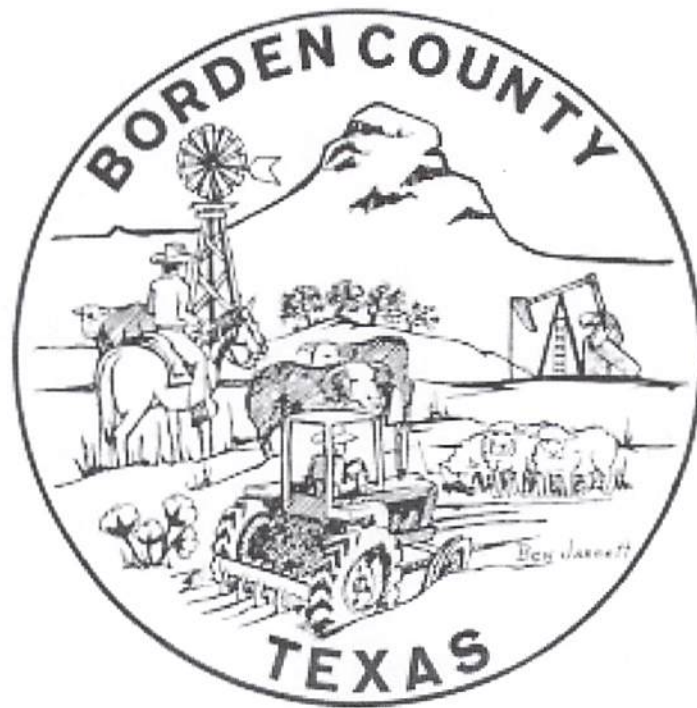


BORDEN COUNTY APPRAISAL DISTRICT



WILDLIFE MANAGEMENT GUIDE

2018-2019

BORDEN COUNTY APPRAISAL DISTRICT

WILDLIFE MANAGEMENT GUIDE 2018-2019

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BORDEN COUNTY APPRAISAL DISTRICT

WILDLIFE MANAGEMENT GUIDE — INTENT & PRIMARY USE FACTORS 2018-2019

I. INTRODUCTION

The law requires agricultural use to be the *Primary Use* of the land. Wildlife management is an agricultural use under the law. Wildlife management is a conversion from property that has a 1-D-1 valuation. The primary use requirement is particularly important for land used to manage wildlife. For example, land devoted to wildlife management can be used as a residence for the owner, but the land will not qualify if residential use is the land's primary use. Land qualifies for an agricultural valuation if appraised at a special productivity valuation on the land's ability to produce something (commercial product and to protect/enhance natural resources) rather than on its market value. Under the Texas law, wildlife management is legally nothing more than an additional qualifying agricultural practice people may choose in order to maintain the agricultural valuation on their land. There is no change in the ad valorem tax valuation with wildlife management, only a change in the qualifying agricultural practice.

The degree of intensity standard for wildlife management land is determined in the same way as other agricultural uses. Wildlife management land usually requires a management of the land that encourages long-term maintenance of the population. All activities and practices should be designed to overcome deficiencies that wildlife or harm their habitats.

- **Habitat Control:** A wild animal's habitat is its surroundings as a whole, including plants, ground cover, shelter and other animals on the land. Habitat control or "habitat management" means actively using the land to create or promote an environment that is beneficial to wildlife on the land.
- **Erosion Control:** Any active practice that attempts to reduce or keep soil erosion to a minimum for the benefit of wildlife.
- **Predator Control:** This term means practices intended to manage the population of predators to benefit the owner's target wildlife population. Predator control is usually not necessary unless the number of predators is harmful to the desired wildlife population.
- **Supplemental Supplies of Water:** Natural water exists in all wildlife environments. Supplemental water is provided when the owner actively provides water in addition to the natural sources.
- **Supplemental Supplies of Food:** Most wildlife environments have some natural food. An owner supplies supplemental food by providing food or nutrition in addition to the level naturally produced on the land.
- **Shelter:** This term means actively creating or maintaining vegetation or artificial structures that provide shelter from the weather, nesting and breeding sites or "escape cover" from enemies.
- **Census Counts to Determine Population:** Census counts are periodic surveys and inventories to determine the number, composition or other relevant information about a wildlife population to measure if the current wildlife management practices are serving the targeted species.

II. INITIAL CONVERSION FROM AGRICULTURAL TO WILDLIFE MANAGEMENT

All properties under agricultural/wildlife valuation must submit a 1-D-1 and a Wildlife Management Plan. A wildlife management plan can be completed on the form prescribed by Texas Parks and Wildlife Department (TPWD) or prepared by the landowner. A copy of the form may be obtained by contacting TPWD online at www.tpwd.state.tx or on our website at www.bordencad.org. The chief appraiser may accept, but may not require, a wildlife management plan that is not on the form prescribed by TPWD if

the plan contains all the information required. All landowners are required to develop and submit a plan to the Borden CAD along with their 1-D-1 Open Space Appraisal application.

The wildlife management plan must contain:

- Ownership information, property description, historic and current use.
- Landowner's goals and objectives for the tract of land.
- Specific indigenous wildlife species targeted for management.
- No less than 3 of the 7 specific management practices and activities to be implemented in support of the specific indigenous wildlife species targeted for management.
- Map depicting where the activities will be practiced.

III. ANNUAL REPORTING

A wildlife management property association may file a single annual report, if the report shows how the wildlife management plan was implemented on each tract of the land in the wildlife management property association. The report will be completed on the form prescribed by TPWD and shall be signed by each landowner or an agent of the landowner designated. A landowner may file an individual annual report if they so desire.

***AN ANNUAL REPORT IS REQUIRED OF ALL PROPERTIES UNDER WILDLIFE MANAGEMENT**

***ALL ANNUAL REPORTS ARE DUE EVERY YEAR ON APRIL 30TH.**

IV. WILDLIFE MANAGEMENT ACTIVITIES

HABITAT CONTROL

Habitat is defined as the physical and biological surroundings of an organism and provides everything that a living organism needs to survive and reproduce. The 3 basic requirements of any wildlife species to survive and reproduce are food, water and shelter. Quite frequently, we as land managers tend to focus on a specific wildlife species and its needs as opposed to the habitat or community in which they live. The key to managing wildlife and our natural resources is to use a holistic approach and promote healthy ecosystems. Single species deserve less attention, while the system in which they thrive requires more. Knowing how a system functions and applying the techniques with which that system developed is imperative for its continued health and existence.

Grazing Management: Typically considers rational grazing if fencing allows. Alternative would be high intensity short duration. Another method would be a 1-2-year lease with a rancher. Deferment from grazing is only allowed for 2 years. A report that states total deferment without a grazing management plan will be denied for habitat under this activity. The high intensity short duration grazing systems allow livestock to act as a tool to manipulate and enhance wildlife habitat and plant diversity. Good grazing management starts with the basics:

- Kind and class of livestock grazed.
- Stocking rate and intensity.
- Duration of grazing to provide rest periods for pastures.
- Excluding livestock from sensitive areas to promote vegetation protection and/or recovery.

Prescribed Burning: Burning can improve accessibility, increase both quantity and quality of foliage and browse production, suppress brush and cactus, improve grazing distribution of livestock, puts nutrients back in the soil and wildlife and remove excessive thatch and debris. Prescribed burning is a tool to maintain desired vegetation composition and structure. A successful burn includes 3 basic steps:

- Development of a burn plan which includes management goals and objectives, burn prescription, safety plan, description and map of the burn unit, smoke management, legal requirements, contacts and notifications, control and fire planning and evaluation.
- Safe and effective execution of the burn.
- Good post-burn range, livestock and wildlife management practices to maximize the effects of the burn.

Range Enhancement (Range Reseeding): Range enhancement is the re-establishment or enhancement of plant communities with native grasses and forbs. These plants provide both food and cover for wildlife and help to meet the basic requirements. Managing, restoring and/or protecting native grasslands is also considered range enhancement. This may or may not include actual reseeding but could include utilizing some of the tools to manage for the earlier successional states of a native grasses. Enhancement should annually affect 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.

Brush Management: Brush management is only part of a good habitat management program and should be planned carefully to address overall management goals. There are 4 primary principles that drive any good brush management plan:

- **Extent:** The extent to which brush is going to be cleared is the first step in developing a program. Overall goals of the property should be examined and can help to dictate the amount of clearing needed to meet wildlife, livestock and/or aesthetic expectations. Clearing 100% of the brush may be best from a livestock production standpoint, but if the overall goal includes white-tailed deer management, only clearing 50% or less may be a better option. Removal of only individual plants may be all that's needed to be done depending on the amount of brush.
- **Pattern:** The pattern in which brush is cleared should be considered wildlife cover and accessibility. This may include cover form predators, nesting cover, loafing cover or roosting cover. Maintaining travel corridors that link sections of brush is also important.
- **Selection:** Selection includes both the site and the species of brush to be cleared. The site of brush clearing is important to make sure potential soil erosion is kept to a minimum. Soil type and slope should also be considered. Certain soils may also be selected for clearing because of better forage production. Removal of desirable plant species used by wildlife for food and cover should be kept to a minimum.
- **Method:** A total cost analysis, soil erosion issues and the type or species of brush, which is being targeted, will determine the method(s) used. This practice should affect a minimum of 10% of the total area designated in the plan or a minimum of 10 acres annually, whichever is smaller.

Riparian Management and Enhancement: Riparian areas are lands adjacent to and on either side of a stream course where vegetation is strongly influenced by the presence of water. This is not applicable where livestock is not present. If there is an area where this activity might be applicable, consult the Natural Resources Conservation Service (NRCS) for planning assistance.

Habitat Protection for Species of Concern: New and changing land use practices, habitat fragmentation caused by human population growth, exclusion of fire from landscapes and uncontrolled grazing by livestock has had negative impacts on a number of wildlife species. Habitat protection as it is defined here can include setting aside critical areas of habitat, managing, vegetation for a particular species, maintaining overstory vegetation from degradation and annually monitoring the species of concern. A minimum of one project must be implemented every 10 years to qualify. Management for migrating, wintering or breeding Neotropical birds and should follow specific guidelines provided by the Texas Parks and Wildlife Department specific to your ecological region. A minimum of 1 project must be implemented every 10 years to qualify. Contact TPWD for approved management guidelines before implementing activities designed to protect or enhance habitat for endangered species.

Prescribed Control of Native, Exotic and Feral Species: The changing land management practices, combined with grazing pressure of too many deer, exotics and livestock have degraded the quality of wildlife habitats across the state. There may be little or no groundcover to capture runoff, rainwater is lost, and groundwater is not recharged. The whole system is suffering. Using the gun, as a tool, to manage populations of white-tailed deer and other ungulates at or below the carrying capacity of the range is essential in providing quality wildlife habitat for a multiple of wildlife species. If the white-tailed deer are allowed to overpopulate, they can have a negative effect on the habitat for themselves and other wildlife 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.

Wildlife Restoration: Wildlife restoration means restoring or improving habitat for targeted species as part of an overall reintroduction program in the Texas Parks and Wildlife Department approved restoration area.

EROSION

Erosion is the detachment and movement of soil by moving water, wind or ice. It is a natural process that cannot be stopped; however, human activity such as earthmoving and tillage can accelerate the process. Erosion removes fertile soil rich in nutrients and organic matter, which reduces the ability of plants to establish, grow and remain healthy in the soil. A reduction in plant growth and subsequent plant residue causes less soil cover and allows the erosion process to perpetuate and become worse. This in turn affects the wildlife species dependent upon the affected plant communities. The project must provide habitat diversity and wildlife benefits. It is important to recognize the exact type of erosion problems you have. The erosion process advances through several stages:

- **Sheet Erosion:** The removal of a fairly uniform layer of soil from the soil surface by shallow overland flow.
- **Rill Erosion:** Occurs as shallow sheet flow concentrates into small channels. Flow in these channels causes further erosion and carries soil particles away.
- **Gully Erosion:** An accelerated form of rill erosion where the channels are much deeper and carry away larger quantities of soil.

Water Quality and Conservation: Erosion not only causes loss of soil productivity but also creates water quality problems once the sediment leaves the site and enters the surface waters. When eroded sediment is transported from its site of origin to nearby bodies of water it can also carry fertilizers, pesticides and other contaminants attached to the soil particles. Water that is loaded with sediments can lead to reduce drainage capacity, increased flooding, decreased aquatic organism populations, decreased commercial and recreational fishing catches, clogged and damaged commercial and industrial irrigation systems, increases expenditures at water treatment plants to clean the water, and decreased recreational and aesthetic value of water resources. Some erosion control practices include:

Pond Construction: This practice involves building a permanent water pond to prevent, stop or control erosion as an approved Natural Resources Conservation Service (NRCS) watershed project while providing habitat diversity and benefiting wildlife. Whenever possible, owners should use ponds to help create or restore shallow water areas as wetlands and for water management.

Gully Shaping: This practice involves reducing erosion on severely eroded areas by smoothing to acceptable grades and re-establish vegetation. An area should be seeded with native plant species for your area that provide food and/or cover for wildlife.

Streamside, Pond and Wetland Revegetation: Revegetating along creeks, streams, ponds and wetlands to reduce erosion and sedimentation, stabilize streambanks, improve plant diversity and improve wildlife value of sensitive areas.

Establishing Native Plants on Critical Areas: These plants also can provide food and/or cover for wildlife and restore native habitats.

PREDATOR CONTROL

A common-sense approach should be taken when considering control of these species. The landowner or manager must evaluate the predicted outcome of control measures prior to starting any control. A landowner or manager should first manage the wildlife habitat on their property, increasing the plant diversity and abundance of species that provide food, shelter and nesting cover for all predator species. Landowners need to have a long-range wildlife management plan in place defining the goals of any of the activities occurring on the property including predator control. Once in place, activities can be monitored, and results can be recorded to aid in future management decision making. Feral hogs are a known problem. There are other methods other than trapping that can be used to control their populations. Feral hogs require cover, food and water. Considerations should be concentrated on minimizing their habitat by spotting cutting cedar (where hogs prefer to live) and protect watering and feeding areas from them as well.

When implementing predator management, you must know if there is a predation problem on the targeted species. Consideration should include:

- Is there a predation problem?
- Are the predators outnumbering the population of your target species?
- Are the target species declining due to this predator?
- Is there a balance between the 2 populations?

Predator Management: Predator control alone will not be an applicable practice unless it is part of an overall plan to manage the habitats and populations of the target species. Texas and Parks and Wildlife Department advocated elimination of feral/exotic predators, with the thoughtful management of native predators as an integral part of functioning natural systems. The predator control plan should be prepared and approved by a competent professional and include the list, duration and intensity of methods to remove the target species annually.

SUPPLEMENTAL WATER

Many people mistakenly believe that water sources suitable for livestock are also suitable for wildlife. Unfortunately, that is not always the case, particularly for young wildlife and many bird species. Wildlife water developments are in addition to those sources already available to livestock and may require protection from livestock. Existing troughs should be modified. Watering sources must be specific for species being managed. Some examples include:

Wildlife Watering Facilities: This practice can provide supplemental water and habitat for wildlife. Owners also may drill wells if necessary and/or build pipelines to distribute water. Building devices, known as wildlife water guzzlers, to collect rainfall and/or runoff for wildlife in areas where water is limited also helps protect wildlife, but these devices must be a part of an overall habitat management program.

Spring Development and/or Improvements (must be approved through NRCS): Improvements can be designed to protect the immediate area surrounding a spring. Excluding and/or controlling livestock around springs may help to maintain native plants and animal diversity. Other ways to protect areas include moving water through a pipe to a low trough or a shallow wildlife water flow to make water available to livestock and wildlife while preventing degradation of the spring area from trampling. Improvements also could include restoring a degraded spring by selectively removing appropriate brush and revegetating the area with plants and maintaining the restored spring as a source of wildlife water. Maintaining critical habitat, nesting and roosting areas for wildlife and preventing soil erosion must be

considered when planting and implementing brush removal. This practice should be planned and implemented gradually and selectively over a period of time.

SUPPLEMENTAL FOOD

Most wildlife environments have some natural food. An owner supplies supplemental food by providing food or nutrition in addition to the level naturally produced on the land. Some examples include:

Food Plots: Is one way to establish locally adapted forage to provide supplemental foods and cover during critical periods of the year.

Feeders and Minerals Supplementation: Once a feeding program has been initiated, it is important to keep it implemented. It is also important to clean all feeders regularly to avoid contamination from aflatoxin. Harmful aflatoxin in feed should not exceed 20 parts per billion. A minimum of 1 free-choice feeder per 320 acres in use during the recommended time period, with a minimum of 16% crude protein feed, required to qualify. Spin cast feeders do not qualify as a supplemental feeder. Corn may be used to harvest, collect census data and feed during extreme cold spells.

Managing Tame Pasture, Old Fields and Croplands: This can increase plant diversity, provide supplemental food and forage and gradually help convert the land to native vegetation.

SUPPLEMENTAL SHELTER

Cover and shelter is an important part of wildlife habitat. Although supplemental shelter can be provided in many ways, it will never take the place of good conservation and management of native habitats. When land is properly managed for wildlife habitat, quality cover and shelter will usually be available. Unfortunately in much of Texas, many areas have been so altered, neglected and abused that one or more of the key requirements of wildlife (including shelter) is absent or in short supply. Before beginning on any wildlife management practice, you must determine what wildlife species you are managing for and what its specific cover needs are. Some examples include:

Nest Boxes, Bat Boxes: Number and location of nest boxes should be consistent with habitat needs and territorial requirements of the targeted 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.

Brush Piles and Slash Retentions: This practice also includes slash retentions, meaning to leave the dead brush on the ground (not stacking) where it was cut to provide protection for seedlings of desirable plant species. It also means stacking posts or limbs in tepees in a planed area with lack of cover.

Half-Cutting Trees or Shrubs: The practice of partially cutting branches of a live tree or shrub to encourage horizontal cover near the ground, providing supplemental cover in habitats where cover is lacking relative to an overall plan for target wildlife species. A minimum of 25 trees/shrubs in one one-fourth acre block must be half-cut annually to qualify.

CENSUS

This activity provides an estimate of species numbers, population trends, population density, age structure, or sex ratio using accepted survey techniques. Results of annual surveys should be recorded on appropriate forms as evidence of completion of this practice. Selection of specific survey techniques should be appropriate to the species of interest at a level of intensity to achieve proper management of the resource in connection with a comprehensive wildlife management plan. Some examples include:

Spotlight Counts: Counting animals at night along a predetermined route using a spotlight should follow accepted methodology with a minimum of 3 counts conducted annually.

Aerial Counts: Use of a fixed-wing aircraft or helicopter to count animals should follow acceptable methodology for the region and be performed by a trained individual.

Daylight Wildlife Composition Counts: Driving counts used to census wildlife in the daylight hours. Annual population trends on dove, quail, turkey and deer, as well as, sex/age structure on deer should be determined by sightings along a standardized transect of a minimum of 5 miles at least 3 times during a season.

Miscellaneous Counts: Specific species may require special survey techniques. These may include and should be addressed in the management plan:

- Time/area counts
- Roost counts
- Song bird transects and counts
- Quail call and covey counts
- Point counts
- Drift fence and pitfall traps
- Small mammal traps
- Bat census

ADDITIONAL INFORMATION

www.bordencad.org

<https://tpwd.texas.gov>

Wildlife Management Activities and Practices for the High Plains and Rolling Plains Ecological Regions can be downloaded from the TPWD website.

1-D-1 Open Space Agricultural Valuation Wildlife Management Plan can be found on the TPWD website or at the back of this Guideline.