

September 2018

## **Texas State Soil and Water Conservation Board Announces 2018 Conservation Award Winners**

Each year the Texas State Soil and Water Conservation Board (TSSWCB) and the Association of Texas Soil and Water Conservation Districts (ATSWCD) recognize and honor individuals who dedicate themselves to the conservation and management of renewable natural resources. These outstanding conservationists will be recognized during an awards luncheon on Tuesday, October 30, 2018 at the Omni Hotel in Fort Worth.

The Texas Conservation Awards Program began in the late 1970's to recognize conservationists and the vital role they play in managing Texas' natural resources. The purpose of the program is to acknowledge, recognize, and honor individuals that dedicate their time and efforts to the conservation of natural resources. The program provides an opportunity for competition and incentives to expand and improve conservation efforts as well as the wise utilization of renewable natural resources. Categories recognized through the Texas Conservation Awards Program are: Poster Contest and Junior and Senior Essay Contests, Conservation Farmer, Outstanding Soil and Water Conservation District, Conservation Rancher, Friend of Conservation, Conservation Teacher and Wildlife Conservationist.

The subject for the 2018 Poster Contest was "Healthy Soils are Full of Life." Emma Willemin from Inez and the Victoria Soil and Water Conservation District (SWCD), was chosen as this year's winner. "Healthy Soils are Full of Life" was also the topic for the 2018 Essay Contest. Trey Johnston, of George West and the Live Oak Soil and Water Conservation District, took first place in the Junior Division of the essay contest. Lindee Miller, of Silverton and the Caprock Soil and Water Conservation District won first place in the Senior Division. Below is a list of the 2018 Conservation Award Winners:

**Conservation Farmer – Randall Bankhead, Nolan County SWCD #245:** Randall Bankhead is a fourth-generation farmer that has dedicated himself to innovative and progressive techniques of farming. Through these efforts his 5,000 acres near Champion has remained extremely productive while implementing conservation practices that prevent soil erosion, improve soil health and structure, and conserve water usage. He has been a leader in finding new ways to conserve resources while steadily increasing his yields. Bankhead was the first farmer in Nolan county to install drip irrigation, going on to improve his water conservation by converting side-roll and flood irrigation with pivots as well as the first to change from conventional tillage to minimum-till or no-till farming. He also restructured his farming operation from cotton on cotton to rotating high residue crops of wheat and corn in between cotton crops. He also added multi-specie cover crops to his efforts and hopes to add livestock to graze his cover crops. As trends continue to change, Bankhead is always looking to the future and how he can advance his operation with conservation in mind.

**Outstanding Soil and Water Conservation District – Terry Soil and Water Conservation District #151:** Organized in the 1940s, the Terry Soil and Water Conservation District (SWCD) has provided farmers and ranchers of Terry County with technical and financial assistance to encourage the wise and productive use of natural resources. Their goal is to ensure the availability of those resources for future generations so that all Texans' present and future needs can be met in a manner that promotes a clean, healthy environment and strong economic growth.

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## *Texas State Soil and Water Conservation Board Announces 2018 Conservation Award Winners-Continued*

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The Terry SWCD is passionate about educating landowners and youth on the importance of protecting and enhancing natural resources. This passion is put into play many times during the year through field days, educational meetings, conferences, community outreach, tree and seed sales as well as promoting the Conservation Awards Program. In 1996, Terry SWCD started the Duane Moss Conservation Scholarship and has provided 34 scholarships to local youth in the amount of \$68,000. The District is dedicated to the wise and productive use of natural resources today and for many years to come.

**Conservation Rancher – Pitchfork Land & Cattle Co., King SWCD #168:** Established in 1883, the well known Pitchfork Ranch has deep historic roots. It currently operates nearly 165,000 contiguous acres in King and Dickens counties with other operations in Knox County as well as Oklahoma. The ranch's primary livestock herd consists of 4,500 head of cattle and they also run 125 horses. As with many Texas ranches today, wildlife management and recreational hunting is a large aspect of the overall ranch operations. The Pitchfork is no different, offering hunts for a number of species of wildlife, including whitetail deer, mule deer, quail, dove, turkey, geese and wild hogs. In addition to being a Cooperator with the King Soil and Water Conservation District and working with the Guthrie Natural Resources Conservation Service (NRCS), the ranch also partners with many other conservation groups. The Pitchfork Ranch has done an outstanding job of being dedicated stewards of the land and will continue to set a fine example for others to follow.

**Friend of Conservation – M.J. Hanna Trust, Hamilton-Coryell SWCD #506:** Along the Cowhouse Creek in the Southwestern parts of Coryell County, lies the 1,800 acre Hanna Ranch. In 1946, Joe Hanna purchased the ranch from his father and has dedicated his time with the ranch to conservation. Joe was a conservationist and understood the importance of implementing land management practices that would improve vegetation production, reduce soil erosion, and improve water quality. Water conservation and brush management are two important management goals for the Hanna Ranch. The ranch uses a rotational grazing management plan to maintain healthy grassland pastures while also controlling young ashe juniper. Hanna recognized the importance of water conservation and did everything he could to keep every raindrop that fell on his property. Across the ranch there are ponds with water diversion terraces built in all of the major drainage areas as well as small diversion dams to slow water down and increase infiltration. After Hanna passed away he asked that the ranch and his financial portfolio set up a trust to be used for educational purposes. Hanna was an admirable steward of the land that left a legacy of conservation for many generations to follow.

**Conservation Teacher – Mary Kniffen, Menard County SWCD #215:** Mary Kniffen of Menard County was selected as the 2018 Conservation Teacher, representing Menard County Soil and Water Conservation District #215. Kniffen actively works with local 4-H members and Jr. Master Gardeners to teach them the importance of ethics, leadership, responsibility, conservation, community, and the outdoors. She works with local schools to encourage cross curriculum involving gardening and school subjects such as math and science. In 2005, Kniffen started Jr. Master Gardeners in Menard County. The group went on to win Texas Group of the Year, National Jr. Master Gardeners Service Achievement Award and Small Group of the Year. She was recognized as the Marva Ebeck Jr. Master Gardeners Leader of the Year Award in 2010. Three years ago she added the Morning Glory Seedlings which allows students from kindergarten to third grade to participate in Jr. Master Gardeners. Kniffen continues to be a leader in teaching our future generations the importance of conservation and stewardship.

**Wildlife Conservationist – Badwater Ranch, Brazos Valley SWCD #557:** In 1995, Russ and Marcia Miller inherited Badwater Ranch which was previously owned by Russ' grandfather since the 1940's. After retiring from the telecommunications business, the Millers began a new adventure on the ranch with the primary goal to create natural habitat for native wildlife species. The land had been over-grazed for years and the site of wildlife across the ranch was scarce. Russ and Marcia began their tireless efforts to restore the ranch beginning with a Wildlife Management Plan put together by their Texas Parks & Wildlife Biologist. The Millers sought the assistance of various natural resource agencies such as the Brazos Valley SWCD and NRCS to ensure they incorporated the best management practices available for the land, resources and wildlife. Through these partnerships they cleared brush and reseeded with 28 species of native plant mix on over 174 acres. As a result of the last 20 years of management, wildlife is abundant with bird surveys showing over 85 different species, whitetail deer as well as an abundance of butterflies and other pollinators.

More information about the Texas Conservation Awards Program is available at: <https://www.tsswcb.texas.gov/programs/public-information-and-education/texas-conservation-awards-program>

# Quarterly Program Update

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## • PUBLIC INFORMATION & EDUCATION

### *2018 ANNUAL MEETING OF SOIL AND WATER CONSERVATION DISTRICT DIRECTORS*

The 78th Annual Meeting of Soil and Water Conservation Districts will be held October 29-31 at the Omni Fort Worth. Pre-Registration is open and will close on Oct. 1st. The deadline for refunds is Oct. 5th.

### *CONSERVATION AWARDS PROGRAM*

The 2019 Conservation Awards Packet is now available. A packet was mailed to each district or can be found on the TSSWCB website under Public Information & Education.

### *LEADERSHIP DEVELOPMENT WORKSHOP*

An annual survey of intent to attend the February 2019 Leadership Development Workshop will be sent to all SWCDs in October. It is important that SWCDs complete and return the survey as it is used as a tool to help reserve room blocks for the event and budgeting. Dates for the event will be released at a later date. Registration and other information will be sent in December.

WAY CAREER DEVELOPMENT EVENTS – Dates for the 2019 regional and state wildlife career development events are as follows (locations are TBD):

- Region 1-April 8, 2019
- Region 2-April 15, 2019
- Region 3-April 4, 2019
- Region 4-October 31, 2018
- Region 5-April 8, 2019
- State Contest-April 23, 2019

## • FLOOD CONTROL PROGRAM

The State Board approved \$5,460,430 for flood control grants for Fiscal Year 2019. Of this amount \$1,000,000.00 (\$950,000.00 O&M, \$50,000.00 admin) was made available to all sponsors beginning September 1, 2018 for operation and maintenance (O&M) grants on a first-come-first-serve basis. Currently, O&M proposals have been received for about \$463,000, and work is underway to fund these. Three state funded dam repairs will be contracted for construction by sponsors in September. Approximately \$1,900,000 construction funding and \$470,000 for engineering services will be allocated to these projects in fiscal year 2019. Additional repair projects will be funded later in the fiscal year after designs have been completed. The remaining Fiscal Year 2019 funds will be used to assist sponsors in matching federal funds received for Watershed Rehabilitation Program projects, and associated engineering services. Currently, \$67 million is needed to repair 188 flood control program dams in Texas, and \$1.5 Billion is needed to upgrade and rehabilitate 484 high hazard dams where downstream urban development has resulted in public safety issues.

## • 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 FY2018 as of August 20, 240 WQMPs have been certified on 93,509 total acres.

## • CARRIZO CANE ERADICATION PROGRAM

The 85th Legislature approved funding in the amount of \$3 million across the 2018-2019 biennium (\$1.5 million per fiscal year) to implement the RGCCEP. A need for dedicated funding to implement the RGCCEP is identified in the TSSWCB's Strategic Plan for Fiscal Years 2017 to 2021. Funding will allow the TSSWCB to reduce Carrizo cane canopy and density which will improve border access for law enforcement officers and improve visibility to allow better detection of illegal activities. The TSSWCB developed a Request for Proposals for aerial application of herbicide, herbicide application by watercraft, herbicide application by ATV (by hand) to utilize FY 18-19 RGCCEP funding. The RFP has been posted and closes September 20, 2018. SWCD planners have received approximately 70 landowner applications in Val Verde, Kinney, Maverick, Starr, Cameron, and Hidalgo counties with approximately 2,826.3 acres of Carrizo cane to be treated.

# Quarterly Program Update

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## • BUDGET & ACCOUNTING

### DISTRICT DIRECTOR MILEAGE AND PER DIEM

-**September 30th** is the deadline for submitting Fiscal Year 2018 4th Quarter claims and the return of unused advance funds.

-**October 15th** advance payments for Fiscal Year 2019 will be made.

-**November 1st** supplemental payments for Fiscal Year 2018 will be made.

### MATCHING FUNDS

-**November 1st** supplemental payments for Fiscal Year 2018 will be made.

### TECHNICAL SERVICE PROVIDER (ADMINISTRATIVE ASSISTANCE GRANT)

-**September 30th** is the deadline for submitting claims for the Fiscal Year 2018 NRCS Technical Service Provider (Administrative Assistance Grant).

### CONSERVATION IMPLEMENTATION ASSISTANCE (TA)

-**September 30th** is the deadline for Fiscal Year 2018 regular and supplemental claims.

-**November 1st** supplemental payments for Fiscal Year 2018 will be made.

### CONSERVATION ACTIVITY PROGRAM (CAP)

-**August 31st** was the deadline for submitting Fiscal Year 2018 Conservation Activity (CAP) claims.

-**November 1st** supplemental payments for Fiscal Year 2018 will be made.

### SWCD INFORMATION TECHNOLOGY ASSISTANCE

-**September 30th** is the deadline for submitting SWCD Information Technology Assistance claims.

### FINANCIAL STATEMENTS

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

-**December 31st** is the deadline for submitting Compilations, Reviews, and Audits prepared by a CPA.

## • NONPOINT SOURCE GRANT PROGRAM

### FY2019 REQUEST FOR PROPOSALS

On August 17, 2018, TSSWCB Staff issued the FY2019 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 28, 2018.

### FY2018 GRANT AWARD

The FY2018 Clean Water Act §319(h) NPS Grant award has been approved with an effective date of September 1, 2018. Staff is currently initiating contracts for 9 new projects. The FY2018 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.

### UPCOMING PUBLIC MEETINGS

- **September 20, 2018** Soil Health Workshop (Goliad)
- **September 25, 2018** Cibolo Creek WPP meeting (La Vernia)
- **September 27, 2018** Galveston Bay Council-Budget and Priorities Subcommittee Meeting (Houston)
- **October 2, 2018** Texas Watershed Steward Workshop (Austin)
- **October 4, 2018** Coastal TAC Meeting (Victoria)
- **October 18, 2018** Texas Well Owner Network (Beeville)
- **November 5, 2018** Mill Creek Stakeholder meeting (Bellville)
- **November 7, 2018** Lower Nueces Stakeholder meeting (Corpus Christi)
- **November 7, 2018** Texas Well Owner Network (Lufkin)