

MANAGEMENT NOTES January through April

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What's YOUR Future?

It's winter! As winter continues and we move toward spring, based on what has happened the last several months it will either be warm or cold and dry or raining. Regardless, the weather over the last year has been extremely variable. One month wet, another dry and when there was rain it was often heavy. The drought has given us major damage to the rangeland and woodlands in Texas. In addition, wildlife has suffered and many populations have been adapting. Blame it on lack of water, reduced natural forage and feed, heat, and all the other things that drought and heat bring. Needless to remind most of you, once we get good rains and see recovery starting, it will take a long time for the vegetation to recover to what was there or it may never recover. The drought of the 1950s took a long time to recover and this one has been about as bad in many areas.

Be sure to evaluate the current animal use to determine if there will be adequate resources for winter use. Hope you have evaluated your resources and finances for 2012 and adjusted your 2013 plans and management. Above all, update your five-year plan.

Here are some points to consider in the next few months.

- Water should always be your highest priority. Without adequate water, production and even survival is difficult at best.
 - Closely monitor your water resources for availability and quality. Have options in place if sources appear to be less than optimal. Evaluate water needs for the year with an eye on the need and potential needs. Be prepared to move animals to where water is available if necessary.
 - If the drought continues, check water sources often.
- Review rainfall records for the past 12 months, the forecast for the next three to six months, and determine if the

current soil moisture availability is adequate for the rest of the fall and winter seasons. Even if current soil moisture is fair to good, projected plant growth may be below average if drought conditions continue as some have predicted. If drought conditions do continue, prepare for even less growth in 2013.

- Evaluate the status of the winter grazing and browse use. The amount of use on highly desirable species is critical. If use has been heavy, plan to reduce the pressure if possible. Plan to reduce 2013 rates to allow the preferred species to recover and improve next year.

- Routinely check and repair or replace, where possible, all improvements such as fences, water sources and equipment.

- Finalize your financial data for 2012. Continue to evaluate and adjust the 2013 and five-year management and economic plans based on current and projected weather plus current and projected economic conditions.
- Evaluate broadleaf and woody plant control sites for 2013 management plans.
- Finalize prescribed burn areas for 2013. Have plans for their implementation and management in 2013. When it comes to prescribed burning, planning ahead is better than just "going out and dropping matches!"
- Adjust and continue the management for 2012 seeded areas to insure long-term management is accomplished.
- Finalize plans for any seeding opportunities for 2012 and begin preparing for seeding.
- Update your land resource records through new photos or other means.
- If you haven't started a land resource record, start now. If you use photographs, establish points that you can return to and photograph at least once each year.
- Remember, your management is for today and the future. Base your decisions on documenting what you have done, what is currently happening and combine these with what you have planned or predicted for future. Include how you expect weather, economic conditions and your personal life to interact. Management is not easy!
- If you haven't developed a business management plan, please get started!

Planning now can make decisions in the future easier! 