

Texas Alliance for Water Conservation

2015 TEEA Winner: Agriculture



Alliance connects Panhandle producers to government, university, and front line technology to extend the life of the Ogallala Aquifer.

Following the 78th Texas Legislature's expansion of the Texas Water Development Board's Agricultural Water Conservation Program, the Texas Alliance for Water Conservation emerged. Its mission included linking researchers from Texas Tech University with volunteer producers to test and refine in-field techniques in order to solidify best management practices that would not just save water, but do so while maintaining producer profitability.

For many High Plains producers, being involved in protection of the Ogallala Aquifer is just as important as not compromising agricultural productivity—their livelihood. The TAWC recognized this importance and in fact, all production-related decisions are made by the individuals. Over the last 10 years, the TAWC has recruited more than 30 farms in eight counties encompassing 6,000 acres to test an enormous range of water-saving and land-management tools and to then conduct demonstrations on organized field days for peer learning opportunities.

As the managing authority on the project, the Alliance maintains a central point for industry, government, private landowners, and consultants to submit clear and organized information that is shared among all parties. Through individual site monitoring and integrated central processing equipment, the organization receives collected data in a single database which is then compiled and made publicly available through online tools. Both the organization's original program—TAWC Solutions—and its newest feature—WaterGuide—have garnered enormous interest, with more than 350 registered users of these free resources.

Outstanding results by this producer-driven project are evident in the progress the TAWC has seen over the last decade. Estimations of water savings in 2006–13, encompassing the time during 2011

and 2012 in which the area experienced particularly severe drought, averaged 616 acre-feet per year across all sites—more than 200 million gallons. With increasing buy-in from area producers every year, the most recent three-year average was even more outstanding, at almost 300 million gallons conserved.

The TAWC producers are instrumental in the savings and successes over the last decade. By providing their producers with a central network of information and facilitating the integration of best management practices, the Texas Alliance for Water Conservation serves as the catalyst for these Texas Panhandle role models.