



TEXAS STATE

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**Soil & Water**

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CONSERVATION BOARD

# Agency Conservation Programs

## Soil and Water Conservation District Assistance

### Programs

- Technical Assistance Grants
- Matching Funds Grants
- Mileage and Per Diem Reimbursements
- Conservation Activity Program

## Flood Control Dam Programs

- Operation and Maintenance Grants
- Structural Repair Grants *(Includes Rehabilitations and Upgrades)*

## Nonpoint Source Pollution Programs

- Water Quality Management Plan Certification Program *(Cost-share grants)*
- Clean Water Act, Section 319(h) Nonpoint Source Grants *(Federal / USEPA)*
- Poultry WQMP Program

## Rio Grande Vegetative Management Program

- Ongoing Carrizo Cane Treatment in Priority Areas
- Mapping, Density, and Distribution Assessment of Carrizo Cane Along the Rio Grande River *(To determine funding needs)*

## On-The-Ground Conservation Program

- Texas Climate-Smart Initiative
- Conservation Reserve Program Technical Assistance *(Contractors)*
- District Flood Control Technician Grants
- Feral Swine Trap Loan Program

## Communications and Outreach

- News Releases
- Conservation News
- Director Workshops
- Media Inquiries

# Texas Nonpoint Source Management Program

## Texas Nonpoint Source Management Program

2022



Texas Commission on  
Environmental Quality  
SFR-068/22



Texas State Soil and Water  
Conservation Board

- The state's comprehensive strategy to protect and restore water quality in waterbodies impacted by NOP pollution.
- The TSSWCB and Texas Commission on Environmental Quality (TCEQ) **jointly administer** the overall statewide program.
- The state must have a federally-approved management program in order to continue receiving CWA §319(h) grant monies from EPA.
- Serves as a coordinated “umbrella” program for all nonpoint source abatement activities in Texas.
- Updated and revised every 5 years.

TEXAS STATE  
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# Texas Nonpoint Source Management Program Partners

- HARC
- River Authorities
- SWCDs
- TCFA
- Texas A&M AgriLife Extension/Research
  - TWRI
  - NRI
- Texas A&M Forest Service
- TFB
- TIAER
- TTU
- USDA-ARS
- USDA-NRCS
- USGS
- UTBEG
- UT El Paso
- Water Districts

# Statewide Nonpoint Source Grant Program

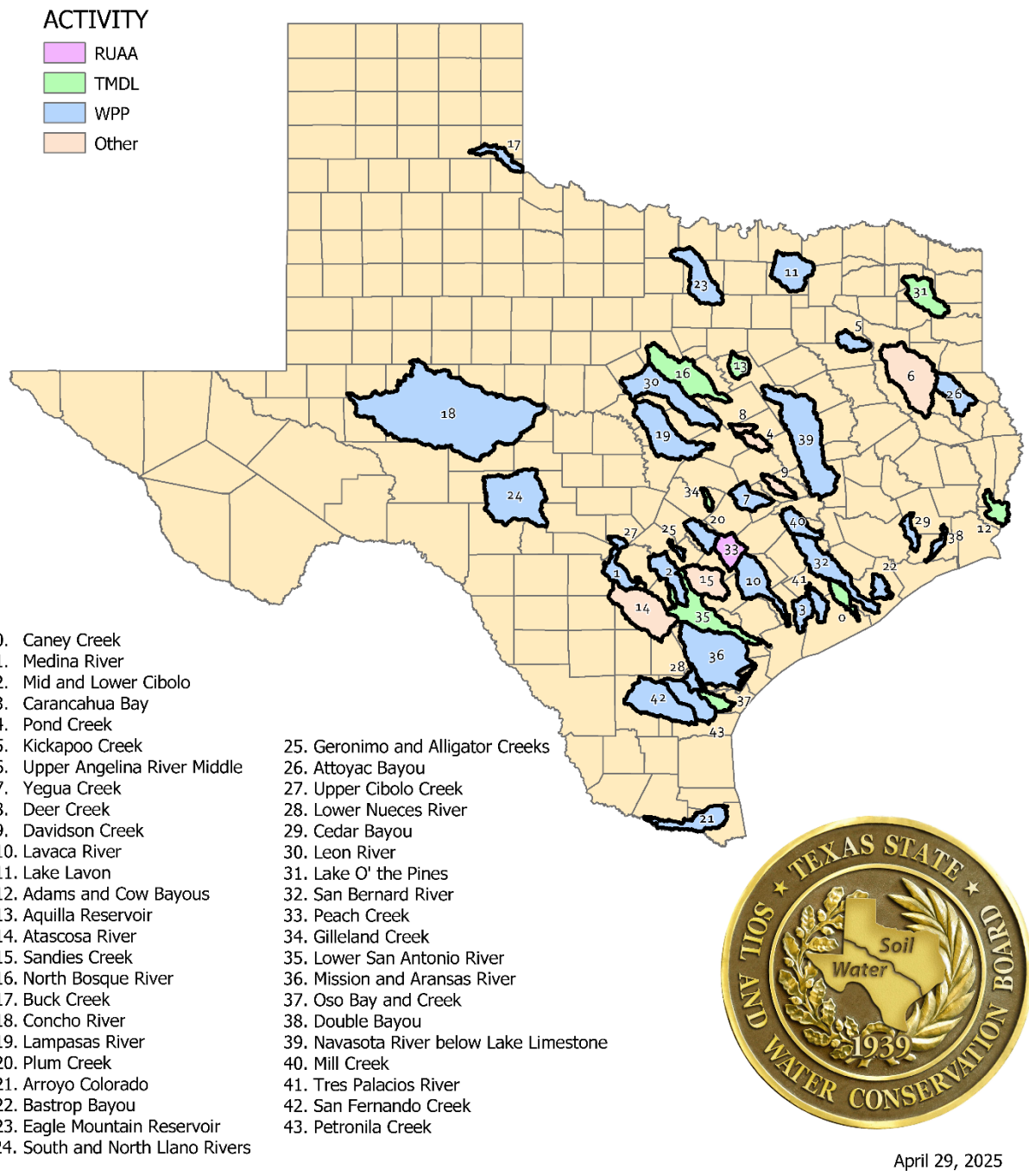
- The TSSWCB's primary funding mechanism for abating NPS pollution
- Federal funding from CWA §319(h)
  - Approx. \$7.6 million annually
  - Split evenly between TSSWCB and TCEQ
- State funding is appropriated by the Texas Legislature
- Provides grants to project partners to implement the agricultural and silvicultural components of the Texas NPS Management Program

# Statewide Nonpoint Source Grant Program

- 35-45 ongoing projects totaling an estimated \$11 million in funds
  - Implement best management practices (BMPs)
  - Demonstrate and evaluate BMPs
  - Develop and implement nine-element watershed protection plans (WPP)
  - Implement agricultural and silvicultural NPS portion of total maximum daily load (TMDL)
  - Surface Water Quality Monitoring
  - Data analysis and modeling
  - Educational programs
    - Field tours and workshops
  - Watershed Assessment and planning



# TSSWCB PRIORITY WATERSHEDS



# Other Projects *Not Watershed Specific*

- Bacterial Source Tracking
- SWCD Education and Technical Assistance
- Texas Well Owner Network (TWON)
- Texas Watershed Stewards (TWS)
- Lone Star Healthy Streams Feral Hog Education (LSHS Feral Hog)
- Lone Star Healthy Streams (LSHS)
- Texas Silvicultural BMP Implementation
- Watershed Coordinator Development Program
- Riparian Education Program
- LCRA Creekside Conservation Program
- Hydrologic and Water Quality System (HAWQS)
- RUAAAs

# How to Apply for Nonpoint Source Grant Funding

- Annual competitive grant process
- Issue Request-for-Proposals
  - FY27 RFP to be released late summer/early fall
- FY26 funding
  - 30 proposals submitted
  - 9 proposals selected
- Project period is for 2-3 years
- 40% match requirement for federal §319(h) funds

# Nonpoint Source Success Stories in Texas

NPS Success Stories highlight waterbodies identified by states as being primarily NPS impaired and having achieves documented water quality improvements.

## Sample of Published Success Stories in Texas

- Upper San Antonio River
- Lower San Antonio River
- Aquilla Reservoir
- Little River
- Navasota River
- Tres Palacios Creek
- Buck Creek
- Oso Bay
- Trinity River
- Attoyac Bayou
- North Concho River
- Leon River
- Upper Colorado River
- Toledo Bend Reservoir
- Concho River
- Leon and South Leon Rivers
- Guadalupe River
- Catfish Creek



## NONPOINT SOURCE SUCCESS STORY

# Texas

### Addressing Agricultural and Residential Bacteria Sources Improves Water Quality in the Leon and South Leon Rivers

#### Waterbodies Improved

High levels of bacteria prompted the Texas Commission on Environmental Quality (TCEQ) to add the Leon River (in 1996) and South Leon River (in 2006) to the Clean Water Act (CWA) section 303(d) list of impaired waters for not supporting the primary contact recreation use. The Texas State Soil and Water Conservation Board (TSSWCB) provided CWA section 319(h) grant funding to develop a watershed protection plan (WPP) to address the bacteria impairments in the Leon River watershed. Watershed stakeholders voluntarily implemented best management practices (BMPs) and conducted public outreach and education. Through these efforts, water quality improved and the South Leon River (assessment unit [AU] 1221B\_01) and three assessment units of the Leon River below Proctor Lake (AU 1221\_01, 1221\_04, and 1221\_05) were removed from the state's list of impaired waters in 2014.

#### Problem

The 1,375-square-mile Leon River watershed in central Texas is bounded by Proctor Lake upstream and Belton Lake downstream (Figure 1). The Leon River is 190 miles long, and drains portions of Comanche, Erath, Hamilton, and Coryell counties. The watershed is largely rural, with most of the land suited for grazing by cattle and goats; a few animal feeding operations are also present. These agricultural operations, wildlife, feral hogs and on-site sewage facilities (OSSFs) have the potential to be sources of bacteria loadings. South Leon River, a tributary of the Leon River, shares the land use features of the larger watershed.

Data collected in the Leon River (1990–1995) showed that fecal coliform levels exceeded the bacteria water quality standard (WQS) for contact recreation. As a result, TCEQ added the river to the 1996 CWA section 303(d) list for not supporting its primary contact recreation use. In 2000 the bacteria WQS changed to an *Escherichia coli*-based standard requiring that *E. coli* levels not exceed a geometric mean of 126 colony-forming units (cfu) per 100 milliliters (mL) of water. Data collected from 1998 to 2005 showed that the geometric mean for *E. coli* exceeded the standard in South Leon River. As a result, TCEQ added South Leon River to the 2006 CWA section 303(d) list for not supporting its primary contact recreation use.

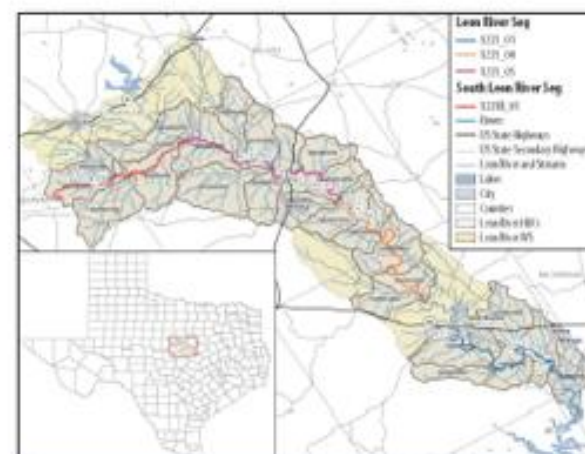


Figure 1. The Leon River watershed is in central Texas.

#### Project Highlights

Water quality impairments in the Leon River and some of its tributaries prompted TCEQ to begin developing a bacteria total maximum daily load in 2002. Local stakeholders, wanting to take an active role in developing management strategies to reduce bacteria loadings, sought to initiate the development of a WPP. The TSSWCB provided CWA section 319(h) funding to

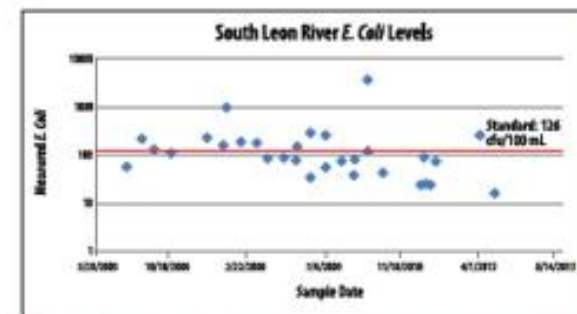


Figure 2. Bacteria levels in the South Leon River have dropped.

the Brazos River Authority to facilitate the development of a WPP for the Leon River. The stakeholder group leading the WPP development included representatives from Commissioner's courts (i.e., county governments), agricultural producers, wildlife interests, soil and water conservation districts (SWCDs), the dairy industry, cities and various other interests in the watershed. A technical advisory group, composed of representatives from federal, state and local agencies; universities; and other entities provided expertise to the stakeholder group.

Management measures identified in the WPP were implemented by stakeholders. Several outreach and education programs were implemented to inform local stakeholders of available resources.

The TSSWCB, partnering with the Upper Leon, Mills County and the Hamilton-Coryell SWCDs, certified and implemented 13 water quality management plans on 4,058 acres in the impaired watersheds. These plans included alternative water sources, prescribed grazing, cross-fencing, grassed waterways, nutrient management and grass planting. In addition, the U.S. Department of Agriculture's Natural Resources Conservation Service (NRCS) worked with landowners to implement conservation practices (e.g., prescribed grazing, grass and range planting, nutrient management, residue management, conservation cover, water wells, water troughs, ponds) using Environmental Quality Incentives Program and Agricultural Water Enhancement Program funding on over 388,600 acres in the Leon River watershed and over 47,600 acres in the South Leon River watershed. From May through November 2012, TSSWCB partnered with Hamilton County and Texas A&M AgriLife to help repair or replace 10 failing OSSFs along or near the Leon River

in Hamilton County. Implementation continued after 2012, and additional counties in the watershed have received funding to fix failing OSSFs.

#### Results

Monitoring data show that waters meet the state WQS for contact recreation in several portions of the Leon River (101.82 cfu/100 mL in AU 1221\_01; 67.82 cfu/100 mL in AU 1221\_04; 99.23 cfu/100 mL in AU 1221\_05 for 2005–2012 assessment data) and all of South Leon River (116.93 cfu/100 mL for 2005–2012 assessment data)(Figure 2). Consequently, the entire length (17 miles) of the South Leon River (AU 1221B\_01) was removed from the state's list of impaired waters in 2014. In addition, three AUs of the Leon River (1221\_01, 1221\_04, and 1221\_05) were removed from the impaired waters list in 2014 (see Figure 1). These waterbodies currently support all their designated uses.

The success can be attributed to conservation practice implementation, repaired or replaced failing OSSFs, and increased stakeholder awareness due to the watershed planning process. Water quality monitoring continues to track and measure interim progress to implement the Leon River WPP and ensure the restoration effort remains a success.

#### Partners and Funding

Over \$433,550 in CWA section 319(h) funds (provided by the TSSWCB), combined with more than \$353,680 in nonfederal matching funds from TSSWCB and the Brazos River Authority, supported developing the WPP, collecting and analyzing water samples, developing pollutant loading models, facilitating stakeholder involvement in the watershed planning process and crafting the WPP.

The Hamilton-Coryell and Upper Leon SWCDs worked with landowners to voluntarily implement conservation practices to reduce the impact of livestock on grazing land. The TSSWCB and the NRCS worked through the SWCDs to provide approximately \$47,200 in state funding and \$1,924,000 in federal Farm Bill funding to landowners as financial incentives to implement BMPs and provide technical assistance. More than \$60,000 in CWA section 319(h) funds matched with over \$8,500 in state and local funds were used to repair or replace failing OSSFs.



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# Texas Nonpoint Source Program

## Texas Agriculture Code, Chapter 201 Section 201.026(g)

(g) In an area that the state board identifies as having or having the potential to develop agricultural or silvicultural nonpoint source water quality problems or an area within the "coastal zone" designated by the commissioner of the General Land Office, the state board shall establish a [water quality management plan certification program](#) that provides, [through local soil and water conservation districts](#), for the development, supervision, and monitoring of individual water quality management plans for agricultural and silvicultural lands. Each plan must be developed, maintained, and implemented [under rules and criteria adopted by the state board and comply with state water quality standards established by the Texas Commission on Environmental Quality](#).

[The \*\*state board\*\* shall certify a plan that satisfies the state board's rules and criteria and complies with state water quality standards](#) established by the Texas Commission on Environmental Quality under the commission's exclusive authority to set water quality standards for all water in the state.

# Water Quality Management Plans

## **What is a WQMP?**

A water quality management plan (WQMP) is a site-specific plan developed through and approved by soil and water conservation districts for agricultural or silvicultural lands. The plan includes appropriate land treatment practices, production practices, management measures, technologies or combinations thereof. The purpose of WQMPs is to achieve a level of pollution prevention or abatement determined by the TSSWCB, in consultation with local soil and water conservation districts, to be consistent with state water quality standards.

## **What is the legal outcome of possessing a certified WQMP?**

The State Board has determined that the USDA-Natural Resources Conservation Services' (NRCS) Field Office Technical Guide (FOTG), when properly planned and implemented, is the best available technology for protecting state water quality standards. This means when a WQMP meets the FOTG resource criteria for water quality, any runoff that occurs, despite the fact that there may be a visible discharge of water to water, is authorized and allowable by the State of Texas. Complaints from neighbors and other parties are addressed by the local SWCD and TSSWCB. Ultimately, noncompliance with the WQMP results in referral to TCEQ for potential enforcement activities.

## **Is the WQMP confidential?**

Yes! Agriculture Code, Chapter 201, Section 201.006 makes any conservation plan developed in conjunction with a local SWCD confidential by law.

# So What?!?

**The TSSWCB has certified approximately 20,000 WQMPs since 1994**

**There are currently 12,886 active and certified WQMPs in Texas**

**3,200 WQMPs in the overall [Brazos River Basin](#)**

- 1,126,190 total acres under a WQMP
- 503,562 acres of cropland
- 160,149 acres of pastureland
- 407,067 acres of rangeland
- 34,094 acres of irrigated lands



# ON THE GROUND

TEXAS STATE SOIL & WATER CONSERVATION BOARD

# On-The-Ground Conservation Program

- improve **soil health** characteristics
- conserve and manage **water resources**
- prevent and manage **flooding**
- control **invasive** and **nuisance species**
- improve resilience to **weather extremes, climate variability, and natural disasters**
- protect and enhance **native habitats**, including the protection of **endangered species**
- mitigate and reduce **soil erosion**
- restore **land damaged by development**
- **sequester carbon** to provide environmental benefits

# On-The-Ground Conservation Program

- **Current Projects**

- Texas Conservation & Sustainability Initiative (*formerly Texas Climate Smart Initiative*)
- Feral swine control pilot program
- Assisting Texas NRCS with implementing the Conservation Reserve Program in Areas 1 & 2
- Texas Partners In Conservation 2024 grant (NRCS) to provide a flood control technician
- Surface water quality monitoring project assessing sediment runoff
- Technical Assistance to Implement a Watershed Protection Plan

# Texas Conservation & Sustainability Initiative

- \$40 million USDA funded incentive program to build soil health and reduce emissions
- Working with row crop, grazing, forestry, CAFO, mixed vegetable, rice, and perennial horticulture operations across the state
- Can be used in concert with WQMP and NRCS cost-share programs
- A&M AgriLife is conducting in-depth research to assess soil health impacts and market potential for climate-smart branded products

# Texas Conservation & Sustainability Initiative

We have a total of 4696 acres under contract with 11 producers in the Brazos River Basin under the TCSI project . The operations range from large scale multi-thousand acre native range ranches to much smaller scale vineyards and vegetable operations.

The most significant practices we are supporting in this region include prescribed grazing, cover crop and grass plantings (both introduced and native species). All the practices are focused on building soil health in order to reduce runoff, increases water infiltration, and improve drought resilience.

We have over \$40 million of cost share left in the program and are strongly encouraging potential participants to submit their applications before June 1<sup>st</sup> so that there is time to get a plan written for multi-year implementation before the grant concludes in the spring of 2028. The TCSI application can be accessed at [tcsi.tamu.edu](https://tcsi.tamu.edu)



**THANK YOU!**  
**QUESTIONS?**

*Protecting and Enhancing Texas'  
Natural Resources Since 1939*