

WILDLIFE MANAGEMENT

WHAT IS WILDLIFE MANAGEMENT??

The Texas Tax Code reads: Wildlife management is to propagate a sustaining, breeding, migrating, or wintering population of animals.

Sustaining/Breeding – Live, breed, reproduce and repeat on your property

Migrating – Animals moving between ranges. That could be from your property to the neighbors or 200 miles across country.

Wintering – Animals only found during the winter months

Minimum acreage for Wildlife Special Value: 15 acres

**HUMAN USE, RECREATION AND MEDICINE ALL COME SECONDARY TO ALL OTHER PRACTICES. **

APPLICATION & QUALIFICATION:

ALL 3 OF THESE ARE REQUIRED:

1. TEXAS COMPTROLLERS 50-129 1D1 APPLICATION – FILL/SIGN/DATE (NAME EXACTLY AS SHOWN ON DEED)
 - 1.1. Owner must show 5year ag history
 - 1.2. Any change in ownership/name will require a new application
2. TEXAS PARKS AND WILDLIFE FORM 885-W7000 – 5YEAR PLAN
 - 2.1. Fill/sign/date (name exactly as shown on deed)
3. 5 YEAR COMPREHENSIVE WILDLIFE PLAN – CREATED BY ONE OF THE FOLLOWING
 - 3.1. Texas Parks And Wildlife (Free)
 - 3.2. A certified wildlife biologist – Dan VanSchaik does quite a lot of them in our area. 903-821-7054
 - 3.3. Certified wildlife manager

After receiving/approving the application the property will be inspected after 1 calendar year to ensure the plan is being followed. (If there is no evidence that wildlife practices are meeting the sufficient degree of intensity the special value application will be denied.

REPORTING:

COVER THE PREVIOUS YEAR (always reporting a year behind)

1. TEXAS PARKS AND WILDLIFE FORM 888-W7000 – annual report
2. SUMMARY LIST OF WILDLIFE EXPENSES (to include but not limited to):
 - 2.1. FEEDERS & FOOD PLOTS – feeders, clover/grasses, wildflowers, no till planting, winter food plots, etc.
 - 2.2. FEED/SEED
 - 2.3. WATER RESOURCES – earthen tank building, guzzlers, troughs, ponds, pools, pan drips, potholes, playa lakes, etc.
 - 2.4. FENCING – water gaps, erosion fencing
 - 2.5. DISEASE CONTROL
3. SUPPORTING PHOTOS OF EACH PRACTICE – before and after
4. SUPPORTING NARRATIVE OF EACH PRACTICE – throughout the year

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TARGET SPECIES:

YOUR TARGET SPECIES SHOULD INCLUDE A VERY BROAD RANGE OF NATIVE OR MIGRATORY SPECIES. -

- 1) BIG GAME – Whitetail, Mule Deer, Antelope
- 2) CAPTIVE DEER FARMS – Licensed Breeders
- 3) UPLAND BIRDS – Turkey, Dove, Quail, Pheasant
- 4) WATERFOWL – Ducks, Geese, Swans
- 5) SMALL MAMMALS – Rabbits, Squirrel, etc.
- 6) NONGAME SPECIES – Bats, Moles, Shrews, Jackrabbits, Armadillos, Porcupines, Prairie Dogs, Rodents, Raptors, Shorebirds, Waders, Songbirds, Neotropicals, Woodpeckers, Jays, Ravens, etc.
- 7) MISC SPECIES OF CONCERN – Includes endangered or threatened animals, plants, insect or fish.

PRACTICES, ACTIVITIES AND APPLICATIONS:

HABITAT MANAGEMENT:

Habitat Control or management means actively using the land to create or promote an environment that is beneficial to wildlife.

1. GRAZING – partial or total
2. SPECIFIC HABITAT CREATION & PROTECTION – The development of specific habitat requirements for particular species of interest ****GREATEST CONSERVATION CONCERN****
3. GENERAL/PRIMARY HABITAT CREATION & PROTECTION
 - 3.1. EDGE – the area of transition between two different vegetation types such as forest to meadow – plant switchgrass, milo, sorghum, or other annually reseeding grasses
 - 3.2. BUFFER ZONE – Help to provide a natural barricade where natural wildlife habitat come together with active fields, roadways, structures, etc.
 - 3.3. CANOPY GAPS – Openings in the canopies of forested areas to provide visual diversity. – plant lollies, grasses and clovers.
 - 3.4. FOLIAGE VARIATION – HEIGHT & DENSITY – Well manicured or uniform conditions will be less desirable to species present. Wildlife prefers a variation of height, color, density and shape.
 - 3.5. ROADS/PATHWAYS – Well maintained roads are a healthy wildlife management practice. If you can't get to it, you can't manage it.
 - 3.6. RIPARIAN PROTECTION – Waters Edge Foliage – Birds will breed more often in these grassy/weedy areas around water. 60% of land birds breed in riparian areas and 40% only breed in riparian areas. *****#1 TO WILDLIFE SUCCESS***** *A minimum of 1 Riparian Management and Enhancement project must be implemented and maintained every 10 years to qualify.*
4. WETLAND IMPROVEMENT - *Construction and maintenance of a new project will qualify for 10 years.*
 - 4.1.1. SHALLOWS – less than 4' deep
 - 4.1.2. IMPOUNDMENTS – 24-36" berms above ground
5. BRUSH MANAGEMENT – *Enhancement should annually affect 10% of the total area designated in the plan, or a minimum of 10 acres annually, whichever is smaller, until the project is complete.*
 - 5.1.1. TRADITIONAL METHODS – Fire, Mechanical, Herbicides, & Grazing
 - 5.1.2. WEEDY PLANT CONTROL – Herbicides/Mechanical to control invasive plants

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- 5.1.3. ENHANCED MID-SECTION BRUSH – Mechanical method of removing the top growth of woody plants but encourage root sprouting.
- 5.1.4. FOREST/BRUSH OPENINGS – Create openings to have the habitat more accessible
- 5.2. PRESCRIBED BURNING – with a controlled burn plan
- 6. FOREST MANAGEMENT
 - 6.1.1. Establish native trees and plants to restore native habitat
 - 6.1.2. Hardwood thinning for mast and canopies. Retain Pine and evergreen for thermal cover.
- 7. RANGE ENHANCEMENT – Re-establishment of native grasses diversity. Enhancement should annually affect 10% of the total area designated in the plan, or a minimum of 10 acres annually, whichever is smaller, until the project is complete.
 - 7.1.1. PRAIRIE/GRASSLAND – overseeding native grasses *Disk DEC-MAR**Plant DEC-APR*
 - 7.1.2. CONVERSION OF EXOTIC VEGETATION – Removal of exotic plants and replace with native plants that grow 2-4" tall.
 - 7.1.3. SHALLOW DISKING – No till planting
- 8. CONTROLLING NATIVE, EXOTIC & FERAL SPECIES –
 - 8.1. Populations of exotics, feral animals and wildlife should be strictly controlled to minimize negative impact on native wildlife and habitat. The removal or control of exotic vegetation or the conversion of tame grass pastures must affect a minimum of 10% of the area designated, or 10 acres annually, whichever is smaller.

EROSION CONTROL:

Any Practice that attempts to reduce or decrease soil erosion for Wildlife's benefit is considered erosion control. Erosion is the detachment and movement of soil by moving water, wind, or ice.

The most effective methods result from a combination of established vegetation cover and controlled drainage.

SUGGESTED METHODS –

- 1) Water Gaps
- 2) Erosion fencing
- 3) Rock
- 4) Rocky Speed Bumps
- 5) Water Diversion
- 6) Vegetation
- 7) Culverts
- 8) Drainage Ditches
- 9) Swells

PREDATOR & WILDLIFE DISEASE CONTROL:

This is a practice intended to manage the population of predators to benefit the target wildlife species. Predator control is usually not necessary unless the number of predators is harmful to the wildlife population.

1. Hunting/Trapping Predator Animals- ***DO NOT kill just to kill.*** The management of predator populations to increase survival of target species. Key native predator species may include coyote, raccoon, bobcat, mountain lion, and rat snakes. Exotic predators may include feral house cat, feral

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dog, and feral hogs. The predator control plan should be prepared or approved by a competent professional and include the list, duration and intensity of methods to remove the target species annually.

2. Animal Damage Identification
3. Trapping and removal of invasive or aggressive species
 - 3.1. **Imported Red Fire Ant Control**- To protect native wildlife species or their food base, including native fire ants which seem to restrict the spread of the imported fire ants; proper treatment of at least 10 acres or 10% of infested area per year, whichever is more.
 - 3.2. **Control of Cowbirds**- Reducing populations of these birds for the purpose of decreasing nest parasitism on target Neotropical bird species in a PLANNED PROGRAM (see TPWD Appendix J, K and Q). Trapping and euthanizing require certification from TPWD. Removal of at least 30 cowbirds annually is required to qualify.
 - 3.3. **Grackle/Starling/ House Sparrows Control**- Reducing populations of Grackles, Starlings and or House Sparrows for the purpose of controlling avian diseases and reducing overcrowding to exclusion of other avian fauna in a planned program- See TPWD Appendix J, particularly targeting white-winged dove and other Neotropical birds. Removal of at least 30 grackles/starlings/house sparrows annually is required to qualify.
4. Monitoring for Sick and Dying animals.
 - 4.1. Coyote Mange
 - 4.2. Deer CWD – Chronic Waste Disease (Zombie Disease) – Report to TXPWD
 - 4.3. Deer EHD - Epizootic Hemorrhagic Disease (Blue Tongue Disease) – Report to TXPWD
 - 4.4. Deer Fibroma
 - 4.5. Lumpy Jaw
 - 4.6. Deer Heavily Ticked

SUPPLEMENTAL WATER & DEVELOPING WATER SOURCES:

Supplemental water is provided when the owner is ACTIVELY providing water in addition to natural resources.

****This is a critical practice to a drought prone area. Water must be provided 12 months out of the year. This practice will be heavily observed and inspected in drought years****

Wildlife experts say that we have reached a point where, setting out water for the armadillos, squirrels, skunks, possums, raccoons, rabbits, birds, and other wild animals we share our neighborhoods with may be the difference between life and death for the heat-weary creatures. Animals suffering from the heat and drought show many of the same symptoms of a person suffering from heat exhaustion or even heat stroke, such as listlessness, lack of coordination, unslakable thirst and even unconsciousness, all of which can indicate that the animal needs urgent care.

Deer drink 3 quarts of water per 100lb of body weight. Keep that in mind when you take into consideration the amount of water you should be providing for not only them but any other animal that may come for a drink. Have drinking stations at various heights for the various sized animals.

This practice can be accomplished by pumping ground water, providing mineral supplements in the water, collecting water, developing runoffs, or bringing in water in the following manners (to name a few):

1. Guzzlers

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2. Troughs
3. Windmills
4. Earthen tanks
5. Ponds
6. Pools
7. Pan drips – perfect for quail, birds or small rodents
8. Pot holes
9. Playa lakes
10. Bird Baths

SUPPLEMENTAL FOOD:

Food and Water are essential to the life of plants, animals, and humans. **MUST PROVIDE SUPP FOOD 9/12 MONTHS**

1. FOOD PLOTS – Focus on winter plots – A minimum of 1% of the acreage should be planted in seasonal food plots.
 - 1.1. Clover
 - 1.2. Grasses
 - 1.3. Wildflowers
2. FEEDERS – MIN 1 Free Choice feeder per 320 ac with a minimum 16% crude protein
 - 2.1. Corn feeders
 - 2.2. Protein feeders
 - 2.3. Quail feeders
 - 2.4. Turkey feeders
3. Songbird Feeders

PROVIDING SHELTER:

Just like humans or pets, wildlife needs a place to escape extreme weather conditions, digest their food, rest, and recoup. Wildlife needs the lowest ambient temperature, minimal light and maximum air movement to achieve success in their shelter.

1. COVER STRUCTURE – groves, trees, bushes, scrub cedars
2. FRAGMENTED LANDSCAPES – sumac, persimmon, switchgrass
3. PROTECTED TRAVEL ROUTES - outcroppings
4. SNAGS (dead trees) – ideal for birds of all kinds but especially birds of prey
5. MANMADE COVER STRUCTURE
6. BRUSH PILES – Perfect for small mammal as well as Quail who need that low lying structure.
7. ROCK PILE WITH STRUCTURES - caves
8. PLANT NATURAL COVER – shrubs and trees
9. DEFERRED MOWING – NO MOWING May 1-Aug 15 – this is the prime time for your wildlife to flourish. Smaller animals and some larger animals' bed, breed, or sleep in the cover that taller grasses can provide.
10. Nest/Bat Boxes - Number and location of nest boxes should be consistent with habitat needs and territorial requirements of the target species, and sufficient over the area to provide a real supplement to the target population and address and identified severe limiting factor as

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a part of a comprehensive wildlife management plan. Must have records of the activity in the nesting boxes

10.1. Nesting Boxes for common birds:

10.1.1. Eastern Bluebird - Floor – 5 $\frac{3}{4}$ inches by 5 $\frac{1}{2}$ inches

Depth- 10 inches

Top of Hole – 8.75 inches above floor

Hole – 1.5 inches

Mounting – at least 5 feet above ground on metal pole - not on post, tree or “t” post.

A bluebird box should not have a perch. Predatory House Sparrows and House Wrens are attracted to perches. Monitor nest boxes regularly and remove House Sparrows and their nests early and aggressively. Biologists recommend mounting the nest box so the entrance hole points away from the hot afternoon sun and faces away from prevailing winds— usually somewhat eastward is best.

10.1.2. Carolina Wren - Floor – 4 inches by 4 inches

Depth – 6 to 8 inches

Entrance Height above floor – 1 to 6 inches

Entrance diameter – 1 $\frac{1}{2}$ inches

Recommended height above ground – 6 to 10 feet

10.1.3. House Wren - Floor – 4 inches by 4 inches

Depth – 8 to 10 inches

Entrance height above floor – 1 to 6 inches

Entrance diameter – 1 $\frac{1}{4}$ inches

Recommended height above ground – 6 to 10 feet

10.1.4. Tufted Titmouse - Floor – 4 inches by 4 inches

Depth – 8 to 10 inches

Entrance height above floor – 6 to 8 inches

Entrance diameter – 1 $\frac{1}{4}$ inches

Recommended height above ground – 6 to 15 feet

10.1.5. Red-headed Woodpecker – Floor – 6 inches by 6 inches

Depth – 12 inches

Entrance height above floor – 10 inches

Entrance diameter – 2 inches

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Recommended height above ground – 10 to 20 feet

10.1.6. Northern Flicker Woodpecker - Floor – 7 inches by 7 inches

Depth - 16 to 18 inches

Entrance height above floor – 14 to 16 inches

Entrance diameter – 12 ½ inches

Recommended height above ground – 6 to 20 ft

10.1.7. Barn Owl - Floor – 10 inches by 18 inches

Depth – 15 to 18 inches

Entrance height above floor – 4 inches

Entrance diameter – 6 inches

Recommended height above ground – 12 to 18 feet

10.1.8. Screech Owl - Floor - 8 inches by 8 inches

Depth – 12 to 15 inches

Entrance height above floor – 9 to 12 inches

Entrance diameter – 3 inches

Recommended height above ground – 10 to 30 feet

10.1.9. Wood Duck – Floor – 10 inches by 18 inches

Depth - 10 to 24 inches

Entrance height above floor – 12 to 16 inches

Entrance diameter – 4 inches by 3 inches

Recommended height above ground – 10 to 20 feet

POPULATION CENSUS:

Census should be a mandatory practice for anyone practicing wildlife. How can you tell if you are improving the conditions of your property enough to draw additional wildlife in? Census counting will help you track the increase or decrease in wildlife on your property. If you see the increase, you are doing great and keep up the good work! If you see a decrease, it is time to figure out why and adjust your plan.

1. DIRECT SURVEY – you physically see the animals and take note of how many or any changes to the animals you see repeatedly. Your practices can directly impact their health and wellbeing.
2. INDIRECT – It is best to log these by location and type so that you can better track the particular wildlife you have on the property or moving through. Examples are: tracks, scat, pellets, spotlight detection, photos or videos from cameras, infrared, aerial, quail call surveys, etc.
 - 2.1. Spotlight Counts – A minimum of 3 counts or a minimum of 15 surveyed miles must be completed annually.
 - 2.2. Aerial Counts – Should be performed by a trained individual annually.

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- 2.3. Daylight Deer Heard/Wildlife Composition Counts/Photo Stations - Counts should be conducted on standardized transects along 5-mile minimum lines and run at least 3 times to obtain at least 100 observations. On smaller tracts, at least 5 separate, 2 hour counts during early morning or late afternoon from deer blinds may be used.
- 2.4. Harvest Data Collection/Record Keeping - Collect all age, weight, and antler development data from harvested deer. Age and sex information should be obtained from game birds and waterfowl to determine sex ratios and annual production.
3. DENSITY – Animal/Acre
4. SEX RATIOS – Male/female
5. PRODUCTIVITY – Birthing rates
6. TARGET POPULATION GOALS – How many animals would you like to see?
7. TARGET POPULATION CHARACTERISTICS – what do you need to do to draw your target species?
8. Endangered, Threatened or Protected Species - Standardized & Routine surveys conducted annually.
9. Nongame Wildlife Species - Standardized & Routine surveys conducted annually.
10. Roost Counts - Standardized & Routine surveys conducted annually.
11. Quail Call and Survey Counts – Standardized & Routine surveys conducted annually.

ACCEPTABLE FORMS OF SECONDARY USAGE/AG CROSSOVER PRACTICES:

- Eco Tourism/bird watching – must allow public access (please contact us for further requirements)
- Vineyards
- Orchard
- Hay (only if its in the wildlife management plant)

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