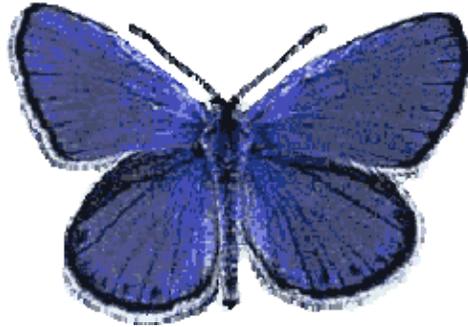


The Wisconsin Karner Blue Butterfly Habitat Conservation Plan
Annual Report of Activities for Calendar Year 2004



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Prepared by

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Introduction

The Wisconsin Karner Blue Butterfly Habitat Conservation Plan, approved in September 1999, established a statewide program for Karner blue butterfly conservation in Wisconsin. The Wisconsin Department of Natural Resources (Wisconsin DNR) is authorized to oversee implementation of this plan and the activities described in the associated implementing agreement according to the terms of Federal Fish and Wildlife Permit #TE0100064-4. This permit, issued by the United States Fish and Wildlife Service (USFWS) to the Wisconsin DNR on September 27, 1999, authorizes incidental take of Karner blue butterflies (Karners) according

to the terms described therein. Thirty-seven organizations currently participate as full or limited partners in the Wisconsin Karner Blue Butterfly Habitat Conservation Plan (HCP). This report summarizes activities conducted by these 37 partners on HCP-covered lands in 2004, the fourth full year of HCP implementation.

Monitoring

Monitoring a critical component of the HCP, and should demonstrate whether or not HCP partners are conserving Karners and their habitat, while still conducting planned land management and development activities. Each year, HCP partner organizations conduct surveys for Karner Blue Butterflies and/or their host plant, lupine.

The year 2004 was one of change and strategizy for the HCP monitoring. The theme for this change was streamlining and adaptive management. Late in 2003, it became clear to the partners and the FWS that the original HCP monitoring strategy was not clearly providing needed feedback for adaptive management. In addition, efficient monitoring became a priority in a time of budget and staff constraints for all partners. Fortunately 2004 has showed much progress with respect to improving our monitoring program to meet these changing objectives, while maintaining some basic monitoring procedures.

A team of biologists, The Monitoring Improvement Team, was formed to revise the HCP monitoring strategy.

Accomplishments of the MIT in 2004:

- ☞ Created a list of adaptive management studies to assess impacts of management activities and efficacy of the HCP.
- ☞ Prioritized this list according to categories of uncertainty (routine management, experimental management, and basic research).
- ☞ Created a “Site Activity Questionnaire” for nine management activities of experimental uncertainty for partners to compile and condense surveys done on lands managed with these activities.
- ☞ Discussed and assessed the need for trend monitoring. Currently still working on a protocol.

During this time of change, all partners agreed to provide us with the following monitoring information for 2004: 1) New lupine and Karner sites, and 2) Pre and post management surveys.

PUT DETAILS HERE:

For more specific details regarding our monitoring activities, please see [Appendix B: The 2004 Monitoring Results Summary Page](#). Also see the 2004 Monitoring Report.

Associated Species Surveys

No associated species surveys were reported in 2004.

Certification of Surveyors

The Wisconsin DNR verified that all monitoring surveyors had attended one of three annual monitoring training sessions ([Appendix C: Certified Surveyors for Karner Blue Butterfly Monitoring](#)). When partners received their effectiveness monitoring assignments, the Wisconsin DNR urged proper completion of updated monitoring forms and offered technical advice. Monitoring and annual report forms were revised to encourage proper completion and further site information. The Wisconsin DNR will continue to encourage improvement and consistency in the survey process through individual contacts, improved training, and other means. One hundred and fifteen people were trained in monitoring training in 2004.

Land Transfers

It has become clear that many of our lands within the HCP are quickly changing hands between into, and out of the HCP coverage. Eighteen partners completed land transfers in 2004. Partners acquired 243 total acres and sold 1,735 total acres of HCP-covered land in 2004. Additionally, land has become included into the HCP via new partner inclusions. The official inclusion of American Transmission Company (whose lands have already been documented as land transfers previously) and Waupaca County Highway Department (2, 758acres) has also changed the land coverage of the HCP. Through the year of 2004 there has been a net increase of land by 1,266 acres ([Appendix D: Land Transferred in 2004](#)). As of December 2004, the HCP covered approximately 250, 261 acres.

The HCP partnership is striving to focus on a landscape perspective. To deal with extremely fast-paced changes, in 2004 the DNR began to research the appropriate methods to track this land and its changing ownership. Discussion of a lands-database to keep accurate maps and information

regarding these lands is becoming a priority in the minds of several partners and the DNR. Tracking these lands is important for the partners, the DNR, and the FWS to determine and strategize mitigation, conservation, management, and incidental take coverage. The WDNR and the HCP team have plans to work on this within the next few years.

Disturbance, Land Use, and Land Management Activities

The Karner Blue Butterfly is a species which lives in a disturbance-dependent ecosystem. Therefore, management activities occurring on habitat are necessary to continue the existence of the Karner populations. Management activities include mowing along right-of-ways, timber harvests, brush clearing, and prescribed burning. Some Karners may be incidentally taken through this process; however, it is an important and necessary step to managing their habitat.

Limited Partner Activities:

In 2004, the following activities occurred on lupine sites along roadsites:

- ☞ Nine Limited Partners mowed a reported total of 1,163 acres of Karner habitat in 2004 along roadsides. Partners surveyed sites for lupine and followed management guidelines, including mowing in late fall with a blade six inches in height for areas where lupine occurred. These sites are of unknown Karner occupation.
- ☞ One “temporary take” of a known occupied site occurred in Waupaca County for a highway reconstruction along highway K. **MITIGATION**
- ☞ Please see (*Appendix E: Limited Partner Activities*)

Full-Partner Activities:

Seven full-partners reported land management activity on sites occupied by Karner blues within the High Potential Range (*Appendix F: Disturbance, Land Use, and Land Management Activities Conducted in 2004*). Activities encompassed 1,081 acres of habitat and an additional 26.4 miles of trails, roadsides and firebreaks. Activities included timber harvest, mowing, brushing, prescribed burning and invasive plant control. No full-HCP partner reported permanent take of Karner blue habitat in 2004.

The Wisconsin DNR continues to ensure partners' compliance with HCP protocols governing pre- and post-management surveys and appropriate documentation. In addition, they are required to follow management guidelines designed to minimize Karner take and optimize habitat management. Partners are contacted individually regarding specific concerns or inconsistencies in reporting or management, and corrective action is recommended if appropriate.

The DNR is working to streamline the pre-management survey requirements. Please see “HCP Management and Process Improvements” below for more information.

Proactive Conservation Activities

In 2004, 20 partners and numerous small private landowners conducted proactive conservation activities on more than 2,868 acres and 14.5 miles of land not yet occupied by Karner blues and/or outside the Karner Blue High Potential Range (*Appendix G: Proactive Conservation Activities Conducted in 2004*). Partners conducted a wide variety of activities to feature and enhance Karner blue habitat, including timber management and harvest, mowing, prescribed burning, trail construction, collection and planting of lupine seed, and invasive plant control. In many cases, land managers undertook these efforts voluntarily, on lands where consideration of Karner blues was not legally required. The USFWS private lands program is not included in this report, though it plays a vital role in pro-active and voluntary conservation for the HCP.

Outreach and Education Activities

As part of their commitment to the HCP, partners have pledged to encourage Karner blue conservation among all land managers in the Karner blue range, including voluntary, non-partner participants. Twenty-four partners reported outreach and education activities in 2004, sometimes working in conjunction with the WDNR or the FWS and often working together with other partners. Outreach included brochure and video production, TV interviews, presentations at festivals and conferences, website development, and one-on-one conversations with neighboring landowners (*Appendix H: Outreach and Education Activities Conducted in 2004*). As in past years, partners hosted several field trips at restored grassland sites like Quincy Bluff and the Bauer Brockway Barrens. The Wisconsin DNR has encouraged more diligent reporting of outreach activities; many partners have remarked that Karner blue-related outreach has become so routine they sometimes forget to report it.

Highlights of outreach activities

The Karner Blue outreach and education has come to new levels. In 2004 the HCP partners participated in a press conference with the Deputy Secretary of the Interior, the ever so popular Karner Blue Festival in Black River Falls, WI, and the recipient of the 2004 Sustainable Forestry Initiative, Wildlife Stewardship Award. These activities have supported the national recognition and attention that this program receives each and every year.

Press Conference with the Deputy Secretary of the Interior/press conference with ENV Defense, etc.

Dave write a summary of this.

Dave Lentz, HCP coordinator spoke at length with the Deputy Secretary of the Interior, Mr. Griles regarding.....

Karner Blue Festival Receives Unprecedented Attention:

Many weekend television watchers got a close look at one of Wisconsin's favorite butterflies, the Karner blue. Into the Outdoors, an Emmy-winning television show specializing in environmental education, highlighted the butterfly and Jackson County barrens restoration efforts in one of its 2003 episodes. This was re-played on the BRF-TV Channel 4 several times until the day of the 2004 Karner Blue Festival in Black River Falls. Approximately 10,000 people attended thanks mainly to the efforts of the Bauer Brockway Barrens Committee, a public/private community group committed to restoration of area barrens. Local awareness of the Karner blue has blossomed. The Committee has established educational displays at the festival, children's activities, barrens tours, and a parade of butterfly-clad locals.

2004 Sustainable Forestry Initiative, Wildlife Stewardship Award

In September, 2004 at the American Forest and Paper Association Annual Sustainable Forestry Initiative Conference the DNR and the HCP partners received the Wildlife Stewardship Award for the HCP's innovative approach to conservation and management of forest land with exemplary involvement with commercial forestry. Dave Lentz gave the acceptance speech on behalf of the partners, and again gave his acceptance speech at the Governor's conference on Forestry in 2004.

Partners estimate that they reached at least 1,248,047 people through educational and outreach activities in 2004 and are eager to contribute more toward education and outreach.

Improvements in Reporting Procedures-dave report on this for this yr.

*What we had last year:*The Wisconsin DNR continues to incorporate suggestions for reporting improvement from all partners and the USFWS. The current annual report form includes explicit instructions and specific entries for each piece of information required. The quality of completed annual reports and surveys has dramatically improved since major reporting improvements were implemented in 2001. Many partners have also taken advantage of electronic reporting.

In 2003, the Wisconsin DNR developed an HCP orientation program for new and existing partners to use in staff training. In part, this program was meant to correct minor reporting errors committed by new HCP partner representatives. The HCP Implementation Oversight Committee is concerned with this issue and is investigating additional measures to assure continual improvement in HCP implementation over time.

HCP Management and Process Improvement-dave look at this

Current economic and budget constraints have forced the partnership to improve the efficiency of HCP processes. Partners are pursuing new approaches to HCP goals that add to the success of the plan while limiting costs. In 2004, the following issues were the focus of our streamlining efforts:

- ☞ Monitoring
- ☞ Pre-management Survey exemptions
- ☞ Successional Management (training new staff)
- ☞ Mitigation

Monitoring:

The main focus of process improvement is the monitoring system. As mentioned previously, partners aim to improve the value of monitoring efforts by concentrating on the effects of specific conservation measures. The Implementation Oversight Committee (IOC) established the Monitoring Improvement Team, which is in the process of devising the new monitoring protocols. The team has met four times within 2004 to re-structure and re-think the monitoring protocols. Please see the 2004 Monitoring Report for additional details.

Pre-management Survey Exemptions:

As the partnership matures people are becoming more and more familiar with the types of habitats on the land and where on the land lupine and Karners can be found. To gain greater efficiency in the monitoring it was deemed helpful to develop and gain concurrence from the FWS on a set of criteria and biological justification to exempt certain areas and activities from surveying and/or reporting requirements. This would allow the partners to be able to reduce unnecessary work loads and focus efforts and resources where they will have the greatest benefit for the species.

The IOC and the DNR have asked partners for suggestions on criteria and the justifications for pre-management exemptions. Currently there are two survey exemptions in the HCP for all partners: wetlands and areas with greater than 75% crown cover. In addition, three partners have survey exemptions after years of monitoring on lands devoid of Karners and lupine.

Successional Management (training new staff)

Successional staff management is hurdle that partners must overcome that partners in the near future. As staff within partner organizations retire or move on to other work, the ranks of those who developed the strategies and understand the broader significance of this HCP get thinner. The IOC recognizes this problem and discussed ways to build continuity in the program. The IOC is excited to find a pro-active approach to this problem.

Mitigation:

During the HCP development, the primary focus was to work with land managers on the management of Karner Habitat. Little attention was given toward future planning of “permanent take” of Karner habitat. The HCP coordinator and the USFWS had begun assisting some town and county highway departments develop mitigation plans for permanent take of KBB habitat incidental to road projects. The goal was to find a “one fits-all” strategy for mitigation. However, as these projects grew in number, it became clear the process needed streamlining. In addition, partners were becoming frustrated by conventional mitigation requirements such as “perpetuity” and “off-site mitigation”. It was clear the HCP needed a non-conventional mitigation strategy

for this non-conventional HCP. In December, 2004 a meeting with USFWS, the DNR, and HCP partners was held to discuss and work on mitigation issues. Currently the HCP coordinator is continuing to work with the USFWS and the IOC on mitigation streamlining. Final mitigation plans will take into account biological, economical, and practical issues.

Mitigation activities in the HCP thus far: **dave look at this**

☞ One partner, Waupaca Co Hwy Dept., conducted a temporary take in 2004 and is currently implementing their mitigation plan.

☞ Additionally, the Adams Co Hwy Department and the WDOT conducted permanent take in ___ and ___ respectively and they are currently conducting monitoring. Anyone else???

☞ The DNR is working with the USFWS on three additional mitigation plans: The Town of Swiss, Oakdale Electric Coop, and Adams-Columbia Electric.

Future streamlining is needed in these areas, however, we are beginning to strategize and plan for these on-going issues.

A summary of HCP compliance audits conducted by the Wisconsin DNR in 2003 is attached as Appendix .

If you have questions about this report or would like to receive a copy of it, please contact Dave Lentz (608-261-6451; David.Lentz@dnr.state.wi.us). You may request a copy by writing to Wisconsin Department of Natural Resources, Attn: Dave Lentz FR/4 101 S. Webster St., PO Box 7921, Madison, WI 53707-7921.

