



Wildlife Habitat Improvement Program

Overview

The Wildlife Habitat Improvement Program (WHIP) offered by the Oklahoma Department of Wildlife Conservation (ODWC) is designed to help private landowners develop, preserve, restore, enhance and/or manage wildlife habitat on their land. Through WHIP, landowners receive technical and financial assistance to develop and maintain wildlife habitat.

To improve wildlife habitat, ODWC will enter into 10-year agreements with interested landowners to help fund approved projects. ODWC will share the cost of the habitat improvement with qualified persons for up to 75%, but not to exceed \$5,000 per landowner per year. In exchange, the participant agrees to maintain the habitat for a minimum of 10 years.

Benefits

The primary wildlife species targeted by WHIP are deer, turkey, quail, pheasant, prairie chickens, dove and waterfowl.

Although game species are the primary beneficiaries of WHIP, many species, including Threatened and Endangered species and Species of Special Concern, benefit from WHIP activities.

Eligible Objectives

Types of acceptable objectives include:

- **Habitat Protection:** primarily excludes or controls activities which can damage or destroy existing wildlife habitat. May include fencing to limit grazing and/or other habitat damaging activities.
- **Habitat Development (Vegetation):** involves planting permanent native vegetation (trees, shrubs, grass, etc.) that is needed to establish new habitat or bolster existing habitat.
- **Habitat Development (Watering):** involves water development (pit ponds, windmills, solar pumps, guzzlers, etc.) that is primarily designed to benefit wildlife in areas where permanent sources of water are limited (> 1 mile away) or habitat protection limits livestock water.
- **Timber Management:** involves timber management practices (creating small openings, thinning timber, etc.) that improve wildlife habitat.

- **Wetland Enhancement:** involves protecting, enhancing, restoring and/or developing wetland habitat by constructing dikes, installing water control structures, etc. For program eligibility wetlands are defined as having $\geq 75\%$ of the body of water not more than 18 inches deep.

How WHIP Works

Persons interested in entering into a cost-share agreement with ODWC may submit an application from January 1 – May 1. Applications may be obtained online at www.wildlifedepartment.com or by calling ODWC at (405) 521-2739.

A biologist will contact applicants to discuss objectives and to schedule an onsite evaluation. Then, if the site is suitable, the biologist will work with the applicant to develop a habitat improvement plan. The plan will specify the project(s) to be completed along with cost estimates.

A panel of biologists reviews plans in June to determine if the project meets acceptable objectives and approves or denies projects accordingly. Available funds will be obligated to acceptable applications on a first-in basis.

Applicants will be notified by July 1 if they will be awarded a contract to participate in WHIP. A signed and notarized contract along with the habitat improvement plan must be filed at the County Courthouse in which the land is located prior to financial reimbursement.

Participants will have until June 30 of the following year to complete all work scheduled on the habitat improvement plan.

Following completion the participant will schedule an inspection with their assigned biologist and present receipts of work done. Participants will be reimbursed for up to 75% of the contracted costs (plus or minus 10%, based on actual costs) within 60 days of receipt of the reimbursement form.

For More Information

If you need more information About WHIP please contact the ODWC at (405) 521-2739.



This bulletin expires 7/1/2010