



# TEXAS STATE SOIL & WATER CONSERVATION BOARD

## Program News and Activities

NOVEMBER 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 tentatively scheduled a Work Session on **Wednesday, January 21, 2015** and a formal State Board Meeting on **Thursday, January 22, 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](mailto:kpreece@tsswcb.texas.gov).

### BUDGET AND ACCOUNTING

- **Financial Statements**
  - December 31<sup>st</sup> is the deadline for submitting completed Reviews and Audits.

For more budget and accounting information, contact Kenny Zajicek at (254) 773-2250 ext. 236  
Or [kzajicek@tsswcb.texas.gov](mailto:kzajicek@tsswcb.texas.gov)

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## SPECIAL PROJECTS

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

### Program Development Workshop

Planning is underway for the annual Program Development Workshop for district directors, district employees and select NRCS district conservationists. The workshop is scheduled for February 24-25 in Temple at the Hilton Garden Inn. A location is yet to be determined. Based on the number of "New Director Training Agreements" received, it is anticipated that an excellent attendance is to be expected. Districts were given advance notice of the workshop via a flyer sent on November 10th. Recently appointed or elected directors will be sent a letter of invitation at the first of December. In mid December, a letter of invitation will be sent to all districts who may have directors interested in attending.

### Soil Stewardship Public Speaking Contest

The 2015 Guideline Packet for the Soil Stewardship Public Speaking Contest is under development. 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. The guideline packet is to be delivered to the Texas FFA Association in December for dissemination to Ag teachers. SWCDs will also receive a copy of the speaking guidelines packet.

### Region IV WAY Contest

Inclement weather caused the Region 4 wildlife contest to relocate from the Stephen F. Austin State University Forest to the Nacogdoches Exposition Center. The contest was held

November 5<sup>th</sup>. Forty-Eight FFA teams and 7 4-H teams participated in the event. Overall 148 students participated in the contest. The top scoring FFA team was from Rusk while the Trinity County 4-H team earned top honors. Both the top scoring FFA team and 4-H team was given a \$200 cash award from the ATSWCDs Public Information Education Committee.

### TSSWCB 75<sup>th</sup> Anniversary

*Plowing New Ground: The 75<sup>th</sup> Anniversary History of the Texas State Soil and Water Conservation Board* made its debut at the annual meeting in Galveston. Dan Utley addressed the banquet participants on the document and gave insight to the oral histories that are included.

Staff has reviewed and commented on the draft text to be included in the historical marker. The Texas Historic Commission is still in review of the suggestions and we hope to hear from them soon. Staff is beginning to prepare an open house at the Capitol for March 3 to commemorate the agency's 75<sup>th</sup> anniversary. This will be in conjunction with the Association's Committee of 100 meeting with legislators and luncheon.

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## 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.

On September 9, 2014 and October 9, 2014 the regional Offices conducted a ranking exercise to rank all Requests for Cost-Share Incentive Funding. Regional office staff is currently 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.

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## 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 \$11 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 21 on-going projects addressing an array of agricultural and silvicultural NPS issues. Unliquidated state funds for these 21 on-going projects total approximately \$3 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

### **STATE DISTRICT III**

#### **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

On November 6, 2014, TSSWCB SRM staff [Jana Lloyd, Liza Marshall] attended the Mill Creek public kickoff meeting in Bellville. The meeting focused on an introduction to the watershed planning process, engaging stakeholder involvement, and successful development of a watershed protection plan. Other discussion topics included watershed partnership structure, how to get involved and what the next steps are in this process.

On November 13, 2014, TSSWCB SRM staff [Jana Lloyd, Brian Koch] attended the Mill Creek public kickoff meeting in Brenham. The meeting focused on an introduction to the watershed planning process, engaging stakeholder involvement, and successful development of a watershed protection plan. Other discussion topics included watershed partnership structure, how to get involved and what the next steps are in this process.

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.

### **STATEWIDE PROJECTS (NOT WATERSHED SPECIFIC)**

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 October 14, 2014, a Riparian and Stream Ecosystem Workshop was held for the Eagle Mountain Lake watershed. Over 30 people attended the workshop that was sponsored by the Texas Water Resource Institute, TSSWCB and the Texas A&M Institute of Renewable Natural Resources. 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. For more information on the Riparian and Stream ecosystem educational program, please visit <http://twri.tamu.edu/>.

#### Upcoming Public Meetings

- December 4, 2014 – Texas Watershed Steward Workshop, Oso Creek and Oso Bay (Corpus Christi)
- December 10, 2014 – Cedar Bayou Watershed Partnership Meeting

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### 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 83<sup>rd</sup> 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, Kerr County SWCD #217, Pedernales SWCD #218, Gillespie County SWCD #220, Bandera SWCD #229, Upper Nueces-Frio SWCD #238, Comal-Guadalupe SWCD #306, and Gonzales County SWCD #338.
- WSEP staff assisted Conservation Planners in the Upper Guadalupe River, Pedernales River, Frio River, Upper Nueces River, and Edwards Aquifer projects.

- WSEP staff attended the following Texas Water Development Board Regional Water Planning Group meetings to discuss WSEP issues: Region G (November 5, 2014; Waco); Region N (November 13, 2014; Robstown); and Region F (November 20, 2014; Big Spring). A presentation on the WSEP was given by TSSWCB staff at the Region N and Region F meetings. Additional information on the Regional Water Planning process is available at <http://www.twdb.texas.gov/waterplanning/rwp/>.
- WSEP staff worked with multiple landowners in Kerr and Bandera counties to develop conservation plans and water supply enhancement cost-share contracts.
- On November 3, 2014, the Victoria SWCD #346 and the U.S. Geological Survey hosted a project kickoff meeting in Victoria for the Huisache Water Utilization Research Project. This 5-year study is funded in part by the TSSWCB and will examine the effects of huisache removal on evapotranspiration in south central Texas. Research will be conducted on over 300 acres of native rangeland on the McFaddin Ranch in southern Victoria County.
- On November 4-5, 2014, WSEP staff participated in a meeting in Johnson City with staff from the USDA NRCS, the Lower Colorado River Authority, and the Pedernales SWCD #218 to discuss the effects of brush control on water supply enhancement and water quality. TSSWCB staff hosted the group on a field tour of an Upper Guadalupe River WSEP project site located at Guadalupe River State Park and Honey Creek State Natural Area.
- On November 6, 2014, the Texas Water Development Board adopted, as final, the proposed amendments to the Texas Administrative Code relating to the State Water Implementation Fund for Texas (SWIFT). These rules are intended to implement provisions of HB 4 and SJR 1,

passed by the 83<sup>rd</sup> Texas Legislature. The Legislature created the SWIFT to serve as a water infrastructure bank, to ensure financial assistance is available to help finance projects in the *State Water Plan*, and to provide an adequate water supply for the future of the state. The application process for SWIFT funding is now open; entities interested in applying for the first round of FY2015 funding will need to submit abridged applications by February 3, 2015. Additional information is available at

<http://www.twdb.texas.gov/financial/programs/swift/>.

- On November 20, 2014, WSEP staff met with the Wes-Tex Groundwater Conservation District in Sweetwater to discuss the effects of wildfire and brush control on groundwater levels and aquifer recharge.

More information on the WSEP is available at <http://www.tsswcb.texas.gov/brushcontrol/>.

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## 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 \$642,077 that still needs to be spent before the June 2015 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 will be contracting for engineering services on these dams over the next three months. TSSWCB will also be providing financial assistance to sponsors for the local share of construction cost on 5 additional dams during the next three months.

For more information on these programs, please visit the TSSWCB's website at:  
<http://www.tsswcb.texas.gov/en/floodcontrol>.

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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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