

# TEXAS STATE SOIL AND WATER CONSERVATION BOARD

## Soil & Water Conservation Districts and Agricultural & Silvicultural Nonpoint Source Pollution Abatement



*Soil & Water  
Conservation  
Districts and Rural  
Landowners  
Protecting Texas'  
Water Quality  
Through Wise and  
Productive Use of  
Natural Resources.*

TEXAS STATE  
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Nonpoint Source Pollution from agricultural and silvicultural (forestry) activities is currently under increased scrutiny from regulatory agencies and urban interests. It has never been more important for rural landowners to be protective of natural resources and conscientious of the impact of their activities. Likewise, strong and informed Soil and Water Conservation Districts have never been more needed to set examples and provide assistance. Discussions of expanding the regulations pertaining to stormwater permitting, animal feeding operations, and nutrient criteria are more prevalent than ever. Most of these eventualities are discussed as special measures for impaired watersheds. However, the need for such actions can be prevented through voluntary programs when paired with enhanced educational programs. Texas Soil and Water Conservation Districts are the ideal mechanism for preventing extreme measures from infringing on rural landowners' ability to utilize our natural resources.



## ***Why Should Rural Landowners be Concerned About Nonpoint Source (NPS) Pollution?***

**Urban Texans pay attention to rural Texans when it comes to water quality.** The manner in which landowners use their private property and associated natural resources can have a detrimental impact on the quality of an urban areas drinking and recreational sources of water. When rural Texas is not pro-active in protecting water quality from agricultural and silvicultural activities, it comes back to them in the form of regulation. **The State of Texas continuously performs monitoring to ensure water quality standards are met and all Texas waterbodies meet their designated uses.** When water quality standards are not met, the State is required to develop and implement **Total Maximum Daily Loads (TMDLs)**. TMDLs are quantitative limits placed on the amount of a certain pollutants when they are found to be the parameter of concern. **TMDLs can be enforced by state and federal regulations that can sometimes lead to limitations and restrictions on the use of private property and its natural resources.**

## ***In Texas, SWCDs are the First Line of Defense Against NPS Pollution.***

**The Texas Legislature has designated the TSSWCB as the lead agency for abating NPS pollution from agricultural and silvicultural activities.** Because the TSSWCB is an extension of SWCDs, and because SWCDs are truly the smallest and closest form of government to rural landowners, **SWCDs are perfectly positioned to be the driving force behind NPS pollution prevention.** No other organization or forms of government has the potential to reach as many rural landowners as SWCDs.

## ***How can SWCDs Take Advantage of their Ideal Situation?***

SWCDs can increase their ability to abate NPS pollution by offering **strong conservation planning programs.** The existing **certified water quality management plan (WQMP) program** and other programs offered to SWCDs through their partnership with the **United States Department of Agriculture-Natural Resources Conservation Service** are examples of such programs and should be promoted, strengthened, and expanded to assist rural landowners across Texas. Incentives and cost-sharing programs such as the **TSSWCB Senate Bill 503 Program** and the **NRCS Environmental Quality Incentives Program (EQIP)** also serve as needed sources of financial assistance to ensure rural landowners have the funding to properly implement best management practices. **The TSSWCB can assist SWCDs in finding available funding for carrying out special educational programs and further financial assistance for implementing management measures.**

## ***Taking the Lead for the Future!***

**SWCDs can take the lead and set a strong example by getting government's and rural landowner's attention.** Participating in water quality stakeholder groups, hosting NPS seminars for students, and producing informational materials are just a few examples of ways SWCDs can become involved. **SWCDs can also be very effective by serving as a vehicle for landowners to communicate with their elected officials.**



***The TSSWCB will provide information and assistance on law, policy, and sources of technical and financial assistance to any SWCD or landowner in Texas. See reverse side for contact information.***