

TEXAS STATE SOIL & WATER CONSERVATION BOARD

Soil & Water Conservation Districts and Agricultural & Silvicultural Nonpoint Source Pollution Abatement



***Soil & Water
Conservation
Districts and Rural
Landowners
Protecting Texas
Water Quality
Through Wise and
Productive Use of
Natural Resources.***

TEXAS STATE SOIL & WATER CONSERVATION BOARD

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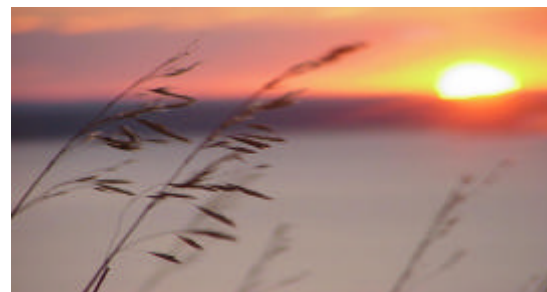
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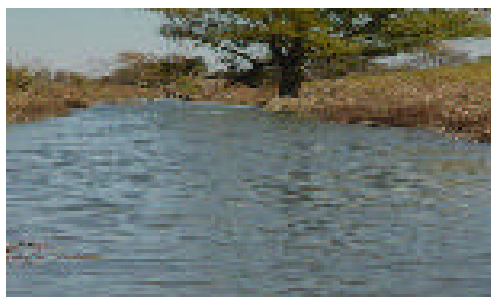
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Nonpoint Source Pollution from agricultural and silvicultural (forestry) activities is currently under increased scrutiny from regulatory agencies and urban interests. It has never been more important for rural landowners to be protective of natural resources and conscientious of the impact of their activities. Likewise, strong and informed Soil and Water Conservation Districts have never been more needed to set examples and provide assistance. Discussions of expanding the regulations pertaining to stormwater permitting, animal feeding operations, and nutrient criteria are more prevalent than ever. Most of these eventualities are discussed as special measures for impaired watersheds. However, the need for such actions can be prevented through voluntary programs when paired with enhanced educational programs. Texas Soil and Water Conservation Districts are the ideal mechanism for preventing extreme measures from infringing on rural landowners' ability to utilize our natural resources.



Why Should Rural Landowners be Concerned About Nonpoint Source (NPS) Pollution?

Urban Texans pay attention to rural Texans when it comes to water quality. The manner in which landowners use their private property and associated natural resources can have a detrimental impact on the quality of urban areas' drinking and recreational sources of water. When rural Texas is not pro-active in protecting water quality from agricultural and silvicultural activities, it comes back to them in the form of regulation. **The State of Texas continuously performs monitoring to ensure water quality standards are met and all Texas waterbodies meet their designated uses.** When water quality standards are not met, the State is required to develop and implement **Total Maximum Daily Loads (TMDLs)**. TMDLs are quantitative limits placed on the amount of certain pollutants when they are found to exceed allowable levels. **TMDLs can be enforced by state and federal regulations that can sometimes lead to limitations and restrictions on the use of private property and natural resources.**

In Texas SWCDs are the First Line of Defense Against NPS Pollution.

The Texas Legislature has designated the TSSWCB as the lead agency for abating NPS pollution from agricultural and silvicultural activities. Because the TSSWCB is an extension of SWCDs, and because SWCDs are truly the smallest and closest form of government to rural landowners, **SWCDs are perfectly positioned to be the driving force behind NPS pollution prevention.** No other organizations or forms of government have the potential to reach as many rural landowners as SWCDs.

How can SWCDs Take Advantage of their Ideal Situation?

SWCDs can increase their ability to abate NPS pollution by offering **strong conservation planning programs.** The existing **certified water quality management plan (WQMP) program** and other programs offered to SWCDs through their partnership with the United States Department of Agriculture-Natural Resources Conservation Service are examples of such programs and should be promoted, strengthened, and expanded to assist rural landowners across Texas. Incentives and cost-sharing programs such as the TSSWCB Senate Bill 503 Program and the NRCS Environmental Quality Incentives Program (EQIP) also serve as needed sources of financial assistance to ensure that rural landowners have the funding to properly implement best management practices. **The TSSWCB can assist SWCDs in finding available funding , such as Clean Water Act, Section 319(h) grant funding, for carrying out special educational programs and further financial assistance for implementing management measures.**

Taking the Lead for the Future!

SWCDs can take the lead and set a strong example by getting government's and rural landowners' attention. Participating in water quality stakeholder groups, hosting NPS seminars for students, and producing informational materials are just a few examples of ways SWCDs can become involved. **SWCDs can also be very effective by serving as a vehicle for landowners to communicate with their elected officials.**



The TSSWCB is ready to bring information and assistance on law, policy, and sources of technical and financial assistance to any SWCD in Texas. Please contact your TSSWCB Field Representative or any TSSWCB staff member at one of our offices for more information.