



TEXAS STATE SOIL & WATER CONSERVATION BOARD

Program News and Activities

FEBRUARY 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

INSIDE THIS ISSUE

- 1 Upcoming State Board Work Session and Meeting
- 1 Special Projects
- 2 Water Quality Management Plan Program
- 2 Texas Nonpoint Source Management Program
 - 2 Nonpoint Source Grant Program
- 3 Water Quality Planning and Implementation
- 7 Upcoming Public Meetings
- 8 Water Supply Enhancement Program
- 10 Flood Control Dam Program

SPECIAL PROJECTS

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

UPCOMING STATE BOARD WORK SESSION AND MEETING

The State Board has tentatively scheduled a Work Session on **Tuesday, March 3, 2015** and a formal State Board Meeting on **Wednesday, March 4, 2015 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.

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. Districts should note the affidavit at the end of the packet. FFA students participating in the speech contest are required to have the affidavit certified by a representative of the local SWCD as proof of their having consulted with the district regarding research for speech content.

TSSWCB 75th Anniversary

To commemorate the agency's 75th anniversary the TSSWCB will be holding a meet and greet at the Capitol Grill from 8:30 a.m. to 10:30 a.m. in Austin on March 3, 2015. Breakfast tacos will be served and we welcome everyone to come and join the celebration. This will be in conjunction with the Association's Committee of 100 meeting with legislators and luncheon.

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 conduct a ranking exercise to rank all Requests for Cost-Share Incentive Funding. Regional office staff are 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

FY2010 – FY2014 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 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 25 on-going projects addressing an array of agricultural and silvicultural NPS issues. Unliquidated state funds for these 25 on-going projects total approximately \$2.52 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.

Texas Groundwater Protection Committee

Background

Established by the Texas Legislature in 1989, the Texas Groundwater Protection Committee (TGPC) bridges the gap between State groundwater programs, improves coordination between member agencies, and works to protect groundwater as a vital resource; the TSSWCB is a statutorily-authorized member of the TGPC.

The Texas Water Code sets non-degradation of the State's groundwater resources as the goal for all State programs and asserts that groundwater be kept reasonably free of contaminants that interfere with its present and potential uses. The TGPC implements the State's groundwater protection policy which:

- Requires that pollution discharges, waste disposal and other regulated activities not harm public health or impair current or potential groundwater use;

- Recognizes the variability between aquifers;
- Acknowledges the importance of water quality;
- Balances the protection of the environment and the long-term economic health of the state; and,
- Recognizes the use of the best professional judgment of the responsible state agencies to implement the policy.

The TGPC develops, implements, and updates a comprehensive *Texas Groundwater Protection Strategy* and an annual *Joint Groundwater Monitoring and Contamination Report*. More information on the TGPC is available at <http://www.tgpc.state.tx.us/>.

Activities of the TGPC and Subcommittees

On February 3, 2015, TSSWCB SRM staff [Ashley Wendt] attended a TGPC Public Outreach and Education Subcommittee meeting in Austin. Ten agencies and organizations were represented. An overview of recent and upcoming outreach events was discussed, as well as popular and updated groundwater-based articles and publications. The next meeting is set for June 9, 2015.

Water Quality Planning and Implementation

Coordination with EPA

On February 10, 2015, TSSWCB SRM staff [Ashley Wendt, Liza Marshall, Jana Lloyd, TJ Helton] met with EPA and TCEQ staff in Temple for the annual joint end-of-year review (FY2014) of the *Texas NPS Management Program* and the CWA §319(h) NPS Grant Program. Many priority issues affecting both state agencies were discussed in the meeting including financial aspects of the program and measuring success in watershed restoration. Both agencies discussed on-going efforts in select watersheds to develop and implement WPPs and TMDLs, and the status of statewide educational projects. The group also discussed their on-going collaborations with other state and federal agencies on water quality restoration activities. Discussion highlighted the program's accomplishments, goals, and plans for the coming year.

Coordination with TCEQ

On January 30, 2015, TSSWCB SRM staff [Jana Lloyd, Ashley Wendt, Wesley Gibson, Mitch Conine, Brian Koch, TJ Helton, Liza Marshall] met with TCEQ staff in Austin to discuss and coordinate the many on-going activities between the two agencies. Many topics were discussed including the Watershed Action Planning process, water quality standard revisions, CWA 303(d) Vision and the 2014 Annual Report. An update on the progress of resolving the conditional approval status of the Texas Coastal NPS Pollution Control Program was discussed as well. Other updates included status of the FY2015 CWA §319(h) NPS grant, setting priorities for the FY2016 Request for Proposals, the Coastal Bend Bays and Estuaries Program (CBBEP) and the Clean Rivers Program.

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 February 4, 2015, TSSWCB SRM staff [Brian Koch] attended the Water and Sediment Quality Implementation Team meeting for the Coastal Bend Bays and Estuaries Program in Corpus Christi. This meeting was held to generate project ideas for the FY2015 workplan. These project ideas are then turned into proposals for consideration of the team and then the top proposals are moved to the Bays Council for approval.

More information is available at <http://www.qbep.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.

Texas Watershed Coordinator Roundtable

On January 22, 2015, TSSWCB SRM staff [Ashley Wendt, Jana Lloyd, TJ Helton] participated in the latest Texas Watershed Coordinator Roundtable workshop in San Antonio. Over 50 people attended, representing many of the on-going watershed planning efforts across the state. Topics discussed included the Clean Water Act Section 319(h) Grant Program, state-wide analysis of WPP impacts, and an extensive discussion on implementation improvements, incentives, monitoring and funding. Also, a presentation on the State-wide Revolving Fund (SRF), which is administered by the Texas Water Development Board (TWDB), was given.

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 February 5, 2015, TSSWCB SRM staff [Jana Lloyd, Liza Marshall], Field staff [Kendria Ray] and Area 2 State Board Member [Marty Graham] attended the Upper Llano River Watershed Protection Plan Coordination Committee meeting in Junction. The meeting focused on reviewing the watershed model and discussing the results with stakeholders. Later into the meeting the stakeholders discussed WPP content and reviewed introductory chapters.

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.

STATE DISTRICT III

Geronimo Creek

Impairment: Bacteria
Mechanism: WPP
Lead: TSSWCB

- Project: "Water Quality Monitoring in the Geronimo Creek Watershed and Facilitation of the Geronimo and Alligator Creeks Watershed Partnership", Guadalupe-Blanco River Authority; Federal \$292,421/External \$191,435
- Project: "Implementing Agricultural Nonpoint Source Components of the Geronimo and Alligator Creeks Watershed Protection Plan", Comal-Guadalupe SWCD #306; Federal \$155,973
- Project: "Coordinating Implementation of the Geronimo and Alligator Creeks Watershed Protection Plan", Texas A&M AgriLife Extension; Federal \$375,909/External \$250,611
- Project: "Surface Water Quality Monitoring to Support the Implementation of the Geronimo and Alligator Creeks Watershed Protection Plan", Guadalupe-Blanco River Authority; Federal \$135,021/External \$90,014

On January 28, 2015, TSSWCB SRM staff [Ashley Wendt, Liza Marshall] attended a Texas Well Owner Network Training in Seguin. Over 50 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 Geronimo and Alligator Creeks watershed. 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/>.

On February 3, 2015, TSSWCB SRM staff [Jana Lloyd, Brian Koch] attended the Geronimo and Alligator Creeks Watershed Partnership meeting in Seguin. The meeting focused on updating the partnership of the latest water quality monitoring and discussed an upcoming clean up event in the watershed. Also a presentation from the local high school FFA advisor was given to discuss a \$3000

grant that was awarded to the Seguin High School Agricultural Science department from the Seguin Education Foundation to build feral hog traps for the community.

More information is available at <http://geronimocreek.org/>. This WPP affects ranching and farming operations in the Geronimo Creek watershed in Guadalupe and Comal Counties.

Mill Creek

- Impairment: Bacteria
 Mechanism: WPP
 Lead: TSSWCB
 Project: "Data Collection and Development of Essential Components for the Mill Creek Watershed Protection Plan" Texas A&M AgriLife Extension Service; State \$299,955
 Project: "Phase 2: Development of a Watershed Protection Plan for Mill Creek" Texas A&M AgriLife Extension Service; State \$208,542

On January 26, 2015, TSSWCB SRM staff [Jana Lloyd, Brian Koch] attended the Mill Creek Watershed Partnership meeting in Bleiberville. The meeting focused on approving the Steering Committee members and the partnership ground rules. Other topics discussed included steps in watershed protection planning and intro to watershed characterization of the Mill Creek watershed.

More information is available at <http://millcreek.tamu.edu/>. This WPP affects livestock and farming operations in the Mill Creek watershed in Austin and Washington Counties.

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 January 29, 2015, TSSWCB SRM staff [Ashley Wendt, Brian Koch] attended a Cedar Bayou Watershed Partnership Meeting in Baytown. Focus of the meeting centered upon feedback received on chapters 1-4 of the draft watershed protection plan. Much discussion was held on the already submitted comments, as well as further changes were also requested. A presentation was also given by Galveston Bay Estuary Program staff about their activities surrounding Galveston Bay.

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 February 5, 19 and 23, TSSWCB SRM staff [Brian Koch] attended workgroup meetings for the Double Bayou Watershed Partnership in Anahuac. These meetings were held to begin discussion on management measures to help improve water quality in Double Bayou. The Agriculture, Wildlife and Feral Hog workgroup reviewed common grazing and farming BMPs, which also work to address local needs, to add to the WPP. The Wastewater Workgroup focused on OSSF and wastewater collection system upgrades and improvement. Finally, the Recreation and Hunting Workgroup came up with several strategies to help address their potential issues.

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.

Navasota River

Impairment: Bacteria

Mechanism: Assessment
Lead: TSSWCB
Project: "Watershed Protection Plan Development for the Navasota River below Lake Limestone", Texas Water Resources Institute; State \$210,532

On January 20, 2015, TSSWCB SRM staff [Ashley Wendt] attended the Brazos County SWCD #450 and Robertson County SWCD #451 meeting in Bryan and Franklin, respectively. TSSWCB SRM staff, along with project staff from the Texas Water Resources Institute, introduced a new FY15 project, "*Watershed Protection Plan Development for the Navasota River below Lake Limestone*". District board members asked a multitude of questions about the project and how to address the bacteria impairment in the Navasota River and its tributaries.

A Texas Well Owner Network training took place in Navasota on February 5, 2015. Over 35 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 Navasota River watershed. 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/>.

More information is available at <https://www.tsswcb.texas.gov/en/managementprogram/navasota>. This project affects livestock operations in the Navasota River watershed in Brazos, Grimes, Madison, Leon, Limestone and Robertson Counties.

STATEWIDE PROJECTS (NOT WATERSHED SPECIFIC)

Project: "Delivery of Lone Star Healthy Streams Feral Hog Component and Providing Technical Assistance on Feral Hog

Management in Priority Watersheds”, Texas A&M AgriLife Extension Service; Federal \$491,227/External \$312,768

On February 3, 2015, TSSWCB SRM staff [Liza Marshall] attended a Feral Hog Management Workshop in Luling. Over 180 people attended the workshop that was sponsored by Texas A&M Agrilife Extension and TSSWCB. The workshop provided participants with information about the basic biology of feral hogs and their damage in watersheds, population dynamics, and laws and regulations regarding feral hogs. Also, participants learned about Agricultural regulations regarding feral hogs, disease concerns, and feral hog control. More information about the Lone Star Healthy Streams Feral Hog Component is available at <http://lshs.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 San Antonio on January 27, 2015. Over 30 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 San Antonio River watershed. 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

- March 5, 2015 – Galveston Bay Council- Water And Sediment Quality Subcommittee Meeting (Houston)
- March 8 – 14, 2015 – National Groundwater Awareness Week
- March 12, 2015 – Riparian and Stream Restoration and Education Workshop, Leon River (Hamilton)
- March 12, 2015 – Regional Watershed Coordination Steering Committee Meeting (Columbus)
- March 12, 2015 – Lower Colorado River Authority Upper Basin Clean Rivers Program (CRP) Coordinated Monitoring Meeting (CMM) (San Angelo)
- March 13, 2015 – Upper Colorado River Authority CRP Water Quality Advisory Committee Meeting (San Angelo)
- March 17, 2015 – Red River Authority CRP Basin Advisory Committee (BAC) Meeting (Amarillo)
- March 17, 2015 – International Boundary & Water Commission (IBWC), Pecos River CRP CMM (Midland)
- March 18, 2015 – IBWC, Upper Rio Grande River CRP CMM (Terlingua)
- March 19, 2015 – Angelina & Neches River Authority CRP CMM (Jasper)
- March 19, 2015 – IBWC, Upper Rio Grande CRP CMM (El Paso)
- March 24, 2015 – Red River Authority CRP BAC Meeting (Wichita Falls)
- March 25, 2015 – Red River Authority CRP CMM (Wichita Falls)
- March 26, 2015 – Guadalupe-Blanco River Authority CRP CMM (Seguin)
- March 27, 2015 – San Antonio River Authority CRP Steering Committee Meeting (Karnes City)
- March 30, 2015 – Mill Creek Watershed Partnership 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 supplies through the targeted 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, Pedernales SWCD #218, and Bandera SWCD #229.
 - WSEP staff assisted Conservation Planners in the Upper Guadalupe River, Pedernales River, Frio River, Upper Nueces River, and Edwards Aquifer projects and worked with landowners in several project watersheds to develop cost-share contracts.
 - WSEP staff worked with project applicants to assess unobligated funds from the FY2015 project cost-share allocations in order to consider reallocation of FY2015 grant funding to maximize expenditure of WSEP funds during the fiscal year.
 - WSEP staff attended the following Texas Water Development Board (TWDB) Regional Water Planning Group (RWPG) meetings to discuss WSEP issues: Region G (February 4, 2015; Waco), Region L (February 5, 2015; San Antonio), Region K (February 18, 2015; Austin), and Region J (February 19, 2015; Bandera). Additional information on the regional water planning process is available at <http://www.twdb.texas.gov/waterplanning/rwp/>.
 - WSEP staff has been working with Region G and the TWDB to develop a template brush control water management strategy that could be used by the RWPGs in order to include the WSEP and brush control in their next *Regional Water Plans*.
- At the February 5, 2015 Region L meeting, the group discussed a potential water management strategy for brush control over the Carrizo-Wilcox Aquifer Recharge Zone in Gonzales, Caldwell, and Guadalupe Counties. This water management strategy is based on the TSSWCB's brush control feasibility study for Gonzales County. Using the groundwater availability model, this water management strategy, depending on landowner participation levels, has the potential to increase the available groundwater in the aquifer between 1,370 and 13,910 ac-ft per year.
 - At the February 18, 2015 Region K meeting, the group discussed the draft policy recommendations for inclusion in the next *Regional Water Plan*. The group is considering removing the policy statement supporting brush control as a feasible water management strategy.
- On January 27, 2015, WSEP staff attended the California Creek SWCD #545 meeting in Anson. The group discussed a proposed water management strategy for brush control in the Fort Phantom Hill Reservoir watershed to be included in the next Region G *Regional Water Plan*.
 - On January 29, 2015, TSSWCB staff hosted a WSEP Public Outreach Meeting in Temple; about 30 people attended the meeting. In July 2014, the State Board adopted the *State Water Supply Enhancement Plan*, with changes to the draft version made based on public comments received. The State Board

directed staff to continue working with those interested in improving the *State Plan*; subsequently, two public outreach meetings were scheduled to continue discussions with the public, particularly those who provided comments during the public comment period. The first meeting was January 8, 2015, and focused on aspects of the WSEP related to conservation plans for landowners and soil erosion potential from brush control. The second meeting was January 29, 2015, and focused on aspects of the WSEP related to feasibility studies, computer modeling, geospatial analysis, and project prioritization criteria.

- On February 5, 2015, WSEP staff attended the Upper Llano River Watershed Protection Plan Coordination Committee meeting in Junction. The Coordination Committee met to review progress by Texas Tech University in developing the computer model of the watershed. The focus of discussion during the meeting was on aspects of the model related to brush control and water supply enhancement. Once completed, the model will be used to produce a brush control feasibility study for the North and South Llano Rivers.
- On February 6, 2015, WSEP staff participated in a Land Stewardship Workshop for Brush Contractors in Junction. The workshop was sponsored by the Texas Wildlife Association and the Texas A&M Forest Service. Topics discussed at the workshop included water resource protection, wildlife management, invasive species management, and financial incentive programs available to landowners that implement conservation practices. This workshop was modeled after the Professional Logger program administered by the Texas Forestry Association.
- On February 10, 2015, WSEP staff participated in a wildfire mitigation webinar. The webinar was hosted by the Federal Emergency Management Agency

(FEMA) and the Texas A&M Forest Service. Topics discussed during the webinar included wildfire mitigation projects, FEMA's Hazard Mitigation Grant Program, methods to reduce hazardous fuels across the landscape, Community Wildfire Protection Plans, and tools for wildfire risk assessments.

- On February 16, 2015, WSEP staff attended the Texas House of Representatives Committee on Appropriations Subcommittee on Articles VI, VII, & VIII hearing in Austin. The Subcommittee heard testimony relating to the agency's Legislative Appropriations Request (LAR) for the 2016-2017 biennium. In addition to the base request for WSEP funding, an exceptional item request was included in the LAR for \$2M across the biennium for WSEP funding in order to partially meet unmet demand for cost-share to landowners and to conduct new feasibility studies. An archived video of the hearing is available at <http://www.house.state.tx.us/video-audio/committee-broadcasts/>.
- On February 17, 2015, the Governor laid out his legislative priorities and detailed a roadmap to achieve his agenda; the Governor's Budget for the 2016-2017 biennium was also released. One of the Governor's priorities is border security. The Governor's Budget provides funding for Carrizo cane (*Arundo donax*) removal along the Rio Grande. Carrizo cane is an invasive, non-native species that impedes and conceals the detection of criminal actors and restricts law enforcement officers' access to riverbanks. The Governor's Budget includes \$9.8M for Carrizo cane removal through the TSSWCB. While this funding priority supports border security, Carrizo cane is also a noxious brush species that consumes water to a degree that is detrimental to water conservation. As such, Carrizo cane is a species of interest to the WSEP and is eligible for inclusion in the program. Additional information is available at

<http://gov.texas.gov/news/press-release/20543>.

- On February 20, 2015, WSEP staff attended the Texas State Senate Committee on Finance hearing in Austin. The Committee heard testimony relating to the agency's LAR for the 2016-2017 biennium. An archived video of the hearing is available at <http://www.senate.state.tx.us/avarchive/>.
- On February 25, 2015, WSEP staff attended the Texas House of Representatives Committee on Agriculture and Livestock hearing in Austin. The Committee heard testimony relating to the Committee's oversight of the agencies and programs under the Committee's jurisdiction, including the TSSWCB and the WSEP. An archived video of the hearing is available at <http://www.house.state.tx.us/video-audio/committee-broadcasts/>.

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 \$375,413 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. To date there is a balance of \$647,216 that still needs to be spent before the June 2017 deadline.

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 has contracted for engineering services on these dams.

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.

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>

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.



4311 SOUTH 31ST STREET, SUITE 125
TEMPLE, TEXAS 76502

(254) 773-2250 <http://www.tsswcb.texas.gov>
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.

Follow TSSWCB on Twitter, Facebook, and LinkedIn!



<http://twitter.com/TSSWCB>



<http://www.facebook.com/tsswcb>



<http://www.linkedin.com/company/968674>