TSSWCB Receives Over $3.7 Million from EPA to Address Water Quality Impairments

The Texas State Soil and Water Conservation Board (TSSWCB) recently received a $3,729,500 grant from the U.S. Environmental Protection Agency (EPA). The grant is leveraging an additional $2,486,334 in non-federal funds for a total of $6,215,834.

TSSWCB will utilize the funding to help address water quality impairments across Texas. Projects include implementing agricultural components of watershed protection plans for Plum Creek, Geronimo and Alligator Creeks, Attoyac Bayou, Arroyo Colorado and Mill Creek. In addition, the funds will provide educational and outreach opportunities for landowners to learn about feral hog management through the Lone Star Healthy Streams Program.

“TSSWCB is proud to work with conservation partners and Soil and Water Conservation Districts to provide technical and financial assistance to landowners in impaired watersheds to implement conservation practices,” said Jana Lloyd, Nonpoint Source Management Program Project Manager.

Established by the Texas Legislature in 1939, the TSSWCB is governed by seven board members, all of which are actively involved in agriculture or silviculture. Five of the board members are voted in by a delegation of their local peers, and two board members are appointed by the Governor of Texas.

TSSWCB works in conjunction with local SWCDs across Texas to encourage the wise and productive use of natural resources. TSSWCB is the lead agency for planning, implementing, and managing coordinated natural resource conservation programs for preventing and abating agricultural and silvicultural nonpoint sources of water pollution. TSSWCB also works to ensure that the State’s network of over 2,000 flood control dams are protecting lives and property by providing operation, maintenance, and structural repair grants to local government sponsors.

For more information visit: https://www.tsswcb.texas.gov/programs/texas-non-point-source-management-program
Program Updates

• BUDGET & ACCOUNTING

District Director Mileage & Per Diem
- October 15th advance payments for Fiscal Year 2019 will be made.
- November 1st supplemental payments for Fiscal Year 2019 will be made.

Matching Funds
- November 1st supplemental payments for Fiscal Year 2019 will be made.

Technical Service Provider (Administrative Assistance Grant)
- September 30th is 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 will be made.

Conservation Activity Program (CAP)
- November 1st supplemental payments for Fiscal Year 2019 will be made.

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

*Important Dates/Deadlines for Calendar Year ‘19 are on the SWCD Resources page on the TSSWCB website.*

• COMMUNICATIONS

2019 ANNUAL MEETING OF SOIL AND WATER CONSERVATION DISTRICT DIRECTORS
The 2019 Annual Meeting will be held October 27-30, 2019 at the Hyatt Regency Hill Country Resort in San Antonio. The hotel room block and pre-registration will close on October 1st. The deadline for refunds is October 7th, please send an email to Molly to request a refund. For more information visit: https://www.tsswcb.texas.gov/annual-meeting-swcd-directors or contact Molly Christensen at 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 FY2019 as of August 31, 183 WQMPs have been certified on 80,400 total acres.

• NONPOINT SOURCE GRANT PROGRAM

FY2019 Grant Award
The FY2019 Clean Water Act §319(h) NPS Grant award has been approved with an effective date of September 1, 2019. Staff is currently initiating contracts for 10 new projects. The FY2019 grant award is for a total of $6.2 million with $3.7 million federal and a 40% non-federal match portion of $2.5 million.

FY2020 Request for Proposals
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 deadline for proposal submission is September 27, 2019.
• **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 11 dam repairs. Seven additional dam designs will be completed and ready for construction by October. TSSWCB is also contracting with engineering firms for design of 19 additional dam repairs and 20 dam upgrades, as well as construction inspection of 13 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 and assessment of 60 high hazard dams. 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.

• **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: 66 acres were treated in Cameron County and FY19: 3,046.3 were treated in Val Verde, Kinney, and Maverick Counties for a total of 6,599.3 acres treated. **NOTE: Treatment conducted in Cameron County in August 2019 is not reflected in this summary because it is still being measured.**

• **HUMAN RESOURCES**

TSSWCB currently has 2 positions open, an Accountant II in Temple and a Natural Resources Specialist III in Mt. Pleasant. For more information visit: www.tsswcb.texas.gov/contact-us/employment

• **NATIONAL ASSOCIATION OF CONSERVATION DISTRICTS GRANT STATUS REPORT**

The Texas State Soil and Water Conservation Board (TSSWCB) and National Association of Conservation Districts (NACD) are working together in an effort with Soil and Water Conservation Districts (SWCD) to further enhance conservation district technical assistance across the state from a $337,000 grant through the NACD. Projects have been initiated in Lubbock County SWCD #108, Howard SWCD #243, Starr County SWCD #332, Red River SWCD #423, and Hill County-Blackland SWCD #540.

• **CONSERVATION PLANS TO RESTORE THE HEALTH OF THE GULF COAST**

The TSSWCB project, Conservation Plans to Restore the Health of the Gulf Coast closed on August 31, 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 create and enhance healthy habitat for coastal migratory and shore birds in the Gulf of Mexico region by developing conservation plans for farmers, ranchers, and private landowners that address natural resource concerns that impact wildlife habitat. Within the thirty-two coastal counties that were included in the project, 117 conservation plans were written that encompass almost 70,000 acres. By receiving a conservation plan, these coastal landowners may now have the opportunity to receive financial assistance from NRCS through the Environmental Quality Incentives Program (EQIP) or TSSWCB’s Water Quality Management Plan Program.