



# 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.

## 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 other 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 must submit an application by mail only from January 1 – May 1. Applications may be obtained online at [www.wildlifedepartment.com](http://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 ODWC biologists reviews plans in June to determine if the project meets acceptable objectives and approves or denies projects accordingly. Available funds will be allocated to acceptable applications on a first approved basis, subject to timely completion of the project.

Applicants will be notified on July 1 or shortly thereafter if they are approved to participate in WHIP. A signed and notarized contract along with the habitat improvement plan must be submitted to ODWC within 30 days of notice of approval. Approval does not guarantee funding.

Only a limited amount of funds are available to WHIP each fiscal year, therefore participants must complete all work scheduled on the habitat improvement plan by June 30 of the same fiscal year of approval to qualify for reimbursement.

Following completion the participant will schedule an inspection with their assigned biologist and present receipts of work done. Participants will be reimbursed the contracted costs (plus or minus 10%, based on actual costs) within 60 days of receipt of the reimbursement form. In no event shall reimbursement exceed \$4,500 per participant per year.

## For More Information

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

