

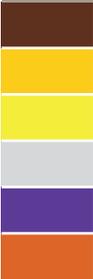
101 South Main Street
 Temple, Texas 76501

Contact us at 254-742-9800
www.tx.nrcs.usda.gov

Helping People Help the Land



September 2010



Activity *report*



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Programs

As of July 15, 2010, Texas NRCS has successfully implemented 11 programs for Fiscal year 2010 period. In addition, we provided technical assistance to the Conservation Reserve Program. Three other initiatives were funded under the Environmental Quality Incentives Program (EQIP) which include the Cooperative Conservation Partnership Initiative (CCPI), Conservation Innovation Grant (CIG) Program and Agricultural Water Enhancement Program (AWEP).

**2010 EQIP
 Statewide Resource Concerns (cont.)**

Program	Total Financial Assistance
Environmental Quality Incentives Program	\$73,389,595
Wildlife Habitat Incentives Program	\$5,577,958
Conservation Stewardship Program	\$14,948,990
Farm & Ranch Land Protection Program	\$2,000,000
Grassland Reserve Program	\$18,119,889
Wetland Reserve Program	\$6,257,187
Emergency Watershed Protection Program	\$8,759,508
Total Assistance	\$129,053,130

Programs (continued)

2010 EQIP Statewide Resource Concerns

Data regarding the number of contracts, funding obligated, and the number of acres covered under the EQIP Statewide Resource Concerns involving Animal Health (AH) and Water Quantity (WQ) (brush control).

FUND CODE	Contracts Obligated	Obligation Amount	Contracted Acres
Beef	3	\$204,217.00	1,000
Dairy	31	\$1,727,483.73	7,174
Poultry	34	\$1,554,112.20	2,210
Edwards Aquifer T&E Rangeland	18	\$777,131.25	11,669
North and South Llano Rangeland	15	\$779,889.85	12,395
North Concho River Rangeland	16	\$741,541.70	24,190
Pedernales River Rangeland	10	\$275,002.78	3,555
Spring/DoveCreek/TwinButtes Rangeland	21	\$802,258.52	37,018

2010 EQIP Statewide Irrigation Resource Concerns

FUND CODE	Contracts Obligated	Obligation Amount	Contracted Acres
Edwards Aquifer T&E Cropland Irrigation	14	\$990,193.22	2,617
Gulf Coast Cropland Irrigation	8	\$628,536.00	2,570
Lower Rio Grande Valley Cropland Irrigation	21	\$632,343.98	3,117
Ogallala Aquifer Cropland Irrigation	199	\$6,947,261.83	38,149
Seymour Aquifer Cropland Irrigation	12	\$518,092.27	983
West TX Cropland Irrigation	21	\$1,537,392.69	3,076



Programs (continued)

2010 EQIP Statewide Resource Concerns --

Hurricane Ike, Fever Tick, Texas Soil and Water Conservation Board identified impaired streams, and TSP.

FUND CODE	Sum of Contracts Obligated	Sum of Obligation Amount	Sum of Contracted Acres
Coastal Plant & Soil Quality	4	\$59,030.00	1,552
Fever Tick Rangeland	30	\$2,367,503.69	66,118
South Central Texas Rangeland	34	\$387,439.57	4,148
FY 10 Planning - CNMP	6	\$52,602.00	4,348

2010 EQIP Statewide Resource Concerns --

Total – State Wide Resource Concerns	497	\$20,982,032.28	225,885
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2010 EQIP County Base (CB) Funding

County base allocations were allocated by land use this fiscal year. Cropland, irrigated cropland, non-industrial private forest land, pastures and range were added to our county base funding.

FUND CODE	Contracts Obligated	Obligation Amount	Contracted Acres
CB Cropland	474	\$7,476,624.98	84,825
CB Irr Cropland	162	\$3,583,885.20	25,894
CB NIPF	171	\$2,594,109.52	12,359
CB Pastureland	912	\$8,735,919.29	128,977
CB Rangeland	1,281	\$20,807,250.59	1,044,124
Total - County Base	3,000	\$43,197,789.58	1,296,179

2010 EQIP Special Initiatives Funding

FUND CODE	Contracts Obligated	Obligation Amount	Contracted Acres
Lesser Prairie Chicken	125	\$2,892,912.00	85,656
Migratory Bird Habitat Initiative	69	\$2,648,274.00	20,429
EQIP-Air Quality	46	\$1,235,521.02	34,518
Organic - Certified	6	\$140,580.00	1,129
Organic - Transition	10	\$161,992.00	840
Total - Initiatives	228	\$7,079,279	117,619

Programs (continued)

2010 AWEP & CCPI Funding

Two Cooperative Conservation Partnership Initiative (CCPI) projects approved in FY 09 received funding in FY 10- the Canadian River Salt Cedar Control and the Houston Toad Habitat Improvement projects.

Three Agricultural Water Enhancement Program (AWEP) projects received funding this fiscal year – the Ogallala Aquifer, Leon River, and Lake Arrowhead projects. Funding allocations, obligations and acres under contract are listed above.

FUND CODE	Contracts Obligated	Obligation Amount	Contracted Acres
CCPI - Canadian River Rangeland	4	\$75,711.00	652
CCPI - Houston Toad Rangeland	1	\$17,790.00	552
Total - CCPI	5	\$93,501.00	1,204
AWEP – Ogallala Aquifer	132	\$4,015,374.00	19,799
AWEP – Leon River	11	\$101,377.00	8,937
AWEP – Lake Arrowhead	3	\$99,977.00	14,263
Total - AWEP	147	\$4,216,728	42,999

2010 EQIP Total Funding Through July 17, 2010

Fund Code	Contracts Obligated	Obligation Amount	Contracted Acres
SWRC	497	\$20,982,032	225,885
County Base	3,000	\$43,197,789	1,296,179
National Special Initiatives	194	\$4,899,545	101,784
CCPI & AWEP	152	\$4,310,229	44,103
Total EQIP Obligation	3,944	\$73,389,595	1,631,884



2010 Conservation Stewardship Program (CSP)

The Conservation Stewardship Program replaced the Conservation Security Program which required several policy changes. The first sign-up has been completed. The second sign-up is underway, we are currently evaluating and ranking applications. Note that Sign Up 2 numbers are not final as contracting will not be completed until late September.

Sign Up	Contracts Funded	Crop Acres	Pasture Acres	Range Acres	Forest Acres	Total Acres	Total \$ Funded
1	695	205,381	80,384	1,054,317	69,360	1,409,443	\$9,790,708
2	337	488,055	670,639	12,289	37,729	1,208,712	\$5,158,282
Total	995	693,436	751,023	1,066,606	107,089	2,618,155	\$14,948,990

Programs (continued)

2010 Wildlife Habitat Initiatives Program

The Blackcapped Vireo, Lesser Prairie Chicken, Pronghorn Antelope, and Rolling Plains Quail EQIP Statewide Resource Concerns (SWRC) were directed to WHIP special initiatives. The Long Leaf Pine, and Migratory Bird Habitat Initiatives (MBHI) were national in scope and we received supplemental funding for those.

FUND CODE	Contracts Funded	Acres Funded	Total \$ Funded
Black-capped Vireo Rangeland	1	995	\$61,503
Lesser Prairie Chicken-National Initiative	81	63,912	\$1,904,585
Long Leaf Pine-National Initiative	1	30	\$8,123
Pronghorn Antelope Rangeland	6	42,564	\$337,372
Rolling Plains Quail Rangeland	2	2,599	\$72,906
Migratory Bird Habitat Initiative	10	2,058	\$243,410
WHIP General	91	48,521	\$2,950,059
Total	192	160,679	\$5,577,958



2009 EQIP SWRC vs. 2010 WHIP

A comparison between resource concerns that were funded with EQIP in 2009 and with WHIP in 2010. The numbers are very similar between the years.

In FY 10, the Lesser Prairie Chicken Initiative received a huge funding increase from the national initiative.

FUND CODE	EQIP 2009			WHIP 2010		
	Contracts Funded	Acres Funded	Total \$ Funded	Contracts Funded	Acres Funded	Total \$ Funded
Black-capped Vireo	2	1,411	\$148,772	1	995	\$61,503
Lesser Prairie Chicken	6	6,272	\$177,804	81	63,912	\$1,904,585
Long Leaf Pine	1	50	\$18,859	1	30	\$8,123
Pronghorn Antelope	5	100,909	\$685,613	6	42,564	\$337,372
Rolling Plains Quail Rangeland	2	2,458	\$154,338	2	2,599	\$72,906
Total	16	111,100	\$1,185,386	91	110,099	\$2,384,489

Programs (continued)

2010 Easement Programs

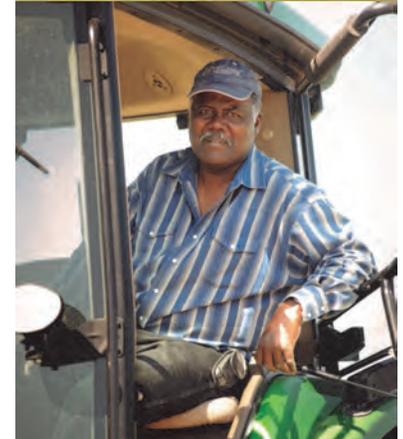
All funds received in our initial allocation were obligated and we received additional funding to supplement the backlog of program demand.

Easement Program	Contracts Funded	Acres Funded	Total \$ Funded
Grassland Reserve	83	118,374	\$18,119,889
Farm & Ranch Land Protection	2	694	\$2,000,000
Wetland Reserve	13	10,418	\$6,257,187
Total	98	129,486	\$26,377,076

Emergency Watershed Protection (EWP) Program

This program is not run by fiscal year, but rather by catastrophic event, resulting from natural resource disasters. Agreements are developed with municipalities or other governmental organizations to address natural resource disasters such as hurricanes, flooding events, and tornadoes.

Event Name	Project Agreements	Total Financial Assistance
Hurricane Ike	8	\$1,311,077.79
Hurricane Dolly	6	\$2,247,656.53
Summer 2007 Floods	10	\$1,234,866.38
Summer 2009 Floods	7	\$2,568,224.00
Fall 2009 Floods	3	\$407,743.50
Winter 2009 Floods	2	\$441,340.00
June 2010 Exigency	4	\$548,600.00
Total	40	\$8,759,508.20



NRCS Texas has obligated all EQIP, WHIP, GRP, FRPP, WRP and associated national initiatives funding for FY 10. It was a very good year for conservation from a financial assistance program perspective at NRCS and in Texas. Partnership and outreach efforts make the programs successful.

Watershed Program

American Reinvestment and Recovery Act (ARRA)



Hickory Creek Site 13 ARRA repair.

- Favorable weather conditions have allowed construction to proceed at a rapid pace during the past month.
- The following projects have been completed:
 - Caney Creek Site 3A Mitigation (Fannin County)
 - Chambers Creek Site 32 Repair (Johnson County)
 - Pilot Grove Site 28 Repair (Collin County)

- Little Elm and Laterals Site 16 Repair (Collin County)
- East Fork Above Lavon Site 38 Repair (Grayson County)

- Final inspections were conducted on two additional projects on August 25, 2010: Hickory Creek Site 13 (Denton County) and Plum Creek Site 8 (Caldwell County). These projects should be completed in the next week or two.
- A construction contract for rehabilitation of Calaveras Creek Site 6 (Bexar County) has been approved by the San Antonio River Authority, and construction should begin in mid-September.



Plum Creek Site 8 ARRA repair.

<<< Watershed Rehabilitation Program

- Mountain Creek 10 (Ellis County) rehabilitation plan has been submitted to the NRCS Chief for authorization.
- Planning has been completed on East Fork above Lavon 2A (Collin County) and the plan has been sent to these sponsors for signature.
- Planning is underway on Plum Creek 1 (Hays County)
- Planning for Olmitos-Garcias 7 (Starr County) and Plum Creek 6 (Hays County) will begin in October 2010.

- Contract has been awarded for construction of recreations facilities (Phase II) at Attoyac Bayou Site 23A (Nacogdoches County)
- Construction of boat ramp and parking area has been completed at Elm Fork Site 19MP (Muenster Lake; Cooke County) >>>>
- Work is underway to obtain the 404 permit for construction of Elm Creek (1250) Site 1A Rev. in Taylor County

<<< Watershed Operations Program



Watershed Program (continued)



From this aerial view, Richland Creek dam site No. 14 shows the flood retarding structure (FRS) functioning as designed while retaining rainfall runoff from the heavy storms in June 2010 that could have caused damage to surrounding communities and infrastructure downstream. This FRS is located in Navarro County, which was the hardest hit county within the Richland Creek watershed, receiving 10-18 inches of rainfall in approximately seven hours.

Engineering

Emergency Watershed Protection (EWP) Program Repairs—NRCS



EWP repairs: NRCS and TSSWCB are working together to assist local sponsors on repairs of the following watershed structures: Elm Fork 7A, Richland Creek 107B, Richland Creek 31, Richland Creek 110, and Cedar Creek Site 137. Repairs on several of the sites are complete and contracts are underway on the others. Very heavy rainfall (approximately 15 – 16 inches) resulted in the overtopping of Richland Creek 107B, Richland Creek 110, and Cedar Creek 137.

The most extensive damages were found on Richland Creek 107B (shown at left and above) near Dawson, Texas. This outlet pipe, center, flowing into the impact basin reflects the large amount of rainfall runoff stored in Richland Creek dam site No. 107B after heavy storms dropped 10-18 inches of rain in Navarro County in about seven hours during June 2010. In the background, note the soil damage to the back slope of the dam.

In July 2010, several construction crews started working to repair Richland Creek dam sites Nos. 107B, 31 and 110 using \$450,000 in funding through the Emergency Watershed Protection Program. Elton Taylor, far left, district technician for the Navarro Soil and Water Conservation District No. 514, and the site contractor observe new repairs being done to the auxiliary spillway and back slope on dam site No. 107B.



New Hires & Vacancies

Texas NRCS currently has 34 vacancies:

- 4 Civil Engineers
- 1 Clerk (Job Opportunity Announcement (JOA) closed – Selection Pending)
- 1 Contract Specialist (JOA closed – Selection Pending)
- 2 District Conservationists – (JOA closed – Selection Pending)
- 2 Engineering Technicians (Civil)
- 1 Forester
- 1 Public Affairs Specialist
- 2 Purchasing Agents (JOA closed – Selections Pending)
- 4 Rangeland Management Specialists (GLCI) (JOA closed – Selections Pending)
- 3 Rangeland Management Specialist (Soil Survey Offices) (JOA closed – Selections Pending)
- 1 RC&D Coordinator (JOA closed – Selection Pending)
- 1 Soil Conservationist
- 5 Soil Conservation Technicians
- 4 Soil Scientists (JOA currently open for 2 positions)

2 Voucher Examiners (JOA closed – Selections Pending)

NRCS has made the following 13 selections resulting in accessions since the July 2010 report:

- 1 Agricultural Engineer
- 3 Rangeland Management Specialists
- 5 Soil Conservationists
- 3 Soil Conservation Technicians
- 1 Soil Scientist

Engineering Update:

Brian Wenberg, Civil Engineer, has been selected as the Assistant State Conservation Engineer. Brian has worked in a number of different roles for NRCS with approximately 20 years of experience in several different states. Most recently, he served as the State Dam Safety Engineer.



Soils Update:

- Abilene MLRA Project Leader was promoted to Assistant State Soil Scientist for Colorado.
- Rosenberg Soil Survey Project Leader was promoted to Assistant State Soil Scientist for Arkansas.
- Soil Survey offices were staffed with 4 college students under the summer intern program. These interns observed and participated in different aspects of soil survey such as gathering soil samples for lab analysis, entering soil data into the soils database, soil mapping and using ARC GIS software to perform spatial soil analysis. Participants in this program are encouraged to return as full-time soil scientists.

Soils

Soil Survey Accomplishments

- Soil scientists have completed the “once over” soil field mapping of all of the 171,891,840 million acres in Texas. The Soil Survey staff are preparing the soil maps and soil survey manuscripts for publication for Culberson, Hudspeth, Presidio, Mason, McMullin, and Zapata Counties. The soil survey information will be placed on Web Soil Survey for land users to access and utilize.
- Cooperative efforts between NRCS and the National Park Service have resulted in the completion of the Guadalupe Mountains National Park soil survey and the soil survey of Big Bend National Park.
- Texas soil scientists along with soils staff members from Louisiana completed the field mapping of Caddo Parish, Louisiana. Caddo Parish, Louisiana is part of the Nacog-



Texas and Louisiana NRCS Soil Scientist examining soils in the field. (left to right) Sara Russell, Brandon Waltman, Joel Bolin, Charlie Henry, Marc Bordelon.

Soils (continued)

doches Major Land Resource Area soil survey area of responsibility under the National Soil Survey Cooperative program.

- Soil Scientists developed five new soil interpretations that provide users the soil suitability and limitation for specific use. New soil interpretations include:
 - Soil interpretation for identifying sources of Caliche
 - Soil interpretation using TECQ criteria (4 soil

class by texture) for On-Site Evaluation of Septic Systems (Ib, II, III, and IV)

- Soil interpretation for Pesticide and Surface Loss Potential, and Soil Interaction Screening Procedure
- Soil interpretation for Orchard Suitability Groups
- Soil interpretation for Wildlife Food Plots of less than 2 Acres

Information & Outreach

Southern Regional Soil Survey Conference—Texas NRCS Temple state office staff and Texas A&M University hosted the Southern Regional Soil Survey Conference, in Bryan, Texas recently. State Conservation Don Gohmert welcomed conference attendees from the south eastern and south central states. The conference was conducted to identify and coordinate soil research, interpretations, and technology needs between University staff and NRCS. A field day allowed attendees to study the soils in central Texas and discuss the different management and conservation practices utilized with these soil types.

Feral Hog Appreciation Day—95 people attended the seminar held in Coleman targeting feral or wild hog issues.

Urban Soil Interpretations Committee—Texas Soil Scientists are serving on the new national Urban Soil Interpretations Committee—a committee formed to assess current soil interpretations (soil use) of urban soils and determine future needs of urban interpretation to assist land managers throughout Texas.

Soil Information Outreach—Soils information on land use management and current practices, was presented to various individuals and groups throughout the state that included the Texas Master Naturalist group in Abilene; Science Day Fair in Temple; and the Hunter's Expo in San Antonio.

STAC Meeting- The Texas State Technical Advisory Committee met in Austin on August 5, 2010. Over 75 people attended and heard a summary of 2010 Farm Bill programs as well as brief forecasts of 2011 programs from NRCS and FSA.



Don Gohmert welcomes Soil Scientists at the 2010 Southern Regional Conference in Bryan-College Station.



Soil Scientists examining Ships Clay soil on the Brazos River bottom during the Southern Regional Conference, held in Bryan-College Station.

CRP Sign Up—General Signup #39 for the Conservation Reserve Program (CRP) occurred from Aug 2-27, 2010.

Zone Grazing School—In July 2010, the first Zone Grazing School was held at Weatherford Zone Office, and included several classroom sessions and field tours of local ranches. More than 25 NRCS personnel attending the school. J. Alfonso (Poncho) Ortega-Santos, Ph.D., Texas A&M University-Kingsville, taught the grazing school. NRCS state office and zone specialists also assisted with teaching presentations about range, soil and grazing topics.

Landowner Workshop

Granbury field office worked with Texas Forest Service (TFS) to sponsor a program for new landowners in Hood and Somervell counties. Approximately 151 attendees had questions answered by personnel from NRCS, TFS, Texas AgriLife Extension Service, Texas Parks and Wildlife Dept., and the U.S. Fish and Wildlife Service.



During a field tour in July of Bear Creek Ranch located in Aledo, Texas, J. Alfonso "Poncho" Ortega-Santos, Ph.D., right, shows Michelle Ayer, left, and NRCS rangeland management specialist in Vernon, and Kevin Derzopf, center, NRCS soil conservationist in Weatherford, center, some plants from the pastures around Bear Creek Ranch that can be used for forage.



Riparian Training—The Texas Riparian Team hosted training in the revised Stream Visual Assessment Protocol July 27-29, 2010 in Bell County; 15 NRCS employees and 6 Texas Parks and Wildlife Department employees participated in the training. Kathryn Boyer, NRCS Fisheries Biologist from Portland, OR, provided the training (see photo above).

Chisholm Trail RC&D Annual Meeting

- In August 2010, Chisholm Trail RC&D held their annual meeting with 80 attendees, including Tate Reid representative from Congresswoman Kay Granger's office; Mark Lungren from Congressman Mac Thornberry's office; and Texas Senator Craig Estes.

Flood Control Structural Repair Grant Program

- The Waxahachie field office assisted the Ellis-Prairie and Dalworth Soil and Water Conservation Districts, along and Ellis County, the sponsoring local Organization, in securing approximately \$1.9 million in funding for dam repairs in the Chambers Creek and Mountain Creek watersheds through the TSSWCB's Flood Control Structural Repair Grant Program.

Local Work Group (LWG) Meetings

—LWG meetings, hosted by the local SWCDs, have been scheduled throughout the state in August and September. Outreach materials have been posted and sent to local media for meeting dates, times and locations.



More than 25 NRCS personnel from Zone 5 attended the first Zone Grazing School in July held at the Weatherford zone office, along with local ranches granting field days for the instructors to help NRCS personnel.

Young County Soil Survey Complete—Stephenville Soil Survey Office staff presented the Young County Soil Survey to the Young Soil and Water Conservation District. The author of the soil survey was present and also received a copy of the survey.



Sidney Paulson (right) presents Nathan Shack (chairman of the Young Soil and Water Conservation District Board) a leather-bound copy of Young County Soil Survey.



Sidney Paulson (left) presents Tom Cyprian (retired Soil Survey Project Leader) a leather-bound copy of Young County Soil Survey.

Video completed for upcoming Terry County Farm Tour—The Terry County Farm Tour is one of the largest and oldest farm tours in the region, possibly the state. Bob Stobaugh, NRCS Audio Visual production specialist, Temple, Texas, came to Brownfield to video the Terry County conservation award recipients. The video will be shown at the Terry County Farm Tour Luncheon.

National I Food Security Act Manual (NFSAM) Wetland Identification Training – Zone 1 NRCS Soil Scientist Kelly Attebury, attended a national NEDS course to learn about recent changes to the Wetlands Conservation provisions authorized by the Food, Conservation, and Energy Act of 2008.

The goal of the training was to better understand NFSAM policy requirements regarding wetland determinations and delineations.

Zone 1 Technician Workshop—NRCS Zone Engineer Greg Sokora and his team of engineers organized and planned the training in Lubbock. All new and experienced technicians and engineers met to discuss current standards for irrigation pipeline standards, pumping plant specifications, watering facility standards, solar pump information, Texas GPS policy, pond design and checkout spreadsheet review, new five percent spot check policy and more. The program/training has direct benefits statewide due to employee mobility.

Feds, Farmers and Friends Feed Families (F5) Food Drive

The USDA Natural Resources Conservation Service, Soil and Water Conservation Districts and others partnered to collect **14,964 pounds** of non-perishable food items for this year's USDA Feds, Farmers and Friends Feed Families (F5) food drive. Announced by Secretary of Agriculture Tom Vilsack, this annual event is designed to help food banks across the nation that are struggling through tough economic times. Employees in USDA Service Centers across the state participated in the food drive.

Appreciation is expressed to all the NRCS staff, SWCD directors and employees and others who donated food and time to help feed families.



The Pecos Service Center donated 405 pounds to Northside Temple Food Bank.



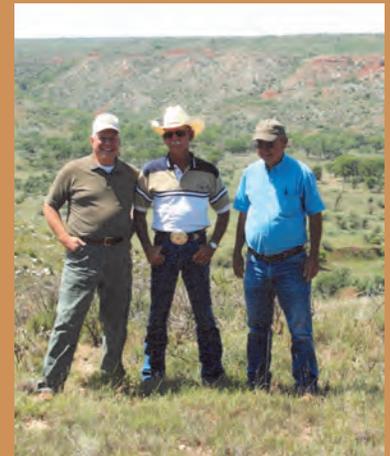
The McKinney field office collected 65 pounds of food for the F5 food drive.

Progressive Farmer Magazine— A writer from the magazine worked with NRCS to feature Larry Edwards, landowner/director for the Soil and Water Conservation board in Littlefield. Edwards has worked with the NRCS for many years to develop multiple conservation measures on his land. He has accomplished conservation tillage on the many acres he farms where his soils are sandy. The Edwards story will be featured in the Sept. issue with state-wide circulation.

Texas Alliance for Water Conservation (TAWC) Field Day—The TAWC completed their second 2010 Pioneers in Agriculture Field Day in Floyd County at the Unity Center in Muncy. TAWC began their second phase of the project this summer with select farmers working with consultants and researchers and the latest water management technologies. The goal of this phase is to determine the extent farmers can aggressively conserve their water resources while remaining economically viable. State Sen. Robert Duncan, responsible for the project from its inception, attended the event.



The Texas Alliance for Water Conservation field day was well attended by landowners.



Conservation Cooperative Partnership Initiative (CCPI) Begins Treatment for Invasive Species – Hutchinson County

NRCS, the National Wild Turkey Federation (NWTf), and TP&W have been working in a cooperative effort to secure conservation plans working with landowners to treat infested salt cedar along the Canadian River in the Panhandle region. Optimal conditions allowed treatment with aerial application to be applied on 732 acres from Aug. 16 – 18. This project is on-going with funds from EQIP and the NWTf and TP&W. Treatment for next year is already being planned.

Ogallala Commons Playa Management Field Day—NRCS presented at the playa management field day and addressed landowners, students and public interested in playa lake education. Based on the surveys, landowners and the interested public still lack and are eager for basic information about playas and sound management of playas. Of greatest interest to those who attended was: greater knowledge and familiarity about playa plants, more tools on how to establish playa buffers, more training on planned grazing for playas and uplands, and how to create good wildlife habitat on working landscapes. Over 45 people attended the event.

Environmental Ag Day—NRCS exhibited at the event and set up the state historic display at Environmental Ag Day for Excell Packing Plants in Texas Cargill Meat Solutions facility in Plainview. Over 1,500 employees from Cargill attended a day in their honor with a trade show of educational activities for health and environment. For the most of the attendees who came by the booth, it was the first time for them to be introduced to NRCS.



Information & Outreach, cont'd



NRCS Wildlife Biologist Ricky Linex (second from left) visits with landowners that attended the Fall Great Outdoor Days at Cabela's in Buda. A popular attracting at the booth were plants Linex gathered from the area and had them on display to discuss with landowners.

NRCS Goes Wild

The Natural Resources Conservation Service (NRCS) staff got to show off the “wild” side of conservation at two events during August. The Texas Hunting and Outdoor Classic in San Antonio held August 13-15, 2010 and the Fall Great Outdoor Days at Cabela's in Buda on August 21-22, 2010.

Both events allowed staff to visit with landowners, urban audiences who leased land for hunting and/or fishing, and outdoor enthusiasts, about the technical and financial assistance available through NRCS for conservation planning. Some attendees were aware of NRCS and talked about the work they have done with our agency, but most were not aware of the opportunities available to them in utilizing the services and programs for enhancing wildlife habitat and other conservation work.



Texas North Plains Corn Irrigation Research and Extension Field Day in Etter/Stratford

AgriLife Extension organized and planned a two-part field day on August 25, 2010 in Etter and Stratford. NRCS was asked to present during part 1 of the limited irrigation research program in Etter. Mike Caldwell, district conservationist in Dumas provided growers an informative program and overview of NRCS program funding utilized in their three county region of Moore, Hartley and Dallam counties. At the request of producers, Caldwell announced the dates, times and locations of upcoming LWG meetings.

Nuffield Group Tour Wraps Up

Scholars from Australia and New Zealand spent the last few days of their tour visiting the 6666 Ranch and in the Fort Worth/Dallas area.

Highlights of their remaining days in the United States included a full day at one of the largest ranches in Texas. They observed cattle shipping in the morning, experienced an authentic chuckwagon lunch and toured the stud barns in the afternoon. In the Fort Worth and Dallas area, scholars stayed in the famous stockyard area of Fort Worth and were treated to a presentation by Clay Murray, Spur Mercantile, Ag Marketing at the Exchange Bldg. Clay met with the group and presented them an overview of the Superior Livestock's video auction. Additionally, they toured the American Western Museum and attended a Texas Ranger's baseball game. The group finished their tour in Texas on July 3, 2010 and was headed to China on July 4, 2010 leaving from DFW airport.



Nuffield Scholar Brad Stillard (left) with 6666 Ranch Manager Joe Leathers during a tour at the 6666 ranch.



NRCS State Conservationist Don Gohmert (second from left) visits with Nuffield Scholar participants while on the bus during the tour.

Wes-Tex Resource Conservation and Development Training – Tahoka Wes-Tex RC&D hosted a one-day training for new NRCS employees, RC&D council members and SWCD clerks.

Kimble County **Prescribed Burn Association Workshop and Tour** was held on July 16, 2010 in Junction. NRCS personnel presented information on NRCS technical and financial assistance for prescribed burning.

NRCS staff attended the provided an exhibit during the **Texas Sheep and Goat Raisers Annual Convention** at the Inn of the Hills Resort in Kerrville, Texas. NRCS also provided a booth exhibit during the July event.

The San Saba Soil & Water Conservation District and Texas AgriLife Extension Service recently held a **Feral Hog Appreciation Day** on July 23, 2010 at the Civic Center in San Saba. Approximately 85 participants attended the event and earned 5 CEU credits from the Texas Department of Agriculture

On August 3, 2010 the Kimble County **Prescribed Burn Association Field Day and Burn Demonstration-** NRCS and Upper Llanos SWCD assisted with the event held at the W. E. Allen Ranch, south of Junction.

Big Country RC&D sponsored a **“Rural Water Well Screening Event”** in Colorado City on August 10-12, 2010.

Congressman Mike Conaway was the keynote speaker at the **West**



NRCS Recruits Students at Texas FFA Convention in Corpus Christi

A record attendance of 12,000 FFA students, teachers, parents and visitors descended on the American Bank Center in Corpus Christi on July 13-15, 2010 for the annual Texas FFA Convention. USDA-Natural Resources Conservation Service (NRCS) staff visited with a large portion of the attendees and provided information about what we do as agency and opportunities to volunteer, intern and work for the agency.

District Conservationist Erasmo Montemayor, Hebbronville field office; Zone 3 Public Affairs Specialist, Melissa Blair; soil conservationist intern, Kelsey Johnson; and Earth Team volunteer, Jessica Burns, visited with students about their work with NRCS and also engaged students and teachers in a challenging game of Conservation Jeopardy.

“It was an excellent opportunity to get NRCS’ name out in front of these future volunteers, interns and employees,” said Burns, who was a FFA member during her high school years. “I hate to say that many of the folks we visited with were not aware of NRCS or the opportunities to volunteer or intern with us. This is a prime example of why we need to continue our outreach to these students and teachers so they think of us when it comes to making career choices.”

Teachers were provided information about Earth Team volunteer positions for students 14 and older and also told about the Federal Women’s Program that is recruiting high school females 16 years and older to work as interns with NRCS during the summer of 2011.

“I think it was important for the NRCS to be there to let students and teachers know about the great opportunities with NRCS,” said Johnson. “The intern program has been beneficial to me, in helping me explore my career options and gain good job experience.”

Information & Outreach, cont'd

Texas Association of SWCDs Annual Meeting held at the Martin County Community Center on August 17, 2010. Meeting attended by 50+ participants.

Alamo RC&D held a **Feral Hog Workshop** in Helotes. Five CEU's offered. 120 people attended the event held August 24, 2010.

NRCS provided a wildlife exhibit booth during an Odessa/Midland **Texas Wildlife Association** event on August 26, 2010.

Chihuahuan Desert RC&D conducted a **Tex-a-Syst water well testing** for Brewster, Presidio, and Jeff Davis counties August 25-27, 2010. Thirty-five individuals participated.

A **Conservation Easement Landowner Workshop** was held in Chambers County on August 6, 2010. This workshop was co-sponsored by the Coastal SWCD, Trinity Bay SWCD, and Liberty SWCD to offer landowners in Chambers, Jefferson, and Liberty counties information on conservation easement programs that are available. There were about 50 in attendance.

The **Hurricane Ike Emergency Watershed Protection Program** projects for Jasper and Newton Counties was completed, certified, and paid. The projects involved two County Judges, four County Commissioners, and dozens of landowners. Leaders in the project were Kat Pinckney, Contracting Officer; Shane Ice, Contracting Officer's Technical Representative; and Tom Bresee, Inspector.

Two programs were presented to the **Jasper Master Gardeners**, one on pond design and construction, and one on bees and pollination.

Ross Brown, district conservationist in Marshall, Texas, spoke at the **Harrison County Extension Natural Resources Committee** meeting on August 9, 2010 discussing programs available to producers, and assisting with planning activities for possible field trips to be taken next year. Committee members from the Texas Forest Service, Agrilife Extension, Texas Parks and Wildlife, and local community leaders were present at the meeting.

The Post Oak RC&D completed field demonstration for **Conservation Innovation Grant** biodiesel project in

Madison County.

The Burlison County SWCD, Brazos County SWCD, and Robertson County SWCD continued working 34 **AWEP applications** for the Brazos Bottom Irrigation Water Management Project.

Value Added Producer Grant application approved for **Waller County Sorghum Growers** which will assist them in the development of their Co-Op being established to produce silage for the Mustang Creek Biogas Plant.

The Madison County SWCD provided financial and technical assistance to Madison County to establish a "**People's Garden**" in Madison County.



The **56th Annual Texas A&M Beef Cattle Short Course** was held in College Station August 2-3, 2010. An estimated 1,300 people attended this year's event. NRCS participated in the tradeshow which included more than 120 vendors. Web Soil Survey was a featured interactive component of the NRCS booth. State NRCS staff also were on the event's forage track agenda and spoke about NRCS and Farm Bill programs. Zone 4 Program Manager Allen Smith is pictured above.

Information & Outreach, cont'd

Ducks Unlimited Magazine ran a Wetlands Reserve Program Zone 4 feature story from Lamar County in their September/October 2010 issue in the Flyways section.

Texas **Federal Women's Program** held an All-Employees Meeting in Victoria on August 11. There were 42 in attendance.



Zone 4 Program Manager Kim Wright (left) visits with a landowner at the Wildlife Short Course.

August 20-21, 2010 – Texas Wildlife Short Course – The first ever Texas Wildlife Short Course was held recently in Bryan, Texas. More than 100 people attended the inaugural event which was held in conjunction with the Texas Big Game Awards sportsmen's celebration. NRCS had a booth at the short course's tradeshow.

Texas Migratory Bird Habitat Initiative (MBHI) In the News

The *Beaumont Enterprise* newspaper interviewed NRCS personnel and featured an article on the migratory bird initiative through EQIP and WHIP. The article was published on July 31st.

Houston's CBS affiliate **KHOU TV 11** did an onsite TV interview with Chambers County landowner enrolled in MBHI. Interview was set up by Zone 4 public affairs specialist Beverly Mosely.



NRCS State Wildlife Biologist Russell Castro talking about the MBHI in an interview with a reporter from Houston's CBS affiliate KHOU TV.

An **MBHI Associated Press** story that Zone 4 staff had been working with Houston Bureau AP reporter on was published July 29 on the wire service. More than 50 media outlets from across the U.S., Canada and even Taiwan ran the story within hours.

Feature story on Chambers County landowner enrolled in MBHI was published in: *Country World's Special Outdoors Edition* and *East Texas Farm and Ranch News*.

Feature story on Jefferson County landowner enrolled in MBHI was published online and in TSCRA's *The Cattleman Magazine*.



Alabama-Coushatta Tribe of Texas Begins Longleaf Pine Restoration Efforts

Alabama-Coushatta Tribe of Texas council members recently enrolled upwards of 400 acres of suitable longleaf pine production land into the Wildlife Habitat Incentives Program (WHIP) administered by the USDA-Natural Resources Conservation Service (NRCS) through the Longleaf Pine Habitat Restoration Initiative. The partnership will focus on reforestation of longleaf pine on Tribal lands, and developing wildlife habitat. This is the first time the Alabama-Coushatta Tribe of Texas has signed a contract with NRCS as part of a Farm Bill program.

Information & Outreach, cont'd

Teacher and Youth Education, Workshops & Field Days



Kent Mills, right photo, of Hi Pro Foods located in Snyder, Texas, helps prepare a plant for scanning at the Buckskin Brigade.

In July 2010, NRCS field office staff assisted with the **Bobwhite Brigade**, **Buckskin Brigade**, and **Clear Fork Range Camp**.



NRCS Soil Conservationist Kimberly A. Burr taught *The Digital Plant Press: Plant Identification in the Cyber Age* to cadets at the Buckskin Brigade, which was held at Stasney's Cook Ranch in Albany, Texas.

Conservation Camp—The Coleman field office staff completed a 3-day annual camp for students to learn about conservation issues, including pond/lake management, and watershed management – 60 students and 24 teachers attended the event held in July 2010.



The Shelby Soil and Water Conservation District awarded Kevin Acuna a Shelby County Graduate, **two \$500.00 scholarships**, one for the fall 2010 and one for the spring 2011 semesters at Texas A&M University. Kevin is in the school of Veterinary Medicine. The SWCD earned the funds thru their annual calendar sales.

Wildlife Alliance for Youth (WAY) state meeting in Stephenville on July 2, 2010. NRCS employees Jonathan Parr and Si Causey in the Matador Team attended the state WAY meeting in Stephenville to represent Area 1.

School Districts Receive Help—Chisholm Trail RC&D presented more than \$2,000 in funding for local projects, including an electronic message board for Newcastle ISD, backpacks and school supplies for Olney HOPE, renovations to McCloud Park, and the refurbishing of two billboards promoting Electra.

Youth Water Camp - Pecos Valley RC&D Council, NRCS employees and Agrilife Extension provided assistance during the 18th Annual State Youth

Water Camp held in Monahans. Thirteen youth from across Texas attended the camp held July 11-15, 2010.



The Bedias Creek SWCD provided financial and technical assistance to Centerville elementary School to establish a **“People’s Garden”** in Leon County.



Upcoming Events

September 17

Rural Landowner Workshop, Cleburne

September 19-23

Association of State Dam Safety Officials annual conference in Seattle, Washington.

Sept. 22 - 23

Riparian-Wetland Function/Proper Function Condition Nat'l training, Clarendon and Matador.

September 28

Ranch Management Clinic, Beeville

September 29

Moving from Production to Profit in Ranching, Decatur

Sept. 29-30, 2010

Classroom and field training sessions for employees have been planned for Sept. 14-15 and Sept. 29-30 at the National Park Service in Amarillo and at the Lubbock Lake Landmark in Lubbock.

September 30

Moving from Production to Profit in Ranching, Commerce

September 30

West Texas A&M University Career Fair, Canyon

October 6

Joint FSA/NRCS Signup 39 CRP Training, Texas A&M Agrilife Research Center in San Angelo.

October 13-15

Texas Section of Society for Range Management annual meeting in Odessa

October 20

Top of Texas Career Expo – Canyon – First United Bank Center

October 20-22

Annual meeting of Texas Forestry Association in Nacogdoches

October 25-26, 2010

70th Annual Meeting of Texas Soil and Water Conservation District Directors- Overton Hotel and Conference Center – Lubbock

October 26

South Plains Tech Prep – Lubbock Memorial Civic Center Career recruitment event planned for high school sophomores, juniors and seniors.

November 2010

The Soil Survey Last Acre Ceremony celebration will be held at Blackland Research Center in Temple, Texas. The Last Acre Ceremony is in recognition of the Soil Survey fieldwork that began in Texas in 1899 and has evolved from hand-drawn maps and handwritten notes to the digital technologies of today.

November 13-17, 2010

Restore America's Estuaries conference in Galveston

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