



Texas State Soil and Water Conservation Board

Quarterly Program Update: Spring 2020

Governor Abbott Reappoints Buford To Texas State Soil and Water Conservation Board

Governor Greg Abbott has reappointed Tina Yturria Buford to the Texas State Soil and Water Conservation Board (TSSWCB) for a term set to expire on February 1, 2022. Buford joined the Board in May of 2017.

“There is a wealth of institutional knowledge within the staff and volunteer leaders of the TSSWCB and the many local Soil and Water Conservation Districts (SWCDs) across Texas. I am honored to be given the opportunity to learn from them while serving alongside them,” said Buford.

Buford is a strong advocate for conservation in Texas and has a wealth of knowledge related to land stewardship, ranching and wildlife management. She currently serves as the Director of Education for the East Foundation, delivering programming, knowledge and leaderships to the youth of South Texas. Buford is also an active member in various conservation organizations such as Texan By Nature, Texas Wildlife Association, Sand County Foundation and the Texas & Southwest Cattle Raisers Association and was appointed to the Governor’s Commission for Women in 2016. Buford received a Bachelor of Science in rangeland ecology and management from Texas A&M University at College Station and a certificate in ranch management from the Texas Christian University School of Ranch Management. Tina and her husband, Trey, have two sons, Cisco and William.

“We are honored to have Mrs. Buford serving on our board alongside an outstanding group of individuals pursuing the protection and enhancement of the natural resources of Texas. We will continue to work to provide our SWCDs and landowners across the state the tools they need to put conservation efforts on the ground,” said Rex Isom, TSSWCB Executive Director.

TSSWCB established in 1939, administers Texas’ soil and water conservation law and delivers coordinated natural resource conservation programs through the State’s 216 Soil and Water Conservation Districts. Additionally, TSSWCB is the lead agency for planning, implementing, and managing programs for preventing and abating agricultural and silvicultural nonpoint sources of water pollution. TSSWCB also works to ensure that the State’s network of 2,000 flood control dams are protecting lives and property by providing operation, maintenance, and structural repair grants to local government sponsors.



Program Updates

• TSSWCB AGENCY UPDATE

- All TSSWCB offices and staff are open, available, and accessible by phone, email, and appointment. TSSWCB programs continue without disruption in service.
- Please be reminded that if a district chooses to meet while social distancing ordinances are in place, the meeting must be by teleconference/videoconference at no cost to the public to participate and must be recorded with the recording available and subject to open records. Please contact your field representative for further guidance should you choose to meet by teleconference/videoconference.

• BUDGET & ACCOUNTING

Disbursement of Payroll and Bills in View of COVID-19

The TSSWCB advises that payment of payroll and other necessary disbursements continue to be processed and then **RATIFIED** by the District Board at the next scheduled meeting. All disbursements must be still be approved by two Board members prior to payment, the District Chair and the Secretary are recommended. Please contact your field representative with any questions or concerns.

Important Dates and Deadlines for Calendar Year 2020 (Revised due to COVID-19)

The May 15th deadline for claiming two thirds of Fiscal Year 2020 Matching Fund allocation has been **cancelled**. 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 for additional updates related to COVID-19.

• 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 22 dam repairs. TSSWCB is also contracting with engineering firms and NRCS for design of 32 additional dam repairs and 20 dam upgrades, as well as construction inspection of 22 dam repairs. Applications for additional dam repair and dam upgrade may be submitted if sponsors are ready to fund the local share of the project cost (5% for dam repair; 1.75% for dam upgrade). TSSWCB has also contracted with engineering firms for development of federal rehabilitation plans on 9 high hazard dams and assessment of 60 high hazard dams. Additional federal construction funding was received on seven high hazard dams that are currently being designed. Currently, \$136 million is needed to repair about 189 flood control program dams in Texas, and \$2 Billion is needed to upgrade and rehabilitate about 500 high hazard dams where downstream urban development has resulted in public safety issues.

• NACD-TECHNICAL ASSISTANCE GRANT

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. High priority locations were identified through our conservation partnerships for the use of these funds. 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.

• 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. There are 138 contracts in 6 counties totaling 1,330.8 acres ready to be treated.

Program Updates Continued

• COMMUNICATIONS

ANNUAL MEETING OF SOIL AND WATER CONSERVATION DISTRICT DIRECTORS

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! Details regarding hotel room block and registration will be released soon.

• 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 March 31, 116 WQMPs have been certified on 54,212 total acres.

• HUMAN RESOURCES

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

• NONPOINT SOURCE GRANT PROGRAM

The 2019 Annual Report “Nonpoint Source Pollution Management in Texas” was completed in January and submitted to the US Environmental Protection Agency (EPA). The report is jointly published by the TSSWCB and Texas Commission on Environmental Quality (TCEQ) and is a culmination of the State’s efforts to ensure and improve the quality of water in Texas. The report highlights the State’s efforts during fiscal year 2019 to collect data, assess water quality, implement projects that reduce or prevent nonpoint source pollution, and educate and involve the public to improve and maintain the quality of water resources for current and future generations of Texans. The report is available for download at <https://www.tsswcb.texas.gov/programs/texas-nonpoint-source-management-program>. Hard copies are available upon request.

• LOCAL DELKALB MIDDLE SCHOOL STUDENT PLACES IN NATIONAL POSTER CONTEST

National Association of Conservation Districts (NACD), in partnership with the NACD Auxiliary, recently announced the winners of the 2019 Poster Contest during the 74th NACD Annual Meeting held in Las Vegas.

Wyatt Barger of DeKalb won the 2019 Texas Conservation Awards Program Poster Contest put on by the Texas State Soil and Water Conservation Board (TSSWCB) and the Association of Texas Soil and Water Conservation Districts (ATSWCD) qualifying him for the NACD Poster Contest. Each year the TSSWCB and the ATSWCD recognize and honor individuals that dedicate themselves to the conservation and management of renewable natural resources.

Barger representing Texas and the Bowie County Soil and Water Conservation District #408, placed 2nd in the 7th-9th grade division of the NACD poster contest. The poster contest celebrated the 2019 NACD Stewardship theme, “Life in the Soil: Dig Deeper.”

