

Summary: Neil B. Ford, Unionoida (Freshwater Mussels)

Dr. Neil Ford of University of Texas- Tyler, working with the Coordinating Organization- their office of Sponsored Research, submitted “*Survey of freshwater mussels in 3 units of Big Thicket Preserve*” in 2013. It was approved for \$6000. Ford is an expert and was recommended by the Park Service. He has surveyed mussels for 10 years in East Texas and has all the necessary equipment to conduct field surveys. The project and payment for services through Park Partnership funds flowed smoothly.

In 2014 “*Surveys of fresh water mussels in 9 units of the Big Thicket Preserve*” for \$13,074 was approved. It was designated to be funded from TCEQ SEP funds with limitations. \$200 was approved for gear. TCEQ can not be used for supplies so that item will need to come from the ToD account. The researcher may not have had a clear understanding that these funds had different restrictions. BTA had issues.

The Final Report was submitted in 2015. Ford inventoried 1535 mussels from 28 species in 72 surveys (including 2013 and 2014). He identified one extremely rare state threatened “Louisiana Pigtoe.” Data work was quality. Maps and photos were submitted as required. Ford conducted a Science Café and submitted an excellent poster.

There was a problem with receipts and approval for the final payment was messy. Much communication back and forth ensued. Ford was billed for 54 FRS stays. We did not ask for payment. The expense was deducted from the grant payment due. Mona Halvorsen and Mary Johnston reviewed receipts separately to try and match and achieve accuracy on totals and then conferred on the final analysis. In an email November 2016 one of the issues stated by Debbie Gibson, U of TX grant manager, was the starting of a new software system. She said that it was a real mess. BTA likewise experienced a migration of Quickbooks to Quickbooks Online. University of Texas- Tyler was requested to resubmit receipts into the proper categories. We certainly could not pay \$2993,33 for Other- ie., computer! The receipt situation was resolved. \$12,354 came from TCEQ funds; \$720 was paid from ToD.

The “To Pay” file illustrates an informative breakdown of the receipts and how they corresponded to the TCEQ approved line items. According to ToD Minutes Dr. Ford was paid in full March 28, 2017! It was a great project. The difficulties in payments on the second project were lamentable. We have learned to clarify TCEQ expectations on line items better and to be vigilant up front to avoid difficulties and delays.

Submitted by Mary C. Johnston July 17, 2020