



TEXAS STATE SOIL & WATER CONSERVATION BOARD

Program News and Activities

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DECEMBER 2015

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 20, 2016** and a formal State Board Meeting on **Thursday, January 21, 2016 in Austin**. 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.

FISCAL OPERATIONS

December 31st is the deadline for Fiscal Year 2015 Financial Statement approval and submission of Review/Audits.

HUMAN RESOURCES

TSSWCB is currently recruiting for the following position:

Information Specialist-Temple

SPECIAL PROJECTS

77th Annual Meeting of Texas Soil and Water Conservation District Directors

Mark your calendars for October 17-19, 2016 and plan on attending the 76th Annual State Meeting held in Waco.

Social Media

The Texas State Soil and Water Conservation Board now has a YouTube Channel. Please visit our channel at

<https://www.youtube.com/channel/UC4Dpz4w1Kl3BT-064bGYnHw>

This media outlet has all of our conservation winner videos from our Annual Meeting this year in Corpus Christi. We will be sharing videos throughout the year featuring soil and water conservation efforts.

2016 Soil Stewardship Public Speaking Contest

Preparation of the 2016 Soil Stewardship Public Speaking Contest materials are complete and have been sent electronically to all SWCDs and the Texas FFA Association for dissemination to all Ag teachers in the state. Districts may expect a copy of the contest material in December. The theme of the contest is "Land Stewardship Produces a Healthy Texas". The packet will include suggested references for a student to begin preparations for the contest.

Districts should be aware that a "Soil and Water Conservation District Consultation Affidavit" is included in the packet. This document validates that a student participating in the contest has consulted with their local SWCD regarding preparation and research for the speech. A district representative must sign the document certifying that a student has in fact consulted with the SWCD during the preparation of the speech.

SWCD Leadership Development Workshop

Planning is well underway for the February 23-24, 2016 SWCD Leadership Development Workshop to be held in Temple.

The workshop will be held at the Hilton Garden Inn. Blocks of rooms have been reserved at the

Hilton Garden Inn and the Holiday Inn Express-Temple Medical Center.

Appointed directors during the last three years and newly elected directors were mailed an advance registration packet during the early part of December. A registration packet and open invitation will be sent to all directors and district employees during the first week in January.

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.

More information on the *Water Quality Management Plan Program* is available at <http://www.tsswcb.texas.gov/en/wqmp>

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

FY2011 – FY2015 CWA §319(h) Grant Status

There are currently 36 on-going §319(h) grant-funded projects addressing a wide array of agricultural and silvicultural NPS issues. Unliquidated federal funds for these on-going projects total approximately \$10 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).

FY2014 – FY2016 State Grant Status

There are currently 19 on-going projects addressing an array of agricultural and silvicultural NPS issues. Unliquidated state funds for these 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 Planning and Implementation

Bell County Water Symposium

On November 19, 2015, TSSWCB staff [Wesley Gibson, Ashley Wendt] attended the 15th Annual Bell County Water Symposium in Belton. This year's symposium topic was "Showcasing Groundwater Management, Science & Education". The Texas Well Owner Network, a CWA §319(h) funded TSSWCB project, gave a presentation to attendees in the afternoon.

STATE DISTRICT III

Arroyo Colorado

Impairment: Bacteria, Dissolved Oxygen
Concerns: Nutrients, Sediment
Mechanism: WPP, UAA
Lead: TCEQ
Project: "Implementing Best Management Practices to Reduce Agricultural Nonpoint Source Pollution in Support of the Arroyo Colorado Watershed Protection Plan", TSSWCB-Harlingen Regional Office; Federal §183,741

Project: "Bacterial Source Tracking to Support Adaptive Management of the Arroyo Colorado Watershed Protection Plan", Texas Water Resources Institute/Texas A&M Institute of Renewable Natural Resources; Federal \$465,555/ External \$178,333

Project: "Education Programs Focused on Stakeholder Needs to Address Agricultural NPS in the Arroyo Colorado Watershed", Texas Water Resources Institute; State \$83,027

On December 9, 2015, TSSWCB SRM staff [Ashley Wendt] and Harlingen Regional Office staff [Ronnie Ramirez] hosted an Arroyo Colorado Ag Issues Workgroup Meeting in San Benito. The meeting recapped the modeling results (BST and SWAT) presented at the latest Steering Committee meeting. Also, several state and federal agencies gave presentations on their programs including TCEQ, Texas Department of Agriculture, TSSWCB and USDA-NRCS.

More information is available at <http://www.arroyocolorado.org/>. This WPP affects farming operations in the Arroyo Colorado watershed in Cameron, Hidalgo and Willacy 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

On December 8, 2015, TSSWCB SRM staff [Liza Parker] attended a Texas Watershed Steward workshop in Lockhart for the Plum Creek watershed. Forty-four people attended the workshop that was sponsored by the Texas A&M AgriLife Extension Service and TSSWCB. The trainings included an overview of water quality and watershed management in Texas as well as current efforts to help improve and protect Plum Creek. Attendees also learned about community-driven watershed protection and management. More information on the Texas Watershed

Steward Program is available at <http://twi.tamu.edu/>.

Project: "Statewide Delivery of Riparian and Stream Ecosystem Education Program", Texas Water Resources Institute/Texas A&M Institute of Renewable Natural Resources; Federal \$317,486/External \$207,973

On December 3, 2015, a Riparian and Stream Ecosystem Workshop was held for the Attoyac Bayou watershed. Fifty people attended the workshop that was sponsored by the Texas Water Resource Institute, TSSWCB and the Texas A&M Institute of Renewable Natural Resources. The training focused on water quality issues including the key role riparian areas play in helping improve and protect water quality in the area. Topics covered included: the definition of a watershed and riparian area, riparian vegetation ratings, how to photo monitor, and local resources for landowners. The training also involved a field tour which provided a chance to see a recovering riparian area and evaluate the vegetation within it. For more information on the Riparian and Stream ecosystem educational program, please visit <http://twri.tamu.edu/>.

Project: "Statewide Delivery of the Texas Well Owner Network", Texas Water Resources Institute; Federal \$478,135/External \$318,831

A Texas Well Owner Network training took place in Cuero on November 20, 2015. Over 60 people attended the training that was sponsored by the Texas A&M AgriLife Extension Service, Texas Water Resource Institute and TSSWCB. The training was focused on helping private well owners care for their wells and water quality issues in the area. Topics covered included: aquifers in Texas, private water well basics, onsite wastewater treatment, water quality and quantity, and protecting your water supply. Water quality analysis was also performed on water well samples brought in by training attendees. More information on the Texas Well Owner Network Program is available at <http://twon.tamu.edu/>.

Upcoming Public Meetings

- January 11, 2015 – Watershed Coordinator Roundtable (College Station)
- January 12-14, 2015 – Galveston Bay Estuary Program, State of the Bay Symposium (Galveston)
- January 26, 2015 – Texas Watershed Steward Workshop, Geronimo and Alligator Creeks (Seguin)
- January 26, 2015 – Geronimo and Alligator Creeks Partnership Meeting (Seguin)

FLOOD CONTROL DAM PROGRAMS

The 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 FY2016, \$1,000,000 was available for sponsors to submit proposals to complete O&M work. To date a total of 49 proposals have been received. 45 proposals have been approved to complete O&M activities in the amount of \$932,816.47, leaving a remaining balance \$67,183.53.

Structural Repair Grants

FY2015 -TSSWCB has contracted with the Ellis-Prairie SWCD to complete needed repairs on Chambers Creek site 5, in Ellis County.

The TSSWCB has also contracted with Wise County to complete needed repairs on Denton Creek site 17, in Wise County using \$222,948.00.

Dam Rehabilitation

In FY 2014, TSSWCB signed ten Project Agreements with NRCS for \$13 million in federal

rehabilitation funding for planning, design, and construction. In FY 2015, TSSWCB signed four new project agreements and four amendments to existing agreements for an additional \$10.4 million in federal rehabilitation funding. TSSWCB is contracting for engineering services and construction on these dams. As of December 2015, total federal rehab funding provided to TSSWCB is \$23.4 million on 19 dams. State matching funds for rehab construction obligated to date is \$14.7 million.

Following are the funded activities and current status of rehabilitation projects:

Planning

Plum Creek 10 (Hays)
Plum Creek 12 (Hays)
Plum Creek 21 (Caldwell)
Lower Plum Creek 28 (Caldwell)
Lower Running Water Draw 4 (Hale)
Chambers 10 (Ellis)
Chambers 11 (Ellis)

Design

East Fork Above Lavon 4 (Collin)
Williams Creek 3 (Gillespie)
Lower Brushy 20 (Williamson)
Upper Brushy 32 (Williamson)

Construction Underway

Mountain Creek 10 (Ellis)
East Fork Above Lavon 2A (Collin)
Calaveras Creek 10 (Bexar)
Martinez Creek 1 (Bexar)
Martinez Creek 2 (Bexar)
Martinez Creek 3 (Bexar)
Plum Creek 6 (Hays)
Olmitos Garcias 7 (Starr)

Construction Funded, but Design Not Yet Complete

Upper Brushy 32, (Williamson)
East Fork Above Lavon 4 (Collin)

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.