



TEXAS STATE SOIL & WATER CONSERVATION BOARD

QUARTERLY REPORT - SUMMER 2024

MARTY GRAHAM IS STEPPING DOWN AFTER 16 YEARS OF SERVICE TO TSSWCB

After 16 years of service, Marty Graham has stepped down after many years of dedication to the Soil and Water Conservation Districts (SWCDs) across Texas.

In 2008, Graham was elected to the Texas State Soil and Water Conservation Board (TSSWCB) to represent Area II, covering 50 counties in the western to trans-Pecos region of Texas, consisting of 43 SWCDs. Throughout his tenure on the TSSWCB, Graham served as Chairman for four years.

In other areas of leadership, Graham serves as a director with the Texas Sheep and Goat Raisers Association, a director on the Mohair Council of America, and as an Edwards County Commissioner for Precinct 1. He also serves as Chairman of the Upper Nueces-Frio Soil and Water Conservation District where he has been a member since 1988. Marty has left a significant mark on the landscape of Texas agriculture and conservation.

Since 1982, Marty has been an integral part of the agricultural community, raising Brangus cattle, Angora and Boer goats on the family ranch in Edwards County. His involvement also extends to running a hunting operation on the ranch, working to foster a sustainable balance between wildlife and land management.

“It has been an honor to have Marty serve on the TSSWCB for the past 16 years. His passion for the conservation and protection of the natural resources of Texas has been a driving force for the agency’s producer-oriented programs,” said Rex Isom, TSSWCB Executive Director.

Joe Freeman of Llano was elected on May 7th to serve on the Texas State Soil and Water Conservation Board (TSSWCB).

Freeman represents TSSWCB Area 2, which consists of 50 counties in the western to trans-Pecos, encompassing, 43 Soil and Water Conservation Districts (SWCDs).

“I am honored to be elected to serve on Texas Soil and Water Conservation Board to continue the admirable work of the agency and its mission to encourage the wise and productive use of natural resources across the state,” said Freeman.

He has been a director on the Llano Soil and Water Conservation District since 2015, where he currently serves as secretary.

In other areas of leadership, Freeman currently serves as Founder and President of the Cowboy Christmas for Kids Charity and a member of the Texas Southwestern Cattle Raisers Association and American Quarter Horse Association. He has previously served as the President of the Hill County Livestock Raisers Association, President of the Llano County Farm Bureau as well as the President of the Llano County A&M Club.

Freeman is a 5th generation rancher that runs a cow-calf operation in Llano County. He and his wife of 46 years, Carol, have two children, Ross and Sarah. He also has four grandchildren.

PROGRAM UPDATES

BUDGET & ACCOUNTING

- Manual of Fiscal Operations
 - The manual was updated (October 2023) to incorporate changes from the 88th legislature and is available under the SWCD Resources section of the TSSWCB website.
- Important Dates and Deadlines for Calendar Year 2024
 - Important Dates and Deadlines for Calendar Year 2024 were made available in March and can be located under the SWCD Resources section of the TSSWCB website.

HUMAN RESOURCES

TSSWCB currently has positions available in Temple, Nacogdoches, San Angelo and West Texas. For more information visit: <https://www.tsswcb.texas.gov/contact-us/employment>

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.

TEXAS NONPOINT SOURCE MANAGEMENT PROGRAM

- Staff attended a three-day meeting at the EPA Region 6 office with EPA and Region 6 state partners from Texas, Louisiana, New Mexico, Oklahoma, and Arkansas. The purpose of the meeting was to discuss recent developments in the national program and how best to achieve water quality improvement from nonpoint source pollution. The meeting covered several topics including a summary of the draft 2024 National NPS Guidelines, state program highlights, state revolving fund opportunities, hazard mitigation, climate resilience, and updates from EPA management. This was an opportunity for the states to learn from one another, explore ways to improve their programs, and provide feedback to EPA staff on how the region can better serve the states' water quality goals.
- The U.S Environmental Protection Agency released updated guidelines for Section 319 grants under the Clean Water Act for the implementation of nonpoint source management programs ("2024 Guidelines"). These revisions incorporate two years of engagement with states, Tribes, territories and other local community stakeholders that engage in nonpoint source water quality projects. The updates to the grant guidance will be effective for grants in FY25 and going forward; active grants issued before October 1, 2024 (FY25) are still subject to the 2013 guidelines.

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 June 29, 84 WQMPs have been certified on 73,487 total acres.

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 other. 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 1300 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

- The 2024 Annual Meeting of Texas Soil and Water Conservation District Directors will be held in Arlington at the Loews Hotel, October 27-30, 2024. The hotel room block and pre-registration will open on August 1st. The tentative schedule and more information can be found here: <https://www.tsswcb.texas.gov/annual-meeting-swcd-directors>
- 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.

FLOOD CONTROL PROGRAM

- The State Board approved \$4,000,000 for dam operation and maintenance (O&M) grants for FY24. All funding has been 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. Additional funding of \$50,000 has also been approved for FY24 and is dedicated to easement re-filing. Guidance for O&M in FY24 may be downloaded from the TSSWCB website.
- For FY24, \$20,000,000 is available for structural repairs. Applications for the Dam Structural Repair Grant Program that were received by November 1, 2023, have been ranked for funding. The ranking is posted on the TSSWCB website. A list of projects proposed for funding in 2024 is also posted on the TSSWCB website. Currently, \$114 million is needed to repair about 169 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.



TSSWCB EMPLOYEE OF THE QUARTER

Laci Derrick has been with TSSWCB for a year and is currently a Natural Resources Specialist in the Mount Pleasant Regional Office.

She has a great attitude, contributes to morale of the office and works hard to ensure the success of the Water Quality Management Plan Program.

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