Texas State Soil and Water Conservation Board Water Quality Management Plan Program

Cibolo Creek WPP Meeting
Floresville, TX
October 12, 2017

Agency Role

Water Quality Mandate - Texas Agriculture Code §201.026

Texas State Soil and Water Conservation Board (TSSWCB) is the lead agency in Texas responsible for planning, implementing and managing programs and practices for abating agricultural and silvicultural nonpoint source water pollution.

Agency Role

- Provide technical and financial assistance to local soil and water conservation districts
  - *Local districts encourage landowners and agricultural producers to voluntarily conserve natural resources on their private lands through the implementation of best management practices*
- Results in a positive impact on state water resources, and protects soil quality which supports the strength of Texas' agricultural economy

How this gets done

TSSWCB administers several programs to achieve conservation goals across the state, they include:

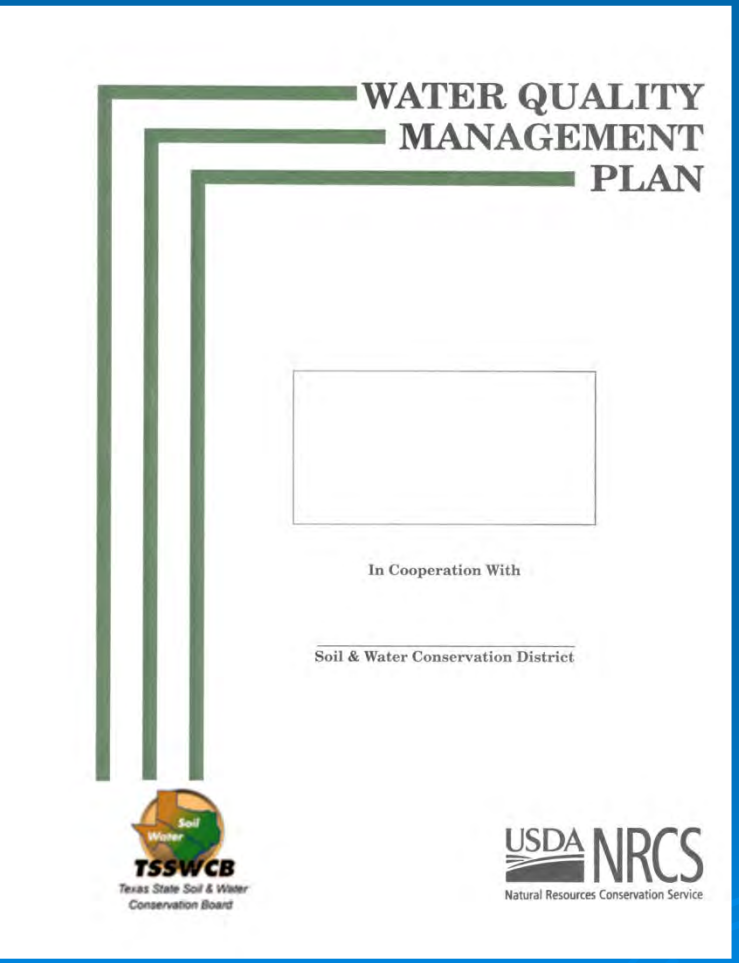
- Water Quality Management Plan Program
- Nonpoint Source Grant Program
- Water Supply Enhancement Program (Brush control)
- Flood Control Program

WQMP Program History

- Created by the 73rd Texas Legislature in 1993 through Senate Bill 503 (often referred to as 503 Program, or 503 plans, or 503 cost-share)

- Voluntary enrollment in WQMP Program for farmers and ranchers, except that the 77th Texas Legislature in 2001 (Senate Bill 1339) said poultry operations must obtain a WQMP

Water Quality Management Plans



- Site-specific plan for land improvement measures developed through SWCD for agricultural lands
- Provides farmers and ranchers a voluntary opportunity to achieve a level of pollution prevention or abatement consistent with state water quality standards
- Includes appropriate and essential land treatment practices, production practices, management measures, or technologies applicable to the planned land use
- Best available management and technology as described in NRCS Field Office Technical Guide

WQMPs

- Site specific plans with a combination of BMPs for the treatment of identified resource concerns
- Based on:
  - Soil types
  - Planned land use/production goals
  - Known/potential water quality/natural resource problems (SWAPA)
  - Other site specific factors (topo, etc.)

WQMPs

- Cover the entire farm or ranch
- Specifically designed to achieve pollution prevention/abatement
- Texas Water Code §26.121

Technical Criteria for WQMPs

NRCS Field Office Technical Guide (FOTG)

To view all approved practices for selected county:

- http://efotg.nrcs.usda.gov/efotg_locator.aspx?map=TX
- Select region
- Select county
- Select Section IV
- Select A. Conservation Practices

FOTG "essential practices" for each land use:

- Cropland
  - Conservation crop rotation
  - Residue mgmt.
- Pastureland
  - Prescribed grazing
  - Livestock water
- Rangeland
  - Prescribed grazing
  - Livestock water
- Wildlife
  - Wildlife mgmt.
- Forestland
  - Forest mgmt.

WQMPs also include:

- Nutrient management
- Pest management
- Animal waste management system
- Waste utilization
- Irrigation water management

WQMPs also include:

- Erosion control measures to bring soil loss to acceptable levels (T)
- Erosion control to treat other forms of erosion (i.e. gullies) according to FOTG quality criteria
- Other practices to meet site specific concerns

Why have a WQMP?

- Abate/prevent erosion and promote conservation
- A strategic “management” plan for your operation
- “Assurance” policy – state-certified proof that you aren’t just sitting around doing nothing
- Demonstrate that voluntary conservation programs promote agricultural production and environmental quality as compatible goals
- Demonstrate that agriculture is doing our part to protect water quality
- Resolve water quality complaints through voluntary process with SWCD and TSSWCB

WQMPs

What Does A Plan Contain?

- District-Cooperator Agreement
- Request for Planning Assistance
- Soils Map & Interpretations
- Conservation Plan Map
- Narrative Record of decisions (practices) needed to implement WQMP
- Implementation schedule indicating years practices are to be applied
- Worksheets used during the inventory and planning process of developing WQMP
- NRCS Practice Standards and engineering designs
- Signature sheet to verify individual's privacy

How to get a WQMP?

- An individual requests planning assistance through their local SWCD
- The WQMP is usually developed by the SWCD Technician with NRCS and TSSWCB assistance
- The WQMP is approved by the landowner, the SWCD and NRCS and then certified by the TSSWCB
- Producer implements the WQMP on their land
- Annual status reviews are conducted to ensure that the landowner implements BMPs as agreed to in the implementation schedule

Financial Assistance

State (TSSWCB) or Federal (NRCS) assistance is obtainable for certain conservation practices

- TSSWCB
  - SB503 WQMP Financial Assistance
  - CWA Section 319 funding
- NRCS
  - Farm Bill Programs

Project History

- Section 303(d) of the Clean Water Act requires states to identify water bodies that do not meet applicable water quality standards. This is known as the 303(d) list.
- Lower San Antonio River appeared on the 303(d) list in 2000 for indicator bacteria (Fecal coliform and *E. coli*)
- In 2005 Texas Commission on Environmental Quality (TCEQ) began work on a Total Maximum Daily Load (TMDL) for the river

Project History

- Fecal bacteria are found in the gut of warm blooded animals, and sources include sewage, wildlife, and livestock and are present in the watershed
- The dominant land use in the watershed is pasture and rangeland, both suited for grazing livestock
- In 2005 TSSWCB and TCEQ worked with NRCS to establish an Environmental Quality Incentives Program (EQIP) State Resource Concern for Water Quality in South Central Texas. Reauthorized in the 2002 federal Farm Bill, EQIP is a voluntary conservation program that supports production agriculture and environmental quality as compatible goals.

Implementing Cooperative Conservation

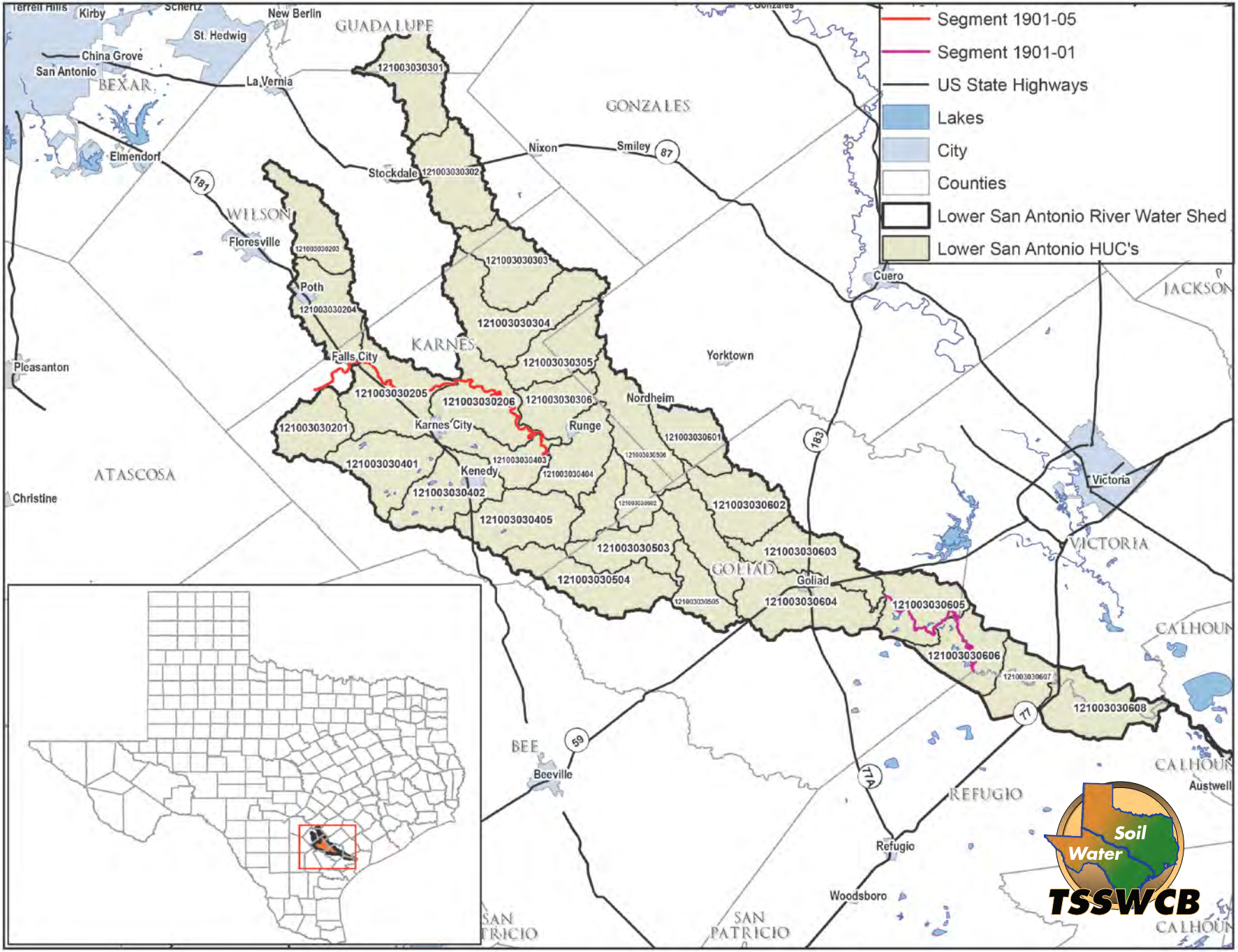
- Through EQIP, farmers and ranchers receive financial assistance with structural and management conservation practices on their land. The program is designed to address both locally identified resources concerns and state priorities.
- Watersheds included in the resource concern included Atascosa River, Elm and Sandies Creeks, and Lower San Antonio River
- In 2007, TSSWCB began providing Clean Water Act §319 funding to soil and water conservation districts to hire technicians to develop Water Quality Management Plans (WQMP) and help allocate the EQIP funding in the identified watersheds

Results

- 25 WQMPs* were written and implemented in Wilson, Karnes, and Goliad Counties from 2007-12
- Conservation Practices were implemented on 40,291* acres in the watershed

Results

- Through these efforts, water quality is improving and two assessment units of the Lower San Antonio River (1901_01 and 1901_05) were removed from the 2014 State List of Impaired Waters.
- The number of WQMPs and total acreage was extrapolated from the watersheds of the Assessment Units that were removed from the list. Over 100 WQMPs have been implemented in the entire LSAR Watershed through the project.


Segment 1901-05
Segment 1901-01
US State Highways
Lakes
City
Counties
Lower San Antonio River Water Shed
Lower San Antonio HUC's
GUADALUPE
BEXAR
GONZALES
WILSON
KARNES
ATASCOSA
BEE
GOLIAD
VICTORIA
CALHOUN
REFUGIO
SAN PATRICIO
JACKSON
Terrell Hills
Kirby
Schertz
New Berlin
St. Hedwig
China Grove
San Antonio
La Vernia
Elmendorf
Stockdale
Nixon
Smiley
Floresville
Poth
Falls City
Pleasanton
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Soil
Water
TSSWCB

Questions?

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