



# TEXAS STATE SOIL & WATER CONSERVATION BOARD

## QUARTERLY REPORT - FALL 2024

### **TSSWCB RECEIVES OVER \$4 MILLION TO ADDRESS WATER POLLUTION IN TEXAS**

The Texas State Soil and Water Conservation Board (TSSWCB) recently received a grant of \$4,267,393 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 Geronimo and Alligator Creeks, Lampasas River, Cedar Bayou and Double Bayou. In addition, the funds will provide educational and outreach opportunities for landowners through the Texas Well Owner Network Program, Lone Star Healthy Streams Program and the New Landowner education program as well as provide supplemental water quality monitoring in the La Nana Bayou, Geronimo and Alligator Creeks, Petronila and San Fernando Creeks.

"We're excited to advance our restoration work in impaired watersheds, collaborating with our conservation partners and local Soil and Water Conservation Districts," said Jana Lloyd, TSSWCB Texas NPS Management Grant Coordinator.

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.

# PROGRAM UPDATES

## BUDGET & ACCOUNTING

- Operating Budget for Fiscal Year 2025
  - The Texas State Soil and Water Conservation Board (TSSWCB) has approved an operating budget for Fiscal Year 2025. The approved budget is available under the Agency Reports section of the TSSWCB website.
- Legislative Appropriations Request for Fiscal Years 2026 and 2027
  - The TSSWCB has approved and submitted a Legislative Appropriation Request for the upcoming 89th Legislative Session. The request is available under the Agency Reports sections of the TSSWCB website.

## TEXAS NONPOINT SOURCE MANAGEMENT PROGRAM

On August 9, 2024, staff issued the FY2025 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 Integrated Report. The RFP closed on September 20, 2024. The TSSWCB received 22 proposals from various entities across the state, requesting more than \$8 million in funding.

## 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 FY2024 as of August 31, 137 WQMPs have been certified on 78,155 total acres.

## FLOOD CONTROL PROGRAM

- The State Board approved \$5,000,000 for dam operation and maintenance (O&M) grants for fiscal year 2025. Funding is currently being allocated to proposals for O&M work. Work on funded proposals must be completed within 90 days of Purchase Order date. Easement re-filing or updating has been approved as an O&M practice and is now eligible for reimbursement under O&M rules. Guidance for O&M in Fiscal Year 2025 may be downloaded from the TSSWCB website.
- For FY 2025, \$20,000,000 is available for structural repairs. Applications for the Dam Structural Repair Grant Program that were received by August 30, 2024, are currently being scored and ranked for funding. When completed, the ranking will be posted on the TSSWCB website. Currently, \$110 million is needed to repair about 166 flood control program dams in Texas, and \$3.0 Billion is needed to upgrade and rehabilitate about 500 high hazard dams where downstream urban development has resulted in public safety issues.

## HUMAN RESOURCES

TSSWCB currently has a Natural Resources Specialist III position open in the Nachogdoches Regional Office. For more information visit: <https://www.tsswcb.texas.gov/contact-us/>

# PROGRAM UPDATES

## ON THE GROUND CONSERVATION PROGRAM

The On The Ground program focuses on creating and implementing educational, research, and conservation programs, especially in partnership with others. Newly created by Senate Bill 1118 in September 2012, the program's first major project is as lead partner for implementation of the Texas Climate-Smart Initiative (TCSI). TSSWCB is working with TCSI partners, including Texas A&M AgriLife to reach 1,300 producers and pay out nearly \$39 million of incentives for ranch, farm and forestry practices that have a positive impact on soil health and greenhouse gas emissions. TSSWCB is also actively pursuing other funding opportunities to resource collaborative initiatives in conservation including creating peer-to-peer producer learning networks and increasing the monarch butterfly and pollinator habitat. More information can be found at <https://climatesmart.tamu.edu/>

## COMMUNICATIONS & OUTREACH

- 2025 Conservation Awards Program: The 2025 Conservation Awards Program Packet has been emailed out to all SWCDs and is available online.
- 2025 SWCD Director & Employee Workshop: Save the date for the 2025 SWCD Director & Employee Workshop! The workshop will be held April 8-9, 2025 at the Mayborn Convention Center in Temple.

## CARRIZO CANE ERADICATION PROGRAM

In FY24, the Carrizo Cane Eradication Program treated a total of 1,786.2 acres of Carrizo Cane in Department of Public Safety priority areas in Cameron, Hidalgo, Maverick, Starr, and Val Verde Counties utilizing all allocated funds. Also, staff continue to work with landowners to determine potential areas for treatment.

## IMPORTANT DATES & DEADLINES

Important Dates and Deadlines for Fiscal Year 2024 is available on the SWCD resources section on the TSSWCB Website. Please note the SWCDs resource section on the TSSWCB website contains documents, forms and important updates to SWCDs in conducting their daily business operations.

## TSSWCB EMPLOYEE OF THE QUARTER

Clay Wright was selected as Employee of the Quarter for the 2nd Quarter of 2024. Clay has been with TSSWCB for 26 years and is currently the Information Resources Manager.

Clay always has a great attitude, cheerful demeanor, and is always a listening ear for IT related issues or for life updates. He works so hard to ensure the success of every member of TSSWCB's staff and the SWCD offices across the state.

Congratulations, Clay! Thank you, for modeling TSSWCB's mission and goals.