



Research Partnership Program in the Eastern Region

The Research Partnership Program is an annual collaborative funding initiative between the U.S. Fish and Wildlife Service-Region 4, and the U.S. Geological Survey (USGS), Eastern Region Biology. These funds are distributed to USGS scientists as support for the response to the immediate research needs of the U.S. Fish and Wildlife Service Refuge Managers.

The Research Partnership Program (RPP) was established by agreements signed in 1995 between the U.S. Fish and Wildlife Service (FWS), Southeastern Region (R4) and the USGS Office of the Eastern Regional Executive for Biology (OERB), formerly the National Biological Service. RPP was designed to provide research and technical assistance on local issues affecting Refuges in the Southeastern United States. It allows matching funds from the two agencies of up to \$30,000 each on an annual basis.

This fact sheet is intended for FWS Refuge managers and biologists, USGS scientists, and agency managers and administrators. It describes the RPP program in the Eastern Region, including how the funds are administered, and the projects managed by USGS Eastern Region Biology.

Solicitation of Research Needs

The managers of FWS-R4 send a request for proposals to the FWS Southeast Region Refuges during October. The FWS field managers identify information needs and submit proposals to their Regional Office by November. Proposals are evaluated and ranked by a team of FWS-R4 personnel and the OERB Program Manager. The FWS field managers are notified within 30 days if a project is selected for funding. Brief research requests (two page maximum) should be submitted to the OERB in the following format:

- A brief explanation of the problem to be addressed, the significance and priority of the issue, and background information including the scientific or technical issues that underlie the proposed project, and the value of the anticipated results.

- A description of the desired products (e.g. written report, scientific publication, technical assistance, workshop, software, data, metadata) and the intended user (refuge/hatchery manager, migratory bird coordinator, etc.) of the products.
- The name, address (including e-mail), and telephone number of a contact person or office.
- An estimate of the total RPP (and other matching funds, if any) required to conduct the research.
- An estimate of the time required to complete the project (maximum is 18 months).
- The name of the USGS principle investigator, Science Center or Cooperative Research Unit recommended to conduct the research.



By January, FWS-R4 submits a list of projects to be completed to the OERB. Frequently, specific USGS Science Centers or Cooperative Research Units are identified by FWS-R4 to perform the work. The OERB is responsible for identifying a USGS biologist or scientist for each project, who then meets with the manager to clarify and finalize objectives, procedures, funding needs, **and write a formal scope of work (peer-reviewed study plan)**.

The USGS scientists and their managers are contacted to confirm they can complete the scope of work within the time and funding constraints given for the project. Each of the scientists are required to provide a written end-of-year summary of results and success, along with a final report. Both will be submitted through the OERB to FWS-R4.

Selection of Project Leaders

During September, the OERB will work with the FWS, if necessary, to identify an appropriate principle investigator from a USGS Science Center or Cooperative Research Unit to complete the work within the budget and time frame established by the FWS. The USGS principle investigator will work cooperatively with the FWS project staff in preparation of a study plan. All study plans will receive scientific peer-review following the USGS Science Center's or Cooperative Research Unit's standard protocols, along with management review from the OERB and FWS

Program Funding

At the beginning of each fiscal year, each agency determines if funding is available to continue the program. FWS-R4 then prepares a modified intra-agency agreement. Each agreement is for one year and must be renewed annually. Reimbursable funds are transferred from the FWS to the USGS through an intra-agency agreement, and provided to designated USGS Science Centers to use for RPP project expenses. The USGS matching funds (appropriated) are transferred to each of the designated USGS Science Centers through a Change of Allocation (COA), or other appropriate means. The OERB Program Manager determines which projects receive funding from which source. The USGS Branch of Fiscal Services, the OERB Regional Management Officer and Program Manager, and the Center or Cooperative Research Unit Administrative Officer, work together to ad-

minister those accounts. RPP funds are provided for supplies, travel, per diem, and other similar expenses. These funds can also be used for salaries of contractors, non-permanent and other permanent USGS employees. RPP funds cannot be used for salaries of assigned USGS principal investigators for the projects. RPP funds are managed as separate accounts from other USGS Biological Resource Discipline budgets and programs. The reimbursable funds transferred from the FWS must be spent within the specified period of performance timeframe stated in the annual agreement between the two agencies. The USGS matching funds may be spent in the current or subsequent fiscal year, which generally gives the scientist about 18 months to complete the project.

Project Administration

At the completion of the project, each USGS principle investigator is required to produce a final report and other appropriate products specified in the study plan. All products must receive appropriate peer-review prior to release to another agency. Draft and final products are submitted through the OERB. An oral report to the appropriate FWS management staff is also required. Metadata are required for all datasets. The OERB Program Manager will track the progress of each project, serve as a repository for all products produced, and assess FWS satisfaction with the service provided.

Examples of Past Research

- Availability of moist-soil seeds on managed public lands.
- Experimental study of prescribed fire as a control of unwanted woody plants invading a restored marsh.
- The effect of managed floods on diversity and abundance of vegetation, wildlife, and macro-invertebrates on a flood plain.
- Bird use of silvicultural treatments prescribed to enhance avian habitat.
- Effects of ultra low volume aerial applications of Naled on non-target insect species.