



Texas State Soil and Water Conservation Board

Quarterly Program Update: Fall 2020

TSSWCB Receives More Than \$3.8 Million to Manage Water Pollution in Texas

The Texas State Soil and Water Conservation Board (TSSWCB) recently received a grant of \$3,887,500 from the U.S. Environmental Protection Agency (EPA). The grant will support TSSWCB's Texas Nonpoint Source (NPS) Management Program which addresses water pollution caused by water runoff that carries pollutants into rivers, lakes and other waterbodies.

Projects include implementing agricultural components of watershed protection plans for Leon, Tres Palacios, Lampasas, Geronimo and Arroyo Colorado. In addition, the funds will provide educational and outreach opportunities for landowners through the Lone Star Healthy Streams Program and the Texas Well Owner Network.

"TSSWCB is proud to partner with the EPA to encourage the protection and wise use of Texas' natural resources. It is our goal to ensure the availability of those resources for future generations, so that the needs of Texans' present and future can be met in a way that promotes a clean and healthy environment," said Thomas Helton, TSSWCB Texas NPS Management Program Administrator.

The federal Clean Water Act (CWA) requires States to develop a plan to protect the quality of water resources from the adverse effects of nonpoint source water pollution. NPS pollution is all water pollution that does not originate from regulated point sources. Types of regulated point sources include wastewater treatment facilities, municipal stormwater systems, and concentrated animal feeding operations. NPS pollution occurs when rainfall flows off the land, roads, buildings, and other features of the landscape. This diffuse runoff carries pollutants into drainage ditches, lakes, rivers, wetlands, bays and aquifers.

The Texas NPS Management Program is a comprehensive strategy for addressing nonpoint source pollution across Texas, where assessment has determined that water quality is impaired or threatened. TSSWCB implements the agricultural and silvicultural aspects of Total Maximum Daily Loads (TMDLs) and Watershed Protection Plans (WPPs) through assessment, planning, implementation, education and research.

Established in 1939, TSSWCB 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 are open and staff is available, and accessible by phone, email, and appointment.

TSSWCB programs continue without disruption in service.

• BUDGET & ACCOUNTING

- The TSSWCB has suspended SWCD Information Technology Assistance and SWCD Audit reimbursements for Fiscal Year 2021 as a result of state agency budget reductions.

Important End of Year Dates and Deadlines for Fiscal Year 2020

The state has not given notice to agencies of any extension to end of year requirements for state appropriated funds, therefore the following deadlines remain unchanged for fiscal year end. Should we receive notice of an extension, we will let everyone know.

- August 31st was the deadline for submitting Fiscal Year 2020 regular and supplemental Matching Fund claims.
- August 31st was the deadline for submitting Fiscal Year 2020 Conservation Activity Program (CAP) claims.
- September 1st was the deadline for submitting the Fiscal Year 2020 Financial Statement/Audit Notification Form.
- September 30th was the deadline for submitting Fiscal Year 2020 Conservation Implementation Assistance (TA) regular and supplemental claims.
- September 30th was the deadline for submitting Fiscal Year 2020 SWCD Information Technology Assistance claims.
- September 30th was the deadline for submitting Fiscal Year 2020 4th Quarter Mileage and Per Diem claims and the return of unused advance funds.
- October 15th advance payments for Fiscal Year 2021 Mileage and Per Diem will be made.
- October 30th is the deadline for submitting Financial Statements prepared by the SWCD.
- In November final payments for Fiscal Year 2020 Mileage and Per Diem will be made.
- In November supplemental payments for Technical Assistance, Matching Funds, and Conservation Activity Program will be made.
- December 30th is the deadline for submitting Financial Statement, Reviews, and Audits prepared by a CPA.

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 for additional updates related to COVID-19 and for any changes with end of year requirements.

• FLOOD CONTROL PROGRAM

The State Board approved \$4,460,519 for dam operation and maintenance (O&M) grants for fiscal year 2021. 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 have contracted with sponsors for construction of 28 dam repairs. Twelve dam repairs have been completed. TSSWCB is also contracting with engineering firms and NRCS for design of 20 additional dam repairs and 20 dam upgrades, as well as construction inspection of dam repairs currently in construction. 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, \$135 million is needed to repair about 182 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.

Program Updates Continued

• COMMUNICATIONS

VIRTUAL ANNUAL MEETING OF SOIL AND WATER CONSERVATION DISTRICT DIRECTORS

In lieu of an in-person Annual Meeting, we will be taking a virtual approach with a few aspects of our Annual Meeting during the week of October 26-30, 2020. Virtual Annual Meeting videos will be available for viewing by 8:00 am on each day. Emails with links to the videos will be sent out each morning and the videos will also be available on the Virtual Annual Meeting webpage: <https://www.tsswcb.texas.gov/virtual-annual-meeting>

Agenda:

Monday, October 26th

- TSSWCB Welcome
- TSSWCB Programmatic Update
- Award Winner Video
- Cultivating the Next Generation Talk

Wednesday, October 28th

- Award Winner Video
- ATSWCD Update Video
- FFA Soil Stewardship Public Speaking Winner
- Educational Opportunity

Tuesday, October 27th

- NRCS Update Video
- Short Keynote Address
- Award Winner Video
- 3:00 pm ATSWCD Board Meeting

Thursday, October 29th

- 9:00 am TSSWCB Board Meeting
- Award Winner Video
- TCAWS Update Video
- Educational Opportunity
- Award Winner Video

Friday, October 30th

- Award Winner Video
- Educational Opportunity
 - TSSWCB Wrap-Up
- Award Winner Video

• 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 August 31, 168 WQMPs have been certified on 78,010 total acres.

• NONPOINT SOURCE GRANT PROGRAM

On August 14, 2020, staff issued the FY2021 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 25, 2020. The TSSWCB received 21 proposals from various entities across the state, requesting approximately \$9 million in funding. Staff is currently scoring and ranking the proposals.

• CARRIZO CANE ERADICATION PROGRAM

The TSSWCB issued a Request for Proposals to treat carrizo cane in June of 2020 and IVM Solutions, LLC. was selected to conduct treatment by drone in Starr County. Staff discussed potential erosion concerns with land-owners from Cameron and Hidalgo counties. Staff visually inspected Carrizo Cane that was originally treated in 2016 and 2017 in Maverick and Val Verde counties to determine the effectiveness of the initial treatment. Staff discussed the Carrizo Cane Program with Border Patrol personnel in Edinburg. The Carrizo Program treated a total 4,107.2 acres of cane, totaling \$641,938.35, in FY 2020.