



Texas State Soil and Water Conservation Board

Quarterly Program Update: Fall 2021



81st Annual Meeting of Texas Soil and Water Conservation District Directors Recently Held in Round Rock

The Texas State Soil and Water Conservation Board (TSSWCB) recently hosted the 81st Annual Meeting of Texas Soil and Water Conservation District (SWCD) Directors. The meeting was held at Kalahari Resort in Round Rock on October 4-6, 2021.

With over 500 people in attendance, the meeting provided SWCD Directors, employees, and conservation partners from across the state the opportunity to address a wide variety of agricultural and conservation issues in Texas as well as learning opportunities.

During the three-day event, a variety of committee meetings were held to discuss issues and highlight important areas to target during the upcoming year. Matt Rush of Levelland, addressed the group during the general session as the keynote speaker.

The 2021 Conservation Award Winners were recognized during the Awards Luncheon for their great work in preserving and protecting the natural resources of Texas. The 2021 Award Winners are as follows, Parker County SWCD #558, Outstanding SWCD, Todd Westerfeld of Moody, Conservation Farmer, Broken W Partnership of Odem, Conservation Rancher, Stephen Deiss of Victoria County, Friend of Conservation, Sherrilyn Welch of Howard County, Conservation Teacher, Quinn Ranch of McCulloch County, Wildlife Conservationist, Cadence De La Rosa of Riviera, Poster Contest Winner, Blaine Dahl of Channing, Jr. Essay Contest Winner, Brianna Latray of Limestone Falls, Sr. Essay Contest Winner.

Workshops were held on Tuesday afternoon covering topics ranging from eminent domain, wild pigs, hemp production in Texas, policy initiatives and a successful SWCD panel.

On Wednesday, participants took part in a conservation tour at Texas Disposal Systems (TDS) Exotic Wildlife Ranch and Recycling Center. The Exotic Wildlife Game Ranch is used primarily as a breeding and conservation operation. The operation is home to more than 2,000 animals from over 100 different species. Dozens of these breeds are considered endangered; some can only thrive in captivity. Many inhabitants from six of the seven continents—including species from Africa, Asia, Australia, Europe, North America, and South America—safely co-exist on the preserve.

Program Updates

• BUDGET & ACCOUNTING

- The TSSWCB has RESTORED SWCD Information Technology Assistance and SWCD Audit reimbursements for Fiscal Year 2022.
- The TSSWCB has approved an Operating Budget for Fiscal Year 2022. The approved budget is available at the Agency Reports section on the TSSWCB website.
- An updated version of the SWCD Manual of Fiscal Operations is available at the SWCD resources section on the TSSWCB website.

Important Dates and Deadlines for Calendar Year 2021

- Final payments for Fiscal Year 2021 District Director Mileage and Per Diem will be made on November 1st. Advance payments for Fiscal Year 2022 District Director Mileage and Per Diem will NOT be made, all payments for Fiscal Year 2022 will be reimbursement only. Claim forms for attending the 2021 Annual Meeting are available at the SWCDs resource section on the TSSWCB website.
- Supplemental Technical Assistance and Matching Fund claims for FY21 are scheduled to be paid on November 8th.
- Supplemental payments for the FY21 Conservation Activity Program are scheduled to be paid on November 8th.
- The deadline for submitting annual financial statements prepared by the SWCD is October 30th. The deadline for submitting annual financial statements, reviews, or audits prepared by a CPA is December 30th.
- Technical Service Provider (Farm Bill Assistance) allocations for the new year will be distributed to SWCDs on October 8th.

Please note the SWCDs resource section on the TSSWCB website contains documents, forms and important updates to SWCDs in conducting their daily business operations. Please continue to check the resources section.

• FLOOD CONTROL PROGRAM

The State Board approved \$2,000,000 for dam operation and maintenance (O&M) grants for fiscal year 2022. All of this funding has been obligated. Watershed sponsors may continue to submit proposals for potential funding in FY 2022 in case additional funds become available. Work on funded proposals must be completed within 90 days of Purchase Order date. For FY 2022, \$6,000,000 is available for structural repair. It is anticipated that most of these funds will be used to cover high bids on previously funded ESF projects. Staff have contracted with sponsors for construction of 54 dam repairs and 15 high hazard dam upgrades. Thirty-five dam repairs have been completed. Federal construction funds and state ESF matching funds have been obligated on 6 federal rehabilitation projects. Federal rehabilitation planning continues on 9 high hazard dams. Currently, \$108 million is needed to repair about 160 flood control program dams in Texas, and \$2.0 Billion is needed to upgrade and rehabilitate about 500 high hazard dams where downstream urban development has resulted in public safety issues. Additional ESF funding for FY 2022 was not provided during the legislative session which ended May 31, 2021.

• WATER QUALITY MANAGEMENT PLAN PROGRAM

With the enactment of Senate Bill 503 (73rd Regular Session - Sims/Counts) 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. For FY2021 as of August 31, 198 WQMPs have been certified on 130,740 total acres.

• FERAL SWINE CONTROL PILOT PROGRAM

Staff has been working with project partners to develop and implement the Feral Swine Control Pilot Program in the Round I project areas. As of June 30, 2021, local SWCDs have purchased 64 smart traps that have been utilized on 107,840 acres by 48 landowners. Landowners have trapped 688 feral hogs through the trap loan efforts.

• CARRIZO CANE ERADICATION PROGRAM

Staff contacted participating landowners to plan treatment and determine plant health of Carrizo cane to be treated in FY 22. Also, staff continued outreach to landowners to provide information on the program. The Carrizo Cane Program treated a total 7,875.9 acres of cane, totaling \$1,063,233.00, utilizing FY21 funds.

Program Updates Continued

• COMMUNICATIONS & OUTREACH

- ANNUAL MEETING OF TEXAS SWCD DIRECTORS

Thank you to 500 attendees who made the trip to Round Rock to attend the 81st Annual Meeting of Texas Soil and Water Conservation District Directors!

- 2022 LEADERSHIP DEVELOPMENT WORKSHOP

We will host an in-person Leadership Development Workshop in Temple, February 8th-9th. More information about the event will be released soon.

- SOIL STEWARDSHIP PUBLIC SPEAKING CONTEST

The theme for the 2022 Soil Stewardship Public Speaking Contest in partnership with the Texas FFA and ATSWCD is "Healthy Soil, Healthy Life." The state contest was held in-person on July 12, 2022 in conjunction with the Texas FFA State Convention in Fort Worth. For more information visit our website.

- WILDLIFE ALLIANCE FOR YOUTH

The Region and State Wildlife Contest dates have been set and are as follows:

Region I: April 12, 2022

Region II: April 11, 2022

Region III: March 30, 2022

Region IV: November 3, 2021

Region V: April 4, 2022

State: April 19, 2022

• NONPOINT SOURCE GRANT PROGRAM

FY2022 Request for Proposals

On August 13, 2021, staff issued the FY2022 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 the funding opportunity. TSSWCB Staff identified priority areas and activities for this funding cycle based on the Texas NPS Management Program and the Integrated Report. The RFP closed on September 24, 2021. The TSSWCB received 19 proposals from various entities across the state, requesting approximately 7.7 million in funding. Staff is currently reviewing the proposals.

Revision of the Texas Nonpoint Source Management Program

The federal Clean Water Act (CWA) §319(b) requires States to develop, and submit to the U.S. Environmental Protection Agency (EPA) for approval, a program to protect the quality of water resources from the adverse effects of nonpoint source (NPS) water pollution. The Texas Nonpoint Source Management Program is the State's comprehensive strategy to protect and restore water quality in waterbodies impacted by nonpoint sources of water pollution. The Management Program is jointly administered by the TSSWCB and the Texas Commission on Environmental Quality (TCEQ). The State must have a federal-approved Management Program in order to receive CWA §319(h) grant funds from EPA.

The Management Program was last submitted to EPA in December 2017 for a five year period.

The proposed 2022 Texas NPS Management Program document has been jointly developed by staff of TSSWCB and TCEQ consistent with regulatory guidance from EPA to satisfy requirements of the federal CWA. The proposed document incorporates EPA's nine components of an effective program; establishes long- and short-term goals for the program; provides for the coordination of NPS-related programs and activities conducted by federal, state, regional, and local entities; and prioritizes assessment, planning, and implementation activities in priority watersheds and aquifers. The proposed document also describes the mechanisms for tracking and reporting success in achieving the goals and objectives of the program.

The public comment period for the draft 2022 Texas NPS Management Program document was from June 4, 2021 through July 5, 2021. On June 21, 2021, TSSWCB staff, in collaboration with TCEQ staff, hosted a virtual public comment meeting. No comments were received during this meeting or during the comment period.