

September 22, 2020

The Honorable John Cyrier
Chair
Texas Sunset Commission
P.O. Box 2910
Austin, TX 78768

The Honorable Dawn Buckingham, M.D.
Vice Chair
Texas Sunset Commission
P.O. Box 12068
Austin, TX 78711

RE: Texas Parks & Wildlife Department Sunset Review

Dear Chair Cyrier and Vice Chair Buckingham:

Thank you for the opportunity to provide feedback on the Texas Parks & Wildlife Department (TPWD) as they undergo their Sunset Review. Kalkomey Enterprises has partnered with the Department for more than 20 years and appreciates the critical role the Department plays in our state.

TPWD has offered hunter education courses since 1972. The 80th Texas Legislature (Senate Bill 504) authorized Texas Parks & Wildlife to establish a hunter education program incorporating specific topics relating to safety practices and wildlife management, to reduce hunting accidents and educate sportsmen in 1988.

Texas law requires every hunter, including those from out-of-state, born on or after September 2, 1971, to successfully complete hunter education. Hunters:

- under 9 years of age, must be accompanied
- age 9 through 16, must successfully complete hunter education OR must be accompanied
- age 17 and over must successfully complete hunter education OR purchase a “Hunter Education Deferral” and be accompanied.

Accompanied is defined as “by a person who is at least 17, who is licensed to hunt in Texas, who has passed hunter education or is exempt (born before Sept. 2, 1971) is hunting within normal voice control.”

Texas recognizes hunter education courses from all states and Canadian provinces. Hunters who have taken a course in their home state are not required to retake a Texas specific course.

Hunters interested in bowhunting may take an additional course specific for bowhunting. However, this is in addition to and not in lieu of Texas Hunter Education. Many states and several provinces require an additional two-day bowhunter course in addition to basic hunter education.

Similarly, Texans licensed to carry a concealed handgun will still need to have a hunter safety certification. Some of the safety training is similar. However, the hunter education training includes multiple topics not included in concealed carry training.

COURSE CURRICULUM

All courses cover core standards in firearm, hunting and outdoor safety, hunting responsibilities and wildlife conservation. Some classroom courses also cover additional topics such as bowhunting, muzzleloaders, outdoor survival and first aid.

Course eligibility is based on a student’s age. Students under 17 MUST take an in-person, instructor-led course. Two options are available:

- A 6-hour, classroom course
- An online + field day combination. Students complete a FREE online course combined with a minimum four hour “field day” that includes live-fire activities and hunter skills.

Kalkomey has partnered with TPWD to offer an online hunter education course to hunters, age 17 and older. Our courses meet the standards of the International Hunter Education Association (IHEA), the international accreditation body. We’re also pleased to bring the first interactive hunter education course to the state. This format allows the student to make choices that directly impact the pace of the content delivery. Studies have demonstrated students typically have better content mastery and retention.

The state-mandated hunter education is taking on an increasingly important role in keeping everyone safe in the outdoors. Today, more hunters are receiving most to all of

their outdoor education from this course instead of a small portion coming from the state portion and the majority being taught by their parents and grandparents.

PROOF OF CERTIFICATION / DERERRAL

Any hunter, 17 and older, who has not completed an approved hunter education course may defer completion for up to one year and must be accompanied while hunting. Each person may only obtain one deferral in their lifetime and it is valid until the end of the current license year. (All licenses expire annually on August 31). Hunter education deferrals are available at license vendors for \$10. Anyone who has been convicted or has received deferred adjudication for violation of the mandatory hunter education requirements is prohibited from applying for a deferral.

The deferral program is a worthwhile program that should be continued. Many people are exploring their interest in hunting and may or may not want to continue to pursue it as a hobby.

All hunters should be required to provide proof of completion of hunter education when purchasing a hunting license unless they are purchasing the one year deferral. Current statute requires proof of certification or deferral to be with the hunter while hunting. Either a printed hunter education certification card or a certification card/ bar code captured on their mobile phone serve as satisfactory proof of hunter education.

I strongly encourage the Sunset Committee to recommend TPWD promulgate regulations so that all hunters provide proof of hunter education or their one-year deferral permit on their person when purchasing a license. I also encourage the Sunset Commission to recommend TPWD strengthen the tracking system for the purchases of the one-year deferrals so that hunters then complete the mandatory hunter education requirements instead of continuing to purchase deferrals.

In closing, I encourage the reauthorization of the Texas Parks and Wildlife Department and, on behalf of Kalkomey Enterprises, look forward to continuing our partnership in the years ahead. Thank you for your consideration.

Sincerely,



Jason Alexander,
Chief Executive Officer