



# Texas Organization of Wildlife Management Associations

*“Enhancing Land & Wildlife Stewardship in Texas by Supporting & Coordinating the State’s Wildlife Management Associations”*

[www.towma.org](http://www.towma.org)

## Spring 2007 Newsletter

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### PRESIDENT’S REMARKS

*by Clinton McPhaul*

#### **Where is TOWMA Going?**

The mission statement for TOWMA reads: “To enhance the operations and effectiveness of Wildlife Management Associations through education, coordination and pursuit of issues resulting in enhanced land stewardship in Texas.”

Let me be the first to tell you that we have fallen short for some time in effectively meeting the goals of our mission statement, but I also want to be the first to tell you that this is unacceptable and things are going to be changing for the better quickly.

On February 17, TOWMA officers and Advisory Committee members met in San Antonio and systematically reviewed where TOWMA was as an organization and where we will go in the future. The meeting was professionally facilitated and extremely productive and I’m very pleased to say that the Officers and Advisory Committee members came out of the meeting with a newfound commitment to fulfilling our mission statement. We are committed to making TOWMA an invaluable and respected statewide organization that will provide communication services, education, and programs that are needed and requested by our member WMA’s.

The newsletter you are currently reading is the very first that TOWMA has ever published and you will find many informational articles contained within. You will see articles about services and programs that we are currently providing. You will also want to visit the new and improved website at [www.towma.org](http://www.towma.org). The new website will be the “go to” place for WMA’s to get information on endless topics and to make the management of a successful WMA as easy as possible. The website will also be where prospective landowners will want to go to get all the information they need to effectively organize a new WMA.

I’m very excited about the future of TOWMA. We have a lot of work to do and I am confident in the ability of our Officers and Advisory Committee to live up to your expectations and conquer the challenges ahead.

I look forward to bringing you more details about our progress in future newsletters and on the website.

Thanks, Clinton

### TOWMA’S ROLE

As our name implies, TOWMA is an organization founded to bring together wildlife management associations throughout Texas to achieve common goals and objectives through synergy - where the outcome is much greater than the sum of the parts.

Individual WMA’s have a significant impact in their local areas but they are not effective in dealing with issues at the state and national level due to their small size. TOWMA combines the membership of many separate WMA’s into a single large organization that speaks with authority on behalf of thousands of small and medium

You are encouraged to submit items for inclusion in future newsletters by emailing them to [newsletter@towma.org](mailto:newsletter@towma.org)



## **TOWMA OFFICERS**

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sized landowners and tax payers.

Every member WMA is represented on the Board of Directors of TOWMA by the WMA President or designated alternate. This grass roots structure provides every member WMA with a voice in the development of TOWMA positions related to wildlife issues and land use practices in Texas.

Biannual meetings provide TOWMA members with the opportunity to learn, to share ideas, and to convey their positions on issues important to their local WMA.

In addition to representing landowners on the TPWD Private Lands Advisory Board and on the White-tailed Deer Advisory Committee, TOWMA monitors legislation that may impact small landowners and disseminates that information to the membership.

In February 2007 TOWMA adopted a more aggressive program designed to assist local WMA management in running their organizations, and to facilitate the formation of new wildlife associations. These tools are being developed on an ongoing basis and will be available to members on the TOWMA website at <http://www.towma.org>.

We need your assistance in developing and gathering material of this type for inclusion in the website. You can email content to [webmaster@towma.org](mailto:webmaster@towma.org). Case studies and examples of how you effectively run your WMA are needed. Every WMA has encountered problems and challenges along the way, and our goal is to document how those issues were addressed and to share that information.

The TOWMA web site will also contain a state wide Calendar of Events, and local WMA's are encouraged to use this calendar to announce their meetings and events. Send email notices, as you want them to appear, to [webmaster@towma.org](mailto:webmaster@towma.org). Hopefully people from neighboring WMA's will be encouraged to attend your events which will further increase the synergy inherent in TOWMA membership.

## **TOWMA MEMBERSHIP**

Any Texas Wildlife Management Association can become a member of TOWMA by completing an application and paying the \$25 membership fee. Individual members of these associations automatically become TOWMA Associate Members and may attend all member meetings. Individuals who are not member of a WMA may become Affiliate Members by paying dues of \$10 per year.

You can join by mailing the application attached to this newsletter, along with your check, or by signing up on line on our website. Since we are a volunteer run organization at this time, we prefer you to join on line at <http://towma.org>. This method saves us considerable time and effort.

You may pay by credit card and your membership information will automatically be entered into our member data base (credit card numbers are not recorded). You will receive newsletters and email alerts at the address you provide. Membership renewable notices will be emailed automatically when your 12 month membership is near expiration. You can renew on line

By providing your WMA mailing list in digital, comma-delimited format you can place your membership on our mailing list to receive notices and newsletters. Member information and addresses are never disclosed to third parties so privacy is protected.

## **NEW WEBSITE**

The TOWMA website, located at <http://www.towma.org>, is getting a complete makeover and is being expanded dramatically. The new site will serve member WMA's as a resource center, be a vehicle for exchanging ideas, and provide real life case studies examining the successes and failures experienced by WMA's across Texas. By sharing we can minimize the problems we encounter in running and growing our individual WMA's and put an end to "re-inventing the wheel" every time a new issue rears its head. Legislative monitoring will be incorporated and issues of importance to small and medium landowners will be discussed.

A portion of the site will be available to all WMA members and the public. A password

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512-475-1678

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361-772-6820

Norman Schultz  
979-249-7159

### **BOARD OF DIRECTORS**

The President of every TOWMA member WMA, or their designated alternate, is a voting Director of TOWMA

### **NEWSLETTER EDITOR**

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protected area for the exclusive use of WMA officers and board members will provide them with tools and assistance to make running their organizations easier and more effective. The content in the password protected area is being developed and will be added as it becomes available. Your submissions are encouraged.

Some of the things included in the public portion of the site include:

**WMA Locator map.** This clickable map will display member WMA locations on a Texas map. Visitors will select the WMA or county closest to their location, which when clicked will take them to the listing of the WMA in that area. If the WMA has a web site there will be a live link to that site. Searches can also be done by zip code. Member benefit: WMA promotion and growth by being more accessible and visible to potential members.

**State Wide WMA Events Calendar.** Any WMA can submit events to be listed. Benefit: Increased exposure, better event turnout, less time spent answering "I need more information" requests, and possibly attendees from neighboring associations to enhance synergy and sharing. Send your listings by email to [webmaster@towma.org](mailto:webmaster@towma.org) in the form you want it listed.

**Weather Map.** By making the TOWMA website your home page you will have instant access to local, state and national weather, current and forecast. The site's home page contains the weather map and you can zero in on any area by zip code. Benefit: Save time with quick and easy access to comprehensive weather information for planning your day or a trip across the country.

**Maps and Mapping.** Planning a trip? Wondering about the shortest route to an address across town? Just click the Travel Map button and you have instant access to as much or as little detail as you need. Benefit: Saves time and frustration with quick map availability, provides access to maps for any location in the United States, and no more wishing your driver (husband?) would stop and ask directions instead of driving around lost.

**Photo Gallery.** Your WMA doesn't have a website yet? No problem! Just set up an Album in the TOWMA Photo Galley and any or all of your members can post photos as often as they please. Got a website, but want to share your group's activities with other WMA's? Post your event photos on TOWMA'S website. You can include comments with your photos. Benefit: Promotion of your WMA, attract new members, synergy, sharing your ideas and learning from others.

**Classified Ads.** Looking for hunters to lease hunting rights? Got some equipment you want to move? Trying to find a used 4 wheeler? List it for free in our classifieds section: Benefit: Access to our highly targeted audience increases your chance of buying or selling your item.

**Links Section:** If you dislike spending time searching for specific wildlife or habitat related web sites you need, try our Links section first. Find a site you think others might enjoy? Post it your self or email it to [webmaster@towma.org](mailto:webmaster@towma.org) for consideration. Benefit: Save time and frustration with our targeted Links.

**Reference Library.** Looking for information on wildlife or habitat? Check the on line Reference Library to see if it is covered there. Want to share some technical information with another WMA? Send it to [webmaster@towma.org](mailto:webmaster@towma.org). Benefit: Focused information, often from hard to find sources. As additional members furnish materials for inclusion the value increases.

**FAQ's.** Got a question about TOWMA? Check our Frequently Asked Questions section first. Can't find it there? Email it to the webmaster, or any officer or Advisory Committee member, and we will get you the answer and may post it on line as well.

**Join, Renew Memberships, Up Date Your Information.** You can do it all on line in just a few minutes, and you can pay your dues with a credit card.

**Catalog.** Would you like to buy a TOWMA logo shirt or jacket? You can order on line and we will ship it to you. No muss, no fuss, no bother! We will be adding additional

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items to our on line Catalog as time goes on, and you can pay with your credit card.

There is a lot whole lot more in our new site than we've listed here, so go on line and check it out. Remember, it's new, and it will be tweaked and expanded and improved as time goes on. If you see something you like, don't like, or think we need to add, just let us know, we want to hear from you. Contact [webmaster@towma.org](mailto:webmaster@towma.org).

**INCOME TAX INCENTIVE: IRA GIFTS**

The Pension Protection Act was signed into law in 2006. It provides tax advantages for you and TOWMA. Eligible individuals receiving distributions from an IRA (individual retirement account) can now exclude that portion of a distribution (up to \$100,000 per year) that is distributed directly to a qualified charity. This allows you to use pre-tax dollars to make a charitable gift to TOWMA. Your support will benefit wildlife across Texas by enhancing TOWMA'S ability to support existing WMA's and to assist in starting new ones.

Details of this provision:

- You must be at least 70 1/2 years old.
- You can donate up to \$100,000 per year for 2007 only.
- A gift to TOWMA through a direct IRA distribution is not reported as income to you.
- This gift can be designated for TOWMA in general, or to a specific TOWMA program.
- You need to plan your 2007 tax year gift now.

Prior to this new law, all distributions to individuals from their IRA's were considered part of gross income. Charitable contributions were treated as itemized deductions, which for many seniors rendered them of little or no value in reducing their taxable income. Under the new provision, those payments made directly from the trustee of the IRA to a recognized charitable organization are excluded from your gross income. Ask your CPA about these provisions to determine the impact on your taxes.

To make an IRA distribution to TOWMA, contact TOWMA President Clinton McPhaul at [cmcphaul@towma.org](mailto:cmcphaul@towma.org) or call 512-304-0014.

**WMA'S AND PRESCRIBED FIRE**

TOWMA promotes the use of prescribed burning as a key habitat management tool. We believe Wildlife Management Associations are in a unique position to encourage their members to use fire and are well positioned to provide training to their membership in its safe use. TOWMA provides sample Fire School Training agendas, speaker lists, and guidance on teaching the safe use of fire in the WMA Resources section of our web site.

So why should your WMA promote prescribed burning to your members? Because it...

- ...optimizes habitat to the benefit of both wildlife and agriculture
- ...increases production of forage and browse
- ...promotes ecological diversity in native grasslands
- ...suppresses most brush and cacti species
- ...removes excess biomass on rangelands and in forests to reduce wildfires
- ...improves the quality and palatability of forage
- ...increases nutrient cycling
- ...controls pests and parasites
- ...improves pasture accessibility
- ...is one of the least expensive and most effective habitat management tools available

**BURN TRAILER**

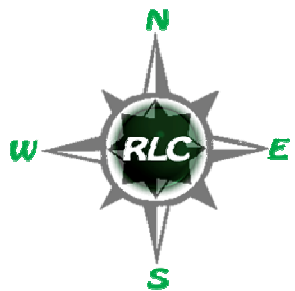
TOWMA has its first burn trailer, worth about \$15,000, donated by the Coastal Bend Chapter of the National Wild Turkey Federation, and it is equipped with almost all of the tools needed to conduct a prescribed burn. Only four wheelers and other vehicles are needed in addition to what comes with the trailer. This trailer is stationed in the

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South Texas area at this time (Victoria, Beeville, Corpus Christi) and it is being fitted out and used by the Coastal Bend Prescribed Burn Association. However, it is available to anyone qualified in its use for a small rental fee. The rental fee is used for maintenance of the trailer and it can be paid with a credit card. We plan to add a burn trailer scheduling feature to the TOWMA web site in the future as funds become available. This trailer is a good example of a group of organizations working together as a partnership for the benefit of wildlife.



TOWMA plans to acquire more burn trailers as funds and grants allow, and to have them available at additional locations around Texas. Those geographical areas, or groups of WMA's that apply prescribed fire the most are the most likely to receive a future burn trailer. The Nature Conservancy also has burn equipment available for rent at some of their locations, including Victoria, Texas.

### TOWMA'S ROLE IN AUSTIN

By Jack Holman, TOWMA Advisory Committee member

The Texas Parks & Wildlife Department is run by a politically appointed (by the Governor) commission. Whenever there is a policy change or important decision to shuffle, these members meet and come to a consensus on how to act. Often, when a real tough decision needs to be hammered out, they will turn to advisory boards to make suggestions.

Some believe the most important of these advisory boards is the Private Lands Advisory Board (PLAB). PLAB members consist of landowners from all corners of the State and the majority of these landowners are large. It wasn't until TOWMA got a voice on the PLAB did the board get representation from the small landowners familiar with the co-op concept. In general, PLAB stresses landowner rights. If an act infringes on an individual landowner's freedom by adding another layer of government rules or regulations, that action will be nixed.

Not many realize TOWMA'S presence on the board was one of the many factors that influenced the 13" antler regulation. The antler restriction harvest concept had initial support by TPWD Biologists, Game Wardens, landowners, WMA'S, TOWMA, and the Texas Sportsman Association. The final decision by the TPWD Commission was not going to be made however without positive input from PLAB. To move forward or kill the idea lay in the lap of PLAB. Here is where TOWMA'S collective voice behind the scenes nudged the deal into action.

PLAB'S original tilt on the project was to stop it. Remember, the majority of PLAB members are extremely large landowners. Most are from South, North and West Texas. Their ranches are big enough that size alone insulates them from over

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harvesting of young bucks by neighbors. PLAB members initial thought was "This is another layer of rules we can do without." TOWMA'S voice on the board at this critical time gave the PLAB members a different perspective. With a small landowner point of view closely examined, PLAB members agreed to give it a try. PLAB'S recommendation to the TPWD Commission to proceed with the experiment was the final act that pushed the idea into reality and TOWMA'S input behind the scenes at the PLAB meeting was critical.

PLAB meets at least twice a year. The latest meetings have focused on getting TPWD more technical guidance biologists to meet the needs of landowners in the State. Currently there almost 20 millions acres in Texas enrolled in some type of Wildlife Management plan. More boots are needed in the field to deal with these plus the new plans that are being added each year. TOWMA'S presence at these meetings continues to assure the small landowners view is represented. Having your wildlife management association a member of TOWMA and communicating with each other over conservation issues will assure your collective voice will be heard in Austin in the future.

### **LEGISLATIVE MONITORING**

One of TOWMA'S roles is to monitor wildlife and landowner issues being discussed in Austin and keep our members informed about those issues. Once informed, members have the option of acting on the items of interest to them. The following article is intended to provide an understanding of the political process so your voice will be heard.

#### **Legislative Monitoring 101**

by Linda McMurry, TPWD

#### How to Find and Keep Up With Legislation of Interest

For regular Texans, the legislative process basically consists of two things: A) getting favorable legislation passed, and B) making sure unfavorable legislation doesn't pass. Everything else relates to one of these two outcomes. If the world belongs to those who show up, then the internet is a must for people without easy access to Austin. This guide is not an exhaustive treatise on the process a bill follows in becoming law. That information is readily available online to anyone interested and those details are not critical to monitoring issues one finds of interest. This guide provides landowners with the guidance necessary to become more involved in the Texas legislative process.

#### The Basics: Where to Start

Bookmark the following three websites to stay on top of legislation or use links section of our website at <http://www.towma.org>.

*The Texas Legislature Online:* [www.capitol.state.tx.us](http://www.capitol.state.tx.us).

All filed bills can be accessed here.

*The Texas House of Representatives:* [www.house.state.tx.us](http://www.house.state.tx.us).

View House Floor proceedings and select hearings in live. Use the "Schedules" feature to plan your monitoring activities.

*The Texas Senate:* [www.senate.state.tx.us](http://www.senate.state.tx.us).

View Senate floor proceedings and selected hearings live.

#### Getting Set Up

The House and Senate are composed of committees. Each committee has oversight of specific state agencies. These committees hear testimony pertaining to the bills they have been assigned. Bills that do not get out of committee automatically die because they are not heard on the House or Senate floors.

Step 1: Find the committee(s) with oversight of the agencies and legislation that interests you. If you're not sure, look at legislation assigned to that committee in the previous session.

Step 2: Sign up to receive email notification of your selected House and

*"We seem ultimately always thrown back on individual ethics as the basis of conservation policy. It is hard to make a man, by pressure of law or money, do a thing which does not spring naturally from his own personal sense of right and wrong."*

*\* Aldo Leopold \**

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*\* Buddy Turner -  
OGT Program  
Director \**

Senate Committee hearings. Do this by establishing a free account on either the Texas House of Representatives website, the Texas Senate website, or the Texas Legislature Online website.

Step 3: Customize your watch list. You may do this in any number of ways. It's generally a good idea to start by adding your chosen committees to your notification list. You will probably also want to add the option of being notified of any meetings, and which bills will have testimony heard on them. Finally, start adding any bills you think you might need to keep an eye on.

Step 4: No system of notification is fool-proof. Set up a routine so that at least once a week you set aside time to check all the new bills filed since the previous time you checked. Invariably a bill will "sneak through" by way of a committee you don't have on your notification list.

Step 5: Finally, check your system! Nothing is more frustrating than having everything ready to go and then find out you need to update your software at a critical moment. The best way to check is to go to the archives of either the House or the Senate and view an archived broadcast.

#### Analyzing a Bill

Reading a bill and determining its impact is challenging since they don't always say what you think they do. With practice it gets easier. Initially it may be easiest to print a hard copy.

First, what is the bill *supposed* to do, and does it do it? Look for key words. Is the bill permissive? If it is, then it will use the words "can", "may", "if", "or." If it imposes no choice about the topic then it will use the words "shall" and "will."

Who does the bill apply to, and under what circumstances? The key words to look for are "all", "if", "or", "and", "but", "unless."

Next, look at the bill section by section. What does each section do? If the bill says it is amending or adding an additional section to a code, go and read that particular code. Doing so is tedious, but is frequently how things "slip through"—because no one else wants to go to the trouble to actually cross-reference the bill either!

Finally, is there a fiscal impact? Will an agency have to spend money to comply with the bill? Fiscal impact could include new employees, record-keeping, travel costs, buying computers, vehicles, fuel, and so forth. Does the bill consider these expenses? The Legislature is generally reluctant to pass bills that impose a financial burden on an agency, or to appropriate additional funds for that agency to comply with the bill.

As the session progresses, the pace picks up. A spreadsheet helps keep track of a bill's progress. Information you'll want to have will probably include the following:

Bill number, Author, Subject, Analysis, Into Committee, Out of Committee, Floor, Pass House, Pass Senate, Date.

#### Making Your Opinion Count

You now receive notifications of hearings and bills, you are able to watch and listen by computer to live hearings, and you are alerted when a bill you care about is on the calendar to be heard. What's next?

If you've been watching and listening over your computer, you already know that any interested person is able to attend a hearing and testify "for" "against" or "on" a bill being considered by the committee. So the next step is to go to Austin and actually testify.

Austin parking is always a challenge, particularly when the Legislature is in session, arrive early. Locating hearing rooms can be a daunting task as most rooms look alike. Take your map, and don't hesitate to ask for directions. You will find everyone courteous and helpful.

The Legislature is a formal place, you should dress accordingly. You will not be turned away if you show up in jeans and T-shirt, but you won't project the professionalism you need nor will your testimony capture the attention you intended when you traveled to Austin. Gentlemen are usually expected to wear a coat

and tie, or at least a coat. Ladies should dress in business attire.

#### The Moment of Truth

At the hearing room turn off your pager, cell phone, PDA, or any other electronic device before entering. Normally someone is in the back of the room with cards you must fill out if you want to testify. Fill it in and return it. These cards are used to call people when it is their turn to testify. If you have hand-outs, give them to the clerk when it is your turn to speak. Don't pass them out yourself. Begin your testimony by stating your name, and who, if anyone you are representing. Close your testimony by thanking the Committee for the opportunity to address them. Almost without exception, people who come in to testify are treated with the utmost courtesy by the committee members. Nonetheless, there are a few things to keep in mind in preparation for your testimony.

Know what you want to say. Prepare note cards to assist you in remembering the key points you want to mention. While you are allowed to read your statement if you prefer, you will be better received if you don't. Be concise and limit your testimony to between 3 and 5 minutes. Avoid rambling on and on. Unless there are a lot of people who want to testify on a bill you will not have a time limit. Remember though, that the committee members are human and whether or not there is a limit to the amount of time *you* have, there *is* a time limit to their attention span! Try not to exceed it!

If you are supporting a bill, tell the committee why you are in favor of it. Tell them specifically what good things will happen if it is passed. If you are not in favor of the bill, tell them why. Again, be specific. The committee is genuinely interested in getting public input, so expect some questions from them. Usually you will be asked what they could do to make the bill effective, so have some constructive suggestions ready on how to fix the bill. After all, if you don't know how to fix it, how can you expect the committee to know how to fix it?

The best preparation for testifying on a bill is to watch the process, either first-hand in Austin, or over your computer. You'll quickly see what styles of testimony send members out of the room to the bathroom, and what styles keep committee member attention. Take notes and learn!

#### In the Meantime

Know who your representatives are and make a point of getting to know them. Legislators are generally happy to meet with their constituents, but they are also very busy. Plan in advance what you will say, and be concise. Although issues are usually complex, you will be better received if you can "keep it on a postage stamp." In the world of legislation, "less is more." Establish yourself as a person whose information is accurate, and will not waste the Representative's time. The better you are at that, the more time the Representative's will spend with you.

#### Conclusion

The purpose of Texas government is to serve the People of Texas. Everyone can participate in the process. Just as it is important to be informed and to exercise your right to vote, so too is it important to participate in the legislative process. Technology has now made it easier to participate, but it's still up to each of us to exercise that right.

#### **TOWMA INITIATIVES AND PROGRAMS**

TOWMA is active in numerous programs, including cow bird control, biological fire ant control, prescribed burning, and wildlife and habitat improvement education. An overview of some TOWMA programs follows below. For a more in depth description visit our website at <http://www.towma.org>.

#### **Cow Bird Control**

Cow birds lay their eggs in the nests of songbirds and let the songbirds raise their young. For several reasons this leads to the death of song bird chicks, and a decline in adult populations of song birds. Cow bird trapping programs remove cow birds from the environment which increases the success of song bird nesting. TOWMA maintains an inventory of cow bird traps that are made available to landowners, and

**DON'T FORGET:**  
We need your input  
for the TOWMA  
website.

Please send:

1) articles for the  
**Technical Library**

2) **Best Practices**,  
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3) Post photos in the  
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4) List items for sale  
or wanted in the  
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5) Submit **Links** to  
enhance the depth of  
our referral area.

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*"Why don't they pass a constitutional amendment prohibiting anybody from learning anything? If it works as well as prohibition did, in five years Americans would be the smartest race of people on Earth."*

Will Rogers

**Remember, the TOWMA website is under construction and will be expanding through 2007 and beyond. Be sure to keep checking back for new additions.**

**Did you know you can now buy TOWMA shirts and caps on line with a credit card?**

files reports to TPWD annually on the success of the program.

### **Biological Fire Ant Control**

The reason for the uncontrolled expansion of imported fire ants is that they have no natural enemies in the United States. In their native countries a microscopic insect called the phorid fly controls their numbers. The Bee County WMA and TOWMA are working with the University of Texas to establish imported phorid fly populations in Texas to control imported fire ants.

### **Prescribed Fire**

Fire has been an important part of our environment for millions of years. Without fire many brush species expand dramatically with negative effects on wildlife and ranching. TOWMA promotes prescribed fire training and the use of fire as a habitat management tool and is involved in providing fully equipped burn trailers for rent at nominal rates.

### **Education**

TOWMA believes the answer to habitat fragmentation and its negative effect on wildlife lies in education. Two meetings are held each year, and a two day major Symposium is held every other year. Educational articles are published in the TOWMA newsletter and are made available in our web site. We provide numerous services to our membership to help them educate at the local level.

### **"Best Practices" and WMA Operational Resources**

The TOWMA web site contains a password protected area that provides WMA leadership with numerous tools for their use in managing their associations. Among these are "Best Practices" papers that provide real life solutions to many of the issues encountered in running a successful WMA.

### **Legislative News**

Through our website, our newsletter, and email alerts we keep members informed about legislation and regulations that affect them as landowners.

### **State Level Wildlife and Land Use Committee Participation**

TOWMA represents small and medium sized landowners on various policy and advisory committees, including the Private lands Advisory Board, the White-tailed Deer Advisory Committee, and the newly formed Texas Outdoor Partners organization.

### **ASSESSING LAND FOR ITS WILDLIFE POTENTIAL**

Gary Homerstad & Jack Holman

Whether you currently own a piece of property or are looking to buy, habitat diversity is the key for wildlife potential. With diverse habitat comes a greater diversity of wildlife species. The quantity and quality of wildlife within diverse habitat is dependent upon the degree of wildlife management activities and practices applied. Simply put, the five basic tools of wildlife management involve the plow, axe, cow, fire, and gun. It is important to incorporate each and not just one or two if you are to maximize the land's wildlife potential. A good wildlife management plan is a must.

Habitat is comprised of food, cover, water, space, and the optimum arrangement of the aforementioned. Primary wildlife foods include browse, mast, forbs, grasses, and supplemental forms such as crops or food plots, protein feed, and minerals.

Browse species are very important because they are available throughout the year. The leaves, mast, and tips of tender twigs are utilized. Browse species have varying degrees of utilization based on their palatability. Some of the major browse species include sumac, elm, oak, hackberry, and mulberry.

Forbs are high in protein and are generally preferred over most other food types but they are susceptible to drought and freezing temperatures. Forbs also have varying

Be sure to check the WMA Locator Map in the new TOWMA website and **make sure the location and information for your WMA is correct.**

Some of the information used to generate the map is old and has no doubt changed. If you find errors email your corrections to [webmster@towma.org](mailto:webmster@towma.org)

TPWD gets numerous requests from landowners trying to find a WMA in their area. They will now be referring these requests to the TOWMA site. Keep your listing current and let the TOWMA WMA Map become an important part of your membership recruiting efforts.

degrees of palatability. The leaves, stems, and seeds are consumed. Some examples of quality forbs include Engelmann's daisy, partridge pea, orange zexmania, butterfly weed, and Turk's cap.

Native grasses are utilized, but not nearly to the extent of browse and forbs. Tender shoots and the seeds are more often utilized. Tall native bunch grasses actually play a greater role for wildlife in the nesting and bedding cover they provide. Major species include big bluestem, little bluestem, yellow indiagrass, sideoats grama, eastern gamma, and switchgrass. Tame grasses are not considered to be very beneficial for wildlife. Land with extensive stands of tame grasses minimizes habitat diversity. Some of the more common tame grasses include coastal bermudagrass, Bahia grass, King Ranch bluestem, buffelgrass, Kleingrass, and ryegrass.

Habitat cover takes on many forms and types. The general classifications include grassland, rangeland, timber, bottomland, riparian, and pasture. Topography is an important component of each and may vary from flat to hills and valleys. An interspersed of the various cover forms increase diversity and create an edge effect frequented by deer and other wildlife. Wildlife needs various types of cover including nesting, brooding, loafing, roosting, and escape. Any one type of cover that may be lacking can severely limit a wildlife population. Not all cover is good cover if it is in the form of noxious vegetation. Some native and most introduced species are extremely invasive and severely limit wildlife diversity in much the same way as tame pasture. Some examples include Chinese tallowtrees, McCartney rose hedge, running live oak, huisache, mesquite, yaupon, privet, and eastern red cedar.

Water is rapidly becoming a very valuable economic resource. As the human demand for water increases, less and less of it will be available for wildlife use. Surface water is critical to wildlife, especially in the more arid regions of the state. A river, creek, or other drainage coursing through a property provides a natural distribution. For wildlife purposes, it is best if water is available on a one-quarter mile basis. This is often the case in the eastern half of the state. Lakes, ponds, tanks, wells, and/or troughs can be created to take up the slack where water distribution is lacking. Shallow water wetlands and moist soil units add elements of diversity that is especially valuable for migrating waterfowl.

Space is the habitat component hopefully comprising the optimum arrangement of food, cover, and water. The larger contiguous land masses are obviously more likely to contain the most diverse habitat and wildlife. All is not lost on smaller acreages, however, because more landowners are becoming members of wildlife management cooperatives. In that sense, small properties are managed as one large property, except by many managers. For example, in general, deer require an optimum of 50 percent brushy cover. A large property would have a good arrangement of cover if it were distributed throughout the ranch, rather than all lumped into one corner. A small property might be comprised of 100 percent brushy cover but is too small to otherwise meet all the requirements of a deer's home range, while a neighboring property of equal size may be mostly open comprising better quail habitat. And so forth. A good wildlife management plan is all it takes in either case.

There are variables such as soil types that will have a bearing on just how much habitat diversity can be created on a given property. For example, chalky/gravelly soils are not as productive as combinations of clay, sandy, and loamy soils. Combinations of clay, silty, and peaty soils make good ponds, wetlands and moist soil areas. In actuality, several soil types comprising a property lend more to habitat diversity.

No matter the property, habitat diversity and wildlife can be enhanced. The degree of management and expense will be driven by the factors discussed heretofore.

#### **TEXAS OUTDOOR PARTNERS (TOP) IS FORMED**

At least 33 organizations, representing every aspect of the Texas Outdoors, have joined together in an organization called Texas Outdoor Partners (TOP). Just as TOWMA gains stature by having many WMA members, TOP has tremendous

influence because it speaks with the united voice of at least 33 organizations and hundreds of thousands, perhaps millions, of members. Sustaining our conservation heritage in the face of budget restraints and the devastating effects of land fragmentation demands that the protectors of Texas wildlife unite and speak one voice.

TOWMA is part of Texas Outdoor Partners, as are the following organizations: Audubon Texas, Austin Woods and Waters Club, CCA Texas, Coastal Bend Bays & Estuaries Dallas Safari Club, Ducks Unlimited, Exotic Wildlife Association, Gulf Coast Chapter-Safari Club International, Houston Safari Club, LBJ Fish and Habitat, Lone Star Bowhunters Association, National Wild Turkey Federation, Plateau Land and Wildlife, Pheasants Forever, Quail Forever, Quail Unlimited, Quality Deer Management Association, Rocky Mountain Elk Foundation, Saltwater-fisheries Enhancement Association, Sensible Management of Aquatic Resources Team, Texas Association of Bass Clubs, Texas BASS Federation Nation, Texas Bighorn Society, Texas Black Bass Unlimited, Texas Brigades, Texas Chapter of The Wildlife Society, Texas Deer Association, TexasHuntFish.Com, Texas Mining and Reclamation Association, Texas Organization of Wildlife Management Associations, Texas Teaming with Wildlife Coalition, Texas Wildlife Association, The Nature Conservancy of Texas

### **CALENDAR**

- March 17, 2007 - Paint Creek WMA Spring Meeting, St. Andrew Lutheran Church Fellowship Hall in Paint Creek. Dinner at 6:00 p.m. and the meeting at 7:00. Silent Auction included. FMI email: [eschberger@towma.org](mailto:eschberger@towma.org)
- March 24, 2007 - Bastrop-Caldwell County WMA Extravaganza. 2:00 P.M. to 8:00 P.M. Riverbend Park in Smithville. Live auction at 5:00, dinner follows. FMI call Clinton at 512-304-0014 or Meredith at 512-332-7280
- April 7, 2007 - Karnes County WMA Annual Spring Meeting, 6:30 P.M. at Cestohowa Hall. Dinner is at 7:00, there will be speakers, the nominations for the officers and directors election in June, and a raffle. Contact 830-254-3327 or 210-259-5444 or 830-583-4276 for more information
- Summer 2007 - Coastal Bend Prescribed Burn Association Summer Prescribed Burn Workshop. Check the calendar at [www.towma.org](http://www.towma.org) for date and location to be announced soon.
- August 11, 2007 - TOWMA Fall Meeting, location TBD. Check the calendar at [www.towma.org](http://www.towma.org) for the location and details to be announced soon.
- 2007 Texas Big Game Awards Banquets  
Contact David Brimager at 800-839-9453 for more information  
Region 2 - September 8 - Fair Park Auditorium, Childress  
Region 3 - July 28 - Abilene Civic Center, Abilene  
Region 4 - May 26 - Galloway Hammond Center, Burnet  
Region 5 - September 22 - Cain Center, Athens  
Region 6 - July 21 - Fredonia Hotel, Nacogdoches  
Region 7 - August 25 - El Campo Civic Center  
Region 8 - May 5 - KJ Northway Civic Center, Kingsville  
Statewide - Hyatt Regency Hill Country Resort, San Antonio

A TOWMA member  
free benefit →

**LIST YOUR  
ASSOCIATION'S  
EVENTS HERE  
AND IN THE  
TOWMA WEBSITE**

**Just email your  
announcements to  
[ljones@towma.org](mailto:ljones@towma.org)**

TOWMA  
P. O. Box 701  
LaGrange, TX 78945



### Membership Application

Please print carefully so we can read your information

WMA name: \_\_\_\_\_ County: \_\_\_\_\_

President/Contact Person: \_\_\_\_\_

(This Person will be the voting TOWMA Board Member representing your WMA unless changed in writing)

Address: \_\_\_\_\_ City \_\_\_\_\_ State \_\_\_\_\_ Zip \_\_\_\_\_

Telephone #: \_\_\_\_\_ FAX #: \_\_\_\_\_ EMAIL Address: \_\_\_\_\_

WMA ANNUAL DUES are \$25

Join or renew your membership online at <http://www.towma.org>

You may also make checks payable to TOWMA and mail to P. O. Box 701, LaGrange, Texas, 78945

For additional information call Jimmie at 512-304-0676

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Visit our website at <http://www.towma.org>