

PERFORMANCE AUDIT

Upland Game Bird Enhancement Program

Department of Fish, Wildlife and Parks

MARCH 2009

08P-01

REPORT SUMMARY

Removing the statutory 15 percent limit on administrative expenses, creating a citizen’s advisory council, and developing an upland game bird management plan could help address the declining trend in habitat enhancement projects and improve program priority within the Department of Fish, Wildlife and Parks (FWP).

Context

We found the current funding structure has resulted in an increasing program fund balance and has hindered the ability of the program to dedicate program resources in the regions. Analysis of habitat enhancement projects found the program is facing a significant decline in total number of active habitat enhancement projects. In the next five years 61 percent of all currently active projects will expire. In addition, since the late 1990s the program has been creating fewer new habitat enhancement projects and this trend will likely continue.

We concentrated on strategic planning and evaluated program information used to make management decisions. Unlike many other programs within the Wildlife Division, the UGBEP does not have a management plan to guide program operations despite the program being in existence for over 20 years. Since program management decisions are not based off long-term program goals and objectives, decisions regarding program activities and future direction may not be in the best long-term interest of the UGBEP. We also found the database used by the program to store project data had a significant number of errors such as contract termination dates, project acreage, and project cost-share information. The current state of the database impacts the department’s ability to effectively manage the program.

**Habitat Enhancement Projects
Expiring by CYE 2013**

Region	Active Projects	Expiring Projects (%)
1	6	4 (67%)
2	13	13 (100%)
3	11	8 (73%)
4	86	55 (64%)
5	39	15 (38%)
6	119	75 (63%)
7	80	47 (59%)
Total	354	217 (61%)

Source: Compiled by the Legislative Audit Division from FWP records.

Results

Four recommendations were made to the department to improve UGBEP operations.

- Revisit the 15 percent funding allocations used for designated administrative duties found in section 87-1-247(1), MCA.
- Develop an upland game bird management plan which is driven by specific goals, quantifiable objectives, and results-oriented performance measures. Create an UGBEP advisory council to assist in management planning and provide a review mechanism to assess whether program goals and objectives are being accomplished.
- Correct errors in existing database information, establish controls to assure database information is complete and accurate, and assure program information is accessible at the regional level.

Recommendation Concurrence	
Concur	4
Partially Concur	0
Do Not Concur	0
Source: Agency audit response included in final report.	

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