

Historical and Current Assessment of Texas Parks and Wildlife Department's Private Lands Assistance Program

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Abstract: A primary directive of Texas Parks and Wildlife Department (TPWD) is to assist landowners with habitat improvement, land management, and wildlife conservation. In a state that is more than 94% privately owned and managed, the Technical Guidance (TG) program is critical for wildlife conservation on private lands. Department biologists assist almost 5,500 landowners who manage over 8.4 million hectares. Since establishment of the TG program in 1973, there has been minimal documentation of the history, evolution, focus, and success of this program. In an effort to better understand the TG program, we surveyed and interviewed TPWD field biologists who assist landowners in developing and implementing wildlife management plans. We used a quantitative email survey sent to 94 TPWD staff (response rate 74%, $n = 70$). Additionally, we utilized qualitative personal interviews from eight biologists for further insight and information about the history and effectiveness of the TG program. The information gathered helped support TPWD in developing strategies to effectively meet the increasing demand for assistance in private land habitat management. This model can provide useful insight for other private land states and agencies interested in improving or assessing their wildlife conservation programs.

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