



Texas State Soil and Water Conservation Board

Quarterly Program Update: Winter 2019

TSSWCB Receives Funding from USDA-NRCS to Address Feral Swine in Texas

The United States Department of Agriculture (USDA) recently announced it is awarding more than \$1.4 million to the Texas State Soil and Water Conservation Board (TSSWCB) to fund three pilot projects to control feral swine in Texas.

These projects are a part of the Feral Swine Eradication and Control Pilot Program which is a joint effort between USDA-Natural Resources Conservation Service (NRCS) and Animal and Plant Health Inspection Service (APHIS) to help address the issues that feral swine pose to agriculture, ecosystems as well as human and animal health.

Feral swine cause a high level of economic, biologic and natural resource damage. The species are also a threat to Texas waterways and ecosystems as their numbers rapidly increase. Texas is a private-land state, with 83% of its land mass in family-owned farms, ranches and forests. Consequently, providing learning opportunities to landowners about effective management strategies remains crucial to the success of abating damages associated with feral swine.

TSSWCB will work in partnership with Soil and Water Conservation Districts (SWCDs), USDA-NRCS, APHIS, Texas A&M Natural Resources Institute (NRI) and the Texas Wildlife Damage Management Association to administer the Feral Swine Control Pilot Program (FSCPP). The program will focus on three main areas across Texas including the Canadian River Watershed, Upper Leon River Watershed and the Upper Red River Watershed. FSCPP will consist of a “smart trap” loan program, educational and outreach activities, as well as hiring six trapping technicians to assist with restoration efforts.

Landowners in the following counties may be eligible for assistance from technicians to trap feral swine on their property. The Canadian River Watershed Project area encompasses Hartley, Oldham, and Potter Counties, and which are under the direction of the Hartley, Oldham County, and Canadian River Soil and Water Conservation Districts. The Upper Leon River project area encompasses Eastland, Comanche, and Erath Counties, which are under the direction of the Cross Timbers and Upper Leon Soil and Water Conservation Districts. The Red River Project area encompasses Harde- man, Wilbarger, Wichita, and Clay Counties which are under the direction of the Wilbarger, Wichita, Little Wichita, and Lower Pease River Soil and Water Conservation Districts.

Contact Liza Parker at 254-773-2250 or by email at lparker@tsswcb.texas.gov. For more information visit: <https://www.tsswcb.texas.gov/feral-swine-texas>

Program Updates

• BUDGET & ACCOUNTING

District Director Mileage & Per Diem

-November 1st supplemental payments for Fiscal Year 2019 were made.

Matching Funds

-November 1st supplemental payments for Fiscal Year 2019 were made.

Technical Service Provider (Administrative Assistance Grant)

-September 30th was the deadline for submitting claims for the FY 2019 NRCS Technical Service Provider (Administrative Assistance Grant).

Conservation Implementation (TA)

-November 1st supplemental payments for Fiscal Year 2019 were made.

Conservation Activity Program (CAP)

-November 15th supplemental payments for Fiscal Year 2019 were made.

Financial Statements

-October 31st was the deadline for submitting Financial Statements prepared by the SWCD.

-December 31st deadline for submitting Financial Statement, Reviews, and Audits prepared by a CPA.

• PUBLIC INFORMATION & EDUCATION

2020 SOIL STEWARDSHIP PUBLIC SPEAKING CONTEST

The theme for the 2020 Soil Stewardship Public Speaking Contest is “Where would we BEE without Pollinators?” Material for the 2020 program will be developed in December and made available to SWCDS and Texas FFA students in the latter part of December. The annual theme coincides with the National Association of Conservation Districts annual program.

SWCD LEADERSHIP DEVELOPMENT CONFERENCE

The training workshop is scheduled for February 25-26, 2020 at the Hilton Garden Inn. Room blocks for the event have been set up at the Hilton Garden Inn, Holiday Inn Express & Suites Temple Medical Center and the Fairfield Inn & Suites. Registration packets to new directors will be sent out December 2nd and a general letter of invitation will be sent to all SWCDS on December 16th.

• FLOOD CONTROL PROGRAM

At the July board meeting, the State Board approved \$4,935,000 for dam operation and maintenance (O&M) grants for fiscal year 2020. Watershed sponsors are encouraged to submit proposals for O&M work that they are ready to implement and provide the local 10% share of cost. Work on funded proposals must be completed within 90 days of Purchase Order date. TSSWCB received a supplemental appropriation of \$150 million from the Economic Stabilization Fund (ESF) in fiscal year 2019 for dam repair, rehabilitation, and upgrade. This funding must be obligated by June 5, 2021. Staff are currently contracting with sponsors for construction of 13 dam repairs. Five additional dam designs will be completed and ready for construction by December. TSSWCB is also contracting with engineering firms and NRCS for design of 36 additional dam repairs and 20 dam upgrades, as well as construction inspection of 18 dam repairs. Three dam repairs are currently under construction. Applications for additional dam repair and dam upgrade may be submitted if sponsors are ready to fund the local 5% share of the project cost. TSSWCB has also received federal funding for development of rehabilitation plans on 9 high hazard dams, assessment of 60 high hazard dams, and additional construction funding on seven high hazard dams that are currently being designed. Currently, \$76 million is needed to repair about 200 flood control program dams in Texas, and \$1.5 Billion is needed to upgrade and rehabilitate about 500 high hazard dams where downstream urban development has resulted in public safety issues.

Program Updates Continued

• COMMUNICATIONS

2019 ANNUAL MEETING OF SOIL AND WATER CONSERVATION DISTRICT DIRECTORS

We would like to thank everyone who attended the 2019 Annual Meeting in San Antonio, there were over 715 attendees! We hope you can join us October 26-28, 2020 at Moody Gardens in Galveston and October 4-6, 2021 at Kalahari Resort in Round Rock!

2020 CONSERVATION AWARDS PROGRAM

Area qualifying entries must be postmarked by January 31, 2020. Please contact Molly Christensen at 254-228-7881 or by emailing mchristensen@tsswcb.texas.gov

• 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 FY2020 as of November 18, 48 WQMPs have been certified on 22,482 total acres.

• NONPOINT SOURCE GRANT PROGRAM

On August 16, 2019, staff issued the FY2020 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 2014 Integrated Report. The RFP closed on September 27, 2019. The TSSWCB received 25 proposals from various entities across the state, requesting approximately \$6.5 million in federal funding with a total of \$10 million requested federally and external funding. Staff is currently scoring and ranking the proposals.

• CARRIZO CANE ERADICATION PROGRAM

In FY16: 760 acres were treated in Maverick County, FY17: 2,727 acres were treated in Val Verde County and Maverick County, FY18: 64.4 acres were treated in Cameron County and FY19: 3,529.3 acres were treated in Val Verde, Kinney, Maverick, and Cameron counties for a total of 7,080.7 acres treated.

• HUMAN RESOURCES

TSSWCB currently has 1 position open, an Accountant II in Temple. For more information visit: www.tsswcb.texas.gov/contact-us/employment

• ENHANCING AND RESTORING THE MONARCH BUTTERFLY HABITAT IN TEXAS

The TSSWCB project, Enhancing and Restoring Monarch Butterfly Habitat in Texas ended on September 30, 2019. Through this effort, TSSWCB partnered with the National Fish and Wildlife Foundation (NFWF) and USDA Natural Resources Conservation Service (NRCS) to work together to enhance and restore Monarch Butterfly habitat in Texas by working with private landowners to enhance/restore 1-30 acre plots, or entities with public spaces to create Monarch Butterfly urban gardens. In total, seventy-four monarch conservation plans were developed and implemented, including 1,286 acres of Monarch habitat restoration/enhancement, and 15 urban gardens that were installed in public spaces, such as schools, city parks, or Soil and Water Conservation District offices.