



# Texas State Soil & Water Conservation Board

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## Monthly Program News and Activities

June, 2007

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The TSSWCB produces this monthly update of the agency's activities as an informational service to local soil and water conservation district directors. I hope you find this information helpful, and if you have any questions please don't hesitate to call your local Field Representative or our State Headquarters.

REX ISOM, Executive Director

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### Budget/Accounting

- 2007 Agricultural Water Conservation Grant – Allocation amounts for the 2007 Agricultural Water Conservation Program were distributed in May. The total amount available for 2007 is \$ 100,000. There were 212 districts eligible with 199 districts agreeing to participate. The final value per X (criteria) is \$211.42. Participating districts will have until October 31, 2007 to spend and claim these funds.
- 2007 Technical Service Provider Grant (TSSWCB) – On April 9, 2007 the TSSWCB received \$202,116 from NRCS for a regional office technical service provider program. This funding will be used to cover the costs of contract employees providing technical services for EQIP in the following counties: Nueces, Hidalgo, Cameron, Willacy, Kleberg, Kenedy, Jackson, Wharton, Jim Wells, Duval, Frio, Atascosa, Dimmit, Zavala, Fort Bend, Brazoria, Colorado, Calhoun, La Salle, Erath, Bosque, Comanche, Hamilton, McLennan, Eastland and Coryell. The funding will be available through September 30, 2007.
- 2007 Technical Service Provider Grant (SWCDs) – On April 9, 2007 the TSSWCB received \$382,000 for a 2007 SWCD statewide Technical Service Provider Program. Allocation letters have been distributed to all participating districts. This funding will be used to cover the cost of district technical services for EQIP. The funding will be available through September 30, 2007.
- **Reminder: July 1<sup>st</sup> is the deadline for 1<sup>st</sup>, 2<sup>nd</sup>, and 3<sup>rd</sup> quarter Director Mileage and Per Diem claims for 2007.**

### Dates and Deadlines

- July 1 – Deadline for 1<sup>st</sup>, 2<sup>nd</sup>, and 3<sup>rd</sup> quarter Director Mileage and Per Diem claims
- August 31 – Deadline for balance of Matching Fund allocations to be claimed
- August 31 – Deadline for Matching Fund supplemental to be claimed
- August 31 – Deadline for Technical Assistance program Performance Report
- August 31 – 4<sup>th</sup> quarter ending

## **Human Resources**

TSSWCB is currently recruiting for 2 Natural Resource Specialist III positions in Temple. Both positions have a start date not earlier than September 1, 2007.

### ***Resignation***

Carter Miska will resign on July 6, 2007, as the Regional Manager in Wharton.

## **Special Projects**

### ***State Meeting***

The Annual State Meeting for 2007 is scheduled for October 22 – 24, 2007 in Waco. Please mark this date and make plans to attend. Planning is already underway to provide an excellent program. Everyone's support is needed and welcomed.

### ***New Rule Proposed***

The State Board is proposing a new rule to address handling public funds. The new rule proposes that in order for a soil and water conservation district to be designated to administer State Board programs or to receive funds or cost share funds, they must show that they are conducting regularly scheduled meetings to properly handle financial and contractual obligations and are implementing internal controls for handling public funds.

The rule was published in the June 15 edition of the *Texas Register* and is open for review and comments until July 15, 2007.

## **Public Information/ Education**

### **2007 Texas State Envirothon**

*By Kathy Dean*

Nineteen teams from across Texas participated in the state Envirothon competition, April 21 - 23, 2007, at Sheldon Lake State Park and Environmental Learning Center in Houston, Texas.

Envirothon is a three-day academic, extra-curricular environmental and natural resource education program and competition designed for high school students. Teams of five students work together to answer questions focusing on five areas of study: aquatics, forestry, soils, wildlife, and a current environmental issue which was alternative/renewable energy. In addition to the field experience, students also participate in an oral component focusing on a real-world environmental problem.

The overall winner of the 2007 Texas Envirothon was Conroe Academy of Science and Technology Team A and will represent Texas at the Canon Envirothon competition to be held at Hobart and William Smith Colleges in Geneva, N.Y., July 29 – Aug. 3, 2007. Conroe Academy of Science and Technology Team B was second place. The John Cooper Team A and Westside Team A were third place winners.

The day before the competition began, student training workshops were presented by a variety of professionals. Presenters included Michelle Holyfield and Alex Stanton, Eastman Chemical Company; Diana Foss and Andy Sipocz, Texas Parks and Wildlife Department; Steven Cooke and Michael Easley, Texas Forest Service; and Dennis Brezina, Natural Resources Conservation Service. During these presentations students received training in aquatics, forestry, soils, wildlife, and oral presentation skills.

The competition officially began on Sunday with 95 students and 24 team advisors participating in the field testing.

Questions on the field test ranged from identifying bird calls and tree measurements to describing soil textures and discussing the benefits of wetlands. More than 80 volunteers assisted with a variety of jobs, including monitoring the field stations, leading students to each station, grading the field tests, and serving as judges for the oral presentations.

Sponsors of the 2007 Texas Envirothon included Eastman Chemical Company; University of Houston-Clear Lake, Environmental Institute of Houston; Sheldon Lake State Park and Environmental Learning Center; Canon USA; the Sam Houston Resource Conservation and Development; Texas Association of Environmental Professionals; Association of Texas Soil and Water Conservation Districts; Texas Association for Environmental Education; Shell Oil Company – Texas Regional Collaboratives; Lyondell Chemical Company; Blue Bell Ice Creameries; BP America; and Richardson Environmental Action League. Soil and water conservation districts that served as sponsors include Harris County, Montgomery County, Sandhill, and Hale County.

For more information about the Texas State Envirothon, contact Wendy Reistle, Environmental Institute of Houston/UHCL, at (281) 283-3045 or visit [www.texasenvirothon.org](http://www.texasenvirothon.org).

## **Second Annual Sustainable Land Management Workshop**

New landowners received a valuable conservation education at the Second Annual Sustainable Land Management Workshop, April 28, 2007, at the Samuell Farm in Mesquite Texas.

The USDA-NRCS co-sponsored the workshop and delivered materials to the attendees about conservation planning, web soil survey, NRCS programs, Earth Team volunteer opportunities, and an introduction to soils.

“This workshop gave NRCS an opportunity to introduce the web soil survey through a live demonstration using current technology,” said Michael Brooks, NRCS district conservationist in Arlington.

The workshop concept emerged from an increase in the number of new landowners in the Dallas area, and to ensure that resource materials were made available to the public. Landowners attending the workshop had the opportunity to attend various field sessions focusing on pasture and range management for production purpose, along with pasture and prairie restoration management for wildlife purposes. Plus, attendees were able to ask questions of different agricultural specialists during an open forum.

“We introduced grazing management techniques to landowners that will provide an awareness of water quality, plant health, and animal health issues,” Brooks said.

Along with NRCS, other agencies and groups sponsoring the workshop included Texas Parks and Wildlife Department, Texas Cooperative Extension, Dallas Central Appraisal District, Texas Forest Service, Bluebonnet Resource Conservation and Development, Dalworth Soil and Water Conservation District, Dallas County Farm Bureau, North Texas Master Naturalist, and the Noble Foundation.

*By Randy Henry, NRCS Public Affairs Specialist*

## **Texas Teams Sweep Regional Woodland Clinic**

Texas teams won the top three places in both the FFA and 4-H competitions at the 2007 Regional Woodland Clinic, May 4 in Minden, La.

“Although Texas teams have always done well in the regional competition, this is the first time they, or any state, have swept the top three positions in both categories,” said Ray Stoner, state forester for the USDA Natural Resources Conservation Service (NRCS).

Twenty teams from Texas, Arkansas, Louisiana, and Oklahoma participated in the clinic, which began in 1984 in Avinger, Texas.

There are nine categories in the regional contest. Students are quizzed on hardwood identification, pine identification, rate of growth, selective thinning, tree volume, wood products, site index, timber stand improvement, and compass and pacing.

The clinic rotates among the four states that participate; Texas will host the contest in 2008. Each state can send up to six teams, three from FFA and three from 4-H.

More information and photo available on the NRCS Texas web site at <http://www.tx.nrcs.usda.gov/news/Highlights/woodland.html>

*By Kathy Dean, NRCS Public Affairs Specialist*

## **Nacogdoches poultry grower chosen to chair state soil and water board**

During a rare East Texas meeting of the Texas State Soil and Water Conservation Board — a state agency that coordinates conservation and pollution programs — a Nacogdoches poultry grower was chosen as the board chairman.

Jerry Nichols, who has grown chickens in Nacogdoches since 1974, was unanimously selected by the seven-man board at its bi-monthly meeting held at The Fredonia.

With board members coming from each region of the state, the group normally meets in Temple or Austin, but this time Nichols invited the members to come to Nacogdoches.

"The emphasis of this meeting was to educate the board on the poultry industry in Texas," Nichols said.

In addition to its responsibilities of assisting the state's 217 soil and water conservation districts and controlling brush in the state, the TSSWCB also writes policy concerning the effect of agriculture on surface water. In 2001, the Texas Legislature forced poultry growers to adhere to a water-quality management plan, which would instruct growers on how to avoid agricultural pollution.

The TSSWCB provides financial and technical assistance to the growers, helping them to stay within state laws. Board members are most concerned with "litter," the manure collected from chicken houses, according to Joel Clark, a program specialist from Buna.

"(Poultry growing) is complicated," Nichols said. "It's a lot more than raising chickens."

To educate the members, Nichols scheduled Thursday afternoon tours of the Pilgrim's Pride processing plant on Martin Luther King Boulevard and the SFA poultry farm off U.S. Hwy. 259 north of Nacogdoches.

The board must decide what the best practices are for using the litter — when and where to spread it and how to store it. To make smart decisions, the board needed to learn all it could about the poultry world, and Nichols thought the members could use the show-and-tell.

"You've got someone like me from West Texas on the board who knows very little about the poultry industry," said Reed Stewart, of Sterling City, who was chosen as vice chairman of the board.

Nichols, who grew up on a poultry farm in San Augustine, served on the board of the Nacogdoches Soil and Water Conservation District for 28 years before being elected to the TSSWCB. He was elected by the board shortly after Aubrey Russell, the chairman for two years, announced he would step down at the meeting.

Of the seven board members, five who are active in farming and ranching are elected by district directors across the state. The governor's office appoints the remaining two.

The TSSWCB was created in 1939 by the Texas Legislature to organize the state into soil and water conservation districts and communicate with the Legislature on behalf of those districts.

*By KYLE PEVETO*

*The Nacogdoches Daily Sentinel*

## NACD South Central Meeting...July 26 – 28, 2007

Cherokee Casino and Resort,  
Tulsa, Oklahoma



### **Sponsored by the Oklahoma Association of Conservation Districts**

The Oklahoma Association of Conservation Districts invites you to be our guest at the 2007 South Central National Association of Conservation Districts Regional Meeting. The theme of the meeting is **“Water: Don’t Gamble With Your Future!”** We’ll be welcomed by the Chief of the Cherokee Nation and hear from Tulsa Mayor Kathy Taylor who will discuss the partnerships the city has forged in order to ensure safe drinking water to the metropolitan area. Each of the four states will be presenting information on their current water issues. Other sessions include: Dams in Crisis – the future of the watershed program and current status of the 2007 Farm Bill.

This year we will be offering a separate track for district employees. During an all day workshop on Friday, learn new and exciting methods of delivering the important message of soil and water conservation to children and adults. Come prepared to spend the day participating in water, watershed, and soils activities. Any district employee who attends the South Central meeting will be eligible to participate in a drawing hosted by the Oklahoma Association of Conservation District Employees. The winning individual will receive \$250 to be used for conservation education activities in their district.

On Saturday, participants will take a closer look at protecting Tulsa’s drinking water. Northeastern Oklahoma is a land of lakes and rivers, and we are all familiar with the challenges involved in consistently providing clean, fresh water to the people of Tulsa and other communities. Join us on this tour and see and hear about how the lakes’ water quality is being protected.

Come along on this tour and learn about...

- The origin of Tulsa’s drinking water.
- Activities that take place in our lakes’ watersheds.
- Best management practices that protect water against agricultural non-point source pollutants.
- Steps that can be taken by everyone to protect drinking water for those who live downstream.

Separate tours are planned for the Auxiliary both Friday and Saturday. See the Auxiliary Agenda for more information.

The meeting will be held at the Cherokee Casino and Resort ([www.cherokeecasino.com](http://www.cherokeecasino.com)) in Tulsa, Oklahoma. Come experience the unique style of gaming designed to provide hours of thrilling entertainment. The casino floor boasts 1,500 electronic games as well as 70 card game tables for you to try your hand. The casino isn’t the only exciting aspect of the Cherokee Casino Resort. While visiting, you can enjoy a tee time at the challenging golf course and live music at one of the many entertainment venues.

### **Field Day Gives Students Hands-on Experience**

The Fifth Grade Educational Field Day at the Fort Stockton Intermediate School was held April 27. The Trans-Pecos Soil and Water Conservation District #231 (SWCD) started the field day 17 years ago to give students hands-on experience in agriculture.

The field day was organized by Deborah Smith, secretary for the Trans-Pecos SWCD, and sponsored by the district in cooperation with USDA- NRCS, Texas Cooperative Extension, and Texas Parks and Wildlife Department.

Sandra Braden, volunteer, discussed farm products of Pecos County, including cotton production and the many uses of cotton seed oil. A video was shown of products being made from cotton.

Preston Irwin, NRCS range management specialist, demonstrated soil erosion and the effects of good agricultural practices. Wind erosion and different types of soil were discussed.

Shawn Gray, Texas Parks and Wildlife Department, showed the various wildlife species of Pecos County. He explained about predators and their role in ecology, as well as the food chain.

Darrel Seidel, NRCS district conservationist, discussed grazing systems, range management, and different types of brush management.

Jed Elrod, Pecos County Extension agent, discussed the many uses of products derived from livestock. He talked to students about food, clothing, automotive products, healthcare, and many other uses.

Lynn Loomis, NRCS soil scientist, discussed the importance of soil, the components of soil, and how soil is made.

*By Deborah Smith, Trans-Pecos Soil and Water Conservation District secretary*

#### *Young County Wheat and Conservation Tillage Field Day*

Farmers and ranchers from Young County and surrounding areas came to the Red Top Community Center near Graham, Texas, to discuss wheat and conservation at the Young County Wheat and Conservation Tillage Field Day, May 8, 2007.

The field day was sponsored by the USDA-NRCS, Texas Cooperative Extension, Monsanto Corp., and the Young County Soil and Water Conservation District. Speakers shared market outlooks, new wheat varieties, results from test plots, and minimum/no-till production technique benefits. Also, landowners and producers received presentations about new conservation programs.

Several testimonials were given by no-till and minimum-till producers in Young County, who spoke to the group of producers about the benefits of no-till farming.

“There are trade-offs to be expected when going from conventional to no-till, such as a high fuel bill for a high chemical bill,” said Kirk Shepard, guest speaker and host farmer in Young County. “You have to spray a lot, so if you’re scared of spraying don’t make the switch to no-till.”

Several agency and group speakers discussed conservation topics, including market outlooks for wheat production, updated information on wheat variety trials, over-seeding wheat using a heavy minimum-till drill, new herbicides for no-till producers with application rates and target species. Other NRCS information presented to assist producers and landowners included land management tools, RUSLE2, nutrient management, Continuous Conservation Reserve Program, riparian and pond buffers, grassed waterways, and field borders.

NRCS personnel speaking at the field day were Troy Reinke, NRCS rangeland management specialist in Graham; Ricky Linex, NRCS wildlife biologist in Weatherford; Andy Spencer, NRCS agronomist in Weatherford; Sidney Paulson, NRCS soil scientist and MLRA party leader in Graham; and Jessica Jobe, NRCS soil scientist in Graham. Other field day speakers included Brad Morrison, county Extension agent; Stan Bevers, Extension economics specialist; Gaylon Morgan, Extension state agronomist; Greg Steele, representative for Monsanto Corp.; along with Kirk Shepard, Mark Shepard and Wilson Oatman, all farmers in Young County.

*Story by Troy Reinke  
Rangeland Management Specialist  
Graham, Texas*

## **Upper Llanos SWCD Celebrates 60 Years on the Land**

The Upper Llanos Soil and Water Conservation District (SWCD) in Junction, Texas, recently celebrated its 60th anniversary right where they started: on the land.

To commemorate their six decades of conservation assistance, the SWCD board of directors, along with USDA-NRCS District Conservationist Haley Jo Babb and Kimble County Extension Agent Russell Kott, organized a Range Management

Field Day. More than 100 landowners in Kimble County and surrounding areas attended the event.

The field day involved a tour of the Hagood Ranch, with owners and managers Charles Hagood and Brodie Caudle showcasing their conservation efforts, including brush management, prescribed burning, and rotational grazing.

“If you remove any one of those three components you will limit the effectiveness of the entire operation,” Hagood told tour participants.

The ranch was founded by Hagood’s great-grandfather, W. W. Allen, in 1898. The Hagoods have been addressing overgrowth of cedar (Ashe juniper) since the 1950s. They prefer to cut the cedar trees and then let them lie on the ground for a year or two and then use a prescribed burn to remove the dead debris. In pastures with excess slash on the ground, cool season prescribed burns are an effective way to clean the land without getting too hot and causing adverse damage.

He pointed out that the downed trees allow grass and other plants to grow up in the protected area which provide food and shelter for wildlife.

“Some people think they can’t afford to do brush work on their land,” Hagood said. “In my opinion, you can’t afford not to.

“Even if it costs you \$100/acre to get rid of the cedar, it’s like you are buying your land back,” he explained. “You are reclaiming land that was otherwise unusable. So now you have more productive land. You couldn’t go out and buy that land to increase production around here – it would be too expensive. So for \$100 an acre the increased production is well worth it.”

NRCS wildlife biologist Steve Nelle and NRCS range management specialist Charles Anderson were on hand to discuss how wildlife and livestock can benefit from conservation practices that improve the land.

Bill McMillan, president of Cedar Fiber, spoke about how the cleared cedar can be a source of income when it is sold for use as fence posts, cedar wood chips, and other by-products.

“We have our Bobcat cutting brush in this pasture, as well as a wood-hauling operation taking place at the same time,” Hagood explained at one of the tour stops where extensive cedar shearing was taking place. “We try to sell as much of the big cedar as possible in order to help cut down on labor costs.”

Hagood and Caudle led the tour through a pasture where cedar had been cleared eight years prior. The regrowth was kept in check with prescribed burns about three years after the initial cutting, and then again in February of 2007.

“The burning stimulated growth of shin oak, sumac and redbud,” Hagood said. “These are all good forage plants for our goats and deer. We believe this landscape and plant community is closer to the conditions our great-grandfather saw in the late 1800s.”

After the ranch tour, participants went to the Texas Tech University center in Junction for a lunch and awards presentation.

“It’s great to see so many agriculture people in one room united by one thing: we all care about the land,” said Joe Freeman, Texas State Soil and Water Conservation Board field representative, in his welcoming address.

John Dennis, Kimble County chief appraiser was the keynote speaker, addressing wildlife property tax evaluations and options.

Mark Moseley, NRCS rangeland management specialist and state liaison for the Grazing Lands Conservation Initiative (GLCI), was available to help answer land management questions. He handed out “pasture sticks” to members of the audience during lunch. The pasture sticks, a coordinated project with NRCS, GLCI, the Lower Colorado River Authority and others, are a field tool to help ranchers monitor forage and stocking rates.

After lunch, Steve Nelle had a plant identification station set up for ranchers to test their skills in identifying local plants.

“The Upper Llanos Soil and Water Conservation District is proud to have been a part of land stewardship efforts in this county for the last 60 years,” said Upper Llanos SWCD chairman and local rancher Art Mudge. “We have a lot of people in our area doing some great work on their land that will last for many generations.”

*By Dee Ann Cameron*

## **Elm Fork Multipurpose Site Dedication Ceremony**

Several people joined in a dedication ceremony for Elm Fork 19 multipurpose site in Muenster, Texas, on May 30, 2007. Local sponsors, with technical assistance from the USDA-Natural Resources Conservation Service (NRCS), recently completed the \$11.3 million project that established a structure for a municipal water supply, flood retention, and recreational use.

The site, commonly called Muenster Lake, is part of a system of structures within the Elm Fork of the Trinity River Watershed. Muenster Lake was cost shared between NRCS and the Muenster Water District (MWD). Additional sponsors included the city of Muenster, Cooke County, and Upper Elm-Red Soil and Water Conservation District.

“In every instance, we were always positive moving forward, solving problems, and achieving the interim and long-range goals needed for progress,” said Bob Bauer, president of the MWD. “It was delightful working with NRCS.”

Muenster Lake provides flood control and silt reduction for the Elm Fork Watershed. In addition, the lake provides water for the city of Muenster and many recreational opportunities. The lake covers 309 surface acres with more than 3,500 acre-feet of municipal water supply, and over 400 acre-feet for recreational use.

The project was constructed in two phases with phase one being authorized in March 2001, and phase two being funded in September 2002. The construction of the dam was completed in May 2006 with NRCS funding \$5.9 million and the MWD providing \$5.4 million.

Among those attending the ceremony included Texas Sen. Craig Estes; Jim McGee, aide to U.S. Sen. Kay Bailey Hutchinson; Patricia Puig, aide to U.S. Rep. Mac Thornberry; and Mike Lytle, aide to Texas Rep. Rick Hardcastle. Honorees included Henry Weinzapfel, first president of the MWD, and Celine Dittfurth, board secretary for the MWD.

*By Randy Henry*

## **Gillespie County Landowners Receive Rain & Educational Information**

Spirits were high and smiles were plentiful as a steady rain tapped the tin roof of the show barn at the Gillespie County Fairgrounds in Fredericksburg, Texas, during the Annual Beef and Range Field Day held in May.

Nearly 300 people attended the event, hosted by the Gillespie County Soil and Water Conservation District (SWCD). The educational field day was originally scheduled to be held at the Lewis Ranch, with hosts Jack and Liza Lewis giving a tour of the ranch, showcasing conservation practices they have implemented.

However, due to excessive rainfall, the event was moved indoors to the Gillespie County Fairgrounds. While the location changed, the agenda did not. With welcomed rain dripping off the roof, rancher Liza Lewis gave an oral presentation about their ranching operation and management strategies. Lewis has worked closely with the USDA-NRCS District Conservationist Tom Hammer, based in Fredericksburg, to accomplish management goals such as increased forage production and improved wildlife habitat.

Mike Reagan, Texas Parks and Wildlife Department, presented a program with tips for managing wildlife in the Hill Country. As more landowners are making the transition from traditional agricultural uses on their land to more wildlife emphasis, habitat management is a key item of interest.

Allen Ersch, president of Gillespie Prescribed Burn Association, gave an overview of the association and prescribed burning training being offered. The association was formed in February 2005 with the help of the Gillespie County SWCD and NRCS. Ersch stressed the organization's purpose is to give landowners a safe, economical way to control cedar, prickly pear, and mesquite on their private lands through prescribed burning, and encouraged local landowners to join.

Range management through the use of prescribed fire was addressed by NRCS Rangeland Management Specialist Charles

Anderson. Anderson spoke to the audience about advance planning by adjusting stocking rates to increase fuel load in preparation for a prescribed burn. He also stressed the benefits of applying prescribed burns as an effective tool in an ongoing brush management program.

Anderson led the group through an exercise to help them determine the cost-effectiveness of prescribed burning versus performing more intensive brush management over a 15-year time span. Anderson was able to demonstrate how prescribed burning increased forage production, allowing for higher stocking rates, which, in turn, generated more income with reduced range management costs.

Dr. Michael Masser, fisheries specialist for Texas Cooperative Extension, gave a presentation on pond management to the farmers and ranchers in attendance. Masser was able to visually relate fish habitat in a way that created a better understanding of the needs of bass and other fish common in Hill Country ponds.

The Gillespie County SWCD has been hosting the Annual Beef and Range Field Day since 1979. Hundreds of people have attended the fun and educational event each year.

"I am really encouraged by the number of people here investigating opportunities and seeking information about managing their land," Hammer said, expressing his appreciation to the audience for their interest in the program.

A meal was served following the educational program, with the Gillespie County SWCD awarding generous door prizes which included feed, gift certificates, a weed sprayer, and many more items donated from sponsors in the community. More information on the Gillespie County SWCD's events can be found on their website at [www.gillespiecountyswcd.org](http://www.gillespiecountyswcd.org).

*By Dee Ann Cameron*

## **Exhibits/Events/Video Library**

### **Video Library**

- I. Thirty-seven videos have been checked out since June 1, 2007. (Documentation)

### **Watershed Model**

- I. Watershed Model demonstration by Loren Henley at the Tarleton Teacher Workshop in Stephenville, Texas on June 18, 2007.

### **Exhibit**

- I. Exhibit was presented at the Independent Cattlemen's Association Event in College Station, Texas on June 28-29, 2007.

### **Future Events**

- I. Exhibit will be presented at the Texas Sheep and Goat Raiser's Event by Mel Davis on July 19-21, 2007.

# Conservation Programs

## *Clean Water Act, §319(h) Grant Program*

### **PROJECT MANAGEMENT**

There are currently 66 ongoing 319 projects. The \$20 million provided to these projects through the Clean Water Act, §319(h) Nonpoint Source Grant Program is being utilized for NPS from poultry operations and dairies, runoff of atrazine from cropland, salt cedar, watershed planning, groundwater quality improvement, assessing sources of bacteria, educational programs for the forest industry, and other implementation, education, and assessment projects.

### **FY2007 CWA §319(h) FUNDING ALLOCATION:**

The FY07 CWA §319(h) funding allocation for EPA is \$199 million nationally, down from \$204 million in FY06. EPA is stressing that it is very important that projects meet national load reduction goals, have quantifiable environmental benefits, and meet Program Activity Measures (PAMs).

The TSSWCB's FY07 §319(h) program allocation is \$4,564,900. This is a \$121,250 reduction in funds compared to the FY06 allocation (\$4,686,150).

### **2007 WATER QUALITY PROGRAM PLANNING WORKSHOP:**

On May 17, Aaron Wendt and TJ Helton participated in the 2007 Water Quality Program Planning Workshop. This workshop focused on TSSWCB's, TCEQ's, and EPA's efforts to achieve performance relating to the EPA Strategic Plan and the National Water Program Guidance. In particular, attendees discussed EPA's planning and accountability processes, Program Activity Measures (PAMs), midyear progress towards meeting FY07 PAMs, commitments and measures for FY08 PAMs, unliquidated obligation goals for §319(h) grants, and other related program efforts in Texas.

### **EPA-STATE NPS WATERSHEDS WORKSHOP:**

The EPA-State NPS Watersheds Workshop was held on June 6-7 in Dallas. The purpose of this workshop was to improve watershed-based planning strategies that lead to nonpoint source pollutant reduction and achievement of water quality standards. This meeting will give TSSWCB staff the opportunity to discuss NPS program successes and opportunities with staff from EPA Region 6, TCEQ, and other States including Arkansas, Louisiana, New Mexico, and Oklahoma.

### **FY2006 NONPOINT SOURCE ANNUAL REPORT:**

In order to receive §319(h) funds, the State of Texas must submit a report on the activities of the Texas NPS Program annually. The 2006 Nonpoint Source Annual Report highlights the State's efforts during 2006 to collect data and assess water quality, implement projects that reduce or prevent nonpoint source pollution, and educate and involve the public to improve and maintain the quality of water resources for current and future generations of Texans. The 2006 Annual Report has been completed and submitted to EPA. It is currently available electronically at [www.tsswcb.state.tx.us/managementprogram](http://www.tsswcb.state.tx.us/managementprogram).

## *Water Quality Management Plan Program*

A total of 665 water quality management plans have been certified through the end of the 3rd quarter, FY-07. Districts in the priority areas obligated a total of \$1,672,044.00 of cost-share funds. This represents 85.9% of the total allocation for all the areas. The deadline for obligating funds was April 30, 2007. Funds that were not obligated by this date were reallocated within each priority area by the State Board at their May, 2007 meeting held in Nacogdoches. Seventeen districts received supplemental cost-share allocations in the amount of \$242,207.00.

Districts are making every effort to ensure that FY-05 cost-share funds are used to the fullest extent. Deadline for FY-05 cost-share payments will be the first week of August, 2007.

## ***Poultry Water Quality Management Plans***

Two bills were passed and signed into law during the 80<sup>th</sup> Legislative Session.

**HB 1457:** Removes cooking of poultry mortality for swine food as a method of poultry carcass disposal to be consistent with Section 165.026 of the Texas Agriculture Code, which prohibits feeding of restricted garbage (ie: poultry carcasses) to swine. It also prohibits storage of poultry carcasses on the site of a poultry facility for more than 72 hours unless the carcasses are refrigerated or frozen.

**HB 1719:** Removes the requirement to notify the Texas Commission on Environmental Quality (TCEQ) of burial of animal carcasses if that burial is on land covered by a Water Quality Management Plan certified by TSSWCB that addresses site specific animal mortality burial. Poultry carcasses may only be buried in the event of a major die-off that exceeds 0.3% per day of the total farm inventory and the normal method of disposal must continue to be used.

TCEQ adopted a change to the CAFO rules on September 20, 2006 which removes the requirement for dry litter poultry operations to seek coverage under the CAFO general permit. The rule change also addressed SB1707 regarding exemption of dry-litter poultry facilities with WQMPs from the requirement to obtain an individual permit if in close proximity to sole-source drinking water supplies.

However, although dry litter poultry operations are no longer required to apply for or obtain permit coverage, large farms are still defined as CAFOs, and as such are still required to follow certain requirements of the rules or else be subject to having to obtain permit coverage. To maintain their permit exemption, they must obtain and follow a Water Quality Management Plan certified by TSSWCB in accordance with the schedule provided in SB 1339 and in 31 TAC §523.3 (h). They also must not have discharges of pollutants to waters of the state or U.S.

A new guidance document is available and now posted on the agency website to address additional requirements necessary for CAFO size poultry farms to remain in compliance with state and federal rules and laws.

Current status of poultry WQMPs:

Total existing farms	1375
Farms that currently operate under a certified WQMP	1319 (96%)
Farms not signed-up that were due in 2002, 2003, or 2005	1
Farms that have until January 2008 to obtain a WQMP	15
Farms that requested a WQMP and have plans in various stages of development	37
New farms expected to be built in next 18 months in Waco area with Sanderson Farms.	75

## ***Total Maximum Daily Load (TMDL) Program and Watershed Protection Plan (WPP) Program***

### **Upcoming Activities**

Texas is hosting the 15<sup>th</sup> **National NPS Monitoring Workshop** in August 2007 in Austin. The theme for this EPA-sponsored workshop is *Monitoring for Decision Making*. More information, including a call for papers and posters, is available at the Conference website <http://www.rivers.txstate.edu/NPS07/>.

The TSSWCB and the TCEQ established the joint technical Task Force on Bacteria TMDLs in September 2006 and gave the Task Force members 120 days to report. The 3<sup>rd</sup> draft of the Report was delivered to the Board and Commission via e-mail on January 25, precisely 120 days. The Task Force, and approximately 50 Expert Advisors, held three meetings/teleconferences to develop the Report. All Task Force materials and documents are available at <http://twri.tamu.edu/bacteriatmdl/>. The Recommended Approach for Bacteria TMDL and I-Plan Development section is the heart of the Report. The May 2007 issue of *The Cattleman*, published by Texas and Southwestern Cattle Raisers Association, included an article on the Bacteria TMDL Task Force. The Board and Commission have tentatively scheduled June 29 as a joint work session for action on the Task Force Report.

## **Upcoming Public Meetings (through July 31, 2007)**

- June 29 – Joint TSSWCB/TCEQ Work Session on Bacteria TMDL Task Force (Austin)
- July 12 – Concho River WPP stakeholder meeting (San Angelo)

## ***North Bosque River Restoration Initiative***

### **Dairy Manure Export Support Project**

Funding for the Dairy Manure Export Support Program has been depleted to the point such that the last day to receive reimbursement for hauling was February 28, 2007. Program participants were notified of the deadline at the beginning of February. Final billing for the haulers was due to the DMES Office by March 15, 2007. The final report discussing the program's accomplishments since its inception in October, 2000 should be completed by June.

As of February 28, over 1,093,000 tons of manure have been removed from North Bosque and Leon watershed dairies and transported to commercial composting operations.

## ***Coastal Nonpoint Source Pollution Control Program***

The CCC met in Galveston, Thursday, June 21 at 1:30 p.m. There were no action items on the agenda.

### **CIAP Program**

On April 16, 2007, MMS released the individual CIAP allocation amounts for fiscal years 2007 and 2008. The State of Texas will receive \$48,591,202.09 for fiscal year 2007 and for fiscal year 2008. Of that amount, \$31,584,281.36 will be allocated to the state and \$17,006,920.73 will be allocated directly to the 18 coastal counties. The MMS originally estimated that Texas would receive between \$55 and \$70 million based on revenues generated in the federal 2005 fiscal year. Due to the severe storm events in the Gulf of Mexico during the 2006 fiscal year, particularly Hurricanes Katrina and Rita, the outer Continental Shelf revenues generated off the Texas coast were significantly lower in 2006 than expected.

Before any funds can be disbursed to the state or the counties, a state CIAP plan must be approved by MMS. This plan will include the recommended projects that have been submitted for funding. The CIAP staff is currently preparing the draft plan to be presented for discussion and approval at a Coastal Land Advisory Board (CLAB) meeting to be held in the near future. The CLAB-approved draft plan will be submitted to the Office of Governor for final approval before being posted in the Texas Register for 30 days. After public comments are reviewed, the state plan will be presented at a second CLAB meeting. Upon approval by the CLAB and the Office of the Governor, the plan will be submitted to MMS, who has 90 days to review and approve/disapprove the plan. After the state plan is approved by MMS, grant applications for each selected project will be submitted to MMS for funding approval. The MMS will not begin reviewing grant applications until October 2007.

### **CMP Grant Program**

Information on Grant Cycle 13 (FY 09) is now available online.

<http://www.glo.state.tx.us/coastal/grants/cycle13.html>

The deadline for pre-proposals is June 20, 2007 by 5:00 p.m. (Submission of the pre-proposal is optional and is only necessary if written comments are desired.) The full application is due October 10, 2007 by 5:00 p.m.

## **Flood Control Dams**

The National Watershed Coalition will conduct a workshop "Operation and Maintenance/Sponsor Responsibility 101" workshop in Decatur, September 24 – 26, 2007. The workshop will be conducted in cooperation with Wise County, Wise County WCID #1, Texas Association of Watershed Sponsors, the Texas State Soil and Water Conservation Board, and the USDA-NRCS. The workshop costs \$160. Space is limited so interested attendees should register early.

Further information on the workshop may be found at

## BRUSH CONTROL PROGRAM STATUS REPORT

### BACKGROUND:

The 79<sup>th</sup> Legislature continued funding for the State Brush Control Program by providing \$1,874,176.00 in General Revenue Funds in FY07. These funds were directed to be used for continuation of brush control projects designated by the Soil and Water Conservation Board.

<b>Watershed</b>	<b>2007 Allocated Funds</b>	<b>Unobligated Funds (\$)</b>	<b>Treated Acres</b>
<i>North Concho</i>	50,000.00	20.00	328,802.14
<i>Pedernales</i>	200,000.00	\$ 18,222.55	73,375.08
<i>Twin Buttes</i>	500,000.00	\$ 0.20	275,765.57
<i>Lake Ballinger</i>	50,000.00	\$ 0.00	8314.7
<i>Oak Creek Lake</i>	50,000.00	\$0.00	16,404
<i>Pecos (SaltCedar)</i>	150,000.00	\$ 18,914.46	7,274.15
<i>Upper Colorado(SaltCedar)</i>	Combined w/Pecos	Combined w/Pecos	824.32
<i>Hubbard Creek(SaltCedar)</i>	60,000.00	\$ 0.00	0
<i>Lake Arrowhead</i>	100,000.00	100,000.00	0
<i>Nueces River</i>	100,000.00	0.00	0

\*The table listed above represents General Revenue 07 money in the unobligated funds column

\*Total acres treated represents treated acres since the beginning of each project

- Provided the following SWCD with Brush Program Updates or Brush Program Assistance

#### **Area 1 Districts**

Dawson County SWCD  
Upper Colorado SWCD

#### **Area 2 Districts**

North Concho River SWCD  
Middle Concho SWCD

Nolan County SWCD  
Eldorado-Divide SWCD

Tom Green County SWCD  
Mitchell County SWCD  
Runnels SWCD  
Middle Clear Fork SWCD  
Trans Pecos SWCD  
Howard County SWCD

Pedernales SWCD  
Gillispie County SWCD  
Pecos County SWCD  
Midland SWCD  
Sandhills SWCD

**Area 3**

McMullen County SWCD  
Caldwell/ Travis SWCD

**Area 5**

Archer County SWCD  
Lower Clear Fork/Brazos SWCD

## More Information on Programs

For more information on any of these programs, refer to our semiannual report on the web:

<http://www.tsswcb.state.tx.us/reports.html>