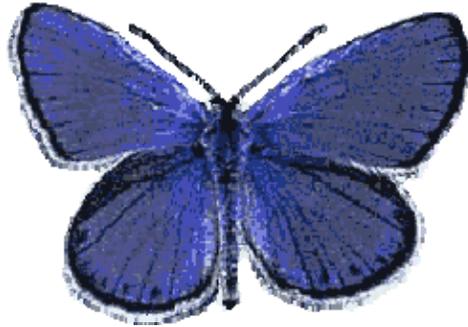


The Wisconsin Karner Blue Butterfly Habitat Conservation Plan
Annual Report of Activities for Calendar Year 2005



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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-eight 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 38 partners on HCP-covered lands in 2005, the sixth full year of HCP implementation.

Monitoring

Monitoring is 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 saw significant changes in the monitoring program. These changes continued for monitoring in 2005. The need for this change was evident and we were compelled to do 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 an active adaptive management strategy. In addition, efficient monitoring became a priority in a time of budget and staff constraints for all partners. The years 2004 and 2005 have seen much progress with respect to improving the HCP monitoring program to better meet the HCP's objectives, while maintaining some well designed basic monitoring procedures.

In 2003 the Monitoring Improvement Team (MIT), a team of biologists and a statistician, was formed by the HCP Partners' Implementation Oversight Committee (IOC) to revisit the HCP monitoring objectives and revise the HCP monitoring strategy. The MIT met 11 times (twice in 2005).

Accomplishments of the MIT in 2005:

- ☞ Created a “2005 Site Activity Questionnaire” to identify potential candidates from among six management activities for partners to survey.
- ☞ Continued adaptive management studies (Cause-Effect) to assess impacts of management activities and efficacy of the HCP.
- ☞ Discussed and assessed the need for trend monitoring. With the recognition that monitoring knowledge from recovery areas would be a better long term investment the redesign of trends monitoring would need to have a strong focus on recovery areas and specifically recovery properties.

During this transition in the monitoring strategy, all partners provided the following monitoring information for 2005: 1) New lupine and Karner sites, and 2) Pre and post management surveys.

Trends monitoring was projected to resume in 2006. (*Note: There is no Appendix A. Trends Monitoring in 2005.*) The MIT also designed a system to directly study the cause-effect relationships of the conservation measures (management activities) designed for the HCP. This information will directly feed the adaptive management process providing the opportunity for partners to assess the effects of management and confirm or improve how they do conservation. Cause-Effect monitoring began during the 2005 field season.

For more specific details regarding our monitoring activities, please see [Appendix B: The 2005 Monitoring Results Summary Page](#). Also see the 2005 Monitoring Report.

Associated Species Surveys

No associated species surveys were reported in 2005.

Certification of Surveyors

The Wisconsin DNR verified that all monitoring surveyors had attended a monitoring training session within the last 5 years. Three monitoring training sessions were held in 2005 in the cities of Babcock, Black River Falls and Grantsburg. One person was trained in the field on the job. In 2005, 69 people received monitoring training either for the first time or as a refresher. Following the 2005 training sessions there were 371 surveyors that held current monitoring certification. ([Appendix C: Certified Surveyors for Karner Blue Butterfly Monitoring lists those who received training from 2001- 2005](#)). Training is provided to all partners’ staff. The WDNR

has been able to provide this training beyond the partners to groups of volunteers who are assisting county highway departments with monitoring, environmental consultants and contracted land maintenance staff who regularly work for partners. When partners received their 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.

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 umbrella. Five partners completed land transfers in 2005. Partners acquired 325.43 total acres and sold 623 total acres of HCP-covered land in 2005. Throughout the year of 2005 there has been a net decrease of land by 297.57 acres ([Appendix D: Land Transferred in 2005](#)). As of December 31, 2005, the HCP covered approximately 249, 963 acres.

The HCP partnership is striving to focus implementation with a landscape approach. To deal with extremely fast-paced changes, in 2005 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. In 2005 the WDNR began discussions with UW Madison to expand the KBB predictive modeling project to other GIS projects that include developing a “lands included” information management system.

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 Karner populations. Management activities include mowing along rights-of-way, 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 2005, the following activities occurred on lupine sites along road side rights-of-way:

- ☞ Seven Limited Partners mowed a reported total of 1719.39 acres of Karner habitat in 2005 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. Many of these sites are of unknown Karner occupation, but nevertheless are treated with appropriate conservation measures.
- ☞ There was no permanent take in 2005.
- ☞ Other partners, particularly limited partners who manage roadside rights-of-way are being faced with the need to do permanent take or complete, but temporary removal of habitat. Minor ditch repairs to return adequate drainage is a common event. While the habitat may be removed on part of the site, new habitat is replaced. Since the use of the land is returning to KBB habitat and not permanently changed as in paving over habitat, the DNR and Service have coined a new type of take which is called “temporary take”. Procedures for dealing with temporary take in a more efficient and appropriate system are nearing completion in 2005. These include a streamlined standardized mitigation guidance and restoration protocols to facilitate easier and faster plan development and will eliminate the need to wait for DNR and FWS approval. Please see ([Appendix E: Limited Partner Activities 2005](#)).

Full-Partner Activities:

- ☞ Three 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 2005](#)). Activities encompassed 2,199.5 acres of habitat. Activities included timber harvest, mowing, brushing, prescribed burning and invasive plant control.
- ☞ There was no permanent take in 2005.

Proactive Conservation Activities

In 2005, 12 partners and numerous small private landowners voluntarily conducted proactive conservation activities on more than **5,227 acres** of land not yet occupied by Karner blues or on unoccupied acres of occupied sites. (*Appendix G: Proactive Conservation Activities Conducted in 2005*). 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 native plants, and invasive plant control. Land managers undertook these efforts voluntarily, on lands where consideration of Karner blues was not legally required. In many cases, the disturbance management followed existing conservation protocols to enhance the results. The USFWS private lands program is not included in this report, though it plays a vital role in proactive 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-one partners reported outreach and education activities in 2005, sometimes working in conjunction with the WDNR or the FWS and often working together with other partners. Outreach and education 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 2005*). 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 become second nature. The continued efforts of the partners have created a momentum and an awareness of the plight of the Karner blue butterfly that goes beyond the partners' direct audiences. Despite all this, the crown jewel of Karnerdom in Wisconsin has become the Karner Blue Festival in Black River Falls, WI. This distinction has made Black River Falls the mecca of Karnerdom in the state.

Karner Blue Festival Receives Unprecedented Attention:

The Karner Blue Butterfly Festival in Black River Falls continues to be a perennial favorite. Approximately 10,000 people attended thanks mainly to the efforts of local chamber of commerce with the support of the Bauer Brockway Barrens Committee. The committee is a public/private grass roots 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 and barrens tours.



An annual highlight of the event is a parade of butterfly-clad floats and marchers.



The 2005 event was honored by the U.S. Fish and Wildlife Service with filmed video interviews which found their way to the Service's national webpage as the featured article. Partners estimated that they reached at least **1,960,017** people through educational and outreach activities in 2005 and are eager to contribute more toward education and outreach.

HCP Management and Process Improvement

The Five-Point Plan increases focus on KBB Recovery

The DNR and the other HCP Partners and Participants to Wisconsin's Karner blue butterfly (KBB) conservation program have finite resources available to apply to the KBB. They have realized that in order to finish the conservation program successfully that they must assist in recovery efforts for the species.

Current economic and budget constraints have forced the WDNR and all partners to improve the efficiency of HCP processes. In addition, the HCP Team became aware of the likelihood that the HCP may need to be implemented for a number of additional decades while recovery takes place. Partners are pursuing new approaches to HCP goals that add to the success of the plan while reducing costs and workload. Late in 2005, the DNR developed and proposed an approach that encompasses the needs and conditions for success of the HCP program now and into an uncertain future. The primary goals of this approach are as follows:

THE FIVE POINT PLAN FOR A STATEWIDE HCP

1. FOCUS HCP implementation on recovery areas.
2. STREAMLINE PROCESSES
3. IMPROVE PROTOCOLS AND GUIDELINES, i.e. monitoring and management protocols and guidelines.
4. RECOVER the KBB in WI
5. Extend the TERM of the permit: Develop 10-Year ITP RENEWAL proposal

The development and implementation of this approach took foot in 2006.

KBB Predictive Model

During 2004-2005 the DNR pursued the development of a mathematical model to predict the occurrence of wild lupine. The model evolved to become a predictor of Kbb occurrence. Final refinements continue with UW-Madison's Department of Landscape Ecology, the DNR's collaborator on the project.

Implementation Monitoring – Compliance Audits

Compliance Audits are a required condition of the federal Incidental Take Permit TE010064-4 for the Karner Blue Butterfly. Compliance audits as designed for this HCP, serve to fulfill the intent of Implementation Monitoring, which is described in the ESA monitoring guidance for HCP's. The term Compliance Audit originated with the HCP before the ESA guidance describing it was available. The purpose of these audits is to assess the status and conditions of the management strategies and management activities actually being applied, and the degree to which partners comply with their individual conservation agreements. The audit process (1) validates whether or not partners are honoring their legal commitments, (2) provides opportunities for continuous improvement through one-on-one contact with individual partners and their local staff, and (3) provides valuable information for adaptive management for the HCP partners and the implementation process.

In 2005, audits were scheduled and performed for 17 partners or DNR properties:

- 6 utility corridor management companies
- 1 county forests
- 3 forest industry companies
- 3 DNR properties or area offices
- Dept. of Agriculture, Trade and Consumer Protection (DATCP)
- The Nature Conservancy
- 2 limited partner

A summary of HCP compliance audits conducted by the Wisconsin DNR in 2005 is attached as

Appendix I. Wisconsin Karner Blue Butterfly HCP; Compliance Audits –Audit Year 2005

Summary

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.