



COOKE COUNTY APPRAISAL DISTRICT WILDLIFE MANAGEMENT INFORMATION



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What is this “Wildlife Management”?

Wildlife Management is the exact - same tax break as agricultural valuation. However, instead of producing food or fiber as a prudent farmer or rancher, you would focus on wildlife management.

To convert from agricultural use to wildlife management, the land size has to be 14.29 acres or greater and it has to have the five out of seven year history of agricultural use.

It sounds very easy, but it is not. First you have to look at your property and develop a wildlife management plan that would show what you are currently doing. Also included within the plan, you will identify the elements you will add to your plan for the next five years.

Based on your property, you identify target animals (deer, turkey, quail, dove, song birds, ducks, etc.). Once you have your target animals, you identify at least three of seven qualifying items to do for each animal identified. These seven items are as follows:

Supplemental Food

Habitat Control

Supplemental Water

Erosion Control

Supplemental Shelter

Predator Control

Census Count *(require knowledge to be included yearly in the annual update)*

Wildlife management will require time, money, expertise, knowledge, and energy. CCAD also requires an annual update and some type of annual census count.

Please ask to speak to someone from our office for more specific information and guidelines.

Wildlife Management

To begin utilizing “wildlife management” as a special valuation with the appraisal district, the land has to have been in agricultural use for five of the preceding seven years.

The land size has to be larger than 14.29 acres unless... it is in a property association (12.5 acres)or the target animal is candidate, threatened or endangered (11.11 acres).

Texas Parks and Wildlife have developed guidelines and a fill-in-the-blanks type of plan. This can be used as a guide. However, Cooke CAD needs additional information which is specified on another hand-out.

The land size, topography, location, and surroundings as well as the target animal(s) selected will determine the suitability. [Example: land size could be over 14.29 acres but still not suitable for deer management]

For each target animal selected for management at least 3 of these 7 items must be performed. (Supplemental food, supplemental water, supplemental shelter, census counts, predator control, habitat control, & erosion control)

Cooke County Appraisal District requires the following on all wildlife management properties:

- An application to convert from agriculture to wildlife
- A personal five-year management plan
- Some type of census count
- And an annual update
- A field review when requested

WILDLIFE MANAGEMENT

The chief appraiser with the advice and consent of the Appraisal District's Board of Directors is to designate a minimum acreage amount for wildlife management and a minimum acreage amount for wildlife management for a wildlife property association. The Texas Parks & Wildlife Department developed wildlife management standards that the Comptroller adopted. These standards and guidelines are specific for different eco-regions. Cooke County lies in the Cross Timbers & Prairies eco-region.

The county may designate a minimum ratio devoted to wildlife management use. It is important to emphasize that these ratios *only affect properties that have been BOTH reduced in size and had a change in ownership since the previous tax year.*

In the Cross Timbers & Prairies, the **minimum** shall be 93 percent (**14.3 acres**) to a **maximum** of 95 percent (**20 acres**).

"A tract of land's wildlife use requirement is a number expressed as a percentage and calculated by subtracting one from the total number of acres in the tract of land and dividing the result by the total number of acres in the tract of land. The following formula expresses the calculation, with 'x' representing the tract of land's total acreage: $(x-1)$ divided by $x =$ wildlife use requirement." **Texas Administrative Code, Title 34, Part 1, Chapter 9, Subchapter G, Rule 9.2005 (a)**

For example, Cooke County in the Timbers & Prairies Eco-Region may select a ratio of 95 percent, resulting in a minimum size 20-acre tract to qualify. Or Cooke county could select 93 percent, thus allowing a 14.3-acre tract to qualify. This would be up to the county and locally determined needs.

For Wildlife Management guidelines

	Percentage	# of Acres
Minimum	93%	14.29
	94%	16.67
Maximum	95%	20.00

Formula= $(20-1)$ or 19 divided by 20 = 95% or $(14.3-1)$ or 13.3 divided by 14.3 = 93%

Counties shall impose lower minimum ratio requirements for areas designated as **wildlife property associations**. In such areas, all properties within the area must have deed restrictions, property owner agreements or conservation easements adequately addressing compatible wildlife management activities. **The chief appraiser with the advice and consent of the Appraisal District's Board of Directors will designate a ratio one or two percent below the minimum designated for the region.**

In the Cross Timbers & Prairies, the percentage must at least be 91 percent but not more than 92 percent. The ratio for the wildlife property association would be one or two percent below the minimum of 93 percent for the region, so it would be designated by the county at 92 percent (12.5 acres) or 91 percent (11.1 acres).

Each tract within a wildlife property association must be performing three of the seven wildlife activities. Each tract must have a wildlife management plan; however, an overall plan for the association may suffice for general purposes, but activities performed on the tract must be identified and supported.

For Wildlife **Property Associations**

	Percentage	# of Acres
1% lower	92%	12.50
2% lower	91%	11.11

Formula=(12.5-1) or 11.5 divided by 12.5 = 92% or (11.1-1) or 10.1 divided by 11.1 = 91%

Areas with species of concern (**candidate, threatened or endangered**) are addressed in the same method as the wildlife property association. The Texas Parks and Wildlife Department will designate these properties.

	Percentage	# of Acres
1% lower	92%	12.50
2% lower	91%	11.11

An exception may be granted should a tract of land not meet the new standards if the landowner can provide "clear and convincing evidence" that the property is unique and wildlife management is possible on a smaller tract.

APPLICATION PROCESS

Converting from 1-d-1 Agricultural Use to Wildlife Management

Requirements:

- Must already be in qualified Ag (1-d-1) Special Use Valuation with the 5 year history in your name - unless land is already qualified in Wildlife Management
- Must be > 14.29 acres excluding the acre for house (if there is a house)

Year One:

- Turn in green application form "Converting from Ag ..."
- Turn in Wildlife Management Plan which includes specific detailed information (see list)
- Start the wildlife management outlined in the plan
- If information meets qualifications the application will be approved this year

Year Two:

- Cooke CAD will do a field inspection to verify what has been done
- Intensity guidelines for our Eco area are to be followed
- If qualifications are met - you will turn in your annual (application) update and follow the yearly process all the wildlife managers follow

Note: *If in year two the property does not meet the qualifications, the special valuation received the prior year will be removed and the additional tax amount will become due.*

A Wildlife Management Plan will include:

Property Description

Map with size & location

Soil map or types of soil

Map [identifying key locations of feeders, food plots, water, path, brush piles, prescribed burn areas (with years identified), etc.]

Target Animals

Wildlife currently there and what you want to accomplish

Land usage [grazing, fishing, hunting, etc. described]

Detailed Description of the following (if they apply to your planned goals or current use)

Supplemental Food

What feed? Feed for what animal? Map with feeder locations.

How many feeders? All year? How much? How often?

Food plots? Where? When? Every year? How do you plant? (no till)?

Mineral supplements? Grazing management?

Supplemental Shelter

Nest boxes, bird houses, brush piles, half-cutting trees??

Supplemental Water

New pond being built? Marsh development or enhancement?

Other types of watering methods?

Habitat Control

Grazing management, prescribed burning, range enhancement (re- seeding), Brush management, fence modification, etc.

Erosion Control

Pond construction, gully shaping, dike, water diversion

Plant establishment on erodible areas

Predator Control

Identify who the predator is

Describe how you are controlling this predator

Keep records on the kills and include in annual updates

Census Counts

Describe how you will conduct your census each year

(spotlight counts, game cameras, aerial counts, harvest data collection & record keeping, browse surveys, roost counts, time/area counts, call and covey counts)

We need to understand what is already done, what you plan to do next year, and the 5 year (long term) goals you plan to accomplish.

Once the Wildlife Management is approved The process is as follows:

ANNUAL UPDATE / APPLICATION

- Each and every year the wildlife manager is required to file an annual update.
 - The annual update acts as a yearly application for the special valuation.
 - The annual update is to be turned in before **March 1st** each year.
 - If the annual update is not turned in by **March 1st** - **the special valuation is removed. A certified letter and re-application process must then be completed by April 30th.**
 - If the application & annual update are sent in on or after May 1st, but before the roll is certified (mid-July) - it can be approved with a 10% late penalty [which is a substantial penalty].
 - Once the roll is certified - there will be no special valuation applied that year.
 - The annual update must include some type of **census data**, as the managers should have knowledge of their census.
 - A sample of an update is provided. This is a narrative description of the wildlife management performed the previous year.
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ON-SITE FIELD INSPECTIONS

The state requires that all wildlife management properties will have an on-site field inspection once every three years. Cooke CAD prefers to have the owner or manager present for the field inspections. Generally the inspections take less than one hour to complete.

There is a "Field Inspection Check List" that needs to be filled out. This will be checked by the appraiser or consultant who will take a few photos for verification.

We have included an intensity guideline for our eco region for your convenience. This will aid you in setting your long term goals.

Helpful Ideas on Data Gathering Wildlife Management Updates

Management requires work, time, and resources. Any information you have pertaining to these should be maintained.

- ✓ Receipts and any documentation on your work should be added to your folder
- ✓ Notebook to journal daily / weekly observations
- ✓ Records on any and all schooling and courses you have attended pertaining to your wildlife management

CCAD requires some type of “census counts”

- ✓ Decide how often and which method to use on your census counts

(How can you manage something unless you know what you have and if your management is succeeding?)

Information to include in your update:

- ✓ Have you started a new project?
- ✓ What items have you completed?
- ✓ What new projects are in the planning stage?
- ✓ What year do you intend to have that project completed?
- ✓ Did you accomplish your goals?
- ✓ What results are you seeing?
- ✓ Do you need to adjust your plan?

Please include an email address as this will make lines of communication more convenient. Also include a primary day time phone number.

“True Wildlife enthusiasts desire active use of the property with the property owners living up to their responsibilities.”

CCAD WILDLIFE MANAGEMENT FIELD INSPECTION CHECK LIST

Property Owner: _____ Phone#: _____

Property ID #'s: _____

Total Acreage: _____ Owner present? ___ Yes ___ No

Date of Inspection: _____ Appraiser(s): _____

Target Animals check list:

___ Deer ___ Turkey ___ Quail ___ Dove ___ Water Fowl ___ Song Bird ___ Other (list)

Supplemental Food Circle & Note

Feeders # - location - amt time, Mineral Supplementation (details), Food Plots 1yr, Fence Modification 5yr, Grazing Management 1yr, Prescribed burning 15%, Re-seeding 10%

Supplemental Water Circle & Note

Wetland Restoration or Development 5yr, Well-Trough-Windmill Overflow 5 yr, Spring Development or Enhancement 5yr

Providing Shelters Circle & Note

Nest Boxes 1yr, Bat Boxes 1 yr, Brush Piles & Slash Retention 3%, Fence Line Management 300', Crop Management 1yr, Half-cutting Trees or Shrubs 10%, Woody Plant/Shrub Establishment #500, Natural Cavity / Snag Development 5/ac

Habitat Control Circle & Note

Management Plan 1yr, Grazing Management 1yr, Prescribed Burning 15%, Range Enhancement (re-seeding) 10%, Brush Management 10%, Vegetation Surveys 1yr, Fence Modification 5yr, Riparian Management & Enhancement 5yr, Wetland Enhancement 5yr, Wildlife Restoration 1yr, other species of concern (list)

Erosion Control Circle & Note

Pond Construction 5yr, Gully Shaping 5yr, Streamside-Pond-Wetland Re-vegetation 3yr, Native Plant Establishment on Erodible Areas #150, Dike/Levee Construction or Management 5yr, Establish Water Diversion 5 yr

Predator Control Circle & Note

Predator Management 1yr, Control of Brown-headed Cowbirds #100, Grackle/Starling Control #100

Census Circle & Note

All count for year of count only, Spotlight Counts 3/yr, Aerial Counts 1/yr, Daylight Counts 3/yr, Collection & record keeping, time/area counts, camera records, Quail Call & Covey Counts, Songbird, Roost, others list

Intensity – 5 Year Guide

WILDLIFE MANAGEMENT PLANE OVERVIEW – INTENSITY LEVELS FOR PRACTICE OVER 5 YEARS

TREATMENTS	PRACTICE	YEAR 1	YEAR 2	YEAR 3	YEAR 4	YEAR 5
HABITAT CONTROL:						
HC: Wildlife & Habitat Management Plan	1yr					
HC: Grazing Management	1yr					
HC: Prescribed Burning	15%					
HC: Range Enhancement (re-seeding)	10%					
HC: Brush Management	10%					
HC: Vegetation Surveys	1yr					
HC: Fence Modification	5yr					
HC: Riparian Management & Enhancement	5yr					
HC: Wetland Enhancement	5yr					
HC: Habitat Protection/Species of Concern	5yr					
HC: Prescribed Control of Species	10%					
HC: Wildlife Restoration	1yr					
EROSION CONTROL:						
EC: Pond Construction	5yr					
EC: Gully Shaping	5yr					
EC: Streamside, Pond, Wetland Re-Vegetation	3yr					
EC: Native Plant Establishment on Erodible Areas	150#					
EC: Dike/Levee Construction/Management	5yr					
EC: Establish Water Diversion	5yr					
PREDATOR CONTROL:						
PC: Predator Management	1yr					
PC: Control of Brown-Headed Cowbirds	100#					
PC: Grackle/Starling Control	100#					
SUPPLEMENTAL WATER:						
SW: Marsh/Wetland Restoration or Development	5yr					
SW: Well/Trough/Windmill Overflow	5yr					
SW: Spring Development and/or Enhancement	5yr					
SUPPLEMENTAL FOOD:						
SF: Grazing Management	1yr					
SF: Prescribed Burning	15%					
SF: Range Enhancement (Re-Seeding)	10%					
SF: Fence Modification	5yr					
SF: Food Plots	1yr					
SF: Feeders & Mineral Supplementation	1/320-ac					
SF: Managing Tame Pasture, Old Fields, Croplands	5%					
PROVIDING SHELTERS:						
PS: Nest Boxes, Bat Boxes	1yr					
PS: Brush Piles & Slash Retention	3%					
PS: Fence Line Management	300-ft					
PS: Cropland Management	1yr					
PS: Half-Cutting Trees or Shrubs	10%					
PS: Woody Plant/Shrub Establishment	500#					
PS: Natural Cavity/Snag Development	5/ac					
CENSUS:						
C: Spotlight Counts	3/yr					
C: Aerial Counts	1yr					
C: Daylight Wildlife Counts	3@5-mi					
C: Harvest Data Collection & Record Keeping	1yr					
C: Browse Utilization Surveys	1yr					
C: Endangered, Threatened, or Protected Species	1yr					
C: Non-Game Wildlife Species	1yr					
C: Time/Area Counts	1yr					
C: Roost Counts	1yr					
C: Song Bird Transects & Counts	1yr					
C: Quail Call & Convey Counts	1yr					
C: Point Counts	1 yr					

EXAMPLE OF ANNUAL WILDLIFE MANAGEMENT UPDATE

ROBERT'S ROOST RANCH
Doug & Dee Dee Roberts
7 Paradise Place
This side of Heaven, TX 76123
(580) 564-9816

800 Acres

Property ID'S: 123, 124, 126, 77750, & 45789

Our main target animals are deer, turkey, quail, & song birds. The 2014 year was still in drought recovery. We modified our plan due to the drought and focused on supplemental feed instead of food plots.

For 2014 we followed our plan of staggered landscaping. We have opened up areas for the strip crops (which failed last year). We have half-cut about 1/6th of the cedars on a 100 acre tract and dug out about a 1/6th of the cedars on the same 100 acres. Our three ponds were enhancement and reshaped during the drought - they are filling up nicely and currently hold twice the water as before.

DEER:

We continue to supplement their food with 10 - 100 lb. feeders set up in various locations. We feed year round. The feeders are typically filled about 2 times a month (3 times a month in winter). Additionally we have 4 mineral supplement areas for the deer. There was only one deer harvested in 2014. You can see from the rack (on the one buck our grandson harvested this year) the mineral supplements are working. (Photo included) Because of the size of our tract and the feed and relative safety for the deer, our census remains about the same (20).

TURKEY:

It looks like we have 3 flocks of turkey on our land. In the spring, our game cameras indicate each flock has about 24 hens. None were harvested. The predator control of the coyote really paid off. We killed 18 that were located in the south area. We will pay attention to the predators for the 2015 year.

QUAIL:

The quail we set out for the last three years have all but vanished. We have called for them, but have not located them. We want to continue to set out and help the quail population, but may wait another year until the drought is behind us. We want to concentrate our time and money on the animals that are already here for this stressful time.

SONG BIRDS:

We have a 20 acre sanctuary for song birds beside our home. We added 10 more blue bird houses to the 30 we already had. We have 6 martin - condo houses. We have about 30 assorted bird houses in the area. We added another 2 acres this year that we planted specifically for the birds and butterflies. The butterfly plants, sunflowers and other plants all are thriving. The area was irrigated when we added 50 water features to attract the birds last year. This was a school project for our grand-daughter, who also researched the birds with cameras and a daily observation diary. This area was home to about 30 painted buntings, 100 finches, 80 bluebirds, and thousands of robins that went through the area. We have over 100 different feeders and the plants for our supplemental feed. A fun thing our grand-daughter did this year was to identify bird songs.

PREDATOR CONTROL:

The west side of the property joins Red River and has shown some feral hog activity. We contracted with a hunting group and put out 3 different hog traps. The hunting group killed 15 hogs and our traps netted 10 hogs throughout the year that we killed. The 20 acre bird sanctuary was treated for fire ants two times last year. We used the topical Diazasanine at 80 percent. We had 18 coyotes snared last year (all on the south end of the property). In addition we killed 2 raccoons, 5 skunks and 13 rattle-snakes.

FUTURE PLANS:

For the 2015 year, we plan to remove one-sixth of the cedars from approximately 80 acres. We will half-cut about half of those and remove the other half. We plan to continue our road-way for our hiking and riding trail and continue with our staggered landscaping. We are adding a 10 acre lake as our main project.