

Lake Erie Protection Fund Grant-SG 395-10 Final Reporting
Middle Bass Preserve Habitat Restoration
Lake Erie Islands Chapter of the Black Swamp Conservancy
P. O. Box 461
Put-in-Bay, Ohio 43456
November 21, 2010

Technical Report:

This report gives the results of the Middle Bass Preserve Habitat Restoration project (SG 395-10) of the Lake Erie Islands Chapter of the Black Swamp Conservancy (LEIC-BSC.) The Lake Erie Protection Objectives addressed by this proposal were as follows: to protect enhance and restore important Lake Erie basin habitats, including ecologically significant coastal properties, and to create new water-based recreational activities along Lake Erie. In our timeline, we proposed to demolish two dilapidated structures on the proposed Preserve site and begin the restoration for the Lake Erie water snake and for migratory birds by providing a variety of habitats (grassy, wooded, and shoreline.) Removing the safety hazard of the buildings and other debris will allow the preserve, dock and shoreline to become available for kayakers to stop and enjoy a walk, providing another stop on the proposed Lake Erie Islands Water Trail.

As part of the LEPF grant application, we solicited a bid to remove the dilapidated home and garage from the Middle Bass Island East Point Preserve from a local company, Schmidlin Construction. The property was purchased and protected on July 21, 2010 by the Trust for Public Lands (TPL) and transferred to the Black Swamp Conservancy. After placement of a conservation easement on the property, the Put-in-Bay Township Park District became the new owners with current and future management assistance provided by the Lake Erie Islands Chapter of the Black Swamp Conservancy (LEIC-BSC) and its Middle Bass Preservation and Education Committee. A copy of this conservation easement and other deed restrictions placed on the property as requested by the Ohio Coastal Management Program (NOAA) and the Land and Water Conservation Fund are available upon request.

Electric service had been removed from the home in 2004. Schmidlin Construction obtained the necessary demolition permits from the county. TPL ordered a Phase 1 Report prepared by Bureau Veritas prior to demolition. Ohio Historic Preservation Office S106 forms were completed and approved for the project by the Trust for Public Lands in 2008. All of this documentation is available upon request. Schmidlin Construction removed the home and garage this fall, leaving any solid foundation in place and using cement block to construct an artificial hibernacula for the state endangered, federally threatened Lake Erie water snake that is known to inhabit the preserve. All other materials were removed from the site in containers and shipped off the island. Care was taken to remove windows in one piece before demolition. A copy of the bill for the removal of the home and garage is included as Attachment A as well as proof of payment by the LEIC-BSC in Attachment B. There are photos of the buildings before demolition in Attachment C, during demolition in Attachment D, and after Demolition in Attachment E. More photos are available on request.

Schmidlin Construction also arranged for the removal of the abandoned vehicles from the woods and off the island (photos in Attachment F) and for the installation of the entrance sign (purchased by the Black Swamp Conservancy) to the preserve without

additional compensation. A photo of the artificial Lake Erie watersnake hibernacula is included in Attachment G. Dirt will be placed on top of the block in the spring to complete the hibernacula. Northwest Illinois University biologist Kristin Stanford will oversee and approve this work.

A rustic path system was laid out by LEIC-BSC with the volunteer labor of the adjacent property owners, Ron and Jan Helman (Photo in Attachment H.) It is a circular path following the shoreline and then looping through the grassy areas and woods. Wood chips donated by a local tree trimmer, Bill Yarnell, will be placed on the trail in the spring by volunteers. Ohio Edison has been contacted to remove the electric lines, poles, and transformers in the spring of 2011. One pole will be maintained for future use as an osprey nesting platform. One portion of the preserve will be maintained in tall grass habitat by one late season annual mowing. The Put-in-Bay Township employee on Middle Bass or volunteers may provide this mowing in the future. The rest of the area will be allowed to regenerate into woody habitat to provide a mix of habitat for migratory and nesting songbirds. It is hoped that funds will be generated to plant some of the area in native trees with volunteers next spring. We may investigate the U. S. Fish and Wildlife Service Private Partners grants to fund further efforts.

Bird banding monitoring efforts have taken place in the fall of 2009 and fall of 2010 by Tom and Paula Bartlett, Ron Minard, and Lisa and Russ Brohl. Summer banding and monitoring were accomplished by Dr. James Marshall and his assistant Larry Long. These banding reports are included in Attachments I and J. Attachment K includes a few photos of banding efforts. The trail was laid out with banding efforts in mind. Banding has been a good public relations and educational tool as well as providing scientific data. The adjacent neighbors and other volunteers have been drawn to the project by the bird banding. The banding efforts will continue annually. The species composition and numbers of birds banded in future efforts will help demonstrate how well restoration efforts work.

A dedication of the site was held on October 16, 2010. Channel 24 was present (<http://www.toledoonthemove.com/news/story.aspx?id=528518>.) An article appeared in the November edition of the local Put-in-Bay Gazette and in our LEIC-BSC quarterly newsletter. A sign including recognition of the LEPF grant was erected just prior to the dedication. It includes language approved by the Lake Erie Commission. Attachment L shows a photo of the sign in place-viewable by water. It has been placed high enough so that it can be seen if vegetation in front of the sign begins to grow and too high for vandals to reach easily.

Our matching funds for this project were generated by the LEIC-BSC (\$1,480), the U. S. Fish and Wildlife Service (\$1,325), and the Young Birders Club of the Black Swamp Bird Observatory (raised \$1840 through a Big Sit Birding Event this fall.) The Young Birders Club have also volunteered to come and assist with restoration efforts in the future.

Agency Advisor Carolyn Caldwell at the ODNR-DOW has been contacted and reviewed this report. She will also receive the lists generated by bird banding efforts in the summer and fall of 2009 and 2010 and will continue to receive these reports as well as any rare plants or animals added to our lists in the future. Megan Seymour of the USFWS will oversee future monitoring efforts for LEWS with the assistance of LEIC-BSC board member Kristin Stanford (researcher from Northern Illinois University.) The

Ohio State University Stone Lab will continue to use the preserve as a research site in the future. This partnership provides us with much needed data and provides the Lab with nearby research areas.

The matching funding we were able to receive for this grant for the removal of the home and garage and construction of the hibernacula demonstrated the commitment of many to see this project finished. It opened up opportunities now for volunteers to aid the project and get excited about it. Now as a result, we have a trail, the cars removed, and possible volunteers for mulch spreading and tree planting in the future. Having a Lake Erie Protection Fund grant gave us leverage toward getting even more support for this project. Thanks for the opportunity to get the Middle Bass Island East Point Preserve restoration on its way!

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List of Attachments

- A- Bill from Schmidlin Constructioin**
- B- Check from LEIC-BSC to Schmidlin Construction**
- C- Photos Before Demolition of Structures**
- D- Photos During Demolition**
- E- Photos After Demolition of Structures**
- F- Photos of Cars Removed**
- G- Photo of Artificial Snake Hibernacula**
- H- Trail**
- I- Bird Banding List 2009**
- J- Bird Banding List 2010**
- K- Photos of Bird Banding**
- L- Photo of Entrance Sign**

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Abstract

This objective of this grant was to restore habitat on the Middle Bass Island East Point Preserve. The Black Swamp Conservancy and its Lake Erie Islands Chapter purchased the preserve with the assistance of the Trust for Public Lands. It has been transferred for management to the Put-in-Bay Township Park District with a conservation easement held by the Black Swamp Conservancy. The abandoned home, garage, and old cars on site were removed and a hibernacula constructed on site for the state endangered, federally threatened Lake Erie water snake with a Lake Erie Protection Fund grant. The removal of the home will allow regeneration of wooded vegetation and further restoration of the site to provide habitat for migratory and nesting birds. The preserve will continue to be monitored with bird banding and snake census efforts. The removal of the potential public safety hazards from the site will make the preserve, lakefront dock and beach available as an access point for the proposed Lake Erie Islands Water Trail. The addition of the walking path by volunteers will allow the public to enjoy the restored lakeshore, wooded, and grassland habitat for birding and nature study.