

**WILDLIFE MANAGEMENT PLAN GUIDELINES
FOR 1-D-1w PROPERTY TAX VALUATION FOR THE
GULF PRAIRIES AND MARSHES ECOLOGICAL REGION**

The following is intended to provide landowners the information to assist them in developing their own Wildlife Management Plan (WMP) for 1-D-1 Wildlife Management Property Tax Valuation; however, **it is recommended, but not required, that landowners meet with a professional who can assist with recommendations for the land.** The management practices discussed is intended as guidelines to make landowners aware of the possibilities for their property. The format presented should be followed as closely as possible. All Appraisal Districts require that a WMP be prepared for the property, but some prefer that the plan be developed for a five (5) year period with an Annual Report turned in each January after approval, and some prefer a one (1) year plan submitted annually.

The first thing to consider is: What do you want to do? That is, what is your goal in managing your property for wildlife? It can be anything from managing for songbirds and bats to managing for white-tailed deer and turkey. What is important to remember is that:

The land must be used to generate a sustaining breeding, migrating, or wintering population of indigenous wild animals.

Once you goal (or goals) has been determined, evaluate which of the seven (7) acceptable management activities you can implement on your property. You must implement at least three (3) of the seven (7) activities each year to qualify. For each activity there are several management practices that can be used. Additionally, there are levels of intensity for each practice that must be satisfied, and **you must address these intensity levels when** writing your plan. The following is a list of management activities and their associated practices and minimum intensity levels for each practice.

1. HABITAT CONTROL

- a. **Grazing Management:** Select a type of grazing system to be implemented, and attach an initial grazing schedule to the plan.
- b. **Prescribed Burning:** A minimum of 33% of acreage annually burned in coastal marshes, 15% in wooded uplands, and 20% in rangeland.
- c. **Range Enhancement:** A minimum of 10% of the total area designated in the plan, or a minimum of 10 acres annually, whichever is smaller, until the project is complete.

- d. **Brush Management, Enhancement or Removal:** A minimum of 10% of the total area designated in the plan, or a minimum of 10 acres annually, whichever is smaller. Can include the planting of 150 native tree and shrub species per acre per year for the area designated in the plan.
- e. **Timber Management:** A minimum of 150 native seedlings/acre/year for the area designated in the plan.
- f. **Riparian Management and Enhancement:** A minimum of one project must be implemented and maintained every 10 years to qualify.
- g. **Wetland Enhancement:** Construction of a new project will qualify for 10 years.
- h. **Habitat Protection for Species of Concern:** A minimum of one project must be implemented every 10 years to qualify.
- i. **Prescribed Control of Native, Exotic, and Feral Species:** The removal or control of exotic vegetation or the conversion of tame grass pastures must affect a minimum of 10% of the area designated in the plan, or 10 acres annually, whichever is smaller. Also includes the removal of exotic or feral wildlife.
- j. **Wildlife Restoration:** A TPWD approved restoration plan at a scale capable of supporting a sustainable population.

2. EROSION CONTROL

- a. **Pond Construction and Repair:** A minimum of one project must be implemented and maintained every 10 years.
- b. **Gully Shaping:** A minimum of one project must be implemented and maintained every 10 years.
- c. **Streamside, Pond, and Wetland Revegetation:** A minimum of one project must be completed and maintained every 5 years, affecting a minimum of 5 acres per project.
- d. **Herbaceous and/or Woody Plant Establishment on Critical Areas (erodible):** A minimum of 150 seedlings per acre must be planted annually on 10 acres or a minimum of 10%, whichever is smaller, of the total designated area annually.
- e. **Dike/Levee Construction and Management:** A minimum of one project must be implemented and maintained every 10 years.
- f. **Establishing Water Diversion:** A minimum of one project must be implemented and maintained every 10 years.

3. PREDATOR CONTROL

- a. **Imported Red Fire Ants:** Proper treatment of at least 10 acres or 10% of the infested area per year, whichever is more.

- b. **Brown-headed Cowbirds:** Removal of at least 30 cowbirds annually is required to qualify.
- c. **Grackle, Starling, and House Sparrow Control:** Removal of at least 30 grackles/starlings/house sparrows annually is required to qualify.
- d. **Miscellaneous:** Feral hogs, raccoons, coyotes, feral cats/dogs.

4. SUPPLEMENTAL WATER

- a. **Marsh and Wetland Restoration or Development:** A minimum requirement of one marsh/wetland restored or developed per 10 years; or annual water management of project or existing wetland.
- b. **Well, Troughs, Windmill Overflows, and Other Watering Facilities:** A minimum of one project per 10 years must be completed to qualify. Consistent water management for wildlife at sites qualifies.
- c. **Spring Development and/or Enhancement:** A minimum of one project per 10 years must be completed to qualify; or existing or restored springs consistently managed to prevent degradation.

5. SUPPLEMENTAL FOOD

- a. **Grazing Management:** Same as above.
- b. **Prescribed Burning:** Same as above.
- c. **Range Enhancement:** Same as above.
- d. **Food Plots:** A minimum of 1% of the acreage should be planted in both winter and summer food plots.
- e. **Feeders and Mineral Supplementation:** A minimum of one free-choice feeder per 320 acres in use during the recommended time period, with a minimum of 16% crude protein feed required to qualify.
- f. **Managing Tame Pasture; Old Fields and Croplands:** A minimum of 5% of the designated area must be treated annually to qualify.
- g. **Transition Management of Tame Grass Monocultures:** A minimum of 25% of the designated area must be treated annually to qualify.

6. SUPPLEMENTAL SHELTER

- a. **Nest 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 an identified severe limiting factor as part of a comprehensive wildlife management plan. (See Appendix Y in TPW – Minimum Requirements for

- Supplemental Shelter Gulf Prairies and Marshes). **Number based on acres of suitable habitat.**
- b. Brush Piles and Slash Retention:** A minimum of 1% of the designated area must be treated annually to qualify.
 - c. Fence-line Management:** A minimum width of 30 yards and length of 100 yards of fence line management per ¼ mile of fence is required annually to qualify.
 - d. Hay Meadow, Pasture, and Cropland Management for Wildlife:**
Mowing/Swathing of hay fields should be postponed until after the peak of nesting/rearing period of ground-nesting birds and mammals (July 15).
Annually mow/shred 25% of open areas per year, preferable in strips or mosaic types of patterns, to create edge and structural diversity.
 - e. Half-Cutting Trees or Shrubs:** A minimum of one clump of trees/shrubs per 100 yards on at least 10% of acreage or 10 acres, whichever is smaller, annually to qualify.
 - f. Woods Plant/Shrub Establishment:** Plant a minimum of 500 seedlings annually, or 4 rows in a 120-foot width by a ¼ mile in length.
 - g. Natural Cavity/Snag Development:** A minimum of 5 snags per acre, on 5% of the acreage, must be retained/created annually to qualify.

7. MAKING CENSUS COUNTS TO DETERMINE POPULATIONS:

For census activity to qualify for deer, a combination of methods must be used to obtain a reasonable assessment of the deer herd for habitat and harvest management. For most properties, this will require spotlight surveys, daylight or incidental observations, and harvest data for all deer (age, weight, and antler measurements). Similar intensity should be applied for other species to qualify in this activity.

- a. Spotlight Counts:** A minimum of 3 counts, or a minimum of 15 surveyed miles, must be completed annually.
- b. Standardized Incidental Observations:** Observations may be from feeders, food plots, blinds, or vehicles. A minimum of 100 observations of adult deer plus fawns required.
- c. Stand Counts:** One stand is required every 100 acres (i.e. 150 acres requires two stands). Five counts are conducted at each stand. One hour of observation is required during each count (i.e. one hour after sunrise or one hour before sunset).
- d. Aerial Counts:** Counts should employ accepted methodology for the region and be performed by a trained individual annually.

- e. **Track Counts:** Counts made on 3 consecutive days, minimum, using accepted methodology.
- f. **Daylight Deer Herd/Wildlife Composition Counts/Photo Stations:** Counts should be conducted on standardized transects along 5 mile minimum lines and run at least 3 times (if shorter lines are used, a total of at least 15 miles must be surveyed), or through other standardized methodology to obtain at least 100 observations. On smaller tracts, at least five separates, two hour counts during early morning or late afternoon from deer stands (blinds) may be used.
- g. **Harvest Data Collect/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.
- h. **Browse Utilization Surveys:** Annually examine deer browse species for degree of utilization on each major vegetative site on the property through vegetation analysis and stem counts.
- i. **Census of Endangered, Threatened, or Protected Wildlife:** Regular, periodic counts of the target species.
- j. **Census and Monitoring of Nongame Wildlife Species:** Regular, periodic counts of nongame wildlife species. This practice also includes developing checklists of wildlife diversity for the property.
- k. **Miscellaneous Counts:** Specific species may require special survey techniques.
 1. Time/Area Counts
 2. Roost Counts
 3. Song bird transects and counts
 4. Quail call and covey county
 5. Point counts
 6. Drift fences and pitfall traps
 7. Small mammal traps
 8. Bat census
 9. Nest box surveys between February 15 and July 15

GENERAL HABITAT MANAGEMENT CONSIDERATIONS, RECOMMENDATIONS, AND INTENSITY LEVELS

Fundamental requirements which must be considered when managing wildlife habitat include food, cover, water and the property distribution of these elements.

Wildlife and habitat management should be directed at maintaining a productive and healthy ecosystem. The ecosystem consists of the plant and animal communities found in

an area along with soil, air, water and sunlight. All management activities should be aimed at conserving and improving the quantity and quality of soils, water and vegetation.

Managing for plant diversity is essential. A diverse habitat has a good mixture of various species of grasses, forbs (weeds), and browse (woody) plants. Many of these plants will be at various stages of growth, which adds another element of diversity. The diversity of vegetation increases the availability of food and cover for wildlife species. A greater diversity of plants results in more food being made available during different periods of the year. The volume and diversity of plants protects the soil from erosion. Also, the decomposition of vegetation helps restore needed minerals to the soil to sustain plant life. Vegetation improves the water cycle by increasing water infiltration into the soil and reducing surface runoff.

Plant communities with a diversity of grasses and native broad-leaved weeds (called forbs) are more productive than those comprised primarily of grasses. The climax plant community of most rangelands is comprised primarily of perennial grasses with a relatively low forb component. While this may be suitable for livestock and some grassland wildlife, most species are dependent on the seed and foliage of forbs. Periodic disturbances such as fire, soil disturbance, livestock grazing, and mowing can set back plant succession and maintain a diverse plant community, simulating conditions under which plants and animals evolved with ecosystems in Texas.

It is important for that the landowner to be able to document the wildlife management activities that have taken place during the tax year. Receipts, photographs, and maps are some of the types of documentation a landowner might want to consider using for this purpose. If requested to do so by the county appraisal district, the landowner may have to file an annual report, including documentation, on management activities undertaken during the year.