach event that celebrated 30 years of conservation action in the Cache River. It was attend by 200+ people. It also unveiled a commemorative booklet for display the Barkhausen Wetland Center and the dedication of a boat launch site. Coordinator oversaw the development and production of the commemorative booklet and site dedication panels, which induded researching conservation history of Cache through newspaper clippings and other historical files; conducting interviews of key movers and shakers; coordinating and hosting two meetings with various individuals; drafting and editing text for flipbook; managing final text review process with various stakeholders; hiring and managing designer; working with various stakeholders to select design template; assisting with photo selection; managing final design review with partners and board members; and coordinating production through conservation partner. The event succeeded in strengthening community connections and building understanding/support for the project.

PROVIDED LEADERSHIP ON DEVELOPMENT OF A NEW DATABASE/TRACKING SYSTEM FOR PARTNERS MAILINGS AND CONTACT DATABASE: Having a detailed, carefully maintained database with the ability to generate multiple reports is critical to the success of the partnership. Coordinator provided leadership on the design and formation of a new database system for the partnership.

PROVIDED LEADERSHIP IN THE DEVELOPMENT OF NEW OPPORTUNITIES THAT WOULD ENHANCE THE PARTNERSHIP’S GOALS. The Coordinator has provided leadership on various discussions about ways to bolster the ability of the partnership to achieve its

restoration goals with an eye towards new alliances. These range from securing additional science support through the Illinois Natural History Survey with the addition of a local scientist on staff to creating an education-based collaboration with Shawnee College to strengthening collaboration with the Illinois Nature Preserves Commission.

-Review and acquire a thorough understanding of the Cache River Basin Study sponsored by IDNR and the Corps of Engineers (St. Louis District).

Completed first year

b. Complete a review of all regulatory requirements required for implementation of recommended restoration alternatives, and provide a written summary of these legal issues.

CREATED A STRATEGIC PLAN THAT OUTLINED THE NECESSARY STEPS/DECISIONS NEEDED TO SUCCESSFULLY BUILD STRUCTURES NEEDED TO RESTORE THE CACHE RIVER AND WORKED WITH PARTNERS TO MANAGE THE WORKLOAD. Worked with partners to outline necessary decisions, which is continually updated as project develops. Afterwards, worked with partners to keep project moving forward, which has required working with additional internal contacts and external partners, such as the local drainage district. Executed key meetings, including those with the Illinois Water Survey and Office of Water Resources.

c. Identify funding sources (non-Federal) for all recommended restoration alternatives and land acquisition and present these in a written document. Submission and administration of these grants should be ongoing.

IDENTIFYING FUNDING SOURCES: Coordinator continues to lobby legislators and JVP partners for Illinois Capital Budget support for \$4.2 million dollar initiative for Cache River Restoration Measure. The Coordinator has worked closely with TNC and a potential donor to partially fund the measure. The coordinator also facilitated meetings to seek funding for land acquisition through several granting sources. Developed and prepared other project proposals and grant, as needed, for the partnership. Coordinator worked with USFWS, IDNR and The Nature Conservancy, respectively, on grant applications and proposals. Assisted various conservation organizations outside the partnership in launching and executing their own lobbying efforts.

GRANTS:

- **Worked with IDNR to acquire and execute a grant through the Illinois Nature Preserves Commission for additional research into the Cache River Watershed Scale Restoration Project.**
- **Successfully received Illinois Wildlife Preservation Fund Grant to develop a marketing plan for the Friends of the Cache River Watershed and launched work on key components.**
- **Successfully received a Ramsar grant to develop educational material for the Cache River Wetland center.**
- **Applied for Wal-Mart Foundation State Giving Program grant to repair recreational infrastructure damaged during the 2008 100 year Cache River flood event.**

d. Develop and present a draft plan (for review by the JVP) for the implementation of all restoration alternatives recommended by the JVP as part of the Cache River Basin Study.

STRATEGIC PLANNING OF IMPLEMENTING RESTORATION ALTERNATIVES: Created a strategic plan that outlined the necessary steps/decisions needed to successfully build structures needed to restore the Cache River and worked with partners to project manage the workload.

COORDINATED AND COMMISSIONED A CHANGE DETECTION ANALYSIS USING MULTI-TEMPORAL LANDSAT THEMATIC MAPPER SATELLITE IMAGERY: Due to water impoundment along a portion of the Cache River in southern Illinois in the early 1990's, concern has been raised regarding the potential detrimental impacts on the riparian forestland along the impoundment region and the affects of the desired water elevation for restoration measures. For this project, two dates of Landsat Thematic Mapper (TM) satellite imagery were acquired and analyzed in an effort to isolate, characterize, and map any potential adversely impacted riparian vegetation along a specific reach of the Cache River. The analysis was completed on March 7, 2008.

COORDINATED ADDITIONAL TREE HEALTH RESEARCH THROUGH THE STATE FORESTRY PROGRAM: Due to the above mentioned concern, additional research was launched with a scientist through the State's Forestry Program. During the summer of 2008, the scientist flew over the area and attempted to "ground truth" the results from the Change Detection Analysis Satellite Imagery (CDAS) map of 1990 and 2002. A final report was issued September 27, 2008. The Coordinator continues to oversee research underway to continue efforts to monitor the riparian forests along the Cache River.

e. Obtain all information generated by the COE as part of the Cache River Basin Study and organize this for use by the JVP. Of special concern is data and maps pertaining to hydrologic modeling and land acquisition.

COE DOCUMENTS OF CACHE RIVER BASIN STUDY: All documents related to this study were acquired from COE and are housed at the Barkhausen Wetland Center.

LEVEE OWNERSHIP: worked with the Corp to obtain Levee ownership documents, maintenance agreements and easement language to determine ownership, maintenance responsibilities, and certification status.

Job 1.2 Coordinate all activities associated with the Cache River Basin Study, project completion timeline, identify all regulatory requirements and obtain permits, continue grant writing and administration

REGULATORY REQUIREMENTS REPORT: Worked with NRCS and IDNR Office of Water Resources to provide a report of regulatory requirements needed for this project, including the Reconnection and East Outlet Structures, as needed for each of the potential pathways. This document is serving as a tool for organizing regulatory assignments and modeling information.

a. Provide oversight and guidance for the development of a Water Level Management Plan that documents all aspects of water level management associated with structural restoration alternatives recommended by the Cache River Basin Study.

PROVIDED LEADERSHIP TO A PLANNING EFFORT WITH THE OBJECTIVE OF

PRODUCING A CACHE RIVER RESTORATION PLAN. The Coordinator is leading a project utilizing work previously submitted by the Corps of Engineers and currently contracted H&H modeling, to produce a guiding document for the JVP. The plan will concretely state the goals and objectives for the Cache River restoration so that work by the JVP will focus on priority activities necessary to the restoration of the river.

PROVIDED LEADERSHIP FOR THE SCIENTIFIC REVIEW OF RESTORATION PROJECT.

The Coordinator worked with scientists from the partnership to develop a white paper that discusses the ecological justification for restoring low water flow to the Cache and outlines pros and cons with the Northern and Southern alignments. This document is being updated based on new modeling information. Outside scientists with a relationship to the project were brought in to review progress and provide comments. Scientific review of the project also has been expanded to include external scientists engaged in independent research to ensure there is adequate pre-reconnection data to analyze pre- and post- impacts.

DEVELOPED, PLANNED and PARTIALLY EXECUTED A MARKETING PLAN FOR THE JOINT VENTURE PARTNERSHIP.

The marketing plan seeks to provide partners with the necessary tools needed as it enters a more public phase of its work, namely the development of a water management plan for the Cache River. It also supports the strategy to build the partnership's friends group and strengthen its relationship with other organizations, especially other conservation groups in the region. Currently completed components of the plan include media releases (on-going), talking points developed on sensitive subjects, descriptions sheets for the project, draft brochure (recently acquired funding to produce) and, of course, completion of marketing work with Southern Illinois University (listed above), which included the development of a traveling exhibit.

b. Coordinate the completion of all hydrologic modeling/flood analysis necessary for structural design and project implementation which will include a written report and detailed maps illustrating water levels and affected lands (private and public).

PHASE I THE ILLINOIS STATE WATER SURVEY STUDY: Coordinated work necessary to bring Phase I of the Illinois State Water Survey work to completion; report released winter 2008.

PHASE II THE ILLINOIS STATE WATER SURVEY STUDY: Coordinated scope of work and analysis needs for Phase II contract with the Illinois State Water Survey.

POST 2008 SURVEY: Coordinated survey needs post-2008 flood and early-Phase II work, including hiring and management of student workers to assist with data collection.

KARNAK SURVEY: Coordinated survey of Karnak and assisted with data collection designed to determine flood risks associated with the breach in the levee and determine whether Karnak could protect itself. Coordinated presentation meeting to Karnak village board.

NRCS X-SECTIONAL SURVEY: Coordinated scope of work and survey needs for reconnection pathway alternatives contract with the Natural Resources Conservation Service.

PROJECT LEADERSHIP: The Coordinator continues to lead this project, utilizing work previously submitted by the Corps of Engineers and currently contracted H&H modeling, to produce a guiding document for the JVP. The plan will concretely state the goals and objectives for the Cache River restoration so that work by the JVP will focus on priority activities necessary to the restoration of the river.

IMPACT ASSESSMENT: Coordinated report with the list of affected acreages with contact names and maps for various flooding scenarios based on analysis of Phase II study. Maps have been updated as part of the phase two work. Final list and maps will depend on results of ongoing Phase II study.

c. Develop a strategy for the repair of the Karnak Levee beginning with the transfer of management authority from Big Creek Drainage District to the IDNR through a legally binding agreement that may include but is not limited to an MOU or Cooperative Agreement, easement, lease or acquisition. This will include completion of structural design/engineering and acquisition of funding for the levee repair.

COORDINATED A HIGH-LEVEL PARTNERSHIP MEETING TO PRESENT RECONNECTION ALTERNATIVES. Coordinator made a presentation to high-level partnership staff providing a project update and presenting reconnection alternatives. One alternative could eliminate the need for repair of the levee.

PROVIDED TECHNICAL AND DOCUMENT RESEARCH IN THE DEVELOPMENT OF A NEW SETTLEMENT AGREEMENT WITH BIG CREEK DRAINAGE DISTRICT #2 (BCDD).

Coordinator has become the JVP contact for the BCDD and continued leadership in discussions towards a Cache River management plan. The Coordinator worked with the JVP and IDNR attorneys in re-drafting a settlement statement with the BCDD#2. This document informs the activities of the drainage district within the project area and provides assurances to the partners that the drainage district will not undo management actions of the JVP. Coordinator also monthly drainage district meetings in order to foster project support and answer questions regarding the project.

MEETS REGULARLY WITH OTHER GOVERNMENTAL ENTITIES ON THIS MATTER

Coordinator meets regularly with the mayor of Karnak because of their unique interest in the levee and their location as the community nearest the breach. Coordinator also meets with other entities, as appropriate, including the mayor of Ullin and the Cache River Drainage District, which owns the levee. Recently, the Coordinator has been working with other partners to further bolster meeting attendance/outreach about the proposed project.

MEETS REGULARLY WITH CONSERVATION ORGANIZATIONS (LOCAL AND STATEWIDE) INTERESTED IN THE PROJECT.

Various conservation organizations throughout the state, beyond the two partner organizations (Ducks Unlimited and The Nature Conservancy) have been instrumental in supporting the efforts of the project. In order to engage them, multiple presentations were given and follow-up meetings/conference calls has generated tremendous support for the project. Additionally, the Coordinator provides a link to the partnership in other ways, from providing talking points to reviewing documents generated by other organizations for accuracy.

Job 1.3 Coordinate all activities associated with the Cache River Basin Study, completion of all project design and engineering (restoration alternatives), continue grant writing and administration.

a. Coordinate a public meeting to disseminate information about the Cache River Basin Study and associated restoration measures, water level management and land acquisition.

ORGANIZED AND FACILITATED MONTHLY JOINT VENTURE PARTNERSHIP MEETINGS.

The coordinator tracks project progress, routinely solicits agenda items, sets the agenda, and

conducts monthly board meetings of the JVP. Decisions are solicited on current topics of interest, assignments made and documented in meeting notes. The coordinator then tracks progress and makes work modifications, as appropriate, to achieve goals.

CONTINUED TO MEET WITH ELECTED OFFICIALS AND COORDINATED FEB. 2008 MEETING TO UNVEIL REPORT. Coordinator met with local officials on several occasions during this period to discuss issues with the Karnak Levee, local flooding, assistance with emergency flood assistance, and proposed restoration measures. Also, organized a meeting with local stakeholders and officials to unveil the Phase II report. Presentations were given by staff from the Illinois State Water Survey, IDNR's Office of Water Resources, and members of the JVP. The Coordinator was a Key player in achieving goals with elected officials.

ORGANIZING CACHE CONSORTIUM: A Cache River Consortium was held September 10, 2008 on the campus of Shawnee Community College in Ullin, Illinois. Historically, The Nature Conservancy convened a regular meeting of scientists and agency personnel with professional involvement and/or interests in the restoration and management efforts taking place in the Cache watershed. A group of eleven agencies actually signed a Memorandum of Agreement formalizing a Cache River Consortium in 1994 and the group initially met twice a year. However, the group has only met once since 2001. It's the intent of the JVP to resurrect the Cache River Consortium with the intention of meeting bi-annually. This 2008 meeting consisted of a series of short science presentations and agency updates. The objectives of this meeting are to update the science community on current restoration and management in the watershed and to facilitate discussions that may lead to more cooperative efforts aimed at accomplishing mutual goals.

PARTNERED WITH LEWIS AND CLARK COLLEGE ON THE DEVELOPMENT OF A VIDEO CAPTURING MAX HUTCHINSON'S ORAL HISTORY OF RESTORATION ON THE CACHE RIVER: Coordinator served as the point person for the production of this video which will prove to be a valuable outreach piece for the Cache effort.

REFINED JVP'S EDUCATION STRATEGIES, INCLUDING OVERSIGHT AND EXECUTION OF A GRANT. Coordinator is working closely with staff from the Cache River Wetland Center to refine education strategies to better interpret goals of restoration and to better serve the community. Coordinator received a Ramsar grant to develop educational materials.

COORDINATED A SERIES OF PUBLIC MEETINGS WITH KARNAK VILLAGE BOARD: Meetings provide village board members with critical information about the progress of the partnership's work and new information it has uncovered about Karnak. Representatives at these meetings included JVP partners, including the Office of Water Resources, a division of IDNR, ACOE – St. Louis District and ACOE – Louisville District.

b. Summarize the status of the Cache River Basin Study in a written document that will include an assessment of completed restoration measures, details for the administration of existing/ongoing funding sources and a strategy for the acquisition of additional funding.

Expected to be completed during the last half of 2009.