



2008 USDA-CSREES National Water Conference
Sparks, NV

**Locally driven Watershed Protection Planning in the Plum Creek Watershed:
Starting from Scratch and Completing the Plan in less than 24 Months**

Nikkoal J. Dictson, Mark McFarland and Matthew Berg

Abstract Text:

Texas Cooperative Extension (TCE) and the Texas State Soil and Water Conservation Board (TSSWCB) have partnered with local stakeholders to develop and implement a Watershed Protection Plan (WPP). This pilot project selected a watershed that has not had a Total Maximum Daily Load project or prior scientifically rigorous process of intensive data collection and analysis to determine environmental targets and pollutant sources within a watershed. The Plum Creek Watershed was selected for the WPP project in December 2005 and according to the Draft 2006 Texas Water Quality Inventory and 303(d) List, (Segment 1810) is impaired by elevated bacteria concentrations for contact recreation uses and has concerns for elevated nutrient levels. The Plum Creek Watershed Partnership (PCWP) was formed in May 2006 with a very aggressive timeline of <24 months for a draft WPP. The PCWP includes a steering committee consisting of local stakeholders, a technical advisory group consisting of local, state and federal agencies, and five work groups composed of steering committee members, agency personnel and other interested citizens. The PCWP initial meetings included presentations and educational modules on watershed processes to increase the knowledge level of the stakeholders and enhance their involvement in the process as decision makers for the project. To meet this rapid completion target the PCWP has met monthly to accomplish the data analysis, pollutant source identification, modeling, and implementation strategies. This pilot project has integrated the water quality data from the three monitoring stations, the local knowledge of the area, and the modeling efforts into the decision making process for the development of the plan and implementation strategies. The PCWP is promoting a sustainable, proactive approach to improving water quality at the local level from start to finish.

Impact Statement:

The pilot Watershed Protection Plan Project was also selected as a pilot for the Texas Tri-Agency Water Quality Team to identify data gaps and difficulties in both TMDL and WPP processes in Texas. This project has brought together a lot of local, state and agencies that would not otherwise be talking or working together on water issues in the watershed. This process and wide agency support will and has lead to implementation funding to achieve water quality goals.