



TEXAS STATE SOIL & WATER CONSERVATION BOARD

QUARTERLY REPORT - SPRING 2024

TEXAS SOIL AND WATER STEWARDSHIP WEEK SHOWCASES THE SIGNIFICANCE OF FORESTS

The Texas State Soil and Water Conservation Board (TSSWCB) and the Association of Texas Soil & Water Conservation Districts are joining organizations across the state in a campaign to highlight Soil and Water Stewardship Week and the importance of voluntary land stewardship in Texas. The statewide campaign is April 28 through May 5, 2024, and the focus this year is “May the Forest Be With You Always.”

Forests contribute immeasurably to the well-being of our communities, our state, and the planet! Beyond producing oxygen and storing carbon, as well as being havens for biodiversity, forests play a crucial role in safeguarding our soil and water resources. They stand as protectors, preventing erosion, filtering contaminants, and fostering healthy watersheds. This year’s theme invites us to appreciate the intricate relationship between soil, water, and the abundant forests that shape our Texas landscape.

Forest landowners are an important part of Texas agriculture. They work closely with their local Soil and Water Conservation Districts (SWCD) and the Texas A&M Forest Service (TFS) to implement conservation practices that promote the health and sustainability of forests and forest ecosystems.

Since 1939, the Texas State Soil and Water Conservation Board (TSSWCB) and SWCDs across the state have tirelessly worked to encourage responsible natural resource management. Now, more than ever, the collaborative efforts of TSSWCB, SWCDs, the Texas A&M Forest Service, and our conservation partners are crucial in developing strategies to protect and conserve our precious soil and water resources.

Our goal is to shine a light on the forestry industry’s integral role in tandem with agriculture. The collaboration between these sectors is essential for maintaining the health of our soil, water, and forests. Recognizing their relationship is a step towards fostering sustainable practices that benefit us all.

Privately-owned forests contribute significantly to the Texas economy and provide numerous environmental and social benefits. You don’t have to stand in the middle of the woods to be surrounded by forests. Essential products made from trees include paper products, the lumber that built your home and even household items such as toothpaste, medicines and dyes. Trees also offer habitat and food to birds, insects, lichen, fungi, mammals, and reptiles. Finally, trees increase our quality of life through a relaxing effect, reducing stress. It doesn’t matter where you are - the forest is always with you.

In Texas, 11.7 million people get their clean surface drinking water from forests and as stewards of these precious natural resources, we must acknowledge and conserve the bond of soil, water, and forests. Through the theme “May the Forest Be with You Always,” we acknowledge the intricate interdependence of these elements and commit to conserving the beauty and vitality of our beloved Texas landscape for generations to come. Together, let’s ensure that working our forests endure, our soil remains productive, and our waters flow sustainably—may the conservation force be with us always.

This campaign aims to bring more awareness and support to voluntary land stewardship because the way we manage our resources on private lands directly impacts our natural resources. Partnering organizations in the “May the Forest Be With You Always,” campaign includes Agriculture Teachers Association of Texas, AgriLife Extension, Ducks Unlimited, Plains Cotton Growers, Texan By Nature, 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 Farm Bureau, Texas Forestry Association, Texas Hemp Coalition, Texas Poultry Federation, Texas Sheep and Goat Raisers Association, Texas Water Resource Institute, Texas Watershed Steward Program, Texas Wildlife Association, The Nature Conservancy, Upper Trinity Conservation Trust, and USDA-Natural Resources Conservation Service, and Water Grows.

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.
- Soil and Water Conservation District Budget Request for 2026-2027
 - The SWCD budget request application for the 2026-2027 biennium was made available in February. All SWCDs should use this application to enter their projected needs and expenses for the upcoming years. The due date for entering budget requests is April 30, 2024.

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 \$2,572,290.00 to treat a total of 1,510.2 acres of Carrizo Cane in Department of Public Safety priority areas in Cameron, Hidalgo, Maverick, and Starr Counties. Also, 171.0 acres of Carrizo Cane and other noxious species of brush, salt cedar, and willow baccaris that have caused sight visibility issues, was treated in Starr County at the direct request of the DPS for a cost of \$213,750.00. The \$64,695.84 in 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 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.

TEXAS NONPOINT SOURCE MANAGEMENT PROGRAM

The Nonpoint Source Pollution Management in Texas – 2023 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 2023 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.

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 TSSWCB as 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 FY24 as of March 31, 84 WQMPs have been certified on 58,877 total acres.

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.

2024 CONSERVATION AWARD WINNERS

Conservation Farmer: Roy Book, Tom Green SWCD #248

Conservation Rancher: Collier Farms, Wise SWCD #548

Outstanding SWCD: Nolan County SWCD #245

Conservation Teacher: Jessica Reeves, Kerr County #217

Wildlife Conservationist: Kevin Tausin, Medina Valley SWCD #226

Friend of Conservation: David Cowan, Collin County SWCD #535

Junior Essay: Sydney Pletcher, Jackson SWCD #336

Senior Essay: Jayden Gonzales, San Patricio SWCD #324

Poster K-2nd Grade: Elizabeth Gillem, Lamar SWCD #415

Poster 3rd-6th Grade: Sophia Alaniz, Zapata SWCD #335



TSSWCB EMPLOYEE OF THE QUARTER

Jana Lloyd has been with TSSWCB for 13 years and is currently the Grant Coordinator for the Nonpoint Source Management Program at the Temple Office.

She is detail-oriented, committed to natural resource conservation, has a strong work ethic and is always available to answer questions.

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