



TEXAS PRAIRIE WETLANDS PROJECT

*A Cooperative Program Supporting Waterfowl
& Wetland Conservation on Private Lands*



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PROGRAMMATIC & COST-SHARE GUIDELINES

Program Summary:

In 1991, Ducks Unlimited, Texas Parks and Wildlife Department, U.S. Fish and Wildlife Service, and the Natural Resources Conservation Service partnered to create the Texas Prairie Wetlands Project (TPWP). The purpose of this partnership is to help deliver the habitat objectives set forth by the Gulf Coast Joint Venture (GCJV), whose primary goal is to provide habitat for wintering waterfowl and other bird guilds to ensure overwinter survival and sufficient body condition to reach the breeding grounds and nest successfully. The TPWP works with private landowners to restore, enhance, and create shallow-water wetlands throughout a 28-county focus area. This program provides financial cost-share assistance to private landowners for habitat enhancement, levee construction, and the installation of water control structures and delivery systems. This program also provides technical assistance (biological and engineering) and a detailed management plan to private landowners. Projects include the management of harvested croplands, waterfowl food plots, moist soil areas, forested wetlands, and other created or natural existing wetlands to increase biodiversity for waterfowl, as well as other wetland-dependent species.

TPWP Guidelines:

1. Projects shall protect, restore, enhance, and/or create wetlands along with adjoining habitat/buffer zones.
2. Project size should be a minimum of twenty (20) acres of surface water or a combination of smaller sites that equal at least twenty (20) acres. Sites less than 20 acres will be evaluated on a case by case basis.
3. During an average year, shallow surface water (10-18 inches) from precipitation, run-off, wells, or irrigation provider must be present for at least four (4) months between September 1 and April 30. Water may also be maintained on the project site during spring and summer if it is compatible with agricultural, wildlife, and other land use practices.

4. Roller chopping, light disking, and spraying moist-soil plants are acceptable management practices. *Please note that any planted vegetation can only be manipulated by normal and accepted agricultural practices within your county/region, and we recommend that you read current U.S. Fish & Wildlife Service baiting regulations prior to manipulating vegetation (http://www.fws.gov/le/huntfish/waterfowl_baiting.htm).*
5. To help ensure that waterfowl receive the maximum benefits from projects funded through the TPWP, disturbance in and around project sites should be kept to a minimum during winter. Thus, it is **recommended** that hunting of each management unit be restricted to no more than three (3) mornings per week.
6. Due to the increased risks of mottled duck hybridization and disease transmission to other migratory waterfowl, Texas Prairie Wetlands cooperators will agree to refrain from releasing any waterfowl on or near project sites for the period of their agreement.

TPWP Application Procedures:

1. Landowner must complete a Technical Assistance Request Form, a NRCS 1619, W-9, TPWD form, and Related Party Disclosure Form and return it to the TPWP office.
2. A TPWP Biologist, from DU or a partner organization, will schedule a site visit with the landowner to assess the potential for a project. If a viable project meets programmatic guidelines and the landowner is interested in the program, a Wetland Development Agreement (WDA) will be drafted.
3. The TPWP Committee will review each project to ensure that it meets the criteria for the TPWP. Projects will be ranked based on biological significance relative to the objectives of the GCJV, potential project success, and overall cost-effectiveness.
4. Projects must be strategically located throughout key habitat areas identified by the GCJV taking into account their proximity to nearby public and private waterfowl areas.
5. The WDA, project design, and costs estimates are returned to the landowner for their review and signature.
6. The WDA contract will be in effect for a minimum of 10 years.
7. Landowner contribution (cash and in-kind) to the project is an important funding consideration.
8. Projects may be combined with USDA conservation programs (i.e., CREP, WREP, Rice stewardship, EQIP, etc).
9. Overall habitat benefit to cost-ratio is a primary funding consideration.

Construction and Reimbursement of Funds:

1. At the request of the landowner, a pre-construction meeting may be held with the landowner and contractor prior to any construction activities
2. The landowner will be responsible for hiring all contractors and procuring materials.
3. No funds will be reimbursed until project construction is complete and the unit meets engineering specifications.
4. A final inspection of the completed project must be made prior to reimbursement.
5. Once the project has met final inspection, the cooperator will provide the TPWP Biologist with all invoices related to the project expenses. Reimbursement will follow within 4-6 weeks.
6. The cooperator will be responsible for hiring and paying all contractors.
7. Projects shall be constructed to maintain functional and engineering integrity for a minimum of 10 years.
8. Reimbursement to the Cooperator will be **up to \$300 per acre** for costs ACTUALLY incurred for the Proposed Improvements. DU will NOT process any reimbursement in excess of actual invoices provided by the Cooperator.
 - a. The cooperator will be responsible for **ALL improvement costs that exceed \$300/acre.**
9. Allowable expenses include practices for site prep (i.e., disking/brush clearing), dike construction, water control structure fabrication and installation, etc.
10. Projects constructed in active agricultural fields will be reimbursed based off of approved NRCS EQIP Rates; 356 (Cass III Dike), 490 (Site Prep), 500 (Obstruction Removal), 587 (Structure for water control), 600 (Terrace), and 647 (Discing).
11. The cooperator is responsible for routine operation and maintenance to the project site and will allow a Field Representative ingress and egress for monitoring purposes.
12. Ducks Unlimited, Inc. shall sign the WDA and fund the project using funds available through the TPWP.

The TPWP is jointly funded and delivered by:

**DUCKS UNLIMITED, INC.
TEXAS PARKS & WILDLIFE DEPARTMENT
U.S. FISH & WILDLIFE SERVICE
GULF COAST JOINT VENTURE
USDA-NATURAL RESOURCES CONSERVATION SERVICE**