

Quarterly Program Update



Winter 2016

TSSWCB Seeks Additional State Funding to Match Federal Assistance Grants on Flood Control Dam Repairs

TSSWCB is requesting an additional \$2.9 million (fiscal year 2017) in flood control funding from the Texas Legislature to match \$8.5 million to \$10 million of Emergency Watershed Protection (EWP) Program funding from Texas NRCS to complete repairs on 27 dams.

Texas is home to more than 2,000 flood control dams, many of which were severely damaged by the extreme rainfall events of May 2015 and October 2015. In November 2015, four organizations from the state of Texas wrote a letter to the entire Texas Congressional delegation expressing the need for assistance in repairing the dams that were damaged. The request was made to acquire federal funds to match state and local dollars to put toward the repairs. The Association of Texas Soil and Water Conservation Districts, the Texas State Soil and Water Conservation Board (TSSWCB), the Texas Conservation Association for Water and Soil, and the Texas Association of Watershed Sponsors all strongly advocated for financial assistance to address these needs.

As part of the appropriations bill passed by Congress in December 2015, \$157 million was made available to the USDA Natural Resources Conservation Service (NRCS) for the Emergency Watershed Protection (EWP) Program. The EWP Program was created by Congress to respond to emergencies caused by natural disasters. It is designed to help reduce imminent hazards to life and property threatened by excessive erosion and flooding caused by heavy rains, drought, earthquakes, windstorms and other natural disasters.

On June 7, 2016, funds were released to TSSWCB from the USDA Natural Resources Conservation Service as a part of the EWP Program to repair dam structures across six counties in Texas. An estimated \$5.2 million of federal funds were put towards 25 flood control dams that were in need vital repairs as a result of the heavy rainfall events of May 2015. TSSWCB dedicated \$1.5 million of its funding from the Texas Legislature to ensure that all federal funding was adequately matched and utilized on a local level. Currently, TSSWCB is also providing an additional \$616,526 of state funds to match the federal \$1.9 million in EWP construction funds being contracted by NRCS directly with sponsors on 16 dams that were damaged by floods of October 2015.

The TSSWCB's flood control programs provide grants to local sponsors of flood control dams to address minor operation and maintenance needs where 90% of the cost comes from the state, and more elaborate structural repair grants that are covered by the state at 95%. When federal dollars are available through EWP, the state's share is lessened to 25% or less. For more information on the agency's program, go to <http://www.tsswcb.texas.gov/floodcontrol>.



Program Updates

• BUDGET & ACCOUNTING

December 31, 2016 is the deadline for submitting completed Reviews and Audits. If completed Financial Statements, Reviews, or Audits are not submitted by the respective deadline, all Fiscal Year 2017 payments will be withheld until financial reporting requirements for Fiscal Year 2016 have been met.

• PUBLIC INFORMATION & EDUCATION

2017 SWCD Leadership Development Workshop

The 2017 SWCD Leadership Development Workshop will be held on February 28 - March 1, 2017 in Temple, Texas. Districts have received a letter of intent that will help to plan for food and hotel arrangements.

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

The 2017 Annual State Meeting for District Directors will be October 23-25, 2017 in Galveston at the Moody Gardens Hotel, Spa & Convention Center.

Texas FFA Soil Stewardship Public Speaking Contest

The 2017 Texas FFA Soil Stewardship Public Speaking packet is now available:

<https://www.tsswcb.texas.gov/en/infoed/publicspeaking>

• HUMAN RESOURCES

For current employment opportunities at the Texas State Soil and Water Conservation Board, please visit:

<https://www.tsswcb.texas.gov/en/employment>

• WATER QUALITY MANAGEMENT PLAN PROGRAM

The State Board approved \$1,950,000 for cost-share incentive funding for Fiscal Year 2017. The Board set aside 5% of the total budget (\$97,500) for reimbursing SWCDs for their administrative costs. A statewide allocation was made in the amount of \$100,000 for providing cost-share funds to applicants to address complaints and other unforeseen situations. Also, each administrative area of the state (Areas 1-5) were allocated \$350,500 to be ranked and assigned to approved cost-share contracts. To date \$478,000 has been obligated to producers across the state to implement best management practices. The remaining funds will be obligated by the end of the fiscal year.

• FLOOD CONTROL DAM PROGRAM

The State Board approved \$7,050,000 for flood control grants for Fiscal Year 2017. Of this amount, \$1,000,000 is available to all sponsors for operation and maintenance (O&M) grants on a first-come-first-serve basis. To date, a total of 53 proposals have been received. Of those proposals, 40 have been approved to complete O&M activities in the amount of \$889,883.49, leaving a remaining balance of \$60,116.51. The remaining Fiscal Year 2017 funds (\$6,050,000) will be used for structural repair grants, as matching funds for federal rehabilitation projects or Emergency Watershed Protection Program repairs, or for engineering, planning, design, or associated technical assistance activities.

• WATER SUPPLY ENHANCEMENT PROGRAM

The Texas State Soil and Water Conservation Board requests that the public and affected stakeholders review and provide comment on the proposed revision of the State Water Supply Enhancement Plan. The State 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. Comments must be received no later than January 9, 2017. In accordance with statute, the proposed revision of the State Water Supply Enhancement Plan will be discussed at a public hearing scheduled for January 5, 2017 at 2:30 p.m. at the TSSWCB headquarters office located at 1497 Country View Lane, Temple, Texas, 76504. At the hearing, persons and entities may present information and suggestions for any changes to the proposed document.

Meet Your Board Member

Marty H. Graham, Member

Marty H. Graham of Rocksprings is a member of the Texas State Soil and Water Conservation Board. He was elected to the State Board representing Area II in May of 2008. In addition to his work on the State Board, he is Chairman of the Upper Nueces-Frio Soil and Water Conservation District and has been a member of since 1988. Graham previously served on the Board of Directors of the Association of Texas Soil and Water Conservation Districts as the Area II Director. He has also serves as a director with the Texas Sheep and Goat Raisers Association and the Mohair Council of America. Since 1982, Marty has been raising Brangus cattle as well as Angora and Boer goats on the family ranch in Edwards County. He also runs a hunting operation on the ranch, hunting white-tailed deer, turkey, and exotics. Marty and his wife, Joyce, have two sons, Grayson and Tristan, a daughter, Jordyn with her husband Joshua and one year old granddaughter, Addyson. Marty graduated from Texas Tech University in 1982 with a Bachelor of Science Degree in Agriculture-Animal Production. His youngest son Grayson is currently attending Texas Tech University. Marty was on the Livestock Judging Team while attending Texas Tech University and supports the Texas Tech Alumni Association.



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<http://www.nrcs.usda.gov/wps/portal/nrcs/main/tx/soils/health>

Or for further details, please contact
Nathan Haile, 817-550-7738 | Charlie Upchurch, 254-216-1473





Quarterly Program Update

Monarch Butterfly Habitat Enhanced by Texas Soil and Water Conservation Program

The Texas State Soil and Water Conservation Board (TSSWCB) is working in cooperation with 143 soil and water conservation districts (SWCDs) to enhance and restore Monarch butterfly habitat in Texas.

It is estimated that over the past 20 years, the Monarch population has declined from 1 billion to less than 60 million. One of the most prominent factors that contributed to the steep population decline is the loss of habitat and food sources.

The iconic orange and black insects are dependent on nectar producing vegetation to produce energy for their annual migration from Mexico to Canada. The Monarch caterpillar, on the other hand, depends on milkweed as a critical food source. As a result of the decline in the Monarch butterfly population, the National Fish and Wildlife Foundation (NFWF) and the USDA Natural Resources Conservation Service (NRCS) have provided grant funds to the TSSWCB to assist in enhancing and restoring Monarch butterfly habitat.

The project will provide funding to develop conservation plans and plant pollinator-friendly plant species on 1,600 acres of rural Texas lands along the Monarch's migratory pathway. The funds made available to farmers, ranchers, or private landowners will pay \$375 per acre to cover seed cost, planting, and maintenance of the land on tracts of land between 1 and 30 acres. Entities such as schools or municipalities qualify for funding to develop a Monarch butterfly garden between 100 and 300 square feet.

The TSSWCB began accepting applications for the project on May 2, 2016. To date, 684 applications have been received to enhance and restore Monarch butterfly habitat. Of those applications, 583 were for rural plots of land between 1 and 30 acres, totaling a request of over 12,800 acres of habitat enhancement or restoration. The remaining 101 applications were for urban gardens. The current grant allows for enhancement or restoration of approximately 1,600 acres and installation of 30 Monarch butterfly gardens.

TSSWCB staff began notifying applicants of awards in June 2016. Currently, 68 individuals have received or are receiving technical assistance through TSSWCB regional offices or SWCDs. To date, 14 Monarch Habitat Conservation Plans have been completed and certified. Planting began on lands with certified plans on December 1, 2016.

If the TSSWCB acquires additional funding for enhancement and restoration of Monarch butterfly habitat, the agency will continue to fund applications in the order that they were received.

The views and conclusions contained in this news release are those of the TSSWCB's and should not be interpreted as representing the opinions or policies of the U.S. Government or the National Fish and Wildlife Foundation and its funding sources. Mention of trade names or commercial products does not constitute their endorsement by the U.S. Government or the National Fish and Wildlife Foundation and its funding sources.

To learn more about enhancing and restoring Monarch butterfly habitat in Texas visit:
<http://www.tsswcb.texas.gov/monarch>.