



TEXAS STATE SOIL & WATER CONSERVATION BOARD

Program News and Activities

MAY 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 **Sunday, July 27, 2014** and a formal State Board Meeting on **Monday, July 28, 2014**. 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

- May 15th was the deadline for claiming two-thirds of your Matching Fund Allocation for FY 2014.
- July 1st is the deadline for submitting FY 2014, 1st, 2nd, 3rd Quarter for Director Mileage and Per Diem claims.

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 III – Hale Center Regional Office

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.

75th Anniversary of the TSSWCB
May 29, 2014 was the 75th Anniversary; please pass on the feature article to your local news outlets.

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.

Reservations open May 1st. Hotels being used for the meeting this year are the Hilton (877-425-4753); the San Luis (800-455-0090); and the Holiday Inn (800-Holiday).

Please ask for the Texas Soil And Water reservation block. The room rate for each hotel is \$91.00 single/\$125.00 double

Please check our website for a map of Galveston and the hotels.

The Texas State Soil and Water Conservation Board will be celebrating its 75th Anniversary and we plan on having an outstanding meeting.

PUBLIC INFORMATION AND EDUCATION

State WAY Contest

The State Wildlife Alliance for Youth (WAY) Career Development Event (contest) was held May 13, at the Welder Wildlife Refuge located near Sinton.

Fifty FFA teams from all parts of the state competed in the event. Eight 4-H teams also competed in the event.

Scoring high point team in the event was the Tomball FFA chapter followed by the Bellville FFA chapter and the Johnson City Chapter.

In the 4-H division the Austin County 4-H team took top honors followed by Harris County who placed second and followed by the Williamson County 4-H team which placed third.

The top scoring teams in each division was awarded \$500 (1st place) \$300 (2nd place), and \$200 (3rd place) cash awards to be used for educational efforts of the teams. The awards were presented by the Public Information Education Committee of the Association of Texas Soil and Water Conservation Districts.

2014 Youth Range Workshop

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.

Water Quality Coordination Activities

Coordination with TCEQ

On April 22, 2014, TSSWCB SRM staff [Jana Lloyd, Ashley Wendt, Wesley Gibson, Mitch Conine, Brian Koch] 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, CWA 303(d) Vision for furthering watershed planning activities, water quality standard revisions and 2014 Assessment (Integrated Report) progress. 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 FY2013 and FY2014 CWA §319(h) NPS grant Request-for-Proposals and the Coastal Bend Bays and Estuaries Program (CBBEP).

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 April 24, 2014, TSSWCB SRM staff [Brian Koch] attended a CRP Coordinated Monitoring meeting hosted by the San Antonio River Authority in San Antonio. This meeting was held to coordinate SWQM in the San Antonio River

basin for the upcoming year. Adjustments to the monitoring plan will be made due to the Upper San Antonio River I-plan and the Upper Cibolo Creek WPP. More information is available at <https://www.sara-tx.org/>.

On April 24, 2014, TSSWCB SRM staff [Wesley Gibson] attended a CRP Steering Committee meeting hosted by the Brazos River Authority in Waco. This meeting was held to update CRP stakeholders on the many ongoing activities in the Brazos River basin including: the Brazos River System Operation Permit and Water Management Plan, RUAAs, endangered species, drought effects, and proposed monitoring for FY2015. More information is available at <http://www.brazos.org/>.

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 April 23, 2014, TSSWCB SRM staff [Brian Koch] attended a quarterly Galveston Bay Council meeting in Houston. At this meeting the Council approved the GBEP proposed budget for FY2015. The meeting also featured a panel discussion on the March 22 oil spill that occurred in the bay when a barge and a tanker collided in foggy weather. Also, discussion of the USEPA/US Army COE statement on the waters of the US was held with the Council approving a letter to consider wetlands and their connection to coastal waters. The next council meeting is scheduled for July 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.

Gulf of Mexico Restoration and Recovery

On April 30 and May 6 and 9, 2014, TSSWCB SRM staff [Brian Koch] attended a series of meetings in Victoria, Brownsville, and Baytown to discuss developing partnerships and collaboration between different groups seeking funding from several funding sources (RESTORE Act, NRDA, NFWF) related to Gulf of Mexico restoration and recovery. Texas is set to receive large amounts of funding to develop projects to aid in these efforts and the focus of these meetings was to better handle the use of the funding.

Water Quality Planning and Implementation

STATE DISTRICT III

Oso Bay and Oso Creek

Impairment: Bacteria

Mechanism: TMDL

Lead: TCEQ

On April 28, 2014, TSSWCB SRM staff [Brian Koch] attended a stakeholder meeting to discuss the status of the Oso Creek and Oso Bay TMDLs in Robstown. The TMDLs for indicator bacteria (*Enterococcus*) were developed and approved in 2007. Since then, source surveys, Bacteria Source Tracking, and runoff studies from cropland have been conducted, showing the largest contributors to be avian and non-avian wildlife. An I-plan for the watershed is expected to begin development in late 2014.

More information is available at <http://www.tceq.texas.gov/waterquality/tmdl/67-osobaybacteria.html>. This TMDL has the potential to affect livestock and farming operations in the Oso Bay/Creek watershed in Nueces County.

STATE DISTRICT IV

Cedar Bayou

Impairment: Bacteria

Concerns: Macrobenthic 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 April 16, 2014, TSSWCB SRM staff [Ashley Wendt] and Field staff [Joel Clark] attended a Lower Trinity SWCD #435 meeting in Moss Hill. TSSWCB and H-GAC staff provided updates to District Directors on the development of the Cedar Bayou WPP. Feedback was solicited on the animal numbers that are being used in the modeling portion of the project which provides the scientific basis for the WPP.

On April 23, 2014, TSSWCB SRM staff [Ashley Wendt, Brian Koch] attended a Cedar Bayou Watershed Partnership Agriculture, Wildlife and Habitat Workgroup meeting in Mont Belvieu. H-GAC staff discussed the progress of the WPP with the group focusing on the first stage of modeling efforts. Feedback was solicited on the animal numbers used in these efforts, with preliminary feedback already given by the SWCDs. Suggestions from the workgroup meeting will be used to adjust the model, and the results will be presented at the next Steering Committee meeting.

On May 2, 2014, TSSWCB SRM staff [Ashley Wendt] and Field staff [Joel Clark] attended the Harris County SWCD #442 meeting in Houston. TSSWCB and H-GAC staff provided updates to District Directors on the development of the Cedar Bayou Watershed Protection Plan. Feedback was solicited on the animal numbers that are being used in the modeling portion of the project which provides the scientific basis for the WPP.

On May 8, 2014, TSSWCB SRM staff [Ashley Wendt, Brian Koch] attended a Riparian and Stream Ecosystem Workshop targeted for the Cedar Bayou Watershed in Mont Belvieu. Over 55 people attended the workshop that was sponsored by the Texas Water Resource Institute and TSSWCB, in coordination with the Cedar Bayou Watershed Partnership, Houston-Galveston Area Council and the Texas A&M Institute of Renewable Natural Resources. The

training focused on water quality issues relating to the Cedar Bayou Watershed, 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/>.

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.

Other State District IV Projects

Project: "Building Partnerships for Cooperative Conservation in the Trinity River Basin", Texas Water Resources Institute; Federal \$437,946/ External \$293,569*

A Texas Watershed Steward workshop took place on April 15, 2014 in Ennis. Over 28 people attended the workshop that was sponsored by the Texas A&M AgriLife Extension Service and TSSWCB, in coordination with TCEQ and Trinity Waters. The training, focused on the Middle Trinity River, discussed what it means to be a watershed steward, watershed impairments, managing urban and rural lands through the use of BMPs, and how to get involved in community driven watershed protection and management. The workshop included an overview of water quality and watershed management in Texas. More information on the Texas Watershed Steward Program is available at <http://twrs.tamu.edu/>.

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 Well Owner Network training took place in Wichita Falls on May 12, 2014. Over 156 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 Wichita Falls area. Topics covered included: aquifers in Texas, private water well basics, onsite wastewater treatment, water quality and quantity, and protecting your water supply. More information on the Texas Well Owner Network Program is available at <http://twon.tamu.edu/>.

Project: "Continued Restoration of the Coastal Prairie Wetland at Sheldon Lake State Park", Texas A&M AgriLife Extension Service – Sea Grant Program; Federal \$404,204/ External \$235,548

On May 7, 2014, TSSWCB SRM staff [Ashley Wendt] attended the Texas Environmental Excellence Awards Banquet hosted by the TCEQ at the Environmental Trade Fair in Austin. Project staff from Texas A&M AgriLife Extension Service and project partners from Texas Parks and Wildlife were in attendance to receive an award as finalist in the Civic/Community category for the wetland restoration work at Sheldon Lake State Park which is partially funded through CWA §319(h) grant funds.

Upcoming Public Meetings

- June 3, 2014 – Double Bayou Wastewater Workgroup Meeting (Anahuac)
- June 5, 2014 – Double Bayou Ag, Wildlife and Feral Hogs Workgroup Meeting (Anahuac)
- June 5, 2014 – Lone Star Healthy Streams Workshop, Geronimo and Alligator Creeks (Seguin)
- June 6, 2014 – Texas Well Owner Network Training, Leon River Watershed (Hamilton)
- June 9, 2014 – Buffalo Creek RUAA Meeting (Iowa Park)
- June 10, 2014 – Double Bayou Recreation Workgroup Meeting (Anahuac)
- June 10, 2014 – Geronimo and Alligator Creeks Steering Committee Meeting (Seguin)
- June 10, 2014 – Paradise Creek RUAA Meeting (Vernon)
- June 11, 2014 – Sweetwater Creek RUAA Meeting (Wheeler)
- June 12, 2014 – Regional Watershed Coordination Steering Committee Meeting (Columbus)
- June 12, 2014 – Dixon Creek RUAA Meeting (Borger)
- June 17, 2014 – Double Bayou Watershed Protection Plan Meeting (Double Bayou)
- June 18, 2014 – Galveston Bay Council, Water and Sediment Quality Meeting (Houston)
- June 19, 2014 – Upper San Antonio River I-plan Meeting (San Antonio)
- June 24, 2014 – Upper San Antonio River coordinating Committee Meeting (San Antonio)
- June 26, 2014 – Galveston Bay Council, Budget and Priorities Subcommittee Meeting (Houston)
- June 26, 2014 – Oso Creek TMDL Meeting (Corpus Christi)
- June 27, 2014 – Feral Hog Workshop (Double Bayou)

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.

WSEP staff published and distributed the WSEP 2013 Annual Report available at <http://www.tsswcb.texas.gov/reports#wsep>

WSEP staff developed a WSEP Operations Manual that provides detailed guidance to program participants on implementing the program.

Also, WSEP staff developed procedures for conducting Status Reviews, which are currently being performed throughout various project areas.

Staff conducted geospatial analysis on the following FY14 project proposals to determine highest yielding areas:

- Carrizo-Wilcox/Gonzales County
- Lake Arrowhead/Miller-Brazos
- Lake Nimitz/Upper Guadalupe

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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- Lake Arrowhead/Archer County
- On May 15, 2014, the State Board de-allocated \$244,703 in FY14 financial incentives from two projects, and reallocated those funds to the projects mentioned above.
- WSEP staff will be sending a letter to the SWCDs regarding the WSEP policies and FY2014 reallocations that were approved.
- WSEP staff attended the following Texas Water Development Board Regional Water Planning Group meetings to discuss WSEP issues: Region G (April 2, 2014; Waco); Region O (April 23, 2014; Lubbock); Region L (May 1, 2014; San Antonio); and Region G (May 7, 2014; Waco).
- A presentation on the WSEP was given by TSSWCB staff at the Region G and Region O meetings.
- More information on the WSEP is available at: <http://www.tsswcb.texas.gov/en/brushcontrol>

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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