



TEXAS STATE SOIL & WATER CONSERVATION BOARD

Program News and Activities

DECEMBER 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 tentatively scheduled a Work Session on **Wednesday, January 21, 2015** and a formal State Board Meeting on **Thursday, January 22, 2015**. 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

- **Financial Statements**
 - December 31st is the deadline for submitting completed Reviews and Audits.

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

TSSWCB 75th Anniversary

Staff is beginning to prepare an open house at the Capitol for March 3 to commemorate the agency's 75th anniversary. This will be in conjunction with the Association's Committee of 100 meeting with legislators and luncheon.

SPECIAL PROJECTS

Mark your calendars for October 26-28, 2015 and plan on attending the 75th Annual State Meeting held in Corpus Christi.

Program Development Workshop

Planning is underway for the annual Program Development Workshop for district directors, district employees and select NRCS district conservationists. The workshop is scheduled for February 24-25 in Temple at the Hilton Garden Inn. Recently appointed or elected directors were sent a letter of invitation during the first week in December. On December 18, a letter of invitation will be sent to all districts opening the workshop to any director or district employee interested in attending.

Soil Stewardship Public Speaking Contest

The 2015 Guideline Packet for the Soil Stewardship Public Speaking Contest has been sent to the Texas FFA state office and to all SWCDs. The theme for the 2015 contest is "From the Era of the Dust Bowl to the Present: Commemorating 75 Years of Soil and Water Conservation.

The theme will continue a celebration of the founding of the Texas State Soil and Water Conservation Board and soil and water conservation districts.

WAY Contest Manual

The Wildlife Alliance for Youth (WAY) Technical Review Committee met on December 9th to edit and update the Wildlife and Recreation Management Study Guide used in training FFA and 4-H members for competition in the wildlife contests.

The revised manual will be presented to the Texas FFA for approval at their summer conference. Changes being made to the new manual will then be in effect for the next five years.

WATER QUALITY MANAGEMENT PLAN PROGRAM

With the enactment of Senate Bill 503 in 1993, the Texas Legislature designated the Texas State Soil and Water Conservation Board (TSSWCB) the lead agency in the state for the abatement, management, and prevention of nonpoint source pollution from agricultural or silvicultural sources. Additionally, the Legislature authorized the agency to administer a certified water quality management plan (WQMP) program, complete with a cost-share program to incentivize participation and offset the cost of implementing soil and water land improvement measures, for lands within the state. While the TSSWCB makes the program available on a statewide basis, the State Board approves priorities based on activity and geography to target the cost-share incentive funding to the areas of the state that exhibit the most need for nonpoint source pollution abatement.

The purpose of cost-share funding is to provide an incentive to landowners or operators to install soil and water conservation land improvement measures consistent with the purpose of controlling erosion, conserving water, and/or protecting water quality. Rule requires this be done in accordance with a water quality management plan certified by the State Board.

At the beginning of each month the regional Offices conducted a ranking exercise to rank all Requests for Cost-Share Incentive Funding. Regional office staff is working with those producers who ranked out, to develop a certified WQMP. Once the WQMP is certified an application for Cost-Share Incentive funding is completed. This application obligates funding to

that producer to be used to implement Best Management Practices.

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

FY2010 – FY2014 CWA §319(h) Grant Status

There are currently 38 on-going §319(h) grant-funded projects addressing a wide array of agricultural and silvicultural NPS issues. Unliquidated federal funds for these 38 on-going projects total approximately \$11 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).

FY2013 – FY2015 State Grant Status

There are currently 21 on-going projects addressing an array of agricultural and silvicultural NPS issues. Unliquidated state funds for these 21 on-going projects total approximately \$3 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.

Coastal Nonpoint Source Pollution Control Program

Background

The Texas Coastal Management Program (CMP) was created to coordinate state, local, and federal programs for the management of Texas coastal resources. The CMP improves the management of the State's coastal resources to ensure the long-term ecological and economic productivity of the coast. The CMP focuses on five primary issues of concern to coastal communities – coastal hazards; wetland protection; water quality and quantity; dune protection; and shoreline access. The program brings in federal Coastal Zone Management Act (CZMA) funds to Texas to implement projects and program activities for a wide variety of purposes. The Texas General Land Office (GLO) and the Land Commissioner are responsible for coordinating activities associated with the CMP. The Coastal Coordination Advisory Committee (CCAC), established by the Texas Legislature, advises the Land Commissioner on matters related to implementation of the CMP; the TSSWCB is a statutorily-authorized member of the CCAC.

The GLO is charged with adopting uniform goals and policies to guide decision-making by all entities regulating or managing natural resource use within the Texas coastal area. The GLO

reviews significant actions taken or authorized by state agencies and subdivisions of state government that may adversely affect coastal natural resources to determine consistency with CMP goals and policies. In addition, the GLO oversees the CMP Grants Program.

The federal Coastal Zone Act Reauthorization Amendments (CZARA) §6217, requires each State with an approved CMP to develop a federally approvable program to control coastal NPS pollution. The National Oceanic and Atmospheric Administration (NOAA) and the EPA jointly administer §6217 at the federal level. In Texas, the TSSWCB and the TCEQ hold primary responsibility for the implementation of the *Texas Coastal NPS Pollution Control Program*.

More information on the CMP is available at <http://www.glo.texas.gov/what-we-do/caring-for-the-coast/grants-funding/cmp/index.html>.

CMP Grant Program

Through the CMP, GLO awards approximately \$1.8 million of the federal §306/§306A coastal management grant funds received from NOAA to local governments and other entities along the coast for planning and implementation of projects that address environmental problems affecting the coastal area and that promote sustainable economic development.

On December 4, 2014, TSSWCB SRM staff [Brian Koch] attended a Coastal Management Program Cycle #20 Review Team meeting in Austin. This meeting was held to review the scores of the Cycle #20 grants for the CMP. There were 37 proposals submitted, and project ideas ranged from beach and habitat restoration projects to water quantity and quality to beach access and shoreline improvement.

More information on the CMP grant program can be found at <http://www.glo.texas.gov/what-we-do/caring-for-the-coast/grants-funding/cmp/index.html>.

Water Quality Planning and Implementation

STATE DISTRICT IV

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 November 18, 2014, TSSWCB SRM staff [Brian Koch] attended a Double Bayou Watershed Partnership meeting in Double Bayou. This meeting was held to present water quality data that has been collected over the past year. Bacteria, nutrients and dissolved oxygen (DO) parameters were collected as part of the sampling effort, and the results and importance from this sampling were explained to the stakeholders. Next steps for the Partnership are to select best management practices (BMPs) to help address the potential pollutant sources in the watershed.

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.

Lake Houston

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

The Bacteria Implementation Group (BIG) is focused on implementing 72 bacteria TMDLs in the greater Houston area, including Lake Houston, Buffalo and Whiteoak Bayous, Clear Creek and others. The BIG is responsible for receiving input, establishing workgroups, facilitating communications, developing recommendations, and providing oversight in the development of the I-Plan designed to achieve the load reductions called for in these TMDLs.

On December 8, 2014, TSSWCB SRM staff [Brian Koch] attended a BIG Agriculture and Animals Workgroup meeting in Shenandoah. This meeting was held to gather information for the BIG annual update, which will be presented in May 2015. Updates will include implementation of conservation practices on agriculture land, workshops, and other education and outreach focused on bacteria reduction.

More information on the greater Houston area Bacteria Implementation Group (BIG) is available at <http://www.h-gac.com/community/water/tmdl/BIG/default.aspx>. More information on the Lake Houston TMDLs is available at <http://www.tceq.texas.gov/waterquality/tmdl/82-lakehouston.html>. These TMDLs affect livestock operations in the Lake Houston watershed in Grimes, Harris, Liberty, Montgomery, San Jacinto, Walker and Waller Counties.

STATEWIDE PROJECTS (NOT WATERSHED SPECIFIC)

Project: "Continued Statewide Delivery of the Texas Watershed Steward Program", Texas A&M AgriLife Extension Service; Federal \$417,398/ External \$72,033

A Texas Watershed Steward workshop took place on December 4, 2014 in Corpus Christi. Thirty-nine people attended the workshop that was sponsored by the Texas A&M AgriLife Extension Service and TSSWCB, in coordination with Coastal Bend Bays Foundation and Del Mar College. The training included an overview of water quality and watershed management in Texas as well as current efforts to help improve and protect Oso Creek and Oso Bay. Attendees also learned about community-driven watershed protection and management. More information on the Texas Watershed Steward Program is available at <http://tw.s.tamu.edu/>.

Upcoming Public Meetings

- January 9, 2015 – Texas Watershed Steward Workshop, Mill Creek
- January 15, 2015 – Cedar Bayou Watershed Partnership Meeting (Baytown)
- January 21, 2015 – Texas Groundwater Protection Committee (Austin)
- January 22, 2015 – Texas Watershed Coordinator Roundtable (San Antonio)
- January 26, 2015 – Mill Creek Stakeholder Meeting (Bleiberville)

WATER SUPPLY ENHANCEMENT PROGRAM

In order to help meet the State's critical water conservation needs and ensure availability of water supplies, the TSSWCB administers the WSEP to increase available surface and ground water through the selective control of brush species that are detrimental to water conservation (e.g., juniper, mesquite, saltcedar). The 83rd Texas Legislature continued funding for the WSEP by providing \$2,135,413 in general revenue funds for FY2015.

- WSEP staff assisted SWCD Directors with WSEP issues at board meetings for the Kendall SWCD #216, Kerr County SWCD #217, Pedernales SWCD #218, Gillespie County SWCD #220, Bandera SWCD #229, Upper Nueces-Frio SWCD #238, Comal-Guadalupe SWCD #306, and Gonzales County SWCD #338.
- WSEP staff assisted Conservation Planners in the Upper Guadalupe River, Pedernales River, Frio River, Upper Nueces River, and Edwards Aquifer projects.
- WSEP staff attended the following Texas Water Development Board Regional Water Planning Group meetings to discuss WSEP issues: Region G (December 3, 2014; Waco). Additional information on the Regional Water Planning process is available at <http://www.twdb.texas.gov/waterplanning/wp/>.
- WSEP staff worked with multiple landowners in Kerr and Bandera counties to develop conservation plans and water supply enhancement cost-share contracts.
- On December 5, 2014, WSEP staff attended the Hill Country Water Summit in Smithson Valley. TSSWCB staff participated in a panel discussion on rural water conservation strategies; a

presentation on the WSEP was given. Additional information on the Summit is available at <http://www.quadalupebasincoalition.org/>

- On December 18, 2014, WSEP staff attended the Groundwater Management Area 7 meeting in San Angelo. A presentation on the WSEP was given by TSSWCB staff at the meeting. Additional information on groundwater management areas is available at http://www.twdb.texas.gov/groundwater/management_areas/.

In July 2014, the TSSWCB adopted the State Water Supply Enhancement Plan, with changes to the draft version made based on public comments received. The State Water Supply Enhancement Plan serves as the State's comprehensive strategy for managing brush in all areas of the state where brush is contributing to a substantial water conservation problem. The State Board directed staff to continue working with those interested in improving the State Water Supply Enhancement Plan.

These public outreach meetings have been scheduled to continue discussions with those interested in improving the State Water Supply Enhancement Plan, particularly those who provided comments during the public comment period. The first meeting on Thursday, January 08, 2015, will focus on aspects of the Program related to conservation plans for landowners and soil erosion potential. The second meeting on Thursday, January 29, 2015, will focus on aspects of the Program related to feasibility studies, computer modeling, geospatial analysis, and project prioritization criteria. Both meetings will be held at the AgriLife Research and Extension Center at Blackland in Temple. Both meetings are scheduled to start at 9:30 a.m.

More information on the WSEP is available at <http://www.tsswcb.texas.gov/brushcontrol>.

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 through June 30, 2015. To date there is a balance of \$595,300 that still needs to be spent before the June 2015 deadline.

For FY2015, \$1,000,000 was allocated to 69 dam sponsors to conduct O&M activities on flood control dams through June 30, 2017.

The TSSWCB has contracted with the Dalworth SWCD to conduct a major repair on Mountain Creek, Site 10, in Ellis County using \$5,600,000 of FY2014 funds.

The TSSWCB has also contracted with the McCulloch SWCD to conduct repairs on Deep Creek, Site 8, in McCulloch County using \$362,000 of FY2015 funds.

TSSWCB has signed ten Project Agreements with NRCS for \$13 million in federal rehabilitation funding for planning, design, and construction on 15 dams. TSSWCB will be contracting for engineering services on these dams over the next three months. TSSWCB will also be providing financial assistance to sponsors for the local share of construction cost on 5 additional dams during the next three months.

The TSSWCB has contracted with M&E Consultants to develop a rehabilitation plan for

Lower Running Water Draw Site 4 in Hale County.

The TSSWCB has contracted with the City of McKinney and the San Antonio River Authority to provide state funds to assist sponsors with the local share of rehabilitation costs on 5 dams.

For more information on these programs, please visit the TSSWCB's website at:

<http://www.tsswcb.texas.gov/en/floodcontrol>.

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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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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