NATURAL RESOURCES MANAGEMENT ACTIVITIES

AND BIODIVERSITY MAINTENANCE

PROGRESS REPORT

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Thirty-three days were spent administering hunts on Crackerneck Wildlife Management Area with 1541 people participating. 1166 USDOE access permits were issued for the area. Applicants represented 39 of South Carolina's 46 counties and 8 other states. Biological data was collected on 69 deer, 11 turkeys, 93 feral hogs, 29 ducks of two species, 37 gray squirrels, 28 bobwhites, 3 woodcock, 1 rabbit, 1 raccoon, and 234 fish of 7 species. Wackenhutt Security was assisted on 5 occasions with rescuing stranded hunters from the Savannah River. A news release announcing the hunt schedule was prepared. Preparatory work prior to hunts included 10 miles of roads brushed and mowed (summer & winter), and WMA signs replaced on boundaries as needed. Three days were spent chainsawing trees from roads after the spring "Storm of the Century". The check station, campground and Skinface Pond Dam were mowed. Wildlife opening work included planting and top-dressing 11 acres of wheat and planting 2 acres of chufas. Four acres of woods roads were planted to millet, bahia grass, and kobe lespedeza. Work for the cooperative small game habitat improvement project between the USDOE, the SRFS, the SCWMRD, and Quail Unlimited included: 10 acres disked and planted with a kobe lespedeza - partridge pea mixture, 10 acres of partridge peas top-seeded in timber stands prior to prescribed burns, 8,000 bicolor lespedeza seedlings hand-planted in logging decks, mowing and fertilizing established bicolor and small game strips. Twenty wood duck nest boxes on the area were maintained and checked for reproduction. A tour of the area was provided to Assistant Chief of Game Tim Ivey.

Serving as a Coordinating Land User for the SRS Site Use Committee entailed evaluating 42 land use proposals with regard to effects on wildlife populations. Twelve USFS timber prescriptions were the most time consuming. Served on the Natural Resources Coordinating Committee necessitating meeting attendance, document review for task groups reporting to the NRCC, and issued opinion statements on a variety of subjects. Served on the Set-aside Committee reviewing potential impacts to key habitat areas. Issued 8 beaver depredation permits to the SRFS. Other meetings attended included: mortality of non-game birds in conjunction with herbiciding SRS boundary, SRS powerline maintenance proposal, collecting permits for Westinghouse's control of nuisance animals, hard mast collections by SEFES on Crackerneck, office and storage space needs in 760-G compound. Reports to the USDOE included: the final technical report at the conclusion of the five year cooperative contract, RD & D, Crackerneck Harvest & Utilization Reports for spring and fall, and a programmatic summary update to NUS. Proposals to the USDOE on Crackerneck included: evaluation of hunter registration responsibilities, extension of small game hunting season, the addition of Hunt Unit 19 to Crackerneck, and allowing raccoon hunting on the area. Provided a SCWMRD exhibit for "Earth Day" on the SRS. Assistance was also provided the USDOE and other SRS contractors with deer hunts, nuisance animal control, and a variety of other matters.

The antlerless deer quota program continued in the district with 129 landowners in Aiken, Barnwell, and Orangeburg Counties being approved for antlerless harvests. Evaluations included field investigations, acreage verification at tax offices, and personal correspondence. Biological data on 1,255 deer from 45 Aiken and Orangeburg County clubs were evaluated with a harvest report and future harvest recommendations provided to each club. An additional 862 deer jawbones from District V were evaluated for age distribution and harvest reports with recommendations provided to 31 Barnwell County clubs. Assistance was provided with antler scoring for the state records program at sessions in New Ellenton, Barnwell, and Columbia. Ten days were spent in Edgefield County assisting with data collection on Western Piedmont deer hunts.

Bait sites for turkey trapping were maintained on the SRS for two months. 39 turkeys (28 hens, 11 gobblers) were captured and used for in-state restoration. The SRS project led all SCWMRD districts in 1993 for total turkeys captured. Assisted Dr. Tom Eleazer in taking blood samples from 7 turkeys for disease analysis. Evaluated data on 210 turkeys harvested in Aiken County during the 1993 spring season.

Wildlife census work was conducted on wild turkeys, bobwhites, mourning doves, bald eagles, and furbearers on the SRS and in Aiken and Barnwell Counties. Evaluated seven wetlands in Aiken County for suitability with regard to wood duck nest box requests.

Additional work on Wildlife Management Area lands included reposting 130 miles of boundary in Aiken and Lexington Counties and removing signs from several tracts withdrawn from the program. Work on the Barnwell Airport WMA dove field included: 41 acres disked, 12 acres bottom-plowed, 37 acres planted, and 69 acres mowed. Sixteen acres were disked and planted at the Head of the Creek WMA dove field in Gaston. Ten public hunts were conducted on these areas and data collected. Maps, brochures, tags, and data gathering materials were continually provided to 18 Aiken County check stations. Future recommendations for the turkey and regulations brochures were submitted and WMA maps covering Aiken and Lexington Counties and Crackerneck were updated. 1992 Project Accomplishments and 1993 Project Goals were submitted to Columbia. A Farmer's Home tract near Windsor was evaluated for possible inclusion in the WMA program, but was denied due to lack of suitability.

Ten FACE (Food & Cover Establishment) plots for 4-H competition were judged in Aiken County with the Aiken winner also winning the state competition. Assisted with two SCWMRD sponsored kids' fishing rodeos at Graniteville and Barnwell. Technical assistance was provided three landowners in Aiken and Orangeburg Counties with managing deer, turkeys, bobwhites, and waterfowl. A deer management plan was written for The Plantation in Aiken County.

Assisted conservation officers on numerous occasions with game law violations, relocation of two nuisance alligators to Aiken County, investigation of cougar sightings, transport of injured raptors for rehabilitation, and nuisance animal complaints. Underwent pistol requalification at the Criminal Justice Academy. Attended a blood pathogens seminar at the CJA. Attended a S. C. Forest and Wildlife Committee roundtable discussion at Millaree Plantation. Several biologist's meetings were attended during the year.

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