

Current Land Use Trends¹

Dallas/Ft. Worth Metroplex

Introduction

The Dallas/Ft. Worth Metroplex is comprised of 11 counties: Collin, Dallas, Denton, Ellis, Hood, Johnson, Kaufman, Parker, Rockwall, Tarrant, and Wise. These counties account for 3.28 million of the 142 million acres of private farms, ranches and forestlands in Texas and are approximately 2.3% of the state's private land use area. This region provides substantial economic, environmental, and recreational benefits to the state's entire population.

Metroplex Trends

Ownership Size. By the end of 2007, the USDA Census of Agriculture reported 22,801 farming and ranching operations in the Dallas/Ft. Worth Metroplex area. This represents a 15% increase since 1997, or an approximate gain of 298 new working farms and ranches annually. Although there has been a gain in the number of farms and ranches in this region, the land base for agriculture has decreased by as much as 6.7% and the average ownership size has declined from 173 acres in 1997 to 141 acres in 2007.

- By 2007, smaller operations (<100 acres) accounted for 76% of the Metroplex's total farming and ranching operations, while occupying only 14% of the total land area. Furthermore, the number of large operations (>2000 acres) accounted for about 1% of the Metroplex's total farming and ranching operations, but occupied 33% of the total land area.

This class of smaller operations (<100 acres) has increased by 29% since 1997, while adding 9% total land area. Meanwhile, the number of large operations (>2000 acres) remained constant, but showed a 7% increase in total acres in the Metroplex between 1997 and 2007. (Figure 1).



Figure 1. Change in the number of acres by farm and ranch size class from 1997-2007 for the DFW Metroplex. Data Source: USDA Census of Agriculture.

- The amount of land in mid-sized farms and ranches (500 to 2,000 acres) located in the Dallas/Ft. Worth Metroplex has continued to decline at the rate of about 16,000 acres per year, following the statewide trend.
- Large ownerships (>2000 acres) within the Dallas/Ft. Worth Metroplex have remained constant since 1997. However, while the number of large operations has experienced an overall decrease in land area statewide since 1997; land area for large operations in the Metroplex has increased by 65,943 acres or about 7%.

Land Use. The prevailing category of land use in the Metroplex continues to be native rangeland at over 1.6 million acres. However, since 1997, the accumulated localized loss of native rangeland in the Metroplex has exceeded 213,000 acres, while localized losses of dry (non-irrigated) cropland in the area have exceeded 168,000 acres.

The most notable trend in the Dallas/Ft. Worth Metroplex is the conversion of native rangeland to non-native pasture. There are now over 842,000 acres of non-native pasture, an increase of 72,620 acres since 1997.

A more recent trend in land use is a shift to “wildlife management” following state legislation in 1996 that created the official land use category for tax appraisal purposes. Since then, land in the Metroplex classified as being in wildlife management has increased from 125 acres to 26,492 acres.

Land Values. In 2007, the average appraised market value of farms, and ranches and forestlands in Texas was \$1,196 per acre. However, in the Dallas/Ft. Worth Metroplex the average appraised market value was \$6,985 per acre. On average, this represents a 223% increase in appraised market value for this region over the 10-year period. As expected, the increase in market values tended to be highest in those areas surrounding the major metropolitan growth areas of Dallas and Ft. Worth (Figure 2).

Loss Of Agricultural Lands. According to accumulated data from Texas County Appraisal Districts, over 269,000 acres of farms and ranches in the Metroplex were converted to other uses from 1997 to 2007. Over 45% of this land conversion was related to growth and development associated with population expansion in the Metroplex’s three highest growth counties—Rockwall, Collin and Denton. During this period, 121,821 acres were lost from the agricultural land base north and east of the greater Dallas area.

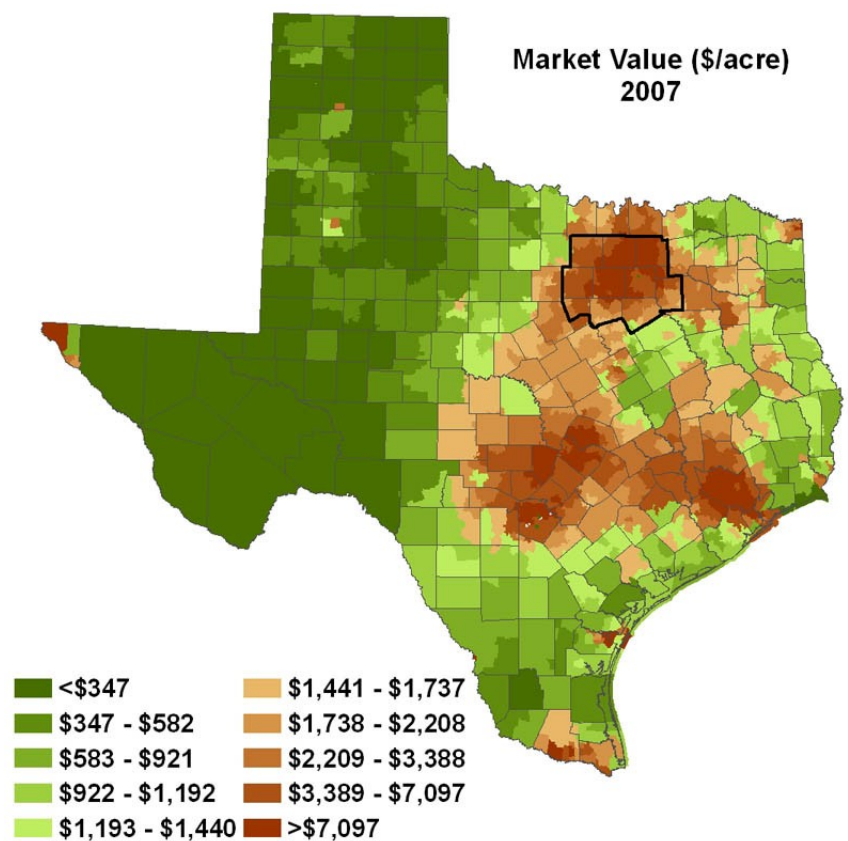


Figure 2. Market Value per acre 2007. Data Source: County Appraisal District Data.

¹Wilkins, R. Neal, Amy G. Snelgrove, Blair C. Fitzsimons, Brent M. Stevener, Kevin L. Skow, Ross E. Anderson, Amanda M. Dube, Debbie Danford. Current Land Use Trends, *Texas Land Trends*. Texas A&M Institute of Renewable Natural Resources. 2009. Texas AgriLife Extension.