



TEXAS STATE SOIL & WATER CONSERVATION BOARD

Program News and Activities

FEBRUARY 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, March 19, 2014** and a formal State Board Meeting on **Thursday, March 20, 2014 in Temple**. 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

- Important Dates and Deadlines for Calendar Year 2014 are now available on SWCD Resources Page of the TSSWCB Website.
- April 1st is the deadline for submitting Board Member Election Delegate Forms for Areas II and IV.
- April 1st is the deadline for submitting a SWCD Biennial Budget Request

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
- Natural Resource Specialist (Project Manager)-Temple

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.

PUBLIC INFORMATION AND EDUCATION

Program Development Workshop

Sixty-three individuals attended the District Director/Employee Program Development Workshop on February 11-12, 2014.

The workshop was held at the Bell County Expo Center in Belton, TX.

The workshop featured a new format which included two hours of training on the "Open Meetings Act" and "Texas Public Information Act" which is mandatory training for newly appointed or elected directors. The topics were presented by representatives from the Office of the Attorney General.

Directors, district employees and NRCS employees who wanted CEU training toward maintaining current pesticide applicator licenses were provided that opportunity. One hour of credit was earned during the normal course of the workshop as a result of relevant program content. An additional two hours of credit on laws and regulations was provided at the conclusion of the Program Development Workshop

2014 Texas Envirothon

The 2014 Texas Envirothon will be hosted April 5th -7th by the University of Houston Clear Lake. Key topics of this year's competition include:

1. Understanding the three pillars of sustainable agriculture and the indicators of sustainable farming.
2. Understanding how ecosystems function and the services they provide.
3. Good soil health is the foundation of a healthy ecosystem.
4. How sustainable farming practices enhance and protect soil health, water quality and water quantity, biodiversity, manage insect pests, disease, and weeds, and
5. The importance of local and regional food systems to sustainable agriculture.

The Texas Brigades Wildlife Leadership Camps

The Texas Brigades program is looking for a few good leaders. Actually, they are looking for 170 leaders.

The Texas Brigades' mission is to educate and empower youths with the leadership skills and knowledge in wildlife, fisheries, and land stewardship to become conservation ambassadors for a sustained natural resource legacy. This will be the 22nd year of the Brigades.

The application deadline is March 15, 2014 and may be found at <http://www.texasbrigades.org/Applications/applications.html>.

Participants are selected through a competitive application process. Helen Holdsworth, Executive Director, says they are looking for youth ages 13-17 years of age. No experience is necessary, but applicants should have a strong interest in learning about wildlife, natural resources, livestock, and/or the environment. "We are looking for those with an interest in learning and then sharing what they have learned with their communities," reports Holdsworth.

The 4 ½ day camps are held on private ranches across the state. "These landowners open their gates to us for five days, allowing us to utilize the land as a living laboratory. Natural resource professionals give of their time to mentor the youth. This is a valuable networking opportunity," she said.

The cost of the camp is \$400 but scholarships and financial assistance are available. "We do not want the fee to be a barrier to anyone. We have donors who are willing to support the youths' educational experience," says Holdsworth.

For more information, call 855-TXBRIGS or 210-556-1391 or email hholdsworth@texas-wildlife.org.

2014 Youth Range Workshop, June 22 - June 27

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.

Coastal NPS Pollution Control Program

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 long-term ecological and economic productivity of the coast. The CMP 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 and the Small Business and Individual Permitting Assistance 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 development and 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>.

Coastal Coordination Advisory Committee

The CCAC was created during sunset legislation (SB656) in the 82nd legislature. SB656, which was enacted in 2011, abolished the Coastal Coordination Council and transferred its functions to the Land Commissioner and the GLO. The legislation established the CCAC to advise the Land Commissioner on matters related to the CMP. The CCAC includes a representative of the TSSWCB designated by the Chairman of the State Board.

The general structure of the coastal program consists of workgroups from the agencies and

governor appointees which focus on specific projects. The main function of the CCAC is to provide consistency review of federal projects and actions and to provide support to the workgroups.

More information is available for a limited time at <http://www.glo.texas.gov/GLO/boards-and-commissions/coastal-coordination-council/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 the planning and implementation of projects that address environmental problems affecting the coastal area and that promote sustainable economic development.

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>.

Coastal Planning

The coastal program is dedicating \$309 funds to the creation of a long-term plan utilizing coastal and marine spatial planning. The first year of this five-year initiative was to create a report to provide a "snapshot" into the current priorities of the Texas coast. A Technical Advisory Committee (TAC) of coastal experts was formed to review and evaluate the project list and the issues of concern for the four coastal regions. TSSWCB is participating in this planning effort as a member of the TAC. TAC regional meetings were held to identify the critical areas and needs of the Texas coast. The information collected at the TAC meetings was used to develop a "snapshot" report to inform the 83rd Texas Legislature of the coastal priorities for each of the four regions, and to serve as a baseline for the long-term planning process. A brochure was also developed, *The Texas Coast: Shoring up our Future*, and can be found here: <http://www.glo.texas.gov/shoring-up-texas/shoring-up-our-future-brochure.pdf>.

Year two of this effort will continue with the creation of a broader planning effort. This long-term plan will better enable an integrated, adaptive management approach to plan for and

balance competing natural and human uses along our coast.

Water Quality Coordination Activities

Texas Clean Rivers Program

The Texas Clean Rivers Program (CRP) is a state fee-funded program for water quality monitoring, assessment, and public outreach administered by the TCEQ. CRP is a collaboration of 15 partner agencies who conduct water quality monitoring and assessment in the 23 river and coastal basins and associated bays and estuaries in Texas.

Each river or coastal basin is assigned to one of the designated CRP partner agencies. Each CRP partner agency has an established steering committee to set monitoring and assessment priorities within its basin. These committees bring together the diverse interests in each basin and are designed to allow local concerns to be addressed through regional solutions.

The Texas Water Code requires the TCEQ and CRP partner agencies to coordinate monitoring and assessment activities with local SWCDs through the TSSWCB.

The data generated by CRP partner agencies is used to identify significant long-term water quality trends and characterize water quality conditions. Each CRP partner agency develops and publishes an annual *Basin Highlights Report* and a five-year *Basin Summary Report*. The TCEQ also uses CRP-generated data in the biennial assessment conducted for the *Texas Integrated Report*.

On February 4, 2014, TSSWCB SRM staff [Brian Koch] attended a CRP Steering Committee Meeting hosted by the Lower Colorado River Authority in Wharton. This meeting focused on the lower region of the basin from La Grange to Matagorda. Drought, illegal dumping, water quality impairments and lack of water quantity were all issues that were presented and discussed at the meeting.

More information on CRP is available at <http://www.tceq.texas.gov/waterquality/clean-rivers/index.html>.

Galveston Bay Estuary Program

Galveston Bay is an estuary of national importance and, through the federal CWA §320, is included in the National Estuary Program administered by the EPA. The Galveston Bay Council (GBC) is the stakeholder advisory group that coordinates the implementation of the *Galveston Bay 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 Galveston Bay Council.

On January 22, 2014, TSSWCB SRM staff [Brian Koch] attended a Galveston Bay Council meeting in Houston. This meeting featured nomination and election of a new Vice-Chairman for the council as well as several presentations. Presentations focused on bioindicators and the health of Galveston Bay and the “Back the Bay” campaign. Also, reports from the subcommittees and news and announcements from council members in attendance were given. The next meeting is scheduled for April 23, 2014.

More information is available at <http://www.gbep.state.tx.us/>. The implementation of the *Galveston Bay Plan* affects agricultural and silvicultural operations in watersheds that drain to the Galveston Bay complex in Brazoria, Chambers, Galveston, Harris and Liberty Counties.

Water Quality Planning and Implementation

STATE DISTRICT III

Lower Nueces River

Impairment: Total Dissolved Solids
Concern: Chlorophyll-a, Nutrients, Sediment
Mechanism: WPP
Lead: TSSWCB
Projects: “Development of the Lower Nueces River Watershed Protection Plan”, Nueces River Authority; Federal \$309,727/External \$248,968

On January 21, 2014, TSSWCB SRM staff [Jana Lloyd] attended the Lower Nueces River Watershed Partnership Stakeholder meeting in

Corpus Christi. The meeting centered upon finalizing the Steering Committee and ground rules. Other updates were given on the water quality monitoring project, watershed protection plan sections and upcoming workshops being held across the watershed.

More information, including the draft *Source Water Protection Plan*, is available at <http://www.nuecesriverpartnership.org/>. This WPP has the potential to affect livestock and farming operations in the Lower Nueces River watershed below Lake Corpus Christi in Jim Wells, Nueces, and San Patricio Counties.

Plum Creek

Impairment: Bacteria
Concerns: Nutrients
Mechanism: WPP
Lead: TSSWCB
Project: "Coordinating Implementation of the Plum Creek Watershed Protection Plan", Guadalupe-Blanco River Authority; Federal \$216,000/ External \$144,000
Project: "Surface Water Quality Monitoring and Additional Data Collection Activities to Support the Implementation of the Plum Creek Watershed Protection Plan", Guadalupe-Blanco River Authority; Federal \$485,545/ External \$257,165
Project: "Implementing Agricultural Nonpoint Source Components of the Plum Creek Watershed Protection Plan", Caldwell-Travis SWCD #304; Federal \$150,788

On February 4, 2013, over 125 individuals attended the Plum Creek Feral Hog Management Workshop in Luling. This workshop was held to implement portions of the Plum Creek WPP. The Plum Creek WPP identifies feral hogs as a significant contributor of pollutants to the creek. Landowners recommended in the WPP that efforts to control feral hogs be undertaken to reduce the population, limit the spread of these animals, and minimize their effects on water quality and the surrounding environment. Presenters at the workshop were from state and federal agencies including AgriLife Extension,

Texas Parks & Wildlife Department Game Warden, Texas Animal Health Commission, USDA Wildlife Services and the Plum Creek Watershed Coordinator. Topics covered feral hog life history and biology, laws and regulations, current research, and control methods including hunting and trapping. Additional information on feral hog management in the Plum Creek watershed is available at <http://plumcreek.tamu.edu/feralhogs>.

On February 13, 2014, TSSWCB SRM staff [Jana Lloyd, Brian Koch] attended the Plum Creek Watershed Partnership Steering Committee meeting in Lockhart. The Watershed Coordinator gave updates on community clean up events, feral hog projects, and upcoming workshops. Updates from GBRA on water quality data as well as a roundtable discussion on upcoming events were provided.

More information is available at <http://plumcreek.tamu.edu/>. This WPP affects livestock and farming operations in the Plum Creek watershed in Caldwell and Hays Counties.

San Bernard River

Impairment: Bacteria
Mechanism: WPP, UAA
Lead: TCEQ
Project: "Surface Water Quality Monitoring to Support Implementation of the San Bernard River Watershed Protection Plan", Houston-Galveston Area Council; Federal \$221,654/ External \$82,388

On January 30, 2014, TSSWCB SRM staff [Brian Koch] attended a San Bernard River WPP meeting in Wharton. This meeting was held to introduce the executive summary to stakeholders. The executive summary is a condensed version of the larger WPP document, which highlights how to address the water quality impairments in the San Bernard River through BMPs and other management measures.

More information is available at <http://www.h-gac.com/go/sanbernard>. This WPP affects farming and livestock operations in the San Bernard River watershed in Austin, Brazoria, Colorado, Fort Bend and Wharton Counties.

Upcoming Public Meetings

- March 4, 2014 – Bois D’Arc Creek RUAA Public Meeting (Bonham)
- March 5, 2014 – San Jacinto River I-Plan Meeting (Cleveland)
- March 6, 2014 – Cedar Bayou WPP Steering Committee Meeting (Baytown)
- March 6, 2014 – Smith Creek RUAA Public Meeting (Paris)
- March 11, 2014 – Mud Creek RUAA Public Meeting (Dekalb)
- March 13, 2014 – Galveston Bay Council Water Sediment Quality Meeting (Houston)
- March 18, 2014 – Canadian River Basin CRP Advisory Committee Meeting (Amarillo)
- March 18, 2014 – San Bernard River Riparian Workshop (Wharton)
- March 18, 2014 – LCRA Mid and Lower Basin CRP Coordinated Monitoring Meeting (Austin)
- March 18, 2014 – Double Bayou WPP Public Meeting (Double Bayou)
- March 19, 2014 – Coastal Bend Bays and Estuaries Program Water and Sediment Quality Implementation Team (Corpus Christi)
- March 20, 2014 – Guadalupe Blanco River Authority CRP Coordinated Monitoring Meeting (Seguin)
- March 20, 2014 – Upper San Antonio River I-Plan Meeting (San Antonio)
- March 25, 2014 – Red River Basin CRP Advisory Committee Meeting (Wichita Falls)
- March 25, 2014 – Pecos River Basin CRP Coordinated Monitoring Meeting (Midland)
- March 26, 2014 – Red River Authority CRP Coordinated Monitoring Meeting (Wichita Falls)

Monthly Program News and Activities is published by the TSSWCB for use by Texas SWCD Directors. If you have any questions regarding its

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.

Staff Activities

- Applied spatial analysis of FY14 WSEP Project Proposals to determine highest yielding areas.
- Attended Texas Water Development Board [TWDB] Regional Water Planning Group meetings in regions G, J, and L.
- Conducted a WSEP Science Advisory Committee meeting in Austin.
- Attended meetings with Nueces-Frio Sabinal SWCD, Upper Nueces-Frio SWCD, and Pedernales SWCD to discuss potential WSEP projects.

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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