

**Annual and Final Report
GCJV Mottled Conservation Plan Phase 3
NAWCA Small Grant Project TX-N211B
January, 2011**

Introduction

This grant was originally awarded to the Texas Rice Industry Coalition for the Environment (R.I.C.E) in the spring of 2009. Soon afterward, Texas R.I.C.E. encountered a rather heavy workload and asked the Friends of Brazoria Wildlife Refuges (Friends) to take over the administration of this grant with Texas R.I.C.E. continuing to assist with the on the ground coordination of the project. The grant was transferred to the Friends in November of 2009.

The proposed objectives of the grant were as follows:

- Restore 100 acres of the lower segment of Otter Slough
- Construct 3 wetland/moist soil units totaling 240 acres in abandoned rice farmland
- Restore 3,500 acres of native prairie

Activities with Matching Funds

Work began in the fall of 2008 with the topographic surveying of the project areas and the purchase of some of the water control structures. Levee construction began in earnest in May of 2009 as the soil began to dry and continued through July. The specifics of this work follows:

Field 3 was converted to moist soil/rice field with the construction of levees on 2 sides and the addition of a 24" water control structure. A portion of the field was a Chinese tallow thicket which was sprayed with herbicide. Acreage – 55

Field 2 was converted to a moist soil/rice field with the construction of levees and the addition of an 18" water control structure. Acreage – 25

Field 8 was subdivided by a levee and a water control structure to create additional wetlands. Acreage – 40

Field 4 was converted to a moist soil/rice field with the construction of a levee and a water control structure. Acreage - 44

Mottled Duck Marsh was restored by construction of substantial levees and new water control structures in order to hold deeper water for summer mottled duck brood habitat. Acreage – 83

Activities with NAWCA Funds

Work began in the fall of 2009 with levee construction and the purchase of water control structures. Major construction was halted by winter rains but minor stabilization of levees and water control structures continued. Major construction on levees resumed in May of 2010 and all work with these funds was completed by mid October of 2010. The following is a summary of accomplishments:

Lower Otter Slough was restored with the addition of two 24" water control structures.
Acreage – 100 acres

Ditch 6-7 Field was converted from a Chinese tallow thicket to a moist soil unit with the construction of substantial levees and water control structures. The entire area was sprayed with herbicide to remove the tallows. Acreage 145

Projects completed with the matching funds were made more functional with the addition of several more water control structures to move rice tailwater from one unit to the next lower level unit, thus capturing, at no expense to the refuge, water that is normally wasted.

Walker Pond was enhanced by the spraying of Chinese tallow and other nuisance vegetation. New stoplogs were also added to the water control structures. Acreage -100

Upper Otter Slough was enhanced by the spraying of Chinese tallow and other nuisance vegetation.
Acreage – 270

Chinese tallow was bulldozed from low areas adjacent to Field 8 in preparation for another moist soil unit in the near future. Acreage – 70

Activities with Non Match Partners

Non match partners in this project included the Brazoria National Wildlife Refuge (NWR) and the Coastal Impact Assistance Program (CIAP).

Brazoria NWR proposed to conduct prescribed burning on 3,500 acres of prairie and wetlands in the vicinity of the projects. In 2009 a total of 2,989 acre were burned and in 2010 another 3,081 were burned in the vicinity of the project areas. In addition, the refuge provided pipes and water control structures valued at \$15,350 for use in the development of the moist soil/rice farming units.

The CIAP was to provide \$90,000 to be used to spray exotic Chinese tallow trees which have invaded refuge prairies and fresh wetlands. The funds were slow to become available but the goal of treating 3,500 acres was met in the fall of 2010. Actually 4,100 acres were treated within a 15,000 acre area in the vicinity of the project area. This was accomplished by the contribution of \$16,774 worth of chemical by the Brazoria NWR. Some of the CIAP funds were used the application of the chemical and the purchase of some additional chemical.

Another non match partner came along with the donation of 2,000 pounds of waterfowl seed rice by Garrett Farms of Danbury, Texas valued at \$2,000. This seed was used in Mottled Duck Marsh.

The Friends also contributed \$20 to pay the balance of the last invoice of the project.

Summary of Accomplishments

An estimated 452 acres of wetland/moist soil units were created and/or restored versus the original goal of 340 acres. This is 112 acres or about 33% more than the original proposal.

In addition, another 370 acres of existing wetlands were enhanced by the spraying of Chinese tallow and other nuisance plants.

At least 4,100 acres of native prairie and wetlands were treated for exotic invasive plants, primarily Chinese tallow, which is substantially more than the goal of 3,500 acres.

Over 6,000 acres of prairie and wetlands were prescribed burned by the refuge during 2009 and 2010 compared to the goal of 3,500 acres.

During the summer of 2010, an estimated 800 – 1,000 mottled ducks were observed these moist soil/wetland units. In the fall of 2010, an estimated 4,000 sandhill cranes were observed in one of these units and many more thousands of ducks, geese, shorebirds and other waterbirds utilized these wetlands through the year.

The attached letter and emails from the refuge staff seem to attest to the value of these projects.