

## **Broad Incidental Take Permit/Authorization Grassland and Savanna Protocols**

### **Ornate Box Turtle (*Terrapene ornata*)**

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This Broad Incidental Take Permit/Authorization (BITP/A) has been issued by the Wisconsin Department of Natural Resources to allow landowners to conduct certain grassland and savanna management activities while remaining in compliance with the state's endangered species law (s. 29.604, Wis. Stats.). This BITP/A allows for the incidental taking (mortality) of the state endangered ornate box turtle (*Terrapene ornata*) that may occur as a result of the grassland and savanna management activities listed below.

Background information/criteria on this BITP/A must also be reviewed and followed:

[https://dnr.wi.gov/topic/ERReview/Documents/GSP\\_Overview.pdf](https://dnr.wi.gov/topic/ERReview/Documents/GSP_Overview.pdf)

Protocols for all other species covered under this BITP/A can be found here:

<https://dnr.wi.gov/topic/ERReview/ItGrasslands.html>

*Note: If carrying out a given protocol is not feasible, or multiple listed species in a given management area pose conflicts, contact the Bureau of Natural Heritage Conservation (NHC) at [DNRRERReview@wisconsin.gov](mailto:DNRRERReview@wisconsin.gov). Staff in NHC will work with species experts and managers to establish an acceptable protocol for a given site that will allow for incidental take without further legal consultation or public notice.*

#### **I. Species Background Information**

**State Status:** Endangered

Background information on the ornate box turtle can be found on the Wisconsin Department of Natural Resources' web page for the species:

<https://dnr.wi.gov/topic/EndangeredResources/Animals.asp?mode=detail&SpecCode=ARAAD08020>

#### **II. Management Protocols for Permitted/Authorized Incidental Take**

If the management activity is for the purpose of recovering, maintaining, or improving the grassland, prairie, or savanna ecosystem that includes habitat for ornate box turtles, then incidental take is allowed if the conditions listed below are followed.

Since this species is so imperiled in Wisconsin, every effort should be taken to avoid take altogether, although the management activities required to maintain its habitat are considered essential to its continued existence in the state. Only the unlikely taking that may occur inadvertently despite following all the conditions of these protocols and the following management prescriptions is

permitted/authorized. If incidental take of ornate box turtles is observed, please notify the Department of Natural Resources' Endangered Resources Review Program ([DNREReview@wisconsin.gov](mailto:DNREReview@wisconsin.gov)).

**A. Burning:**

Spring burns

Generally, spring burns should occur prior to March 5 but the timing should remain flexible due to weather conditions. The following provides some flexibility with this date:

1. If, after March 5, the daily high temperatures have remained consistently below 50°F or if frost remains detectable in the soils of open canopy areas within the prairie habitat to be burned, burning can be safely conducted.
2. If, before March 5, the daily high temperatures have been above 50°F for several days and frost is undetectable in open canopy areas of the prairie, or if you suspect that turtles may be active earlier than normal, please call NHC before proceeding with burns.

Fall burns

Fall burns may be conducted without restriction after November 15. For burns prior to November 15, please call NHC before proceeding.

**B. Mowing/Haying/Mechanical Seed Collecting or Planting:**

1. Allowed between November 15 and March 5.

*Note: In instances where trails or fire breaks need to be maintained during the turtle's active period, a careful survey should be conducted by a person familiar with locating ornate box turtles in the field. These surveys should be done in conjunction with the mowing/mechanical cutting activity by having the surveyor work ahead of the mower to locate and remove any turtles located within and adjacent to the corridor of impact.*

**C. Selective Brush/Tree-Cutting:**

Selective brush/tree-cutting (i.e., chain saw) may occur without restriction.

**D. Grazing:**

The potential for hatchling and juvenile mortality associated with grazing makes this an undesirable management tool at this time. (Grazing may be re-evaluated for sites when and if recovery has occurred.)

**E. Herbiciding:**

To the maximum extent possible, herbiciding should occur during the turtle's dormant period (November 15 – March 5).

Where active season herbiciding is necessary to control herbaceous vegetation, spot treat, preferably with a low persistence/short half-life herbicide (i.e., Round-up®), using wick, sponge or hand-held spray applications, not broadcast spraying.

Basal-bark or cut-stump-treatment methods should be used when treating woody vegetation.