

Evaluation Summary Memorandum
Application ID 018
Project Name: Rare Species Recovery
Consensus-Based Score: 205

Method used to reach Consensus: Average of Revised Scores following discussion.

Review Team Members: United States Fish and Wildlife Service (1) (USFWS), Massachusetts Executive Office of Environmental Affairs (EOEA) Department (2), and Woodlot Alternatives, Inc. (1)

Criteria Discussed:

- Criterion A3 (Sustainable Benefits): Did not receive the highest score because of some uncertainty whether parcels identified with rare species could be permanently protected. It was recognized that the presence of a rare species on a parcel allows some level of protection through other state laws and regulations, therefore even if parcels aren't acquired, results of the study may provide value for rare species protection.
- Criterion B4 (Measurable Results): One reviewer believed that because parcels would not necessarily be protected as a result of this work, that measurable results should be scored low. Other reviewers believed that some additional protection would be afforded to those species and lands that support them once rare species were identified on a site.
- Criterion C1 (Relationship of Expected Costs to Expected Benefits): Some discussion regarding project budget and whether costs were commensurate with expected benefits. Reviewers scored 4 of 5 criteria in budget section differently because of these differences.

Additional Comments:

Although the topic of this proposal is an extremely relevant one to the NRD and the applicant is qualified to conduct the project, the reviewers wish the proposal had been stronger. Shortcomings include:

1. The proposal indicates and explains the methodology for designating a "critical supporting watershed" CSW target area, but then elsewhere talks about the ecological significance of the "marble valley" eco region. While there is a good deal of overlap between these two areas, there is some concern that ecologically significant "marble valley" lands lying outside of the CSW will not get surveyed. These include lands along the Green and Williams River corridors, Konkopot corridor and Schenob Brook area in Sheffield. The reviewers understand how the connectivity to the main stem issue is relevant for preserving aquatic species like fish and mussels, but that is less relevant for other listed organisms (plants, odonates, birds). Indeed, the portion of the proposal discussing wading/marsh

bird habitat talks (rightly) in terms of the entire Housatonic watershed and not just the CSW.

2. Considering how active many NGOs are in the effort to identify and protect elements of natural diversity in the Berkshires (most notably The Nature Conservancy, which has a handful of staff devoted specifically to this purpose), it is strange that NHESP's proposal makes almost no mention of this. Ideally, we would have liked to have seen TNC and NHESP submit a joint proposal or at the very least, TNC should have submitted a letter of support for the proposal (were they ever asked?) Some discussion was provided regarding the need to avoid re-surveying areas that other groups have done, but the proposal would have been stronger had there been more explicit cooperation here between TNC, Audubon, as others could have been good sources of matching monies and in-kind contributions, which were not included in the project budget. Likewise, there was no reference to any cooperative role for the U. S. Fish and Wildlife Service, which plays a major role in rare species recovery efforts elsewhere.
3. Regarding permits required, proposal omits necessity to get pesticide applicator licenses for invasive species control should that be deemed to be necessary.
4. The proposal would have been stronger had it presented a two-prong strategy:
 - a. Survey the larger portion of the watershed for ecological hotspots
 - b. Ask for acquisition money to purchase an ecological hotspot that's already been identified by Biomap, Living Waters or other means. The proposal could have done a better job of explaining why Biomap and Living Waters, plus surveys done by TNC and others are insufficient for prioritizing key acquisitions in the Berkshires and this additional surveying step is necessary.
5. While the proposal is billed as a rare species recovery project, we did not see in the proposal any methodology for identifying the degraded sites that offer the best opportunities for ecological restoration, e.g. the sites that could be good locations for the re-introduction of listed and other native species. Or maybe even restoring historic species to a former part of their range.
6. We would have liked to see in this proposal a little more discussion of current threats to listed species and their habitat and how the work proposed to be funded under this proposal will address those threats. The role of hotspot acquisitions and resulting protection through MESA was adequately discussed, but we wanted to hear more about how other threats will be addressed, like invasive species and burgeoning ATV use.
7. There should have been more discussion of the 34.16% overhead cost. (we think this is assessed by the state comptroller, but the proposal doesn't confirm that). Was there any attempt to use an NGO like TNC as a pass-through to minimize the

overhead charge? Losing more than a third of the NRD funds allocated to this project to overhead makes it much less cost-effective.

8. This project was well thought out and the application well-written and thorough. Lack of outside funding and public outreach were the only downsides to the proposal.

Additional Comments Concerning Review Process:

- Several reviewers mentioned that some of the criterion could have had more choices for scores, i.e., the median score was either too high or too low.

Consensus Based Review Evaluation Summary

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Total Score: 205

A. RELEVANCE AND APPLICABILITY OF PROJECT					
1. Natural Recovery Period	9	9	9	9	9
2. Location of Project	15	15	15	15	15
3. Sustainable Benefits	9	9	9	9	9
4. Magnitude of Ecological Benefits	9	15	15	9	12
5. Human Health and Safety	10	10	10	10	10
6. Benefits to Multiple Restoration Categories	6	10	10	10	9
7. Enhancement of Remediation/Response Actions	3	3	3	3	3
Subtotal (max=85)	61	71	71	65	67

B. TECHNICAL MERIT					
1. Technical/Technological Feasibility	9	15	15	15	13.5
2. Technical Capacity of Applicant and Project Team	9	15	15	15	13.5
3. Potential for Adverse Environmental Impacts	10	10	10	10	10
4. Measurable Results	0	10	6	6	5.5
5. Contingency Actions	0	6	6	6	4.5
6. Administrative Capacity of Applicant and Project Team	3	5	5	5	4.5
Subtotal (max=65)	31	61	57	57	51.5

