



Texas State Soil and Water Conservation Board

Quarterly Program Update: Spring 2023

Texas Soil and Water Stewardship Week Showcases the Significance of Watersheds

The Texas State Soil and Water Conservation Board (TSSWCB) and the Association of Texas Soil and Water Conservation Districts are joining organizations across the state in a campaign to highlight the importance of voluntary land stewardship in Texas. Soil and Water Stewardship Week is April 30 through May 7, 2023, and the focus this year is “One Water.”

Watersheds come in all shapes and sizes, covering every inch of the Earth. However, what is a watershed? A watershed is an area of land that channels rainfall and snowmelt to creeks, streams, and rivers, eventually leading to outflow points such as reservoirs, bays, and oceans. Those bodies of water are all connected, so every drop that falls on Earth becomes part of one water.

At 268,597 square miles, Texas is the second largest state in the nation. Within Texas’ massive acreage, there are approximately 191,228 miles of streams and rivers, more than 8 million acres of inland and coastal wetlands, and more than 3 million acres of reservoirs and lakes. Every inch of land that makes up our great state is part of a watershed, which means we all live in a watershed. We are all a part of one water.

Of all the water used in Texas, roughly 40 percent is drawn from surface water sources and 60 percent from groundwater sources. We share the water in our watershed with our neighbors, livestock, wildlife, forests, and cropland, as it is all one water.

By 2070, the population of Texas is expected to nearly double, with the demand for water increasing by 17 percent. The supply of water from existing sources in Texas will be 11 percent smaller than it is today. If we do nothing, approximately four out of five Texans will face a water shortage in their cities and residences. There is no natural resource with greater significance for the future of Texans than one water.

Texas also has a vital role in contributing to international demand for goods. For almost two decades, the U.S. Department of Commerce’s Bureau of Economic Analysis, has ranked Texas as the No. 1 exporter among U.S. states. Water is crucial to the manufacturing of exported goods. It is also crucial to the transportation of those goods. Texas moves 597.5 million total tons of cargo, making it No. 1 in the U.S. for maritime commerce. This would not be possible without one water.

Since 1939, the TSSWCB and Soil and Water Conservation Districts (SWCD) across Texas have been working to encourage the wise and productive use of natural resources. It is our goal to ensure the availability of those resources for future generations, so that the needs of all Texans can be met in a manner that promotes a clean, healthy environment and strong economic growth. Your local SWCD can work with you to develop a conservation plan for your farm, forest, or ranch to improve water quality and quantity while providing resources on responsible natural resource management. These voluntary plans can be tailored to meet the conservation needs and goals of each individual landowner.

TSSWCB, SWCDs and our conservation partners are committed to working with farmers, ranchers, and forest landowners to conserve and protect the natural resources of Texas. As the population of the state continues to grow, maintaining the productivity of our soil and water resources becomes increasingly vital in meeting the food, fiber, and water needs for all Texans. We must do our part to protect one water.

Partnering organizations in the “One Water” campaign includes Agriculture Teachers Association of Texas, AgriLife Extension, Ducks Unlimited, Texas A&M Forest Service, Texas A&M Natural Resources Institute, Texas Agricultural Cooperative Council, Texas Association of Dairymen, Texas Conservation Association for Soil and Water, Texas Corn Producers, Texas Forestry Association, Texas Hemp Coalition, Texas Hemp Growers Association, Texas Quarter Horse Association, Texas Watershed Steward Program, Texas Wildlife Association, The Nature Conservancy, Upper Trinity Conservation Trust, and USDA-Natural Resources Conservation Service.

For more information on “One Water” please visit www.tsswcb.texas.gov.

Program Updates

- BUDGET & ACCOUNTING

- The SWCD Manual of Fiscal Operations: Updated October 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 2023. All of this funding has been obligated. Work on funded proposals must be completed within 90 days of Purchase Order date. For FY 2023, \$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. Since 2019 construction has been completed on 50 dam repairs, upgrades, and rehabilitations. Sixteen repair, upgrade, and rehab projects are in construction. Sponsors are preparing to get bids on 10 additional funded projects. Federal rehabilitation planning continues on 14 high hazard dams. Currently, \$110 million is needed to repair about 164 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.

- 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 FY2023 as of March 28, 96 WQMPs have been certified on 53,328 total acres.

- CARRIZO CANE ERADICATION PROGRAM

The TSSWCB submitted a request to the Office of the Governor for an advance of \$718,766 for the mitigation of Carrizo cane in an area deemed high priority by the Texas Department of Public Safety (DPS) to ensure border security along the Rio Grande River. This advance was approved by the OOG and will provide the immediate reimbursement to contractors for work performed along a 1.5-mile section of the Rio Grande in Maverick County. Carrizo cane mitigation began on 11/7/2022, and \$557,043.65 in disaster funds from this advance have been requested and paid for work performed through 2/6/2023. The mitigation of Carrizo cane in this project is ongoing. Staff attended the Senate Finance Hearing, House Ag and Livestock Committee Hearing, House Appropriations Committee Hearing, and Senate Border Security Hearing. Staff provided information on the CCEP to Representative Hayes' office and to Representative Morales' office. Staff continues working with DPS, Border Patrol, SWCDs, Irrigation Districts, and landowner groups to determine potential areas for future treatment of Carrizo cane.

- 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 January 1, 2023, fifteen local SWCDs in the pilot project areas have purchased almost 100 smart traps that have been utilized on over 480,000 acres by over 150 landowners. Landowners have trapped over 5,350 feral hogs through the trap loan efforts.

Program Updates

- COMMUNICATIONS & OUTREACH

- 2023 Annual Meeting of Texas Soil and Water Conservation District Directors will be held in Fort Worth at the Omni Hotel, October 30th-November 1st.

- TEXAS NONPOINT SOURCE MANAGEMENT PROGRAM

The Nonpoint Source Pollution Management in Texas – 2022 Annual Report is a jointly published report by the TSSWCB and the Texas Commission on Environmental Quality (TCEQ). This report is a culmination of the State's efforts to ensure and improve the quality of water in Texas. The 2022 report highlights annual load reductions of nitrogen, phosphorus, and sediment, and includes success stories achieved in various waterbodies across the state. Each year, Congress appropriates federal funds to States through the U.S. Environmental Protection Agency under the Clean Water Act §319(h) Nonpoint Source Grant Program. These funds are used to administer and implement the Texas Nonpoint Source Management Program, and in order to continue receiving these federal funds, the State of Texas must report annually on successes in achieving the goals and objectives of the Program.

- HUMAN RESOURCES

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

TSSWCB also has internship opportunities in the Dublin, Harlingen, Mount Pleasant, San Angelo and Temple Offices. For more information visit: <https://www.tsswcb.texas.gov/contact-us/internship-program>

Soil and Water Conservation District Directors from Across the State Take Part in Leadership Development Workshop

Over 125 participants from across the state traveled to Temple, Texas to attend the Annual Soil and Water Conservation District (SWCD) Director and Employee Workshop. The workshop, hosted by the Texas State Soil and Water Conservation Board (TSSWCB) and the Association of Texas Soil and Water Conservation Districts (ATSWCD), is primarily structured for new SWCD directors and employees as well as new USDA-Natural Resources Conservation Service (NRCS) District Conservationists.

The workshop is intended to educate participants on policies, conservation programs, and the powers and duties of SWCDs. Attendees are also taught about the partnership between federal, state, and local government entities and how they work together to deliver financial and technical assistance to all 216 SWCDs. Providing this information, along with various resources, helps lay the foundation for a successful Soil and Water Conservation District.

On the final day of the Leadership and Development Workshop, Bill Simshauser, Second Vice President of the National Association of Conservation Districts, addressed the group. Simshauser has been working on his family's farming operation since 1987. He and his family farm wheat, grain sorghum, and corn in southwest Kansas. He is one of five officers that represent the nation's 3,000 conservation districts.

As leadership and conservation practices continue to change, it is essential that the stewards of the natural resources in Texas stay abreast of the latest trends. TSSWCB recognizes the importance of education and outreach efforts and strives to provide learning opportunities.