



Case Study of Blue Grass Army Depot

Keys to Success



Project Description



Economic Value



Challenges & Advice



Benefits



Stewardship Meaning



Established in 1941, Blue Grass Army Depot (BGAD) is a government-owned, government-operated

Department of Defense installation with multiple missions and projects that ultimately serve to support the U.S. Joint Warfighter. The depot, located near Richmond, Ky., is a U.S. Army storage facility for conventional munitions and chemical weapons. The 14,596-acre site is composed mainly of open fields and wooded areas.

As a Master member of KY EXCEL, the Commonwealth's environmental leadership program, BGAD chose to put those open fields and wooded areas to good use. Using it as one of its membership projects, BGAD restored native warm season grasslands for species of grassland birds and mammals that are in decline across the country. The bobwhite quail is a featured species through a partnership between the Kentucky Department of Fish and Wildlife Resources (KDFWR), Blue Grass Army Depot and Eastern

Kentucky University (EKU). The process began with a prescribed fire to reduce competitive invasive plants and then local native warm-season grass seed was harvested to replant in those areas.



This project adds positive value to the environment by encouraging the continuation of the bobwhite

species and native warm-season grasses. Nathan White, Archaeologist/Land Manager for BGAD, estimates that the habitat restoration, monitoring the response of the grassland birds to the restoration efforts and the associated labor and equipment cost roughly \$15,000 per year.

“KY EXCEL highlights our commitment to responsible stewardship, and educates the public about natural and cultural resources on the installation.”



Prioritizing restoration efforts with the Army's mission is a challenge that was met through creative cooperation involving all stakeholders. Ensuring that the native grassland restoration projects do not conflict with or impede BGAD's mission requires coordination with BGAD Public Works, Fire Department, Operations and Security, as well as with outside entities.

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Grasslands must be maintained, once the remnants are restored, to keep grasslands in early successional stages that are beneficial to the quail. The commitment of so much time and money is a burden that some landowners and conservation groups are often not able to support.

“Above all, patience is needed,” White says. “These projects require a long-term commitment. One challenge is convincing our agricultural lessees that native grasslands are a benefit to livestock operations. One thing that came as a surprise is the resilience of relict/remnant in the seed bank. Often, native grasses recover after removing competitive species with prescribed fire and/or herbicide.”

+ Though native grassland birds and mammals are in decline nationwide, restoration and management of native grasslands



Signage regarding native grasslands

at BGAD have reversed the trend on bobwhites. Recent spring and fall quail call surveys indicate a dramatic increase in population on BGAD. Not only has the project shown a clear benefit, but it is also cost-effective. Surveys are underway to measure increases of other species.

Bobwhite quail hunting has been a traditional sport for generations. The project supports recovery of the species and maintains an important piece of regional culture. Also, the project demonstrated how recovery efforts are compatible with cattle farming. Local landowners can contribute to these recovery efforts with a minimum of impact to agricultural activities. Research has proven that native grasslands (warm-season grasses) are an important component of livestock production. Further research is underway, aimed at assessing the value of native grassland for livestock production and determining the most practical methods for establishment and maintenance of grasslands.

“The KY EXCEL program at Blue Grass Army Depot is supported through our partnerships with KDFWR, the Battle of Richmond Association, Daniel Boone



A bobwhite quail at BGAD

National Forest, Kentucky Heritage Council and other organizations,” says White. “The program not only highlights our commitment to responsible stewardship, but also educates the public about the rich natural and cultural resources on the installation.”

🌿 White reports increased bobwhite quail numbers on the installation, resulting in areas adjacent to BGAD also experiencing a bobwhite population recovery. This project has demonstrated effective recovery efforts that can be used by both private and public land managers.

HELPFUL HINT: Protecting and encouraging the growth of native plants and animals is beneficial to the surrounding environment and balance of nature.