

# THE TEXAS WATER SOURCE

UPDATING BELL, BURNET, AND  
LAMPASAS COUNTY LANDOWNERS ON  
LAND MANAGEMENT AND WATER ISSUES

December 29, 2018

## STEWARDSHIP MANAGEMENT PLANS

Long-term care of private land is critically important to Texas. Sound management practices increase land productivity and enhance ecosystem services provided by forests. These critical benefits include clean air and water, improved wildlife habitat, and additional opportunities for quality outdoor recreation.

Texas A&M Forest Service (TFS) promotes land stewardship to landowners all over Texas—from the Pineywoods of East Texas to the West Texas Panhandle. Professional assistance is tailored to your individual needs.

A written plan for your property is the foundation of good land stewardship. TFS foresters are available to help you develop a written 10-year course of action, outlining step-by-step measures that will enable you to meet your goals and objectives for your property.

A TFS forester will meet with you on your property to discuss your land objectives and how to meet those objectives. A multi-purpose Stewardship Plan addresses numerous resource elements including timber, water, wildlife, forest health, and more.



Natural resources in the Central Texas region are threatened by poor land management, fire exclusion, invasive species, oak wilt, and rapid population growth. As a Texas landowner, you have the ability to conserve Central Texas trees and natural resources for future generations.

TFS is available to help address your interests in trees, wildlife, recreation, and water, as well as concerns about drought, wildfire, forest health, and diseases such as oak wilt. Call your local TFS office or a private consulting forester for

information on obtaining a Stewardship Plan for managing your property.

Successful implementation of a written Stewardship Plan can result in being nominated and recognized as good stewards of the land with the Certified Forest Steward award. This award is presented to any Texas landowner that owns at least 10 acres, has a written Stewardship plan, and implements aspects of that plan while using Best Management Practices that protect soil and water. Recipients receive a metal sign for their property and a certificate signed by the State Forester.

### For more information:

- <http://tfsweb.tamu.edu/LandownerAssistance>

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## Organization Spotlight



## Texas Soil and Water Conservation Districts

The Texas State Soil and Water Conservation Board (TSSWCB) organizes the entire state into soil and water conservation districts (SWCDs); currently, there are 216. Each SWCD is an independent political subdivision of state government and is governed by five directors elected by fellow rural landowners.

To bring a district into existence, a minimum of 50 local agricultural landowners had to petition the TSSWCB requesting the creation of a district. Following the filing of the petition, the TSSWCB held a hearing on the question of desirability and necessity for a district. If facts presented at the hearing determined a favorable need, the TSSWCB conducted an election within the proposed district on the proposition of creating a conservation district. At least two-thirds of the votes cast by local agricultural landowners must have been positive in order to create a new district.

To assure geographical representation on the district's governing board, SWCDs are divided into five subdivisions. A district's governing body, a board of directors, is made up of agricultural landowners, one from each of five subdivisions. Each district director must live in the district, own land in the subdivision he or she represents, and be actively engaged in farming or ranching.

SWCDs work to bring a widespread understanding of the needs of soil and water conservation. In addition, they work to activate the efforts of public and private organizations and agencies into a united front to combat soil and water erosion and to enhance water quality and quantity in the state.

It is the purpose of SWCDs to instill in the minds of local people that it is their individual responsibility to do the job of soil and water conservation. SWCDs receive assistance from many sources; however, even with all this

help, farmers, ranchers, communities, and others must exercise a voluntary initiative in applying a conservation program compatible with their own objectives. Through a chartered, legally established SWCD, local farmers and ranchers are given the opportunity to decide for themselves how they are going to solve local soil and water conservation problems.

The **Central Texas SWCD** serves Bell, Falls, and Milam counties. It meets on the 3rd Tuesday of the month at 6:00 p.m. at the Natural Resources Conservation Service (NRCS) office in Belton at 1605 N. Main St., Room 105.

The Central Texas SWCD can be reached at:

P. O. Box 1832

Temple, Texas 76503-1832

Phone number: (254) 718-5296

E-mail address: [centraltexas@swcd.texas.gov](mailto:centraltexas@swcd.texas.gov)

The **Hill Country SWCD** serves Burnet and Lampasas counties. It meets at 1:30 p.m. on the 3rd Thursday of the month - even months for Burnet Co.; odd months for Lampasas Co. The meeting locations for each county are at their respective NRCS offices: 101 North Pierce, Suite 2, in Burnet; 407 Plum, Suite E, in Lampasas.

The Hill Country SWCD can be reached at:

P. O. Box 1148

Burnet, Texas 78611

Phone number: (512) 756-4651

E-mail address: [hillcountry@swcd.texas.gov](mailto:hillcountry@swcd.texas.gov)

### For more information:

- <https://www.tsswcb.texas.gov/swcds/area5>

## WATERSHED PROTECTION PLANS

Watershed planning is a locally-driven mechanism for voluntarily addressing complex water quality problems that cross multiple jurisdictions. The goal is to protect unimpaired waterbodies from pollution threats and restore impaired, polluted waterbodies. The watershed planning process uses a series of cooperative, iterative steps to: 1) characterize existing conditions; 2) identify and prioritize problems; 3) define management objectives; 4) develop protection or remediation strategies; and 5) implement and adapt selected actions as necessary.

Through this process, stakeholders develop a Watershed Protection Plan (WPP) that holistically addresses all of the sources and causes of impairments and threats to both surface and ground water resources within a watershed. Implementing an approved WPP helps to assure the long-term health of a watershed. Adaptive management is used to modify the WPP based on an on-going science-based process that involves monitoring and evaluating strategies and incorporating new knowledge into decision-making. For more information: <http://watershedplanning.tamu.edu>.

## LAMPASAS RIVER WATERSHED PROTECTION PLAN

The Lampasas River is characterized by relatively low water levels most of the time and is situated within a predominantly rural and agricultural landscape. Land use within the watershed is mostly rural, with grasslands and row crops. Major agricultural interests include beef cattle on rangeland, in addition to hay, wheat, oats, sorghum, corn, cotton, peanut, and pecan operations.

Texas requires that water quality in the Lampasas River be suitable for contact recreation and a healthy aquatic ecosystem. This "swimmable and fishable" goal is not fully supported. The Lampasas River above Stillhouse Hollow Lake is listed as "impaired" on the Texas Water Quality Inventory and 303(d) List due to elevated bacteria levels. Surface water quality monitoring also indicates a dissolved oxygen concern on North Fork Rocky Creek. In addition, population growth and rapid urbanization occurring in the lower portion of the watershed further stress the need to protect the chemical, physical, and biological integrity of the river.

**The Problem:** During periods of rainfall, bacteria (*E. coli*) may be washed into the Lampasas River and its tributaries and have the potential to contribute to elevated bacteria densities; consequently, impairing recreational use of the waterbody. *E. coli* is a bacteria normally found in the intestines of humans and other warm-blooded animals. Studies conducted by the EPA suggest that *E. coli* is a good indicator of fecal contamination of water and the presence of harmful pathogens which can cause intestinal illness or gastroenteritis. Frequent sources of *E. coli* can include sewerage overflows, malfunctioning septic systems, direct deposition by wildlife or livestock, and runoff from rainfall events.

**Working Together:** The Water Sciences Team from Texas A&M AgriLife Research at Blackland Research and Extension Center (BREC) along with collaborators from Texas A&M University's Spatial Sciences Lab and Texas AgriLife Extension Service are addressing the Lampasas

River water quality issues through a coordinated effort to facilitate and encourage public education, awareness, and involvement of water quality issues and conduct a science-based analysis of the watershed.

The Lampasas River Watershed Protection Plan (WPP) was developed through this. It is a coordinated framework for implementing prioritized and integrated water quality protection and restoration strategies driven by environmental objectives. Through the WPP process, stakeholders address all of the sources and causes of impairments and threats to both surface and ground water resources within the watershed. The WPP, with the support of stakeholders, will assure the long-term health of the watershed with strategies for protecting unimpaired waters and restoring impaired waters.

The WPP was accepted by EPA in May 2013 as being consistent with national guidance and was approved by the Steering Committee in September 2013 and may be found on the project webpage (see below). The timeline for full implementation of all the management measures in the Lampasas River WPP is 10 years and began in September 2013 upon stakeholder approval.

Funding and support for this effort are provided through a Clean Water Act §319(h) Nonpoint Source Grant from the Texas State Soil and Water Conservation Board and the U.S. Environmental Protection Agency.

### For more information:

- <http://www.lampasasriver.org>
- [http://www.lampasasriver.org/media/72931/lampasas-river-wpp\\_june-2013.pdf](http://www.lampasasriver.org/media/72931/lampasas-river-wpp_june-2013.pdf) - *the WPP*
- [http://www.lampasasriver.org/media/94137/12-09\\_Final-Report\\_Lampasas.pdf](http://www.lampasasriver.org/media/94137/12-09_Final-Report_Lampasas.pdf) - *Report on WPP implementation*

## HELPFUL ONLINE TOOL FOR LANDOWNERS

An online tool called "got LAND?" has been added to the **Texas Forest Information Portal**, a web-based application (see <http://texasforestinfo.tamu.edu>).

Whether you're looking to purchase land for the first time or you just inherited property, this online application can help new landowners during the initial stages of acquiring property.

Based on the answers to a few short questions, management information and resources are provided to help

you better care for your land and reach your property goals. Questions on property ownership goals, desired or current water features, past land uses, desired tax valuations, region of the property's location, and amount of acreage help the app to generate a report that gives you information that applies to your particular case. In order to see the report make sure pop-ups are enabled in your browser.

Get started at <https://gotLAND.fgs.tamu.edu>.

Texas A&M Forest Service  
offices serving you:

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Distribution of The Texas Water Source is provided free of charge to forest landowners of Bell, Burnet, and Lampasas Counties. This publication is funded by the Texas State Soil and Water Conservation Board through a Clean Water Act §319(h) grant from the U.S. Environmental Protection Agency. PLEASE ADVISE US IF YOU WISH YOUR NAME TO BE REMOVED FROM OUR MAILING LIST.

## Drinking Water Protection

The USDA Forest Service "Forests to Faucets" project uses GIS to model and map the land areas across the United States that are most important to surface drinking water sources. It also identifies forested areas important to the protection of drinking water and areas where drinking water supplies might be threatened by development, insects and diseases, and wildland fire. The results of this assessment provide information that can identify areas of interest for protecting surface drinking water quality.

To prioritize Texas watersheds by forest importance to surface drinking water for source water protection, four main factors were considered:

1. Watershed importance for surface drinking water,
2. Forest importance to surface drinking water,
3. Threats to forests, and
4. Potential for partnership.

Please refer to the Forest to Faucet methods paper, "From the Forest to the Faucet: Drinking Water and Forests in the US," by Emily Weidner and Al Todd (2011) for background and technical details. [Go to <https://goo.gl/E6NkBs> for this publication.]

Find an interesting graphic on how the Texas watersheds were prioritized by going to: <https://goo.gl/AyPPAZ>.



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