



TEXAS STATE SOIL & WATER CONSERVATION BOARD

Program News and Activities

JANUARY 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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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

Registrations are coming in for the annual Program Development Workshop for district directors, district employees and select NRCS district conservationists. The workshop is

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**. 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.

scheduled for February 24-25 in Temple at the Hilton Garden Inn.

District directors and employees are reminded that in order to receive the special group rate at the Hilton Garden Inn reservations must be received by the hotel by February 9th. Reservations made after this date will be subject to rate and availability.

As a reminder, registration fees for directors and district employees may be paid from the State or Local Fund. Travel expenses for district employees may be paid from the State or Local Fund. Travel expenses for district directors must be paid from the Trust Fund.

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. 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.

Lesser Prairie-Chicken Initiative

Meetings have been set with SWCDs in the Lesser Prairie-Chicken region to discuss the initiative with USDA-NRCS and TSSWCB. These meetings will be held in February, each meeting will discuss the roles and responsibilities of the TSSWCB and USDA-NRCS. Below are the specific details of meeting dates and locations.

February 18, 2015 at Pyco Oil Mill at 2901 Avenue A, Lubbock, TX 79404.
This meeting will begin at 1:15 p.m.

February 19, 2015 at the Hemphill County Library (Women's Christian Temperance Union [WCTU]) Building at 500 Main Street, Canadian, TX 79404.
This meeting will begin at 10:00 a.m.

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 \$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 22 on-going projects addressing an array of agricultural and silvicultural NPS issues. Unliquidated state funds for these 22 on-going projects total approximately \$2.7 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

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 January 9, 2015, in Bellville. Over 40 people attended the workshop that was sponsored by the Texas A&M AgriLife Extension Service and TSSWCB. The training included an overview of water quality and watershed management in Texas as well as current efforts to help improve and protect Mill Creek. Attendees also learned about community-driven watershed protection and management. More information on the Texas Watershed Steward Program is available at <http://tws.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 5, 2014, a Riparian and Stream Ecosystem Workshop targeted for the Pedernales watershed was held in Stonewall. Over 80 people attended the workshop that was co-hosted by the

Texas Parks and Wildlife Department, Hill Country Alliance, the Texas Nature Conservancy and the Texas A&M AgriLife Extension Service office in Gillespie County. 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. The Riparian Education program is sponsored by the Texas Water Resources Institute and TSSWCB. For more information on the Riparian and Stream ecosystem educational program, please visit <http://twri.tamu.edu/>.

Upcoming Public Meetings

- February 3, 2015 – Feral Hog Management Workshop (Luling)
- February 3, 2015 – TGPC- Public Outreach and Education Meeting (Austin)
- February 3, 2015 – Geronimo and Alligator Creeks Watershed Partnership Meeting (Seguin)
- February 5, 2015 – Texas Well Owner Network Training, Navasota River Watershed (Navasota)
- February 5, 2015 – Upper Llano River Watershed Partnership Meeting (Junction)
- February 12, 2015 – Plum Creek Watershed Partnership Meeting (Lockhart)
- February 19, 2015 – Arroyo Colorado Ag Issues Workgroup Meeting (Weslaco)
- February 27, 2015 – Riparian and Stream Restoration and Education Workshop, Dickinson Bayou (La Marque)

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, 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 attended the following Texas Water Development Board (TWDB) Regional Water Planning Group (RWPG) meetings to discuss WSEP issues: Region K (January 14, 2015; Austin). 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. Additional information on the regional water planning process is available at <http://www.twdb.texas.gov/waterplanning/rwp/>.
- The *WSEP 2014 Annual Report* was developed, published, and distributed. This *Annual Report* documents program results for calendar year 2014, assesses the program, reports on program

participant compliance with resource management plans, and reports overall projected water yield enhanced. The *2014 Annual Report* is available at <http://www.tsswcb.texas.gov/reports#wsep>

- In January 2015, the Sunset Advisory Commission published the *Compliance Report – Implementation of Sunset Legislation*. On January 14, 2015, the Sunset Advisory Commission met to discuss the *Report*. The *Report* highlights findings from the special purpose review conducted on TSSWCB programs, including the WSEP. The special purpose review was limited to the evaluation of the TSSWCB's implementation of HB1808. In the *Report*, the Sunset Advisory Commission concludes that all provisions of HB1808 related to the WSEP have been fully implemented and that no further action is necessary. Additional information, including the *Compliance Report*, is available at <http://www.sunset.texas.gov/reviews-and-reports>.
- On January 8, 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, scheduled for January 29, 2015, will focus on aspects of the WSEP related to feasibility studies, computer modeling, geospatial analysis, and project prioritization criteria; the

meeting will be held at the AgriLife Research and Extension Center at Blackland in Temple and is scheduled to start at 9:30 a.m.

- On January 22, 2015, TSSWCB staff met with the USGS to review preliminary results of the Lake Alan Henry brush control feasibility study.

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 \$412,874 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 \$954,068 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>.

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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.

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