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The Texas Watershed Steward Program: A Water Resource Training Curriculum

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Abstract Text:

Federal and state water resource management agencies have adopted a watershed-scale approach for managing water quality. One vital component of this approach involves engaging and educating local stakeholders to become actively involved in planning and implementing water resource management and protection programs in their watershed. To support this need for stakeholder involvement and education, the Texas Watershed Steward (TWS) program was initiated as a partnership between Texas Cooperative Extension and the Texas State Soil and Water Conservation Board. Primary goals of the program are to increase citizen understanding of watershed processes, provide science-based watershed education to help citizens identify and take action to address local water quality impairments, and to foster increased local participation in watershed management and protection planning activities. This unique program is specifically designed to be utilized in the initial phases of TMDL or Watershed Protection Plan development. The presentation will detail the development of the TWS program, successes and challenges experienced during implementation, initial results from pre/post-test participant evaluations, and future directions.

Impact Statement:

This project promotes healthy watersheds by increasing stakeholder involvement in watershed protection and planning initiatives, increasing citizen awareness, understanding, and knowledge about the nature and function of watersheds, and watershed protection strategies to minimize nonpoint source pollution.