



TEXAS STATE SOIL & WATER CONSERVATION BOARD

WATER QUALITY MANAGEMENT PLAN PROGRAM

Program Overview

The Water Quality Management Plan (WQMP) Program is a voluntary certification program created by the Texas Legislature that provides farmers, ranchers, and other landowners a way to demonstrate appropriate and effective management toward the protection of water quality from agricultural and silvicultural (forestry-related) nonpoint sources. Nonpoint source (NPS) pollution, or runoff, occurs when rainfall comes in contact with potential pollutants on the ground and flows into waters of the state. Agricultural and silvicultural nonpoint source pollution abatement is not regulated by permit and is the responsibility of the Texas State Soil and Water Conservation Board (TSSWCB). Possessing a certified WQMP provides certainty, for both the State and the landowner, that the agricultural and/or silvicultural activities conducted on the land are done so in a manner that is consistent with state water quality standards.

Water Quality Management Plans

WQMPs are voluntary, site-specific conservation plans developed cooperatively between a landowner and a local soil and water conservation district (SWCD) with an emphasis on water quality. The plan includes appropriate land treatment practices, production practices, management measures, technologies, or combinations thereof to achieve a level of pollution prevention or abatement determined by the TSSWCB, in consultation with local SWCDs, to be consistent with state water quality standards. There are 216 individual SWCDs, administratively associated with the TSSWCB. Each SWCD is responsible for identifying local natural resource concerns and directing landowners toward technical and financial assistance programs. The TSSWCB assists SWCDs with identification and mitigation strategies and establishes the conservation planning threshold that must be met in order for the State to certify a WQMP under Section 201.026(g), Agriculture Code, consistent with Section 26.1311, Water Code.

COMPONENTS OF A WQMP

- District cooperative agreement
- Request for planning assistance
- Soil map with appropriate interpretations
- Conservation plan map
- Plan of operations
- Implementation schedule
- Inventory and/or planning worksheets
- Certification sheet

12,477
Active WQMPs Statewide

5.5 Million Total Acres

1.5 Million Acres of Cropland

1.3 Million Acres of Pasture/Hayland

2.7 Million Acres of Rangeland

144,038 Acres of Irrigated Land



Applicability

Any farming, ranching, forestry, or other rural landowner can request planning assistance toward the development of a WQMP, so long as the operation is not considered a point source under federal and state water quality law. Unless an operation is defined as a concentrated animal feeding operation (CAFO), therefore a point source by definition, it is eligible for a WQMP. Smaller animal feeding operations (AFOs) that do not meet the animal numbers are considered nonpoint source and are eligible. Definitions for AFO and CAFO can be found in the TCEQ CAFO Rules at Title 30, Chapter 321, Subchapter B.

Development and Certification

State law requires that the landowner voluntarily request the planning assistance and agree to the terms and provisions of a WQMP. The local SWCD is responsible for determining if the lands within the scope of the requested planning assistance meet the TSSWCB's rules for an acceptable operating unit. Rules for the WQMP Program are adopted by the TSSWCB and are located at Title 31, Chapter 523, Texas Administrative Code. The TSSWCB has adopted the USDA-Natural Resource Conservation Service (NRCS) Field Office Technical Guide's water quality criteria for a resource management system (RMS) as the technical basis for a WQMP. The NRCS, or an NRCS-approved third-party, verifies that the technical requirements are met. The TSSWCB issues certification that a WQMP satisfies the rules and criteria and complies with state water quality standards established by the TCEQ.

ESSENTIAL CONSERVATION PRACTICES

- Conservation crop rotation
- residue management
- Prescribed grazing
- livestock water
- Wildlife management
- Forest management
- Nutrient mangament
- waste utilization
- Pest management
- Animal waste management systems
- Irrigation water management
- Erosion control measures



Resources

To identify the specific SWCD or TSSWCB Regional Office service area within which an operating unit is located, the TSSWCB website includes the resources below:

SWCD: www.tsswcb.texas.gov/swcds/locatormap

Regional Office: www.tsswcb.texas.gov/contact-us/regional-office-service-areas