



TEXAS STATE SOIL & WATER CONSERVATION BOARD

Program News and Activities

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NOVEMBER 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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UPCOMING STATE BOARD WORK SESSION AND MEETING

The State Board has tentatively scheduled a Work Session on **Wednesday, January 20, 2016** and a formal State Board Meeting on **Thursday, January 21, 2016 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.

FISCAL OPERATIONS

December 31st is the deadline for Fiscal Year 2015 Financial Statement approval and submission of Review/Audits.

HUMAN RESOURCES

TSSWCB is currently recruiting for the following position:

Information Specialist-Temple

SPECIAL PROJECTS

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

Mark your calendars for October 17-19, 2016 and plan on attending the 76th Annual State Meeting held in Waco.

Social Media

The Texas State Soil and Water Conservation Board now has a YouTube Channel. Please visit our channel at

<https://www.youtube.com/channel/UC4Dpz4w1Kl3BT-064bGYnHw>

This media outlet has all of our conservation winner videos from our Annual Meeting this year in Corpus Christi. We will be sharing videos throughout the year featuring soil and water conservation efforts.

2016 Soil Stewardship Public Speaking Contest

Preparation of the 2016 Soil Stewardship Public Speaking Contest materials will begin during the first week in December. The theme of the contest is yet to be determined; however once determined, the packet will include suggested references for a student to begin preparations for the contest. All SWCDs will receive a packet of information in December. The Texas FFA Association will also receive the materials in December so that the information can be disseminated to all AgriScience teachers in the state.

SWCD Leadership Development Workshop

Sixty-six soil and water conservation districts responded to the workshop letter of intent to attend the February training.

The workshop is scheduled to be held in Temple on February 23-24. Beginning in November,

districts will begin receiving initial information about the workshop with subsequent information to be sent to them on a monthly basis.

NGZ Clipz Management Report

The TSSWCB recently subscribed to news clipping management service for the purpose of monitoring media that publish news articles about TSSWCB programs, SWCD activities, NRCS programs as well as keeping the TSSWCB informed on any matter of interest that impacts agency or district programs.

Region 4 Wildlife Contest

The Region 4 Wildlife Contest was held November 4th in the Stephen F. Austin State University Experimental Forest. Forty-nine FFA teams and 7 4-H teams participated in the event. A total of 100 youth participated in the FFA division while 25 4-H youth were represented in their respective division. Troy Caton of the Avery FFA chapter earned High Point individual while the Avery FFA Chapter scored High Point team with a total of 396 in team points. Meridith Ford of the Trinity County 4-H scored High Point individual while her 4-H team earned top spot in the 4-H division with total team points of 288. Top scoring teams in both the FFA and 4-H divisions received a \$200 cash award from the Association of Texas SWCDs PI/Education Committee.

TSSWCB Exhibits and Watershed Educational Module

Scheduled shows for TSSWCB exhibits for September, October and November are: Amarillo Farm and Ranch Show, Victoria Farm and Ranch Show, Annual State meeting in Corpus Christi and Harlingen Outreach Education Event.

The Watershed Educational module use for the months of September, October, and November are as follows:

Bedias Creek SWCD, Goldwaithe Ag Field Day and the Copperas Cove Independent School District.

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.

FY 2016 Area Ranking have been set and program staff will continue to evaluate efficiencies related to WQMP development and obligation and expenditure of cost-share funds. Staff will be reporting on findings to the State Board periodically throughout the fiscal year.

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

FY2011 – FY2015 CWA §319(h) Grant Status

There are currently 36 on-going §319(h) grant-funded projects addressing a wide array of agricultural and silvicultural NPS issues. Unliquidated federal funds for these 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).

FY2014 – FY2016 State Grant Status

There are currently 19 on-going projects addressing an array of agricultural and silvicultural NPS issues. Unliquidated state funds for these 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 Planning and Implementation

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 October 28, 2015, TSSWCB SRM staff [Brian Koch] attended a quarterly Galveston Bay Council meeting in Houston. This meeting featured presentations on the Gulf-Houston Regional Conservation Plan and the Galveston Bay Report Card. Also, the GBEP FY2017 Workplan was voted on and approved by the council. The workplan funds projects selected by the council subcommittees, to carry out their specific goals.

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.

More information, including meeting materials, is available at <http://www.tsswcb.texas.gov/cwp>.

STATE DISTRICT III

Arroyo Colorado

Impairment: Bacteria, Dissolved Oxygen
Concerns: Nutrients, Sediment
Mechanism: WPP, UAA

Lead: TCEQ
Project: "Implementing Best Management Practices to Reduce Agricultural Nonpoint Source Pollution in Support of the Arroyo Colorado Watershed Protection Plan", TSSWCB-Harlingen Regional Office; Federal \$183,741
Project: "Bacterial Source Tracking to Support Adaptive Management of the Arroyo Colorado Watershed Protection Plan", Texas Water Resources Institute/Texas A&M Institute of Renewable Natural Resources; Federal \$465,555/ External \$178,333
Project: "Education Programs Focused on Stakeholder Needs to Address Agricultural NPS in the Arroyo Colorado Watershed", Texas Water Resources Institute; State \$83,027

On October 29, 2015, TSSWCB SRM staff [Ashley Wendt] and Harlingen Regional Office staff [Ronnie Ramirez] attended an Arroyo Colorado Steering Committee Meeting in Weslaco. The meeting covered many aspects of updating the Arroyo Colorado WPP. University of Texas School of Public Health-EI Paso staff presented results on bacterial source tracking in the watershed. Two types of preliminary modeling results, Soil and Water Assessment Tool (SWAT) and CE-QUAL-W2, were also presented by Blackland Research Center and Texas Institute for Applied Environmental Research staff, respectively. Discussion was held on all three presentations by the stakeholders. Further workgroup and Steering Committee meetings will be held to further refine the models and their results, which will be included in the WPP update.

More information is available at <http://www.arroyocolorado.org/>. This WPP affects farming operations in the Arroyo Colorado watershed in Cameron, Hidalgo and Willacy Counties.

Copano Bay and Mission and Aransas Rivers

Impairment: Bacteria
Mechanism: TMDL, UAA
Lead: TCEQ (TMDL), TSSWCB (UAA)

On October 29, 2015, TSSWCB SRM staff [Brian Koch] attended a Mission and Aransas River TMDL/I-plan meeting in Refugio. This meeting was held to update stakeholders on the status of the project, which has been approved by TCEQ commissioners for public comment. Final approval should take place in the next few months.

More information on the TMDL is available at <http://www.tceq.texas.gov/waterquality/tmdl/42-copano.html> and on the RUAA at <http://www.tsswcb.texas.gov/managementprogram/aransaruua>. This TMDL will affect livestock operations in the Copano Bay and Mission and Aransas Rivers watershed in Bee, Goliad, Refugio, Karnes, Aransas and San Patricio Counties.

Lower Nueces River

Impairment: Total Dissolved Solids
Concern: Chlorophyll-a, Nutrients, Sediment
Mechanism: WPP
Lead: TSSWCB
Projects: "Development of the Lower Nueces River Watershed Protection Plan", Nueces River Authority; Federal \$309,727/External \$248,968

On October 20, 2015, TSSWCB SRM staff [Brian Koch] attended a Lower Nueces River WPP meeting in Corpus Christi. The stakeholders reviewed and approved the draft WPP at the meeting and voted to release the document for public comment.

More information, including the draft *Source Water Protection Plan*, is available at <http://www.nuecesriverpartnership.org/>. This WPP has the potential to affect livestock and farming operations in the Lower Nueces River watershed below Lake Corpus Christi in Jim Wells, Nueces, and San Patricio Counties.

STATE DISTRICT IV

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 November 10, 2015, TSSWCB SRM staff [Brian Koch] attended a Double Bayou WPP stakeholder meeting in Double Bayou. This meeting was held to update the stakeholders on the final chapters of the plan and to field questions and comments on the plan. The WPP is under stakeholder review and is expected to be completed in early 2016.

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 November 5, 2015, TSSWCB SRM staff [Ashley Wendt, Brian Koch] and Field Representative staff [Joel Clark] attended the first public meeting for the Navasota River WPP in College Station.

On November 10, 2015, TSSWCB SRM staff [Ashley Wendt] attended a public meeting for the Navasota River WPP in Franklin. Despite the low turnout to the meeting, attendees were very engaged and provided some very important history about the watershed. Stakeholders are key to making watershed planning effective.

More information is available at <http://navasota.tamu.edu/> or <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.

OTHER DISTRICT IV PROJECTS

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 October 26, 2015, the wetland restoration efforts at Sheldon Lake State Park were honored at the 31st Annual Mayor’s Proud Partners Luncheon in Houston. The restoration effort, partially funded by the TSSWCB with CWA §319(h) funds, was awarded the Proud Partner Award by Keep Houston Beautiful.

On October 29, 2015, TSSWCB SRM staff [Ashley Wendt] attended the Wetland Field Day at Sheldon Lake State Park in Houston. The field day presented an opportunity for the public to discover the unique approach used at Sheldon Lake State Park for restoring critical freshwater wetlands. Presentations by local experts involved in various aspects of the restoration were given in the morning. Then in the afternoon, a site visit to the wetlands was provided. More information on the restoration efforts can be found at <http://tcwp.tamu.edu/wetland-restoration/>.

STATE DISTRICT V

Leon River

Impairment: Bacteria, Dissolved Oxygen

Mechanism: WPP, TMDL, UAA

Lead: TCEQ (TMDL, UAA), TSSWCB (WPP)

Project: "Implementing Agricultural Nonpoint Source Components of the Leon River Watershed Protection Plan", Hamilton-Coryell SWCD; Federal \$159,498

Project: "Continued Coordinating Implementation of the Leon River Watershed Protection Plan", Texas Water Resources Institute; Federal \$229,159/External \$152,774

Project: "Implementation of the Leon River WPP through Technical and Financial Assistance to Repair or Replace On-Site Sewage Facilities in Hamilton County", Hamilton County; Federal \$358,559/External \$84,512

On November 10, 2015, TSSWCB SRM staff [Wesley Gibson] attended a public meeting for the Leon River Watershed in Hamilton. The watershed coordinator provided updates on efforts to implement management measures identified in the Leon River WPP and announced EPA’s acceptance of the WPP. Other discussion focused on external grants including money for feral hog abatement and the availability of financial assistance to homeowners for repair and replacement of failing septic systems in Hamilton and Coryell County. Also, the Hamilton-Coryell SWCD District Technician was introduced and gave an overview on the resources available through the SWCD. If you would like more information about the Leon River WPP please visit: <http://leonriver.tamu.edu/publications/>.

More information on the postponed bacteria TMDL is available at <http://www.tceq.texas.gov/waterquality/tmdl/34-leonbacteria.html>. More information on the WPP is available at <http://www.brazos.org/LeonRiverWPP.asp>. More information on the RUAA is available at <http://www.tceq.texas.gov/waterquality/standards/ruaas/ruaasbrazos>. The WPP, the TMDL, and the RUAA affect livestock operations in the Leon River watershed in Comanche, Coryell, Mills, Erath and Hamilton Counties.

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

Two Texas Watershed Steward workshops were held in Austin on October 14 and 15, 2015. Eighty people attended the workshops that were sponsored by the Texas A&M AgriLife Extension Service and TSSWCB. The trainings included an overview of water quality and watershed management in Texas as well as current efforts to help improve and protect Walnut Creek and other Austin Urban Waters. 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/>.

Upcoming Public Meetings

- December 2, 2015 – Texas Groundwater Protection Committee Public Outreach Education Subcommittee Meeting (Austin)
- December 3, 2015 – Riparian & Stream Ecosystem Workshop, Attoyac Bayou (Nacogdoches)
- December 8, 2015 – Texas Watershed Steward Workshop, Plum Creek (Lockhart)
- December 9, 2015 – Arroyo Colorado Watershed Partnership Ag Issues Workgroup Meeting (San Benito)

WATER SUPPLY ENHANCEMENT PROGRAM

In order to help meet the State's critical water conservation needs and ensure availability of water supplies, the 69th Texas Legislature established the Brush Control Program administered by the TSSWCB. Subsequently as a result of the Sunset review process, the 82nd Texas Legislature passed HB1808 which delineated major changes to TSSWCB's programs, including the elimination of the Brush Control Program, effective September 2011. HB1808 established a new program administered by the TSSWCB, the Water Supply Enhancement Program (WSEP), with the purpose of increasing 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 84th Texas Legislature continued funding for the WSEP by providing \$2,638,413 in general revenue funds to the TSSWCB for FY2016.

Staff Activities

On November 5, 2015, TSSWCB staff met, via conference call, with staff from Upper Colorado River Authority and the Texas Institute for Applied Environmental Research to discuss the draft Brush Control Feasibility Study for the *O.H. Ivie Reservoir Lake Basin*.

RIO GRANDE CARRIZO CANE ERADICATION PROGRAM

Large dense stands of invasive, non-native carrizo cane (*Arundo donax*) now occupy the banks and floodplains of the Rio Grande, thwarting law enforcement efforts along the international border, impeding and concealing the detection of criminal activity, restricting law enforcement officers' access to riverbanks, and impairing the ecological function and biodiversity of the Rio Grande.

In order to help meet the Governor's border security priorities, the 84th Texas Legislature, in 2015, directed the TSSWCB, through SB1734, to develop and implement a program to eradicate carrizo cane along the Rio Grande. More information on the Rio Grande Carrizo Cane Eradication Program (RGCCEP) is available at <http://www.tsswcb.texas.gov/arundo>.

On November 10, 2015, TSSWCB staff attended the Starr County SWCD #332 Ranchers Round-Up at the Fausto Salinas Ranch near Sullivan City. A presentation on Carrizo Cane was given by TSSWCB staff.

FLOOD CONTROL DAM PROGRAMS

The 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 FY2016, \$1,000,000 was available for sponsors to submit proposals to complete O&M work. To date a total of 38 proposals have been received. 35 proposals have been approved to

complete O&M activities in the amount of \$770,399.18, leaving a remaining balance \$229,600.82.

Structural Repair Grants

FY2015 -TSSWCB has contracted with the Ellis-Prairie SWCD to complete needed repairs on Chambers Creek site 5, in Ellis County. The TSSWCB has also contracted with Wise County to complete needed repairs on Denton Creek site 17, in Wise County using \$222,948.00.

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.



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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.