



TEXAS STATE SOIL & WATER CONSERVATION BOARD

Program News and Activities

APRIL 2014

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 about specific programs or projects please don't hesitate to call your local field representative or our state headquarters.

REX ISOM

Executive Director

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UPCOMING STATE BOARD WORK SESSION AND MEETING

The State Board has scheduled a Work Session on **Wednesday, May 14, 2014** and a formal State Board Meeting on **Thursday, May 15, 2014**. More information is available at <http://www.tsswcb.texas.gov/boardmeetings>, or by contacting Karen Preece at (254) 773-2250, ext. 245 or kpreece@tsswcb.texas.gov.

BUDGET AND ACCOUNTING

- Manual of Fiscal Operations for SWCDs has been updated and mailed to all districts.
- April 1st was the deadline for submitting a SWCD Biennial Budget Request for the 2016-2017 Biennium.
- May 15th is the deadline for claiming two-thirds of your Matching Fund Allocation for FY 2014.

For more budget and accounting information, contact Kenny Zajicek at (254) 773-2250 ext. 236 or kzajicek@tsswcb.texas.gov

HUMAN RESOURCES

TSSWCB currently has 3 positions available at this time.

- Engineering Technician-Hale Center Regional Office
- Program Specialist (Flood Control)- Primarily Central, North Central and East Texas
- Administrative Assistant-Hale Center Regional Office

For additional information or to download an application, visit <https://www.tsswcb.texas.gov/employment>.

SPECIAL PROJECTS

The TSSWCB Special Projects department provides coordination for the Annual State Meeting of Soil and Water Conservation District (SWCD) Directors, facilitates open government functions required by the Texas Administrative Procedures Act, and directs the completion of other mandatory agency responsibilities such as publishing the agency's Semi-Annual Report and coordinating rule-making functions.

Annual State Meeting of SWCD Directors
Mark your calendars for October 27-29, 2014 and plan on attending the 74th Annual State Meeting held in Galveston.

Reservations open May 1st. Hotels being used for the meeting this year are the Hilton (877-425-4753); the San Luis (800-455-0090); and the Holiday Inn (800-Holiday).

Please ask for the Texas Soil And Water reservation block. The room rate for each hotel is \$91.00 single/\$125.00 double

Please check our website for a map of Galveston and the hotels.

The Texas State Soil and Water Conservation Board will be celebrating its 75th Anniversary and we are plan and on an outstanding meeting.

PUBLIC INFORMATION AND EDUCATION

2014 Youth Range Workshop

The 60th consecutive annual workshop will be held on June 22 - June 27, 2014. Purpose of the Workshop is to recognize outstanding youth, develop leadership skills, and provide advanced training to 4-H and FFA youth interested in practical range ecology, ranch and natural resource management. The workshop will be conducted at the Texas Tech University – Junction, located in Junction, Texas. A total of 40 youth will be accepted to the 2014 Workshop.

The workshop curriculum is structured to provide knowledge and understanding in the following areas; land stewardship, range ecology, plant growth, plant-soil-water relations, primary and secondary plant succession, watershed management, livestock and wildlife needs, tools of range and natural resource management, prescribed burning, the impact of management decisions on the range resource, and the landowner.

Hands-on activities provide curriculum reinforcement, visual examples and opportunities to learn skills in plant identification, plant collecting, plant species composition, total resource planning, stocking rate determinations, estimating forage standing crops, and estimating brush densities and ecological trend. Special sessions on water and range health provide the participants with skills for teaching youth and adults in their home communities. A media program is conducted which encourages youth participants to use and train others on what they have learned. Extending the knowledge learned or gained to others is one of the highest goals of this program.

Participants are exposed to actual land management practices and decisions through

field trips to Menard and Mason County ranches and the Kerr Wildlife Management Area. The field trips bring out facts on decision-making, goals of land ownership and the responses of vegetation to practices conducted for livestock, wildlife and range restoration.

A brochure about the Youth Range Workshop is available on the web. The web site for the announcement, brochure and application can also be found at

www.rangelands.org/texas/youtheducation.htm

Conservation News

Conservation News is a collection of readily available current news and information regarding natural resource issues. TSSWCB periodically distributes Conservation News via email to those interested. To subscribe, send an email to conservation-news-subscribe@tsswcb.texas.gov. Conservation News is also available at <http://www.tsswcb.texas.gov/news>.

Conservation Video Library

There are over 200 conservation-related videos available; the 2011 catalog can be downloaded at <http://www.tsswcb.texas.gov/infoed/videolibrary>. No rental fees are assessed to those wishing to borrow videos from the library.

Ordering a Video

Select a video from the Conservation Video Catalog, then contact Loren Warrick at lwarrick@tsswcb.texas.gov to check it out. The Association of Texas SWCDs will pay the first transit postage costs to mail the video(s) to the requester. Postage for returning the video(s) will be the responsibility of the borrower. All videos must be insured upon return.

TEXAS NONPOINT SOURCE MANAGEMENT PROGRAM

The federal Clean Water Act (CWA) requires states to develop a program to protect the quality of water resources from the adverse effects of nonpoint source (NPS) water pollution. The *Texas NPS Management Program* is the State's

comprehensive strategy for addressing NPS pollution. The program publication is updated every five years. The most recent revision was submitted by the Governor in June 2012 and thusly approved by the U.S. Environmental Protection Agency (EPA). The *Texas NPS Management Program* is jointly administered by the TSSWCB and the Texas Commission on Environmental Quality (TCEQ).

Implementation of the *Texas NPS Management Program* involves partnerships among many organizations. With the extent and variety of NPS issues across Texas, cooperation across political boundaries is essential. SWCDs are vital partners in working with landowners to implement best management practices (BMPs) that prevent and abate agricultural and silvicultural NPS water pollution.

More information on the *Texas NPS Management Program* is available at <http://www.tsswcb.texas.gov/managementprogram>.

Nonpoint Source Grant Program

FY2009 – FY2013 CWA §319(h) Grant Status

There are currently 34 on-going §319(h) grant-funded projects addressing a wide array of agricultural and silvicultural NPS issues. Unliquidated federal funds for these 34 on-going projects total approximately \$10.7 million and are primarily being used to implement BMPs to abate NPS pollution from animal feeding operations, grazing livestock operations and row crop operations; provide technical assistance through SWCDs for the development of WQMPs; provide financial incentives for implementing certain BMPs prescribed in WQMPs; support various targeted educational programs; develop and implement Watershed Protection Plans (WPP); and implement the NPS portion of Total Maximum Daily Load (TMDL) Implementation Plans (I-Plan).

FY2012 – FY2014 State Grant Status

There are currently 15 on-going projects addressing an array of agricultural and silvicultural NPS issues. Unliquidated state funds for these 15 on-going projects total approximately \$2 million and are primarily being used to implement agricultural NPS components of TMDL

I-Plans; conduct Recreational Use Attainability Analyses (RUAA); support increased analytical infrastructure at public bacterial source tracking (BST) laboratories; demonstrate innovative BMPs on animal feeding operations and grazing lands; and collect and analyze water quality data for watersheds with impaired waterbodies.

Water Quality Coordination Activities

Bandera Water Series

On March 22, 2014, over 65 people attended the Bandera Water Series that featured the Texas Watershed Steward (TWS) and the Texas Well Owner Network (TWON) programs. The first portion of the Water Series, TWS, focused on water quality issues in the Medina River, discussed what it means to be a watershed steward, watershed impairments, managing urban and rural lands through the use of BMPs, and how to get involved in community driven watershed protection and management. Attendees also learned about groundwater resources in the area through presentations from the TWON, a program created to aide Texas residents who depend on household wells for their water needs.

Coastal Bend, Bays and Estuaries Program

The 75 miles of estuarine environment along the Texas Coastal Bend, including Aransas Bay, Corpus Christi Bay, Baffin Bay and the Upper Laguna Madre, are of national importance and, through the federal CWA §320, are included in the National Estuary Program administered by the EPA. The Bays Council is the stakeholder advisory group that coordinates the implementation of the *Coastal Bend Bays Plan*, which is a Comprehensive Conservation and Management Plan developed under the auspices of the National Estuary Program. The TSSWCB is a named member of the Water and Sediment Quality Implementation Team.

More information is available at <http://www.cbbep.org/>. The implementation of the *Coastal Bend Bays Plan* affects agricultural operations in watersheds that drain to these estuaries in Refugio, Bee, McMullen, Live Oak, Jim Wells, Duval, Brooks, Kenedy, Kleberg, Nueces, San Patricio, and Aransas Counties.

Water Quality Planning and Implementation

STATE DISTRICT I

E.V. Spence Reservoir

Impairment: Salinity
Mechanism: TMDL, I-Plan
Lead: TCEQ

On March 26, 2014, TSSWCB SRM staff [Jana Lloyd] attended an Implementation Evaluation meeting for a TMDL for Stream Segment 1426, Colorado River below E.V Spence Reservoir in Bronte. Discussion centered on finalizing the update to the I-plan and approval of the I-plan by the coordination committee.

More information is available at <http://www.tceq.texas.gov/waterquality/tmdl/04-spence.html>. This TMDL and I-Plan affect agricultural operations in the E.V. Spence Reservoir watershed in Borden, Coke, Howard, Mitchell, Nolan, Scurry, and Sterling Counties.

STATE DISTRICT II

South and North Llano Rivers

Impairment: None
Mechanism: WPP
Lead: TSSWCB
Project: "Development of the Upper Llano River Watershed Protection Plan", Texas Water Resources Institute; Federal \$666,167/ External \$447,239

On April 8, 2014, TSSWCB SRM staff [Jana Lloyd, Mitch Conine] attended the Lower Nueces River Watershed Partnership Stakeholder meeting in Corpus Christi. The meeting centered upon results from the OSSF inventory project and appointing a committee for the OSSF management plan. Other updates included a review of the historical water quality, City of Corpus Christi water operations and upcoming workshops across the watershed.

More information is available at <http://southllano.org/>. This project has the potential to affect farming and livestock operations in the South Llano River watershed in

Edwards, Kerr, Kimble, Menard, Real and Sutton Counties.

Other State District III Projects

Project: "Recreational Use Attainability Analysis for San Miguel Creek", Nueces River Authority: State \$128,571

On April 10, 2014 TSSWCB SRM staff [Wesley Gibson] participated in a public meeting in Pearsall to discuss conducting a RUAA on San Miguel Creek. Presentations at the meeting focused on the components of a RUAA and the timeline to complete the effort. Access to sites along the creek for field surveys was also discussed with the landowners. More information on this RUAA is available at <http://www.nueces-ra.org/>

STATE DISTRICT IV

Cedar Bayou

Impairment: Bacteria
Concerns: Macroinvertebrate Community, Dissolved Oxygen, Nutrients
Mechanism: WPP
Lead: TSSWCB
Project: "Development of a Watershed Protection Plan for Cedar Bayou", Houston-Galveston Area Council; Federal \$804,000/ External \$353,876

On April 9, 2014, TSSWCB SRM staff [Ashley Wendt] attended the Trinity Bay SWCD #434 meeting in Winnie. TSSWCB and H-GAC staff provided updates to District Directors on the development of the Cedar Bayou Watershed Protection Plan. Feedback was solicited on the animal numbers that are being used in the modeling portion of the project which provides the scientific basis for the WPP.

More information is available at <http://www.cedarbayouwatershed.com>. This WPP affects farming and livestock operations in the Cedar Bayou watershed in Harris, Liberty, and Chambers Counties.

Double Bayou

Impairment: Bacteria, Dissolved Oxygen

Mechanism: WPP
Lead: TSSWCB
Project: "Development of a Watershed Protection Plan for Double Bayou", Houston Advanced Research Center; Federal \$1,023,614/ External \$388,149

On March 18, 2014, TSSWCB SRM staff [Brian Koch] attended a Double Bayou Watershed Partnership meeting in Double Bayou. This meeting was held to update stakeholders on the results of the workgroup meetings that were held in February and seek approval to add them to the WPP. The workgroups focused on potential BMPs for pollution sources identified previously by stakeholders. Additionally, presentations by Texas A&M AgriLife Extension on BMPs for grazing cattle and failing septic systems were given.

More information is available at <http://www.tsswcb.texas.gov/watersheds#doublebayou>. This WPP has the potential to affect agricultural operations in the Double Bayou watershed in Chambers and Liberty Counties.

Other State District IV Projects

Project: "Continued Restoration of the Coastal Prairie Wetland at Sheldon Lake State Park", Texas A&M AgriLife Extension Service – Sea Grant Program; Federal \$404,204/ External \$235,548

On April 10, 2014, TSSWCB SRM staff [Ashley Wendt, Brian Koch] attended a Wetland Field Day at Sheldon Lake State Park in Houston. The field day provided attendees the opportunity to learn about the unique methods used at this site for wetland restoration and the benefits it provides to park goers. Presentations were given in the morning by Texas A&M AgriLife Extension Service, Texas Parks and Wildlife Department and Ducks Unlimited on Prairie Wetland Restoration and specifically, the restoration methodology used at Sheldon Lake State Park. A field tour followed in the afternoon, which included a walk-through of the wetland restoration areas and concluded with a view from the new observation tower.

Upcoming Public Meetings

- May 6, 2014 – Gulf Restoration Partnerships Meeting (Brownsville)
- May 8, 2014 – Plum Creek Watershed Partnership Meeting (Lockhart)
- May 8, 2014 – Cedar Bayou Watershed Riparian Workshop (Mont Belvieu)
- May 9, 2014 – Gulf Restoration Partnerships Meeting (Baytown)
- May 15, 2014 – Lampasas River Watershed Partnership Meeting (Lampasas)
- May 22, 2014 – Feral Hog Workshop, Blanco County (Johnson City)
- May 22, 2014 – Texas Well Owner Network Training, San Jacinto River (Conroe)
- May 22, 2014 – Texas Watershed Stewards Workshop, Lavaca-Navidad Rivers (Victoria)
- May 23, 2014 – Feral Hog Workshop, Geronimo and Alligator Creeks (Seguin)

WATER SUPPLY ENHANCEMENT PROGRAM

The 83rd Legislature continued funding for the Water Supply Enhancement Program by providing \$2,135,413 in General Revenue Funds in FY2014.

Staff has begun implementing HB 1808 and the Sunset Commission's recommendations.

The TSSWCB collaborates with SWCDs, and other local, regional, state, and federal agencies to identify watersheds across the state where it is feasible to implement brush control in order to enhance water supplies. WSEP staff attended several SWCD board meetings to discuss

implementation of WSEP projects: Kendall 216, Kerr County 217, Pedernales 218, Gillespie County 220, Nueces-Frio Sabinal 221, Upper Nueces-Frio 238, Comal-Guadalupe 306, and Pecan Bayou 553. Ongoing geospatial analysis of FY2014 WSEP project proposals is used to determine the highest yielding areas.

WSEP staff attended a variety of meetings to discuss water supply enhancement related issues. Staff attended the following Texas Water Development Board Regional Water Planning Group meetings: Region G, Region J, Region L, and Region N. Also, staff conducted a WSEP Science Advisory Committee meeting in Austin and attended a planning meeting called by Aquifer Group, LLC with Texas Parks and Wildlife Department, Texas Tech University, and Texas Forest Service in Junction.

In addition, WSEP staff provided assistance to Bandera SWCD with documentation, shapes files, and GIS training. Staff also consulted with HDR Engineering, Inc. to develop an engineering contract to evaluate brush control in Gonzales County as a Water Management Strategy for the Region L Water Planning Group, and assisted the San Antonio River Authority with WSEP activities.

Next, WSEP staff consulted with U.S. Geological Survey to review and discuss the effects of huisache control on water quantity in Victoria County. Staff also attended the Texas Invasive Plant and Pest Conference in Port Aransas, and presented information on the WSEP and the agency's salt cedar control efforts.

WSEP staff published and distributed the WSEP 2013 Annual Report available at <http://www.tsswcb.texas.gov/reports#wsep>, and developed a draft WSEP Operations Manual that when finalized will provide detailed guidance to program participants on implementing the program.

FLOOD CONTROL DAM PROGRAMS

The Texas State Soil and Water Conservation Board (TSSWCB) is appropriated general

revenue by the Texas Legislature to provide grants to the sponsors of flood control dams for operation, maintenance, repair, and rehabilitation. The TSSWCB administers an Operation and Maintenance (O&M) Grant Program and a Structural Repair Grant Program, both of which are administered according to rules adopted by the State Board in 31TAC529. The rules for these programs specify which flood control dams are eligible for funding, the entities that are eligible to apply and receive funding, and the conditions under which a grant must be administered, matched, and reported.

For FY2013, \$2,050,997 was allocated to 69 dam sponsors to conduct O&M activities on flood control dams. Contracts were signed with all 69 entities, and funds are available for use by sponsors through June 30, 2015.

Staff is in the final stages of contracting the Dalworth Soil and Water Conservation District to conduct a major repair on Mountain Creek, Site 10, in Ellis County using FY2014 funds. On December 3, 2013, sponsors were notified that the TSSWCB is seeking applications for structural repair projects on flood control dams in accordance with Texas Administrative Code, Chapter 529, Subchapter B.

The TSSWCB received six applications addressing 15 dams for structural repair projects. Applications that were submitted for FY 2010, FY 2011 and FY 2013 repair projects that did not receive funding will also be considered for FY 2014. Staff has ranked the applications and onsite evaluations of six dams have been conducted. Staff is currently working with NRCS, the contracted program engineer, to develop more accurate cost estimates for each application. As cost estimates are completed, staff will work with sponsors to determine which of the applications will develop into repair projects.

For more information on these programs, please visit the TSSWCB's website at:
<http://www.tsswcb.texas.gov/en/floodcontrol>

Monthly Program News and Activities is published by the TSSWCB for use by Texas SWCD Directors. If you have any questions regarding its contents, or have information you would like to see in a future issue, please call (254) 773-2250.



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Established in 1939, the TSSWCB administers Texas' soil and water conservation law and delivers coordinated natural resource conservation programs to agricultural producers through the State's 216 individual SWCDs. The agency is governed by a seven-member State Board composed of two Governor appointees and five individuals elected from across Texas by 1,080 Directors of local SWCDs. The TSSWCB is the lead state agency for planning, implementing, and managing programs for preventing and abating agricultural and silvicultural (forestry) nonpoint sources of water pollution; administers a water supply enhancement program through the targeted control of brush species in areas in need of water conservation; provides operation, maintenance, and structural repair grant funds to local government sponsors of the State's network of 2,000 flood control dams; and facilitates the Texas Invasive Species Coordinating Committee.

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