



A freshwater wetland impoundment at Justin Hurst WMA in Brazoria County

Wetland Management Calendar for the Texas Central Coast

January	February	March	April	May	June	July	August	September	October	November	December
Manage water for wintering and migrating waterfowl							Flood for early migrating teal			Manage water levels for wintering waterfowl	
		Slow drawdown to promote growth of seed-bearing annual plants									
Roller-chop vegetation		Manipulate units and treat undesirable vegetation (disk, shred, graze, burn or spray)							Roller-chop vegetation to maintain open water areas		
	Manage shallow water and emergent vegetation for mottled ducks and other resident wetland birds										
						Slow drawdown to create mudflats for migrating shorebirds					
Maintenance of levees and other infrastructure											

Migratory Waterfowl – Wetland habitats managed for waterfowl in fall and winter should be maintained at shallow depths (6-24 inches). Some units can be flooded in late summer or early fall for early migrating ducks such as blue-winged teal. Remaining wetland units should be flooded by early November prior to peak migration. During fall and winter dense growth of vegetation should be thinned by shredding prior to flooding or roller-chopping when flooded to maintain an even balance between open water and vegetative cover.

Spring Drawdown – Managing shallow wetland impoundments to produce seed bearing annual plants such as millet and smartweed. Begin in early or mid-spring with a **slow** drawdown over 1-2 months. If the water control structure has a riser with boards, one board should be removed every 1-2 weeks. Once desired plants are established to a height that can sustain flooding, the water control structure can be closed to catch rainfall.



Millet, also known as barnyard grass, produces abundant seed that are eaten by ducks.

Wetland Manipulation and Nuisance Vegetation Management – Managed wetlands require periodic disturbance to maintain productivity and to promote annual plant communities that produce seeds desired by waterfowl. Diking is necessary every third or fourth year. Diking late in the growing season can be beneficial for the production of

desired moist-soil plants the following year. Shredding may be required annually depending on the type of plant community that develops and its structure. The wetland unit should be assessed annually for nuisance vegetation such as cattail, phragmites, sesbania, willow and Chinese tallow tree. Chemical herbicides approved for aquatic habitats are effective at controlling large, continuous stands of nuisance vegetation. Shredding or burning may be necessary prior to applying herbicide treatments to increase effectiveness.

Managing Spring and Summer Water – Strategies for managing wetland units can include maintenance of water levels through spring and summer for the benefit of breeding mottled ducks and other wetland birds that reside on the Texas Coast. Shallow water with emergent vegetation is perfect habitat for mottled duck pairs and broods. Spring and summer wetlands are also used by several species of wading birds and small marsh birds that forage on aquatic insects, amphibians and small fish. In July, water can be **slowly** drained from units over 1-2 months to expose mudflats for migrating shorebirds that forage on insects at the soil surface. Maintaining water levels during the growing season can be rotated with spring drawdowns every other year or every third year.

Infrastructure Maintenance – Levees should be inspected annually for signs of erosion where a breach may occur in the future. Alligators and nutria can cause damage from burrowing. Grade and add appropriate fill material to damaged segments in the levee when necessary. Trees and shrubs should not be allowed to grow on levees as they can compromise levee integrity. Shredding vegetation on levees at least once annually should prevent establishment of woody plants. Keep water control structures clear of vegetation and debris to maintain their functionality. Check structures annually for corrosion, especially on sites that are near the influence of tidal waters.

These recommendations and the above calendar are very general and may not be suitable for a specific site. They are intended to be used as guidance to assist landowners in developing a management plan for wetlands on their property. Texas Parks and Wildlife biologists are available for consultation and assistance in developing a site-specific wetland management plan.

For additional information please contact:

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Male blue-winged teal at Matagorda Island NWR & WMA.

This information is for educational purposes only and is intended to be used as a guide to effectively and efficiently manage wetlands for waterfowl and other wetland birds. It can be used as a tool to assist you in preparing a site-specific plan to develop and manage wetlands on your property. Please keep in mind that wetlands are dynamic habitats and no generic management recommendations can be written to account for all possible environmental scenarios that can influence wetland habitats.



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