“Status of the Alligator Snapping Turtle in Central Louisiana based on Trapping Data”

The population status of the Alligator Snapping Turtle (Macrochelys temminckii) is poorly known, despite recent surveys in Louisiana and several other states. Baseline data for populations in Louisiana were established from 1996-2001 (Boundy 2003, Boundy and Kennedy 2006), in which 554 turtles from 123 sites were trapped, sexed, measured, tagged and released. These baseline data were to be used to detect population trends in the turtles when regions could be re-surveyed. A second round of trapping was conducted in the southeastern part of the State in 2006-2007 to replicate efforts in that region from 1996 and 1997. The second survey located 55 alligator snappers at 13 sites. The results of the second survey found a decrease in the trapping rate for alligator snappers of 37%. Results for other species of turtles showed no detectable trend, or an increase in the trapping rate (Boundy 2008). A third round of replicate trapping of those sites, funded by State Wildlife Grant T-106, is ongoing (2012-2013; 68 Alligator Snappers so far). To monitor the survival of the Alligator Snapping Turtle statewide, it is important to periodically re-survey sites using identical methods. The present funding request will enable re-surveys of the Red River/Atchafalaya watersheds, last surveyed in 1998-2000, and will provide initial trend data in those systems. The planned work schedule will allow surveys of 32 of the 64 previously trapped sites—resampling of 50% of the sites.

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