



Texas State Soil and Water Conservation Board

Quarterly Program Update: Fall 2022



Texas State Soil and Water Conservation Board Receives ASDSO Award of Merit

The Texas State Soil and Water Conservation Board (TSSWCB) has been selected to receive the 2022 Association of State Dam Safety Officials (ASDSO) West Regional Award of Merit. One Regional Award of Merit is presented in each ASDSO region annually to an individual, company, organization, municipality, or other entity that has made outstanding contributions to dam safety on the local, county, state, or regional level. This nomination for the TSSWCB was selected with the concurrence of the ASDSO West Regional Representatives.

“We are honored to be recognized for our efforts in the operation, maintenance, rehabilitation, and repair of Texas’ flood control structures to protect lives, property, and public infrastructure,” said Steve Bednarz, Flood Control Program Administrator and Lead Engineer.

The mission of the ASDSO is to improve the condition and safety of dams through education, support for state dam safety programs, and fostering a unified dam safety community. ASDSO consists of four regions, Midwest, Northeast, Southeast, and West.

TSSWCB works to ensure that the State’s network of over 2,000 flood control structures is protecting lives and property by providing grants to local dam sponsors for operation, maintenance, repair, and rehabilitation. These dams were planned, designed, and constructed by the United States Department of Agriculture-Natural Resources Conservation Service Watershed and Flood Prevention Program. After construction was completed, local sponsors (units of government) became responsible for proper care of the dams to ensure they continue to provide flood control benefits.

“Our staff, with the help of the Texas Legislature, has worked tirelessly to support flood control efforts across the state in order to protect the citizens of Texas,” said Rex Isom, TSSWCB Executive Director.

TSSWCB works in conjunction with the state’s 216 Soil and Water Conservation Districts to administer soil and water conservation law and encourage the wise and productive use of natural resources. TSSWCB’s 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.

Program Updates

• BUDGET & ACCOUNTING

- The TSSWCB will continue SWCD Information Technology Assistance and SWCD Audit reimbursements for Fiscal Year 2023.
- Conservation Activity Program – Form has been updated for Fiscal Year 2023 and is available on the SWCD resources page of the TSSWCB website.
- Financial Statement Forms – Forms have been updated for Fiscal Year 2022 reporting and are available on the SWCD resources page of the TSSWCB website.
- The SWCD Manual of Fiscal Operations – Updated May 2022 and available on the SWCD resources page of the TSSWCB website.

Important Dates and Deadlines

Important Dates and Deadlines for Calendar Year 2022 is now available at 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.*

• FLOOD CONTROL PROGRAM

The State Board approved \$2,000,000 for dam operation and maintenance (O&M) grants for fiscal year 2022. All of this funding has been obligated. Work on funded proposals must be completed within 90 days of Purchase Order date. For FY 2022, \$6,000,000 is available for structural repair. It is anticipated that all of these funds will be used to cover high bids on previously funded projects and provide matching funds for federal rehabilitation projects. TSSWCB is now able to transfer ESF funds from one ESF obligated project to another ESF obligated project when needed to accommodate cost increases. Staff have contracted with sponsors for construction of 50 dam repairs and 15 high hazard dam upgrades.

• 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 FY2022 as of August 25, 151 WQMPs have been certified on 84,319 total acres.

• CARRIZO CANE ERADICATION PROGRAM

A total of 3,970.0 acres of Carrizo Cane was treated along the Rio Grande River at cost of \$813,780, utilizing GR funds. The TSSWCB was awarded \$1,465,000 from the Office of the Governor (OOG) to pay invoices for the treatment of Carrizo Cane along the Rio Grande River in support of the Texas Carrizo Cane Eradication Program. This grant was made from the appropriation made by HB (2), 87th Legislative Session, to the Trusteed Programs within the OOG, Strategy A.1.1., Disaster Funds for Border Security. A total of 3,769.4 acres of Carrizo Cane was treated at a cost of \$1,464,982.85, utilizing these Disaster Funds for Border Security. The OOG also awarded an additional grant of \$462,500 to the TSSWCB to provide for the immediate action of contracted applicators for herbicide treatment of 250.0 acres of Carrizo Cane along the Rio Grande River in support of the Texas Carrizo Cane Eradication Program. In January, a total of 249.47 acres were sprayed to fulfill this work order for a total cost of \$461,519.50. The total acres treated for both grants are 4,018.87 acres at a cost of \$1,926,502.35. Both OOG grants have been fulfilled and all GR 22 CCEP funds have been utilized. Staff are continuously working with DPS, Border Patrol, and landowners to determine potential areas for future treatment. The TSSWCB has a request into the Governor's office for Disaster Funds for Border Security for \$1.5 million. In addition, we have enough acres signed up to utilize our FY 23 GR funding, which will be utilized after September 1, 2022. Also, staff participated in a legislative meeting in Edinburg, Texas, with the Senate Finance Chair.

Program Updates

- COMMUNICATIONS & OUTREACH

- 2022 Annual Meeting of Texas Soil and Water Conservation District Directors

We hope you make plans to join us October 24-26, 2022 at Moody Gardens in Galveston! The hotel room block and pre-registration opened on August 1st. Pre-registration will close on October 3rd. The tentative schedule and more information can be found here: <https://www.tsswcb.texas.gov/annual-meeting-swcd-directors>

- 2023 Conservation Awards Program

The 2023 Conservation Awards Program Packet has been mailed out to all districts and is available online.

- 2023 SWCD Director & Employee Workshop

Save the date for the 2023 SWCD Director & Employee Workshop! The workshop will be held April 4-5, 2023 at the Mayborn Convention Center in Temple.

- TEXAS NONPOINT SOURCE MANAGEMENT PROGRAM

On August 15, 2022, staff issued the FY2023 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 has identified priority areas and activities for this funding cycle based on the Texas NPS Management Program and the Integrated Report. For more information, please visit <https://www.tsswcb.texas.gov/programs/texas-nonpoint-source-management-program>. Submit proposals to jlloyd@tsswcb.texas.gov. Proposals must be received electronically by 5:00 p.m. CDT, September 23, 2022.

Implementing Conservation Practices and Conducting Watershed Outreach Improves Water Quality in the Lower Colorado River

The lower Colorado River is one of many rural water bodies listed as impaired on the 303(d) list due to elevated levels of Escherichia coli (E. coli) and Enterococcus bacteria. The Colorado River Tidal assessment unit (AU) was first listed in 2006, and the Colorado River Below La Grange AU was listed in 2014. The Texas State Soil and Water Conservation Board (TSSWCB) and its partners hosted numerous educational events for stakeholders to learn about their local water quality issues. These events also focused on the management of feral hogs, riparian areas, septic systems, livestock, and water wells. Many of these outreach events prompted landowners to begin participating in conservation programs. Through these combined efforts, water quality improved and two Colorado River AUs (1401_01 and 1402_02) were removed from the state's list of impaired waters. To read the full success story, please visit <https://www.epa.gov/nps/success-stories-about-restoring-water-bodies-impaired-nonpoint-source-pollution>.

- 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 June 30, 2022, fifteen local SWCDs in the pilot project areas have purchased almost 100 smart traps that have been utilized on 425,493 acres by 129 landowners. Landowners have trapped 3,979 feral hogs through the trap loan efforts.

- HUMAN RESOURCES

TSSWCB currently has 6 positions open: Natural Resources Specialist III, Feral Swine Control Pilot Program *Temple Office*, Staff Services Officer II, *Temple Office*, Natural Resources Specialist III - Floor Control, *Temple Office*, Natural Resources Specialist III, *Temple Office*, Natural Resources Specialist III, *Nacogdoches Regional Office* and Natural Resources Specialist III, *Wharton Regional Office*. For more information visit: <https://www.tsswcb.texas.gov/contact-us/employment>