



TEXAS STATE SOIL & WATER CONSERVATION BOARD

QUARTERLY REPORT - WINTER 2023



EPA ACCEPTS KICKAPOO CREEK IN HENDERSON COUNTY WATERSHED PROTECTION PLAN

The Kickapoo Creek in Henderson County Watershed Protection Plan (WPP) has been reviewed and accepted by the U.S. Environmental Protection Agency (EPA). Plan acceptance is dependent on meeting EPA's guidelines for watershed-based plans. The WPP outlines a strategy to implement management measures that will reduce nonpoint source pollution into Kickapoo Creek.

The Kickapoo Creek in Henderson County Watershed comprises of 176,759 acres and is located almost completely within Henderson County, Texas with a small, northwest portion extending into Van Zandt County. Headwaters for Kickapoo Creek are at the confluence of Lake Palestine outside of the City of Chandler in Henderson County and continues into Van Zandt County. Municipalities within the watershed include Edom, Murchison, and Brownsboro. However, the City of Brownsboro is the only municipality along the water body.

Kickapoo Creek has a history of elevated bacteria concentrations, and since 2000, the Texas Commission on Environmental Control (TCEQ) has listed the water body as impaired for bacteria based on the Texas State Water Quality Standards.

The Texas State Soil and Water Conservation Board (TSSWCB), in partnership with the Texas Institute for Applied Environmental Research worked to engage local stakeholders and lead them in the process to develop the WPP. Stakeholders were engaged through informational meetings, educational programs, and focused discussions regarding the current state of water quality, their concerns for future water resource issues, and what may be done to mitigate these issues.

"This WPP is a direct reflection of the input and dedication provided by local residents and stakeholders. Their time and efforts are greatly appreciated," said Jana Lloyd, Grant Coordinator at the Texas State Soil and Water Conservation Board.

Throughout the course of developing the WPP, stakeholder engagement is critical because they serve as a resource in providing key input in developing the plan. Public meetings were held to gain local stakeholder input beginning in January of 2022. Additional meetings were also held for county officials and local Soil and Water Conservation Districts to include them in the development process.

More information on Kickapoo Creek Watershed Protection Plan is available at <https://www.tsswcb.texas.gov/kickapoo-creek-henderson-county-watershed-protection-plan> or contact Lloyd at (254) 773-2250 or jlloyd@tsswcb.texas.gov. This effort was funded through a State Nonpoint Source Grant from the Texas State Soil and Water Conservation Board.

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.
- Annual Financial Report
 - The TSSWCB Annual Financial Report for the year ended August 31, 2023, was completed on November 20, 2023. The report is available under the Agency Reports section of the TSSWCB website.
- Operating Budget for Fiscal Year 2024
 - The TSSWCB Operating Budget for Fiscal Year 2024 was filed with the Governor's Office and Legislative Budget Board on December 1, 2023. The operating budget is available under the Agency Reports section of the TSSWCB website.

CARRIZO CANE ERADICATION PROGRAM

In FY24, the Carrizo Cane Eradication Program budgeted \$2,850,735.84 for the treatment of Carrizo cane. The program has utilized \$2,110,665.00 to treat 1,140.9 acres in Cameron, Hidalgo, Starr, and Zapata counties. An additional 119.0 acres of Carrizo cane was treated in Maverick County for a total cost of \$148,750.00. This leaves a balance of \$591,320.84 out of the original program budget of \$2,850,735.84. The remaining funds will be reserved for additional treatment of Carrizo cane in areas deemed as high priority by the Department of Public Safety. Also, staff continue to work with landowners to determine potential areas for treatment.

FLOOD CONTROL PROGRAM

- The State Board approved \$4,000,000 for dam operation and maintenance (O&M) grants for fiscal year 2024. 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. Guidance for O&M in Fiscal Year 2024 may be downloaded from the TSSWCB website.
- For FY 2024, \$20,000,000 is available for structural repair. Applications for the Dam Structural Repair Grant Program that were received by November 1, 2023, have been ranked for funding. The ranking will be posted on the TSSWCB website in January 2024. Decisions on funding will be made in February 2024. Currently, \$110 million is needed to repair about 166 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.

COMMUNICATIONS & OUTREACH

- Texas Stewardship Week will take place April 28th-May 5th following NACD's theme "May the Forest Be With You, Always." The SWCD press release and proclamation will be sent out by March 1st.
- 2024 SWCD Director & Employee Workshop: The workshop will be held April 2-3, 2024 at the Mayborn Convention Center in Temple. Registration and hotel room blocks will open up after the first of the year. More details will be released soon.

FERAL SWINE CONTROL PILOT PROGRAM

Staff has been working with project partners to implement the Feral Swine Control Pilot Program in 15 counties. As of September 30, 2023, fifteen local SWCDs in the pilot project areas have purchased over 100 smart traps that have been utilized on over 580,000 acres by over 245 landowners. Landowners have trapped over 7,400 feral hogs through the trap loan efforts.

PROGRAM UPDATES

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 December 31, 49 WQMPs have been certified on 14,400 total acres.

ON THE GROUND CONSERVATION PROGRAM

The On-The-Ground Conservation Program was created by Senate Bill 1118 during the 87th Texas Legislative Session and was signed into law by the Governor to be effective September 1, 2021. The primary focus of this new program is implementation, especially in partnership with other efforts that offer educational, research, or other activities. This new program received a direct appropriation during the 88th Texas Legislative Session, however, the TSSWCB is actively pursuing all potential sources of funding to address its eligible natural resource priorities. The TSSWCB has partnered with Texas AgriLife Research and others in a \$65 million Climate Smart Initiative project funded by the USDA's Natural Resource Conservation Service. The TSSWCB will lead the development of climate-smart management plans including climate smart conservation practices and participant incentive payments. More information can be found at <https://climatesmart.tamu.edu/>

SWCDS CELEBRATING 75 YEARS IN 2024

Runnels SWCD #232
Llano SWCD #233
Lavaca SWCD #334
Harris County SWCD #442
Delta SWCD #443



TSSWCB EMPLOYEE OF THE QUARTER

Yolanda Brown has been with TSSWCB for over 34 years and is currently a Contract Specialist IV at the Temple Office. She demonstrates kindness, has a strong work ethic, and is always available to answer questions. Yolanda comes to work with a smile and positive attitude daily while contributing to the agency's daily accomplishments.