



## **TWA Position Statement on the BLM - Red River Land Issue**

### **Texas Wildlife Association Policy Position on the Red River / BLM Land Dispute**

Strong private property rights are the foundation for sound stewardship of natural resources, especially in the State of Texas where over 95% of land is privately owned. As such, Texas Wildlife Association (“TWA”) strives to protect land stewards so that they may protect the natural resources so important to the ecological and economic health of our great state.

In the Spring of 2014, the Bureau of Land Management (“BLM”) stated its intent to develop a Resource Management Plan (“RMP”) for approximately 90,000 acres of land located along the Red River in North Texas (the “Planning Area”). The Planning Area has a long, complex legal history that has resulted in uncertain ownership status. The BLM believes that the Federal Government holds title, while many private individuals who have long been in possession of such land believe they hold title. Those private individuals have cared for the property for many years while paying purchase monies and ad valorem taxes along the way. To date, the BLM has not released an RMP for the Planning Area. TWA CEO David Yeates states, “Texas Wildlife Association wants what is best for the natural resources of Texas. It is our firm belief that private individuals are vastly better stewards of land and natural resources than any government agency. The individual is simply more attuned to and invested in what is best for the land. That is irreplaceable. TWA supports any equitable resolution that will continue the private stewardship of this land.”

On August 13, 2014, TWA Executive Committee approved the Position Statement below. It should be noted that the information below reflects TWA’s position on this issue, but does not necessarily serve as a legislative or action agenda.

## **Red River / Bureau of Land Management Position Statement**

*Approved by TWA Executive Committee, August 13, 2014*

Based upon the Fact Statement pertaining to the Bureau of Land Management (“BLM”) pending Resource Management Plan (“RMP”) approved by the Texas Wildlife Association (“TWA”) Board of Directors on July 11, 2014, the following Position Statement is offered:

TWA was established in 1985 by a group of ranchers, wildlife managers and hunters dedicated to the conservation, management, and enhancement of wildlife and wildlife habitat on private lands. TWA is committed to representing private land stewards from across the state of Texas while supporting all efforts to uphold established private property rights of Texas landowners. TWA members care for and control almost 40 million acres of privately owned rangeland and wildlife habitat in Texas. It is critical to keep private land in Texan hands.

The TWA strongly opposes any RMP and federal control of private land and all associated rights located in Texas and south of the Red River. Precisely, the BLM proposal to take possession of any of the 90,000 acres along a 116-mile stretch of the Red River that the BLM considers public land, is not supported by TWA’s membership.

Until such boundaries and legal titles are clearly defined, opening any of the Planning Area for public access and recreation will undoubtedly result in conflicts impacting Texans who have for so long acted as capable stewards of this land. TWA believes that the management and best conservation practices for any Federally owned portion of this 90,000 acre stretch are best left in the adept hands of the private landowners who have shepherded such land for decades.

TWA encourages adoption of a plan, including currently filed legislation that makes appropriate allowances for the interests of such private landowners, regardless of their ownership status. TWA also emphasizes landowners to work towards acquiring title from the USA by grant or under the doctrine of accretion. Such grants would be the equitable solution given the investments these ranchers have made in the disputed lands and the benefits to everyone by the private landowners’ stewardship to be gained by such grants.

Members of the Texas Wildlife Association are upstanding stewards of Texas land and it is imperative to continue protecting private property rights for the future of Texans.