

## **Texas Parks and Wildlife Department to propose a hunting regulation change**

Texas Parks and Wildlife (TPWD) is considering implementing a 4-day antlerless season across much of the District 7 area. The earliest this regulation might occur would be the 2019-2020 hunting season.

Currently, the counties that would be impacted by this regulation proposal would include: Austin, Bastrop, Caldwell, Colorado, Dewitt, Fayette, Gonzales, Guadalupe, Karnes, Lavaca, Lee, Waller, Washington, and Wilson. In addition to these counties, Goliad, Jackson, Victoria, and Wharton counties north of U.S. Highway 59 and Comal, Hays, and Travis east of IH-35 would also be impacted. (See Figure 1)

The proposed 4-day antlerless season would begin on Thursday, Thanksgiving Day, and finish the Sunday after Thanksgiving. The bag limits would remain at 2 antlerless deer (like it currently is for archery season). This would provide an opportunity for hunters on properties that do not participate in the Managed Lands Deer Program to have 4 days to harvest an antlerless deer. On properties that have been issued Managed Lands Deer Permits (MLDP), hunters are restricted to the number of antlerless MLDP tags issued for that property including during the 4-day doe season and would not be able to harvest 'additional' antlerless deer using hunting license tags.

One potential requirement would be the mandatory reporting of antlerless deer harvested during this 4-day antlerless season. This would give TPWD good data on how many doe were being harvested outside the MLDP issuance and allow for better monitoring of the population. Since annual harvest reporting is already required for MLDP cooperators, the proposed mandatory reporting of antlerless deer would extend to all antlerless deer harvested and tagged with a hunting license tag.

After considering the long-term trends in increasing deer populations, the relatively constant antlerless harvest rates on MLDP properties, and numerous request for a short antlerless season from landowners and hunters in these counties, TPWD is proposing a conservative season for antlerless deer for this region. Higher antlerless harvest should have the following positive impacts; 1) relieve browsing pressure on the habitat, 2) help manage buck:doe ratios, 3) reduce disease risk, 4) possibly lower harvest pressure on bucks 5) bring the deer densities closer to carrying capacity and 6) address public requests for an option other than MLDP to be able harvest antlerless deer during the general season. By managing for the deer population to be nearer carrying capacity, the overall habitat and health of the deer herd should be a positive result. The current status of the population is generally healthy; however the slow steady increase is a concern.

TPWD wants to ensure that constituents are informed and engaged in this process. District staff plan to hold several scoping meetings throughout District 7. Scoping meetings allow biologists to present information on the subject matter and openly converse with audience members. From there, staff will have a better idea if the subject should be pursued or modified. After the proposal is sent from staff, the commission, if in favor, will publish the proposal in the Texas Register and seek public comment. Near this period, constituents will also be able to attend TPWD public hearings to voice their opinions. Lastly, the commission will decide to adopt or not adopt the proposal. Below is a projected time line for such events.

- Nov. 2018-Jan. 2019 - Scoping meetings to gauge public interest
- Nov. 2018 - brief TPWD Commission on possible regulation change

- Jan. 2019 - present formal proposal to TPWD Commission to seek permission to publish in Texas Register
- Feb. 2019 - proposal published in Texas Register (public comment sought)
- Mar. 2019 - public hearings prior to Commission meeting
- Mar. 2019 - present proposal to TPWD Commission to seek adoption
- If adopted regulation would take effect in 2019-2020 season

Please be on the look-out for scoping meetings or public hearings coming to a county near you. We want to hear the opinions of our constituents and gauge the level of support for proposed doe days and any aspects associated with the proposal.

## **Scheduled Scoping Meetings**

### **JANUARY**

#### **15 Bastrop County**

Commissioner's Courtroom (2<sup>nd</sup> floor)

804 Pecan St., Bastrop, TX 78602

Begins at 7:00 p.m.

Contact Robert Trudeau at 512-332-7280 or [robert.trudeau@tpwd.texas.gov](mailto:robert.trudeau@tpwd.texas.gov)

#### **17 Caldwell County**

Scott Annex Building

1402 Blackjack St., Suite C, Lockhart, TX 78644

Begins at 7:00 p.m.

Contact Robert Trudeau at 512-332-7280 or [robert.trudeau@tpwd.texas.gov](mailto:robert.trudeau@tpwd.texas.gov)

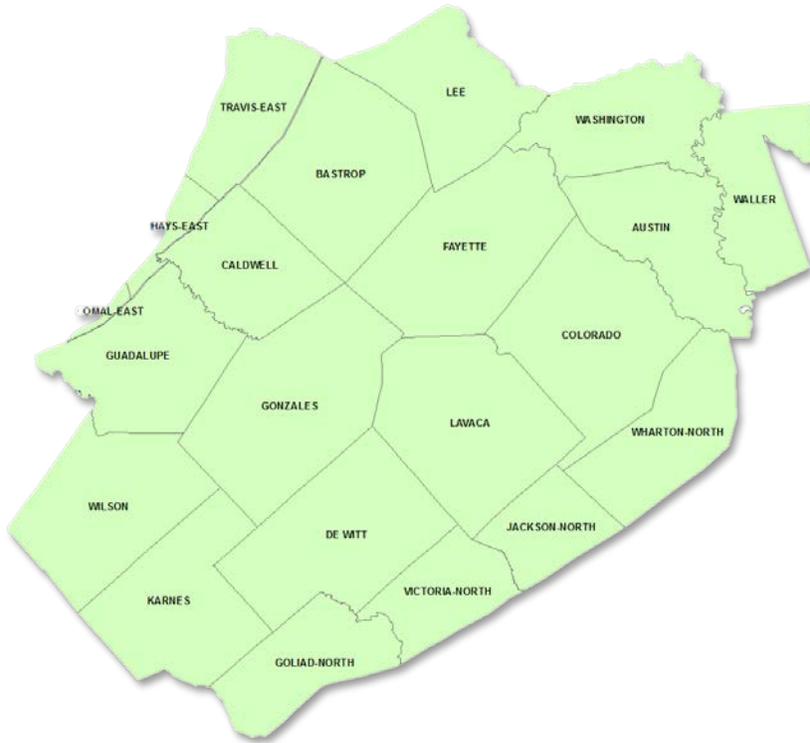


Figure 1: Current counties under consideration for a 4-day antlerless season.