

Qualifying Land for Wildlife Management Appraisal:

The Land must have qualified for and been appraised as agricultural land or timberland during the year before the property owner changes to wildlife management use. The land must be used to generate a sustaining breeding, migrating or wintering population of indigenous wild animals.

An indigenous animal is a native animal that originated in or naturally migrates to or through an area and that is living naturally in that area. A group of animals need not permanently live on the land, provided they regularly migrate across it or seasonally live there.

A sustaining breeding population is a group of indigenous wild animals that is large enough to live independently over several generations. The indigenous wildlife population must be managed for human use. The law requires a property owner to propagate the wildlife population for human use which may include food, medicine or recreation. Land will not qualify unless the owner propagates the population of wild animals for a human purpose. Use as food or medicine is self-explanatory. Recreational may be any type of use for pleasure or sport such as bird/animal watching, hunting, photography, and other non-passive recreational or hobby-type activities.

Wildlife management land requires management practices that encourage long term maintenance of the wildlife animal population. The degree of intensity standard must be met and maintained. **Fencing is typical in the area for managing the target wildlife population** appropriate for feral hog or cattle exclusion and cross fencing for grazing animal rotation.

A wildlife management plan is required and must be completed for land for which wildlife management is sought. A plan is clear evidence of the property owner's intent to use the land primarily for wildlife management. A property owner may use land for purposes that are secondary to the primary use if the secondary use is compatible with the wildlife management plan; i.e. grazing animal rotation, planting crops, etc.

A wildlife management plan is likely to include all elements of all seven wildlife management practices. All practices and activities should be designed to overcome deficiencies that limit wildlife or harm their habitats. Each of the activities should be practiced routinely or consistently as part of an overall wildlife management plan.

The seven wildlife management practices are:

1. Habitat control
2. Erosion control
3. Predator control
4. Providing supplemental supplies of water
5. Providing supplemental supplies of food
6. Providing shelters; and
7. Making census counts to determine population

Each of these practices go hand in hand. Once the target wildlife animals are decided for your plan, the target wildlife animals must thrive. And In order for wildlife to thrive, there are 5 basic components that wildlife require and the habitat must provide. These components are food, water, cover/shelter, space, and arrangement of the food, water, cover/shelter and space.

All animals need food. All animals need water. All animals need cover/shelter to travel, rest, breed, feed, and nest. All animals need adequate space in a suitable arrangement to provide access to sufficient food and water, enough territory for mating and nesting, cover or shelter from weather and predators and the reduction tensions that can aggravate stress related illnesses. The “arrangement” of food, water, cover/shelter and space should allow animals the ability to fulfill their basic needs.

Keep this in mind when choosing/maintaining wildlife management to qualify land for agricultural appraisal. Your target animals will need an adequate habitat maintained year round. You will need to know the population size to sustain several generations. A wildlife biologist may need to be contacted to utilize your land properly for your targeted wildlife animals.

1. Habitat control – a wild animal’s habitat is it’s surroundings as a whole, including plants, ground cover, shelter and other animals on the land. Habitat control – or habitat management – means actively managing the land to create or promote an environment that benefits wildlife on the land.

Activities that contribute to habitat control or management include:

- a. Grazing management
 - b. Prescribed burning
 - c. Range enhancement
 - d. Brush management
 - e. Forest management
 - f. Riparian management and improvement
 - g. Wetland improvements
 - h. Habitat protection for species of concern
 - i. Managing native, exotic, and feral species
 - j. Wildlife restoration
2. Erosion Control – any activity that attempts to reduce or keep soil erosion to a minimum for the benefit of wild animals constitutes erosion control.
Some erosion control activities:
 - a. Pond construction
 - b. Gully shaping
 - c. Streamside, pond and wetland revegetation,
 - d. Establishing native plants
 - e. Dike, levee construction or management
 - f. Water diversion
 3. Predator control – predator management refers to any activity intended to manage the population of predators to benefit the property owner’s target animal population.
Some types of predator management and control activities are:
 - a. Mammal predator control
 - b. Fire ant control
 - c. Brown-headed cowbird control
 - d. Grackle or Starling control
 4. Providing supplemental water – Natural water exists in all wildlife environments. Supplemental water is provided when the property owner actively provides water in addition to the natural sources.

Some examples of recommended activities include:

- a. Marsh or wetland restoration or development
 - b. Managing well, trough, and windmill overflow
 - c. Spring development and/or improvements
5. Providing supplement food – most wildlife environments have some natural food. A property owner supplies supplemental food by providing food or nutrition in addition to the level naturally produced on the land.

Ways to provide supplemental food include

- a. Food plots
 - b. Feeder and mineral supplements and
 - c. Managing tame pasture, old fields and croplands
6. Providing supplemental shelter – providing supplemental shelter means actively creating or maintaining vegetation or artificial structures that provide shelter from the weather, nesting and breeding sites or escape cover from enemies/predators.

Activities to provide supplemental shelter:

- a. Installing nest boxes and bat boxes
 - b. Brush piles and slash retention
 - c. Managing fence lines
 - d. Managing hay meadow, pasture or cropland
 - e. Half-cutting trees and shrubs
 - f. Establishing woody plants and shrubs
 - g. Developing natural cavities and snags
7. Census counts – 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 wildlife species. Such surveys also help evaluation the management plan’s goals and practices. The practice estimates species numbers, annual population trends, density, or age structure using accepted survey techniques.

The survey techniques and intensity listed should be appropriate to the targeted wildlife species:

- a. Spotlight counting
- b. Aerial counts
- c. Daylight wildlife composition counts
- d. Harvest data collection and record keeping
- e. Browse utilization surveys
- f. Census and monitoring endangered, threatened or protected wildlife
- g. Census and monitoring of nongame wildlife species