Black bear range, pg 2

Important Dates:

- November 5—Steering Committee Meeting. Maumelle Wastewater Training Facility, 3:00pm.

- November 6—EPA visit to Maumelle

- November 6—TAC field trip

- November 7—TAC meeting

Story Ideas? Want to be put on the mailing list? Contact us at thecypressknee@swbell.net

The Cypress Knee
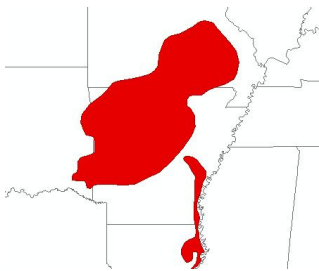
Newsletter of the White Oak Bayou Wetland Management Plan

Wetland Management Plan Update

Current developments, meeting updates, and future plans

The final Steering Committee meeting of 2012 will take place on November 5th. The committee will review the new White Oak Bayou website and provide some feedback before it goes live. The website name is **www.whiteoakbayou.com**. Look for it soon!

The other topic of discussion at the SC meeting will be the HGM subclass mapping for the watershed. Sara Owen finished the HGM subclass maps for the upper watershed using floodplain data supplied by the city of North Little Rock this summer, hydric soils information, topographic maps, and aerial imagery. Scott Owen will show some examples of each HGM wetland type and explain the functions of each type of wetland.

The HGM subclass maps will be used to help categorize and prioritize wetland management in the watershed. The map is currently in draft form. The TAC will be meeting November 6-7 for a field trip around the watershed to look at examples of each HGM type and to review the maps and finalize the HGM subclass boundaries.

It's important to emphasize that the HGM subclass boundaries are much different than wetland boundaries that would be considered jurisdictional by EPA and the Corps of Engineers. However, these maps are still a valuable resource for the development of the wetland management plan. For example, they will be very important for identifying wetlands that may go into a future wetland mitigation bank or degraded wetlands that may hold potential for restoration. In addition, not all wetlands in the watershed have been identified through the early photointerpretation efforts for the project. Any future wetlands that are discovered and/or delineated will have a known HGM subclass (and management category) that will determine how that particular wetland should be managed.

On October 20th Bill and Katy Richardson manned a booth about the White Oak Bayou Wetland Management Plan at the Arbor Day celebration in

A draft HGM subclass map is complete for the entire watershed. The maps will be used to help develop management categories for wetlands.

Maumelle. They talked with several people who are interested in the project and would like to get involved. Bill and Katy handed out a new brochure with information about the project, which will be available on the website soon.

A couple of representatives from EPA will be in Arkansas the first week in November to discuss progress on the project. The Corps of Engineers is meeting the same week to discuss development of the Regional General Permit. The RGP will depend on the wetland priority categories that will be developed in part using the HGM subclass mapping.

Wetland Ecology: Wetlands Reserve Program

Exploring the functions and values of wetlands in the ecosystem

The Wetlands Reserve Program (WRP) is a voluntary program administered through the U.S. Department of Agriculture's Natural Resources Conservation Service (NRCS). This program restores cropland, former and degraded wetlands, and riparian buffers. Restoration consists of planting hardwood trees, hydrology restoration, and creating small openings in forested areas to encourage growth of desirable herbaceous plants. Currently over 11,000 private landowners have enrolled more than 2.3 million acres of land in the WRP. Arkansas ranks 2nd in the nation in total number of acres enrolled in the WRP, with more than 200,000 acres.

Ecological benefits of WRP lands include improved water quality in the watershed, resting grounds and forage for migratory song birds and waterfowl, and improved habitat connectivity for species that require large tracts of contiguous forest, such as black bears.

One example of successful WRP restoration efforts is an increase in black bear populations in the lower Mississippi River bottomland hardwood forests. Black bears in this region nearly went extinct in the mid 1900s due to habitat loss from conversion of bottomland hardwood forest to farmland. In the mid-2000s the first documented

reproduction of black bears in the Delta since the 1970s was recorded on private land enrolled in the WRP. Since then, several litters of cubs have been documented on WRP lands, and have helped increase the number of black bears living in the lower Mississippi River floodplain.

Data source: NatureServe

Black bears are widely distributed across North America, but have limited range left in the southeastern U.S. due to habitat loss.

Wetland Trivia

There are 16 subspecies of black bear that occur in North America. The eastern black bear (Ursus americanus americanus) is the black bear found in Arkansas and much of the eastern U.S.

Animal of the Month: Black Bear

Featuring plants, animals and other critters in your area

Scientific Name:

Ursus americanus

Black bears are a medium-sized bear whose range extends across much of N. America. Adult males typically weigh 130 to 550 lbs, while females weigh about 1/3 less than males, though they can be larger. Female bears (sows) usually have their first litter of cubs around 3-5 years of age. Cubs are helpless when born and don't open their eyes until they are nearly 1 month old. Black bears live an average of 18 years in the wild.

Black bears are omnivores, so their diet varies depending on what food source is available. Up to 85% of their diet can be vegetation, especially young shoots of trees and shrubs in the spring when they emerge from hibernation. Other common foods eaten by black bears include insects, such as bees (and honey!), grubs, and ants; berries, fruits, nuts, and grasses; and prey such as fish and deer fawns.

Now is the time when black bears are entering hibernation. This period of reduced metabolism allows bears to remain dormant for months at a time with

eating, drinking, urinating, or defecating. Prior to entering their dens in the fall, bears will put on up to 30 lbs of body fat to sustain them through the winter. Their heart rate drops to 8 beats per minute, but their body temperature remains high. If weather is mild, they may wander out and forage for food. Females also give birth in January or February and nurse the young until the snow melts. Bears lose between 25-40% of their body weight in the winter.

Black bears use may use bottomland hardwood wetlands for food and shelter. Photo by Bruce Thompson.