

# Bowman Delta Farm - Fall 2019

## Description

Bowman Delta Farm consists of 1426\* acres in Coahoma County, west of Clarksdale. It is an island of wildlife habitat in the Mississippi Delta. Philip Bowman purchased Bowman Delta Farm in 2006. It was enclosed by an eight-foot fence in 2007. I have visited the property more than 20 times since it was purchased. This property ranks as the most intensively and properly managed areas for wildlife habitat that I have had the pleasure of visiting and working with in my career.

The primary wildlife management focus is on white-tailed deer and waterfowl, but many management techniques are implemented to benefit wild turkey, mourning dove, rabbit, shorebirds, and songbirds. A visit to the property quickly reveals the intensity of wildlife management. Various ages of timber exist. Approximately 250 acres of agriculture is planted annually. Additionally, over 70 acres of annual, winter, and summer food plots are maintained. Wildlife openings are created throughout the property. Strips of switchgrass surround agricultural fields and serve as corridors throughout the property. The habitat is diverse and fragmented, creating abundant edge. Approximately 35 acres of permanent water exist on the property and winter flooding results in approximately 300 acres of surface water annually.

## White-tailed Deer

White-tailed deer are managed with emphasis on bucks reaching their maximum antler potential. Contrary to many properties in the region and county, Bowman Delta Farm is managed at a relatively low deer density, with a goal of 1 adult deer per 12 acres. Herd density, sex ratio, and fawn production are monitored by annual camera surveys. Specific bucks, identified from the camera survey, are targeted for harvest based on age and antler quality. Most of these bucks are filmed multiple years before harvest, with emphasis on mature deer. Shed antlers are also used to identify bucks and to monitor their growth. Annual antlerless harvest goals are set from the camera survey.

Bowman Delta Farm exceeds the Delta Soil Region and Coahoma County in average deer weights and average antler measurements. See the table below. These measurements are testament to the dedication towards sound deer management exhibited on Bowman Delta Farm. This property has produced some of the largest antlered bucks in the state and is one of the few properties that reveal the full potential of mature bucks grown on the MS Delta soil.

	Delta Soil Region	Coahoma County	Bowman Delta Farm
<b>1.5 yr old doe weight</b>	104 pounds	105 pounds	109 pounds
<b>3.5+ yr old doe weight</b>	124 pounds	125 pounds	132 pounds
<b>4.5+ yr old buck weight</b>	198 pounds	208 pounds	217 pounds
<b>4.5+ antler points</b>	8.3 points	8.7 points	9.0 points
<b>4.5+ antler circumference</b>	4.5 inches	4.7 inches	5.2 inches
<b>4.5+ mainbeam length</b>	20.1 inches	21.5 inches	23.4 inches
<b>4.5+ antler spread</b>	16.2 inches	16.8 inches	18.4 inches

**\* Acquired additional 145+/- acres in 2020 (not high fenced)**

### **Waterfowl**

Approximately 200 acres are flooded annually via rainfall and pumps. Much of this area is both harvested and unharvested agriculture, while the remainder are impoundments specifically planted for waterfowl (rice, millet, corn). Areas are set aside as off-limit refuges, with no hunting or harassment. Loafing areas exist in the timber, some of which are hunted. A strong emphasis is enacted to not overhunt any specific area. Switchgrass corridors and edges contribute to minimal disturbance from vehicle traffic. At peak times, an estimated ten thousand waterfowl roost on the area nightly. Hunting is outstanding and many new hunters are introduced to waterfowl hunting on this property. This property meets all the critical needs for migrating waterfowl, without excessive disturbance.

### **Wild Turkey**

A sustainable population of wild turkey are found on the property year-round. While the total area of the property is smaller than the normal home-range of a turkey flock, this property obviously supplies all of the year-round needs. Hunting occurs and the property averages about 2 gobblers harvested annually. This is a very rare find in the Mississippi Delta.

### **Small Game**

The habitat diversity and field borders host abundant cottontail and swamp rabbits and exciting hunts are conducted annually. Fox squirrels are common on the property. Mourning doves use the fields year-round and are numerous on the property. On most winters, common snipe are more abundant than any property I have ever visited. All of the small game mentioned above are hunted annually, with many new hunters being introduced to the sport.

### **Non-Game**

Sound game management also benefits non-game animals. There is an abundance of small mammals such as cotton rats and field mice on the property. These sustain coyotes, bobcats, gray foxes, and numerous raptors, such as great horned owls, barred owls, red-tailed hawks and northern harriers that frequent the property. The miles of edge and diversity of habitat provide ideal nesting and wintering grounds for numerous songbirds, such as dickcissels, horned larks, indigo buntings, painted buntings, and various orioles, tanagers, warblers, and sparrows. The permanent and seasonal water attract wading and shore birds such as great egrets, snowy egrets, little blue herons, great blue herons, night herons, and plovers. There is even a flock of Sandhill cranes often observed in the winter. The management efforts on this property reach far more wildlife than the "target" species.

### **Summary**

I reiterate that this property follows the script for proper wildlife and habitat management. Success is measured not in the animals harvested, but in the impact made to wildlife for future generations. I applaud the work and dedication that you have exhibited in the management of the property and I am truly appreciative of being able to share in the management and enjoyment of the land and wildlife.

Respectfully submitted,

William T. McKinley

Deer Program Coordinator for the Mississippi Department of Wildlife, Fisheries, and Parks