



## Fiscal Note for Proposed Wild Quail Management Area for the Wildlife Resources Commission

**Rule Amendments:** 15A NCAC 10B .0227 Wild Quail Management Areas

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**Impact:** State Government: Yes  
Local Government: No  
Private Impact: No  
Substantial Economic Impact: No

**Authority:** G.S. 113-134; 113-291.1

### BACKGROUND

The wildlife resources of the State belong to the people of the State, including the enjoyment of these resources (G.S. 113-131(a)). The Wildlife Resources Commission (hereinafter WRC or Commission) is tasked with the conservation of wildlife resources of the State (G.S. 143-239). This responsibility includes managing as equitably as possible the various competing interests regarding these resources, including the use and take of such resources (G.S. 113-131.1(a)). The statutes governing wildlife resources are found in Chapter 113, Subchapter IV of the General Statutes, and WRC has been granted rulemaking authority to implement the provisions of these statutes (G.S. 113-134). In accordance with the supply of wildlife and other factors it determines to be of public importance, the WRC may fix seasons and bag limits upon the wild animals and wild birds authorized to be taken that it deems necessary or desirable in the interests of the conservation of wildlife resources (G.S. 113.291.2(a)).

A summary of the proposed rule is below, with the full text included in Appendix A.

## 15A NCAC 10B .0227 WILD QUAIL MANAGEMENT AREAS

This proposed rule will allow landowners, on large properties with large amounts of year-round useable quail habitat, to increase wild quail (i.e., not captive-reared) populations by implementing specific management actions that have been demonstrated, through peer-reviewed research, to have positive impacts on quail populations. Requirements for these areas will include 1,500 acres of contiguous land, periodic inspection by the Commission, annual reports of management actions, and no release of pen-reared game birds. Management actions that will be permitted on Wild Quail Management Areas include:

- Trapping programs to reduce the abundance of the most significant quail nest predators (opossum, raccoon, and striped skunk) during the early nesting season.
- Providing supplemental feed without impacting the ability to hunt quail on the property.

### Fiscal Impact

#### *State Impact*

This proposed rule is anticipated to have minimal impacts on the Commission, as only staff time will be required to work with property owners for establishment of the area and re-inspection of participating landowner properties every five years. Because this program is new, the Commission is unsure of exactly how many property owners will want to establish Wild Quail Management Areas and how much staff time will be needed to assist those landowners. However, based on the current number of properties that do this type of management and anticipated future interest, the Commission expects five properties to enter into agreements with the initiation of this program. Based on this estimate, and the anticipated three days of staff time required to work with the landowner and inspect the property, the Commission expects to incur an estimated cost of \$4,920 in the first year of this program (5 properties x 24hrs/property x \$41/hr = \$4,920). If it is assumed that one additional property per year will participate in the program and each property needs to be inspected every five years, the Commission anticipates an annual cost of \$984 (1 property x 24hours/property x \$41/hour = \$984) for property enrollment per year and \$1,640 (5 properties x 8hrs/property x \$41 = \$1,640) for inspections on year 6 with a recurring \$328 (8hrs x \$41/hr = \$328) each of the four years thereafter.<sup>1</sup>

#### *Local Impact*

This proposed rule will not impact local government.

#### *Private Impact*

While the Commission cannot predict how many landowners will ultimately chose to implement the additional management actions required for a Wild Quail Management Area, this proposed rule will provide an opportunity for landowners to implement additional management actions for wild bobwhite quail. Landowners are not required to implement these actions unless they want to manage for trapping nest predators outside of the normal trapping season and hunt quail where feed has been provided; thus, use of this rule is entirely voluntary. Interested landowners must sign an agreement with the Commission, but no fee is required. Participants that choose to implement the additional trapping and supplemental feeding actions allowed by this rule will

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<sup>1</sup> Staff costs based on total compensation for Conservation Biologist II (GN10) at salary midpoint.

incur additional costs associated with carrying out these activities on their lands. Costs may include the purchase of feed, traps, and bait. On average, feeding programs generally require one bushel of feed per acre per year. Seed costs can range from \$3 - \$12 per bushel. Habitat management typically costs approximately \$20 per acre/year. Trapping costs can vary based on the species and whether the landowner is trapping themselves or hiring someone to trap for them.

The landowner costs associated with Wild Quail Management Areas will vary based on total acreage and the percentage of that acreage that the landowner desires to maintain as habitat. Management choices made by the landowner will also determine costs. Due to potential variations in management strategies and lack of data, the Commission has no way to quantify these costs.

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# Appendix A

## 15A NCAC 10B .0227 WILD QUAIL MANGEMENT AREAS

(a) A Wild Quail Management Area shall be land maintained to enhance enjoyment of sportsmen and support wild bobwhite quail conservation under signed agreement between the landowner(s) and the Wildlife Resources Commission.

(b) The following minimum qualifications shall apply to all Wild Quail Management Areas:

(1) At least 1,500 acres of contiguous land; and

(2) A minimum of 15% of the land shall be maintained in year-round bobwhite quail habitat.

(c) Wild bobwhite quail habitat shall be any habitat described as early successional habitat within the North Carolina Wildlife Action Plan, available online, free of charge, at [www.ncwildlife.org](http://www.ncwildlife.org).

(d) Landowners interested in establishing a Wild Quail Management Area shall contact the Commission as described on the Commission's website at [www.ncwildlife.org](http://www.ncwildlife.org).

(e) The signed agreement between the landowner(s) and the Commission shall include at a minimum:

(1) A list of all owners of land included in the Wild Quail Management Area;

(2) County parcel identification information for each parcel to be included in the Wild Quail Management Area;

(3) A scaled map of the Wild Quail Management Area with the areas to be maintained in year-round bobwhite quail habitat clearly identified;

(4) Management practices to be used to maintain bobwhite quail habitat and populations; and

(5) Any reporting requirements in addition to the minimum requirements in (g)(6) that are specific to the individual Wild Quail Management Area.

(f) Property inspection:

(1) All potential properties shall be inspected by a representative of the Commission prior to acceptance into the program; and

(2) Wild Quail Management Areas shall be inspected by a representative of the Commission at least once every five years.

(g) The following shall apply to all Wild Quail Management Areas:

(1) No domestically raised upland game birds shall be released on Wild Quail Management Areas;

(2) The hunting of wild bobwhite quail shall only be permitted during the established seasons in 15A NCAC 10B .0208.

(3) Supplemental feeding, if conducted, shall be for the primary purpose of ensuring that wild bobwhite quail populations remain stable during droughts or other periods of stressful environmental conditions. Supplemental feed shall:

(A) be broadcast into quail habitat along a minimum linear distance of at least one mile per 100 acres of habitat at a rate of three bushels per mile;

(B) be broadcast on a bi-weekly schedule during at least five months each year

(C) be broadcast using a non-stationary spreader;

(D) be only natural grains or seed; and

(E) not be placed to attract birds for the purpose of hunting.

# Appendix A

- 1           (4)   Except for wild bobwhite quail on Wild Quail Management Areas, no wild birds may be taken near  
2                   or with the aid of supplemental feed.
- 3           (5)   Trapping for raccoon, striped skunk, and opossum on Wild Quail Management Areas for the purpose  
4                   of nest predator control shall be allowed from the end of the established trapping season in 15A  
5                   NCAC 10B .0303 through May 31. Enclosed foot-hold traps with a one-way trigger or cage traps  
6                   may be used, and trapped raccoons, striped skunks, and opossums may be euthanized or released at  
7                   the trap site.
- 8           (6)   An annual report for the period of June 1 through May 31 shall be submitted to the Commission  
9                   within 30 days of the end of the reporting period, and shall include at least the following:
- 10                   (A)   number of days and hours wild bobwhite quail were hunted;  
11                   (B)   total annual harvest of wild bobwhite quail;  
12                   (C)   total number of coveys flushed;  
13                   (D)   supplemental feeding activities;  
14                   (E)   number of trap nights, number of animals trapped and their disposition or release, by species,  
15                           for trapping activity conducted during trapping seasons established by 15A NCAC 10B  
16                           .0303; and  
17                   (F)   number of trap nights, number of animals trapped and their disposition or release, by species,  
18                           for trapping activity conducted outside of trapping seasons established by 15A NCAC 10B  
19                           .0303.