

Specific Habitat Management Practices, By Activity

HABITAT CONTROL

GRAZING MANAGEMENT

(Refer to Appendix D - Livestock Recommendations, for information to help prepare a specific grazing proposal for the plan.)



Grazing management which may include deferment, is the planned manipulation of livestock numbers and grazing intensities to increase food, cover, or improve structure in the habitat of selected species. Grazing management includes: 1) kind and class of livestock grazed, 2) determination and adjustment of stocking rates, 3) implementation of a grazing system that provides planned periodic rest for pastures by

Continuous grazing without rest is detrimental to wildlife.

controlling grazing intensity and duration, and/or 4) excluding livestock from sensitive areas to prevent trampling, allow for vegetative recovery, or eliminate competition for food and cover. Planned deferments can be short or long term up to 2 years. Extended rest from grazing (two years or more, if necessary) may be required on some ranges. Seasonal stocker operations may be appropriate to manipulate habitat. Supplemental livestock water (earthen tanks, troughs, wells, piping) to facilitate deferred-rotation grazing of livestock and disperse grazing pressure may be incorporated into planning to improve wildlife habitat. Similarly, it is important to plan and design fence construction to facilitate deferred-rotation grazing of livestock. Fencing can also be used to enhance or protect sensitive areas, woodland, wetlands, riparian areas and spring sites as designated in the plan. Activities should be reviewed annually.

Grazing management systems might include:

- 1 Herd / 3 Pasture (preferably as a step in moving toward a 1 herd / multiple pasture {4+} grazing system)
- 1 Herd / 4 Pasture
- 1 Herd / multiple pasture multiple herd / multiple pasture (goal is to move toward always resting 75% of area)

- High intensity/low frequency (HILF)
- Short duration system
- Other type of grazing system (ex. a short-term stocker system):
- Planned Deferment (e.g., number of years livestock will be deferred from the property, etc.):

PRESCRIBED BURNING

(Refer to Appendix E - Vegetation Management Recommendations, for information to help prepare a specific burning proposal for the plan.)



Using a drip torch to create a prescribed fire is an excellent management practice that simulates the natural cycles that these ecosystems evolved under, and enhances habitats and plant

Prescribed burning is the planned application of fire to enhance habitat and plant diversity, increase food, manipulate cover, or improve structure in the habitat of selected species. Plans should indicate a minimum percent of acreage and general burning cycle (**eg., minimum of 15 percent of acreage burned over 5 years in the Pineywoods**). A written burning plan as an addendum to the Wildlife and Habitat Management Plan (burn plans and prescribed burning should only be attempted with aid of professionals). The plan should include a map that

shows the areas to be burned and the planned dates (month and year) that each area will be burned during the burning cycle. It should also designate areas to be protected from burning, and should incorporate flexibility during periods/ years when conditions are not favorable.

Specific areas (eg., sensitive sites) to be protected from burning should be briefly described and shown on a map.

RANGE ENHANCEMENT (Range Reseeding)

Establish native herbaceous plants (grasses and forbs) that provide food and cover for wildlife or erosion control benefits. Plant species selected and methods for establishment should be applicable to the county (non-native species are generally not recommended, but if required for a specific purpose, non-native species should not exceed 25 percent of the seeding mix). If non-native species must be used to achieve a specific goal, species used **must not** be invasive or aggressive. Seeding mixtures providing maximum native plant diversity are recommended. Many herbaceous broadleaf plants (known as forbs - weeds and wildflowers) are beneficial to wildlife for forage and/or seed production. A list of key species adapted to the Pineywoods can be found in the appendix. Encourage "weed and wildflower" species by selective application of chemical, biological (eg., grazing management) and/or mechanical means on native rangelands, Conservation Reserve Program lands, and tame grass pastures

(eg., coastal bermuda). Some periodic weed control may be needed in fields converted to native rangeland to assist in the establishment of desirable vegetation. This practice must be a part of an overall habitat management plan and designed to reestablish native habitats within a specified time frame. **Range 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 completed.**

TIMBER MANAGEMENT

Periodic harvest, removal or suppression of trees or woody species, including exotics, to allow the increased production of desirable trees, shrubs, grasses, and forbs for forage and nesting or protective cover for selected wildlife species. Timber management includes retaining the proper kind, amount, and distribution of woody cover for selected species. This practice also includes retention of snags to provide cover and nesting sites for cavity nesting animals. Timber management can include periodic thinnings, both commercial and non-commercial. Thinning involves harvesting or cutting trees to reduce the stocking level that increases the amount of sunlight that reaches the ground. The additional sunlight increases the growth or production of herbaceous vegetation and browse plants in the understory.

Establishing native tree and shrub species to provide food, corridors and/or shelter using species and methods applicable to the county. When used, herbicides should be applied in strict accordance with label directions. Restore important forested habitats including bottomland hardwoods, longleaf pine, mixed pine-hardwood ecotone areas, and upland hardwoods. **A minimum of 150 native seedlings/acre/year for the area designated in the plan is required to qualify.** Avoid fragmentation of large forested habitats. Maintain a forested buffer at least 100 yards wide. This practice must be part of an overall habitat management plan and landowners are strongly encouraged to consult a professional forester prior to implementing any timber management practices.

Timber management for wildlife habitat management may include the manipulations and control of midstory and understory trees and shrubs. Understory and midstory vegetation can become so large and dense that habitat quality may deteriorate. This would require a practice similar to a Timber Stand Improvement (TSI) operation that improves the growth of crop trees for timber production. However, in this case the goal of the operation is to increase the amount of light reaching the ground, and/or open up the understory to improve visibility and mobility for wildlife such as turkeys.

The most cost effective and beneficial method to control understory and midstory vegetation in pine and mixed pine and hardwood stand is through the use of prescribed burning (see Appendix E). Other control methods include mechanical control or application of chemical herbicides. Types of mechanical control may include bush hogging if the vegetation is relatively small, cutting with chain saws, or control with large equipment such as a "Hydro Ax". Mechanical control is generally very labor intensive and may be very costly.

Herbicides can be applied in a variety of methods, such as injecting individual trees or large shrubs with an approved herbicide, basal sprays, backpack sprayers, or broadcast applications. Generally, broadcast herbicide applications are the most effective at controlling undesirable vegetation, but may eliminate desirable plant species. Vegetation control using backpack sprayers or injection can be more selective by targeting individual plants to be controlled. By killing the tree rather than cutting, foraging sites for insect eating birds will be created. The dead trees will also provide potential cavity sites for numerous species that utilize cavities for nesting. Any large diameter trees that already have cavities should not be removed from the stand. Care should be taken when implementing any vegetation control program to minimize the impact on valuable wildlife plants.

RIPARIAN MANAGEMENT AND ENHANCEMENT

Annually and seasonally protect the vegetation and soils in riparian areas (low areas on either side of stream courses) from mismanagement, such as caused by excessive, long-term livestock trampling or poor timber harvesting practices. Riparian management and enhancement can include providing livestock with alternate watering sites, deferring livestock grazing in pastures with riparian areas during critical periods of the year, total exclusion of livestock from pastures with riparian areas, and fencing riparian areas to exclude or provide short duration grazing by livestock. Establish trees, shrubs, or herbaceous vegetation along streams or water courses to provide food, cover, and travel corridors, and to reduce erosion. Corridors should be at least 100 yards wide. Livestock must be excluded from restoration areas. Restore important forested habitats including bottomland hardwoods. This practice must be a part of an overall habitat management plan. **A minimum of one Riparian Management and Enhancement project must be implemented and maintained every 10 years to qualify.** See Appendix E.

Proposed riparian management and enhancement projects might include:

- Fencing
 - complete fencing of riparian areas
 - partial fencing of riparian areas
- Deferment from livestock grazing
 - complete deferment
 - partial deferment.
- Establish vegetation
 - trees
 - shrubs
 - herbaceous
 - both sides of stream
 - one side only

WETLAND ENHANCEMENT

Annually provide seasonal or permanent water for roosting, feeding, or nesting habitat for wetland wildlife. This practice involves shallow wetland management, creation or restoration, greentree reservoir creation or management, and other moist soil management such as rotational grazing or exclusion (fencing out) of livestock from wetlands, especially during the growing season. This practice should be a part of an overall habitat management plan. Annual management as described in management plan, such as water level manipulation qualifies. **Construction and maintenance of a new project will qualify for 10 years.**



Over 50% of Texas' wetlands have disappeared. Wetland management, restoration or creation is extremely important for wetland dependent wildlife.

HABITAT PROTECTION FOR SPECIES OF CONCERN



Endangered red-cockaded woodpecker.

(Refer to Appendix I for information on the management of the federally threatened Southern Bald Eagle and Louisiana Black Bear and endangered Red-cockaded woodpecker, both of which may occur in portions of the Pineywoods)

Planned protection and management of land or a portion of land to provide habitat for an endangered, threatened or rare species, managing vegetation structure and diversity within species parameters, establishing and maintaining firebreaks to protect critical overstory vegetation, and annually monitoring the species of concern. This practice includes the management and, or protection of nesting sites, feeding areas, and other critical habitat limiting factors, and the development of additional areas.

The broad-scale management of habitat for migrating, wintering, and/or breeding neotropical birds (primarily songbirds) should follow guidelines in appendix for zones of importance. This practice must be a part of an overall habitat management plan. **A minimum of one project must be implemented every 10 years to qualify.**

Proposed projects for habitat protection for species of concerns might include:

- Planned protection/management projects:
- fencing
- firebreaks
- prescribed burning
- habitat manipulation (e.g. thinning, etc.)
- control of nest parasites
- native/exotic ungulate control
- other _____

PRESCRIBED CONTROL OF NATIVE, EXOTIC, AND FERAL SPECIES

Use legal means to control the number of grazing and browsing animals. Maintain the population density of native wildlife (particularly white-tailed deer - see Appendix F) at or below the carrying capacity of the habitat to prevent the overuse of desirable plant species and enhance habitat for native wildlife species. **Populations of exotics, feral animals, and wildlife should be strictly controlled to minimize negative impacts on native wildlife and habitat.** This should incorporate harvest and vegetative monitoring over time to assess control intensity and impact on habitat to meet plan objectives.



Feral hogs compete directly with native wildlife.

Remove or control exotic vegetation impacting native habitats and wildlife populations (e.g. large stands of Chinese tallow tree, kudzu, Chinese and other exotic privet, etc.). Convert tame pasture grasses (such as large areas of coastal bermuda, old world bluestems) to native vegetation. **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

Restoration or enhancement of habitat to good condition for target species, and reintroduction and population management of TPWD approved native species within the carrying capacity of the habitat as part of an approved restoration area at a scale capable of supporting a sustainable population (e.g. eastern turkey).