



# TEXAS STATE SOIL & WATER CONSERVATION BOARD

## Program News and Activities

SEPTEMBER 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, November 19, 2014** and a formal State Board Meeting on **Thursday, November 20, 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](mailto:kpreece@tsswcb.texas.gov).

### BUDGET AND ACCOUNTING

- September 30<sup>th</sup> was the deadline for submitting FY2014 4<sup>th</sup> Quarter claims and the return of unused advance funds.
- September 30<sup>th</sup> was the deadline for submitting FY2014 regular and supplemental claims.
- October 15<sup>th</sup> advance payments for FY2015 will be made.
- October 30<sup>th</sup> is the deadline for submitting claims for the FY 2014 NRCS Administrative Assistance Grant. Claims must be work performed October 1, 2013 thru September 30, 2014.

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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## HUMAN RESOURCES

TSSWCB is currently recruiting for the following position:

- Administrative Assistant-Temple Office
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## 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.

Annual State Meeting of SWCD Directors  
Mark your calendars for October 27-29, 2014 and plan on attending the 74<sup>th</sup> Annual State Meeting held in Galveston.

Reservations opened May 1<sup>st</sup>. 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.

Pre-Registration forms are available at:  
<http://www.tsswcb.texas.gov/en/swcnds/annualmeeting>

If you are paying by credit card please call 254-773-2250 ext. 248.

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

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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.

FY2014 Water Quality Management Plan Program results:

- 249 Water Quality Management Plans certified on 143,764 total acres
- 577 acres on average per WQMP
- 16,000 acres of cropland
- 19,000 acres of pasture/hayland
- 98,000 acres of rangeland
- 6,500 acres under irrigation management

Environmental Measures:

- 498,185 lbs of nitrogen loading reduced
- 52,166 lbs of phosphorus loading reduced
- 11,354 tons of sediment loading reduced

FY2015

On September 9, 2014 the regional Offices conducted a ranking exercise to rank all Request for Cost-Share Incentive Funding. Results of that ranking will be provided at the next board meeting.

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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

### **FY2009 – FY2013 CWA §319(h) Grant Status**

There are currently 31 on-going §319(h) grant-funded projects addressing a wide array of agricultural and silvicultural NPS issues. Unliquidated federal funds for these 31 on-going projects total approximately \$9 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).

### **FY2015 Request for Proposals**

On July 4, 2014, TSSWCB SRM staff issued the FY2015 Request for Proposals (RFP) for the NPS Grant Program. The RFP was published in the Texas Register, posted on the TSSWCB website, and all SWCDs and cooperating entities were notified of this funding opportunity. TSSWCB SRM staff identified priority areas and activities for this funding cycle based on the Texas NPS Management Program and the 2012 Integrated Report. The deadline for proposal submission closed on August 22, 2014. Twenty-three proposals were submitted through the RFP process. TSSWCB SRM staff are currently evaluating and ranking the proposals.

### **FY2012 – FY2014 State Grant Status**

There are currently 17 on-going projects addressing an array of agricultural and silvicultural NPS issues. Unliquidated state funds for these 17 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 Coordination Activities

### **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 August 26, 2014, TSSWCB SRM staff [Brian Koch] attended a CRP Stakeholder meeting for the San Antonio River Basin in Berclair. This meeting gave an update on the Clean Rivers Program for the San Antonio River Authority, including SWQM activities and other water quality related activities. Also, SARA's parks plan was reviewed, along with their Environmental Investigation program, and a presentation on Bacteria Source Tracking that is being done in the basin. More information may be found at [https://www.sara-tx.org/major\\_initiatives/water\\_monitoring/clean\\_rivers\\_program/index.php](https://www.sara-tx.org/major_initiatives/water_monitoring/clean_rivers_program/index.php).

More information on CRP is available at <http://www.tceq.texas.gov/waterquality/clean-rivers/index.html>.

### **Southeast and South Central Texas Regional Watershed Coordination Steering Committee**

The Southeast and South Central Texas Regional Watershed Coordination Steering Committee (WCSC) is composed of about two dozen water

quality monitoring and improvement partners, including other state and federal agencies, river authorities, national estuary programs and councils of governments. The WCSC is tasked with providing guidance to TSSWCB SRM staff on watershed planning activities in 47 counties across southeast and south central Texas.

On September 4, 2014, TSSWCB SRM staff [Brian Koch, Liza Marshall, Ashley Wendt] attended a quarterly Southeast and South Central Texas Watershed Coordination Steering Committee meeting in Columbus. This meeting featured presentations on the Sheldon Lake Wetland restoration project and constituents in surface-water and streambed-sediments in and near the Eagle Ford Shale Play. TSSWCB SRM staff also led a discussion on future presentations and priorities for the WCSC.

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

### **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 September 11, 2014, TSSWCB SRM staff [Brian Koch] attended a GBC Water and Sediment Quality subcommittee meeting in Houston. This meeting was held to prioritize proposed projects for the FY16 funding cycle for the Galveston Bay Estuary Program. Projects ranged from water quality sampling from different implementation and demonstration projects to detection of harmful algal blooms. These projects are expected to help improve the estuary and to increase knowledge of the system.

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.

### **Annual Texas A&M Forest Service Wetland / BMP Coordinating Committee Meeting**

On September 8-9, 2014, TSSWCB SRM staff [Wesley Gibson] attended the annual Texas A&M Forest Service Wetland / BMP Coordinating Committee. Held in Bastrop, this conference featured a tour of the wildfire recovery at Bastrop State Park. The fire that occurred in the Lost Pines region is the largest wildfire in Texas history and is the perfect site to see the impact of forestry best management practices. This two day conference was a chance to exchange ideas, available resources between agencies and techniques on all aspects of managing water quality.

Water Quality Planning and Implementation

### **STATE DISTRICT III**

#### **Geronimo Creek**

Impairment: Bacteria

Mechanism: WPP

Lead: TSSWCB

Project: "Water Quality Monitoring in the Geronimo Creek Watershed and Facilitation of the Geronimo and Alligator Creeks Watershed Partnership", Guadalupe-Blanco River Authority; Federal \$292,421/ External \$191,435

Project: "Implementing Agricultural Nonpoint Source Components of the Geronimo and Alligator Creeks Watershed Protection Plan", Comal-Guadalupe SWCD #306; Federal \$155,973

Project: "Implementation of the Geronimo and Alligator Creeks Watershed Protection Plan"; State \$155,215

On September 9, 2014, TSSWCB SRM Staff [Jana Lloyd, Brian Koch] attended a Geronimo and Alligator Creeks Watershed Partnership meeting in Seguin. The watershed coordinator gave updates of recent events that have taken place in the watershed as well as upcoming

events. The meeting focused on rainwater harvesting that was presented by the Guadalupe County Master Gardeners.

More information is available at <http://geronimocreek.org/>. This WPP affects ranching and farming operations in the Geronimo Creek watershed in Guadalupe and Comal Counties.

### **STATE DISTRICT IV**

#### **Other State District IV Projects**

Project: "Recreational Use Attainability Analysis for Ten Creeks in the Red River and Neches Basins", Texas Institute for Applied Environmental Research at Tarleton State University: State \$406,298\*

On August 25, 2014, TSSWCB SRM staff [Wesley Gibson] participated in a public meeting in Chandler to discuss an ongoing RUAA on Kickapoo Creek in Henderson County and the Neches River above Lake Palestine and inform local stakeholders on the findings of the first field survey. More information on this RUAA is available at <http://tiaer.tarleton.edu/ruaa/index.html>.

On September 15, 2014, TSSWCB SRM staff [Wesley Gibson] participated in a public meeting in Rusk to discuss an ongoing RUAA on Mud and West Mud Creeks and inform local stakeholders on the findings of the first field survey. More information on this RUAA is available at <http://tiaer.tarleton.edu/ruaa/index.html>.

On September 16, 2014, TSSWCB SRM staff [Wesley Gibson] participated in a public meeting in Tyler to discuss an ongoing RUAA on Mud, West Mud, Prairie Creeks and the Neches River above Lake Palestine to inform local stakeholders on the findings of the first field survey. More information on this RUAA is available at <http://tiaer.tarleton.edu/ruaa/index.html>

### Upcoming Public Meetings

- October 7, 2014 – OSSF Workshop, San Marcos (San Marcos)
- October 7, 2014 – Lower Nueces River Watershed Partnership Meeting (Corpus Christi)
- October 7, 2014 – Cedar Bayou Watershed Partnership Steering Committee Meeting (Baytown)
- October 9, 2014 – Upper San Antonio River I-plan Meeting (San Antonio)
- October 13, 2014 – OSSF Homeowner Education Workshop (Hamilton)
- October 14, 2014 – Texas Watershed Stewards, Atascosa and Frio Rivers (Jourdanton)
- October 27 – 29, 2014 – 74th Annual Meeting of SWCDs (Galveston)

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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> Legislature continued funding for the WSEP by providing \$2,135,413 in General Revenue Funds in FY2015.

- The agency's internal auditor completed the Final Report on the audit of the WSEP. The objective of the audit was to assess all aspects of the WSEP and the changes implemented by the agency in response to the Sunset legislation (HB1808) in order to determine compliance with requirements in the Agriculture Code. The Report concludes that the agency "has implemented the necessary administrative rules, policies and operating procedures to comply with all provisions of... HB1808

related to the WSEP" and that the agency "is doing an excellent job of implementing the directives of the Legislature as it makes changes to the... overall operations of the WSEP." Further, the report makes no recommendations for improvement.

- WSEP staff completed 96 Status Reviews on GR2011 cost-share contracts throughout various project areas. The agency is required by statute to periodically inspect, over the course of each 10-year conservation plan, the status of brush control conducted with WSEP funds.
- WSEP staff assisted SWCD Directors with WSEP issues at board meetings for the Pedernales SWCD #218, Bandera SWCD #229, Kerr County SWCD #217, Upper Nueces-Frio SWCD #238, Gillespie County SWCD #220, and Kendall SWCD #216.
- 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 (September 3, 2014; Waco).
- On September 1, 2014, the public comment period closed on the Texas Water Development Board 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.

- On September 2, 2014, WSEP staff met with the Texas Parks and Wildlife Department (TPWD) to discuss the TPWD Ecological Mapping Systems of Texas database and other TPWD GIS-based land management support tools, as well as the WSEP geospatial analysis methodology used for prioritizing acreage for brush control.
- On September 2, 2014, WSEP staff attended the Frio SWCD #325 meeting in Pearsall to provide information to the District regarding comments from the Nueces River Authority on the State Water Supply Enhancement Plan.
- On September 4, 2014, the Legislative Budget Board and the Governor's Office of Budget, Planning, and Policy held a Joint Budget Hearing in Austin relating to the agency's Legislative Appropriations Request (LAR) for the 2016-2017 biennium. In addition to the base request for WSEP funding, an exceptional item request was included in the LAR for \$2 million across the biennium for WSEP funding in order to partially meet unmet demand for cost-share to landowners and to conduct new feasibility studies.
- On September 18, 2014, the State Board approved the allocation of \$1,436,590 in FY2015 cost-share funds to 13 WSEP projects. WSEP staff will be sending a letter to all SWCDs regarding these allocations.
- On September 23, 2014, the Texas House of Representatives Committee on Agriculture and Livestock held a hearing in Austin relating to the Committee's interim charges, including oversight of the agencies and programs under the Committee's jurisdiction. The Committee heard nearly three and a half hours of invited and public testimony on the WSEP. An archived video of the hearing is available at <http://www.house.state.tx.us/video-audio/committee-broadcasts/>.

- 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 \$745,406 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. To date the contractor has started removing soil from the dam embankment. This material will be lime treated and reapplied at a later date.

TSSWCB has signed ten Project Agreements with NRCS for \$13. million in federal rehabilitation funding for planning, design, and construction on 14 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>.

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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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(254) 773-2250 <http://www.tsswcb.texas.gov>  
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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