

BEING A GOOD NEIGHBOR

New landowners in rural areas are advised to get to know the adjacent property owners and become acquainted with services offered in nearby communities. Remember to respect the property rights of others and avoid placing wildlife feeders or hunting blinds too close to property boundaries. To ensure safety with regard to both shotguns and rifles and to facilitate ethical retrieval of game, be sure to place feeders and blinds well within your property boundaries. A few common sense steps will go a long way in building good relationships with adjacent property owners.

Landowners interested in working with their neighbors to achieve common wildlife management goals may want to join an existing wildlife management association or start one in their area. Over 150 associations are operating in Texas today and the number continues to grow. Benefits include shared knowledge, mutual support for management goals, and more effective wildlife management over a larger area. For more information about wildlife management associations, contact the TPWD District Office serving your county or visit www.tpwd.state.tx.us/wildlifeassn/ or www.towma.org



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A Place in the *Country*



Guidance for New Landowners

WHAT TO CONSIDER WHEN PURCHASING LAND

The purchase of rural property for recreational purposes is one of the fastest growing segments of the real estate market in Texas.

When considering the purchase of land for recreational use, ask yourself what recreational experiences and amenities are most important to you. Do you like to hunt and fish? Do you want to hunt deer, game birds or a little of both? Are you a birder or wildlife watcher? Is your primary interest having a place in the country to relax and get away from the fast pace of urban life? Are you looking for a place to retire? These are important questions to consider when deciding what to buy and how to manage the land once you own it.

If you want to hunt on the property, you will need to know which game animals can be expected to occur on your land and understand the numbers of various species the habitat can support.

As a new landowner interested in wildlife, you will want to learn all you can about the land and the plants and animals it supports. The best way to do this is through keen observation on the land, learning through books and the Internet, and consultation with a local biologist.

Landowners can request assistance from TPWD by contacting the Wildlife District Office serving their county (see map). Technical assistance from TPWD is strictly advisory, confidential and provided at no cost to the landowner.

For information on species, habitats and population trends by region and county for various wildlife species, visit the TPWD Web site at www.tpwd.state.tx.us/landwater/

Many valuable resources are available for landowners—from habitat management advice to financial assistance.



KNOW THE HABITAT

Understanding habitat potential is important to those wishing to fully benefit from the wildlife resources found on their land. Whether you hunt, watch wildlife or just enjoy nature in general, it is important to understand that various habitats support different types of wildlife. Habitat components such as food, cover, water and space need to be evaluated based on the specific needs of the various wildlife species of interest. The mix of vegetation, plant species present and overall structure of the vegetation are important factors in determining the types of wildlife the habitat will support.

If you are considering purchasing land, be sure to communicate your primary wildlife-related interests to your realtor and advisors. Well-prepared realtors marketing rural land should be able to help you match your interests and expectations with the

potential of the property to support various types of wildlife recreation. Realtors who understand the basics of what constitutes habitat for white-tailed deer, bobwhite quail, turkey and other species can provide a valuable service to their clients—future landowners who will be managing the habitat.

Information on the habitat requirements of various species is available from:

Texas Parks and Wildlife Department (TPWD)
www.tpwd.state.tx.us

Texas AgriLife Extension at
<http://texnat.tamu.edu>

USDA Natural Resources Conservation Service (NRCS)
www.tx.nrcs.usda.gov

Local offices of AgriLife Extension, the USDA Service Center and TPWD are listed in the phone book.

PROPERTY TAXES

Having property appraised for agriculture is an attractive prospect for a new landowner. An agricultural appraisal is based on the agricultural productivity value of the land rather than the market value. This is called an agricultural valuation. Agricultural activities include farming, livestock production and wildlife management.

Wildlife management is an increasingly popular option for landowners. Wildlife management is not a separate or additional appraisal for property, but rather, a designated agricultural use. There are certain qualifications and requirements, so landowners should not assume that all land supporting wildlife will qualify for wildlife management as its primary agricultural use.

A property qualifies for wildlife management as an agricultural practice if it is currently appraised for agriculture (1-d-1 appraisal). It is important to note the law only allows landowners to convert to wildlife management from other agricultural uses; therefore, land not currently appraised for agriculture is not eligible for the wildlife management tax option.

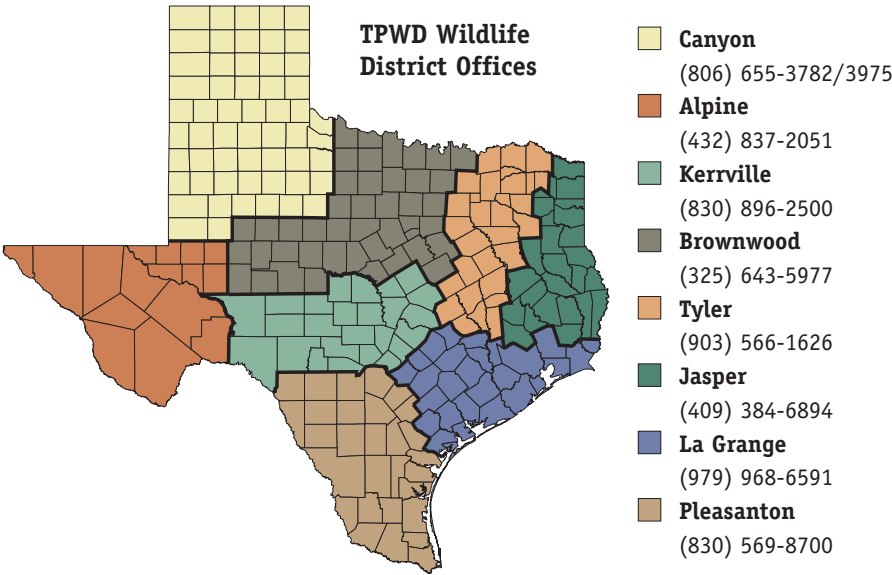
Property appraised for agriculture and being sold as an intact tract of land (not subdivided from a larger tract) may have the primary use changed to wildlife management by the new owner. Landowners are required to submit a 1-d-1 Open Space Appraisal Application (obtain from your county tax office) and a 1-d-1 Open Space Agricultural Valuation Wildlife Management Plan (form can be found on the TPWD Web site at www.tpwd.state.tx.us/taxvaluation/).

If you purchase property that has been divided and sold in smaller tracts, you should contact your county Central Appraisal District to see if the property meets the county's minimum size requirement. Tracts of land below the minimum will not qualify. Forms and information can be obtained from the county tax office or printed from the TPWD Web site.

HELP AVAILABLE TO LANDOWNERS

Technical and financial assistance is available from the following agencies:

Texas Parks and Wildlife Department (TPWD) offers free, confidential technical assistance to help landowners meet their wildlife management goals. For information on wildlife habitat requirements and management, consult the TPWD Web site at www.tpwd.state.tx.us/landowner/



USDA Natural Resources Conservation Service (NRCS) offers free technical guidance and planning assistance to landowners. Financial assistance is available through Farm Bill Programs administered by USDA. To find your local office, check the phone book under U.S. Department of Agriculture or at www.tx.nrcs.usda.gov

Texas AgriLife Extension offers practical, how-to information based on university research. Natural resource information is at <http://texnat.tamu.edu> <http://wildlife.tamu.edu> and <http://texasextension.tamu.edu>