

# TEXAS STATE SOIL & WATER CONSERVATION BOARD

## Workforce Plan

Fiscal Years 2007-2011 Period



Prepared  
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# WORKFORCE PLAN

## AGENCY OVERVIEW

The Texas State Soil and Water Conservation Board (TSSWCB) was created by the Texas Legislature in 1939. The TSSWCB is charged with overall responsibility for administering and coordinating the state's soil and water conservation program with the state's soil and water conservation districts (districts). Title 7, Chapters 201 and 203 of the Agriculture Code of Texas contains the provisions of law pertaining to soil and water conservation. The TSSWCB is named as the agency responsible for implementing constitutional provisions and state laws relating to conservation and protection of soil resources. Within this framework of law, Section 201.026 gives the TSSWCB responsibility for planning, implementing and managing programs and practices for abating agricultural and silvicultural nonpoint source pollution. It is through this, that water quality management planning is incorporated into conservation planning methodologies. Chapter 203 creates the State Brush Control Program, designates the TSSWCB as the implementing agency, funds the State Brush Control program and provides for delegation of certain powers and duties to soil and water conservation districts.

Passage of the Texas Soil Conservation Law makes it possible for local landowners to organize and manage their own districts. Each local district develops a Long-Range Program and Plan of Work and an Annual Plan of Operations that guide the district in solving its conservation problems. These district programs and plans of work are updated regularly to recognize and evaluate changes in agriculture, economy and natural resources. Farmers and ranchers desiring to use a conservation program on their land receive assistance from their local district. Currently there are 217 local soil and water conservation districts that cover almost the entire state.

Since their creation conservation districts have effectively administered conservation programs based on the voluntary application of conservation practices. The voluntary approach, incorporating the basic philosophy prevalent throughout the farming and ranching industry, has proven successful. That philosophy recognizes private land as property of the owner and management a responsibility of ownership. Most Texas landowners have great respect for natural resources including water quality. With appropriate education, these landowners readily recognize the desirability of implementing suitable management practices. These management practices are what constitute conservation plans and water quality management plans.

The current network of 217 districts into which Texas is organized is the logical vehicle to provide the necessary local leadership and the appropriate information as to what practices are best for individual farming or ranching operations. The State Soil and Water Conservation Board is responsible for coordinating the programs of districts through advice and consultation.

The agency structure consists of seven State Board members (five Board members are elected by soil and water conservation districts, two Board members are Governor appointed) and staff. The staff is organized into Executive Administration, seven program areas (Fiscal Affairs, Nonpoint Source Pollution, Human Resources, Special Projects/Public Information/Education, Brush

Control (administered out of San Angelo), Soil and Water Conservation District Program Support (administered by Field Representatives), and Water Quality Management Plan Program (administered by Regional Offices). See Organization Chart (Appendix B of agency strategic plan).

The TSSWCB is currently staffed by 63 (61.6 FTEs) employees and has a current operating budget of approximately \$26 million for the biennium. Twenty (18.6 FTEs) employees are centrally located in Temple, Texas in close proximity to the state headquarters of the USDA's Natural Resources Conservation Service, a federal agency that is a partner in the statewide conservation program. The other 43 employees are located throughout the state. Six regional water quality offices have a total staff of 29 employees. In addition, there are two contract employees who work in regional offices. Ten field staff employees serve their assigned districts from a designated headquarters location. One brush manager administers the North Concho Brush Control Program in San Angelo. The office consists of a total 4 employees. One regional water quality office specializes as a poultry office

## OVERVIEW OF OPERATIONS

Texas State Soil and Water Conservation Board's workforce plan describes each major program of the agency and its associated workforce planning. Administrative Services is composed of an Executive Director, an Administrative Coordinator, along with an Administrative Assistant. Administrative Services directs the administrative affairs of the TSSWCB including the execution of rules, guidelines, decisions, and directives of the TSSWCB to ensure the efficient and effective operation of the agency.

**Fiscal Affairs** responsibilities include the development and oversight of TSSWCB's overall budget, revenue and expenditures, strategic planning, performance measures, cost recovery efforts, and the proper expenditure of grants, both federal and state. Responsibilities also include managing TSSWCB's general ledger and ensuring the proper processing of cash, communicating and implementing state and federal cash management practices, monitoring and processing expenditures in accordance with state and federal statutes and regulations, and information technology.

**Information Technology (IT)** installs and maintains network services including: local area networks; wide area network; internet services; local application support; infrastructure security; implements and maintains web-based technology; and trains staff on the use of applications and services. IT also configures, secures and maintains both wired and wireless local area network environments and troubleshoots computing-hardware and software problems for local and remote staff in all agency departments. The program audits and tracks the use of hardware and software deployments; serves as the agency Information Resource Manager and Security Officer, working with the Department of Information Resources to ensure agency compliance with state IT law; develops, maintains, and enforces policies regarding security, the acceptable use of IT infrastructure, and disaster recovery and works with agency purchaser on the procurement of IT software and hardware.

All **purchasing** efforts for the agency are accomplished in accordance with state and federal requirements, the minority procurement program and vendor recruitment requirements.

**The Nonpoint Source Team** carries out the agency's mandate for addressing agricultural and silvicultural (forestry) nonpoint source pollution (NPS) abatement. The program is funded by the State and the United States Environmental Protection Agency (EPA) to demonstrate and implement activities that control and abate NPS pollution. Work is carried out with other state and federal agencies to address NPS issues as they relate to Water Quality Standards and Criteria, Total Maximum Daily Loads, and Coastal Zone Protection. Texas receives approximately \$10 million annually from the Environmental Protection Agency (EPA) through the federal Clean Water Act, Section 319(h) Nonpoint Source Program.

**Inter-Agency Communications** facilitates interaction between the TSSWCB and other agencies, entities, and individuals on matters pertaining to agency programs and services. Inter-Agency Communications serves as an initial point of contact and ensures appropriate TSSWCB personnel are engaged in matters involving inter-agency cooperation. Inter-Agency Communications ensures various agency programs are coordinated in such a way that they support one another and collectively work toward the agency's mission, goals, objectives, and are in accordance with state and federal statute and agency rules.

**Special Projects/Public Information and Education** responsibilities include: planning and coordinating the Annual State Meeting for Soil and Water conservation District Directors; coordinating agency rules; coordinating various agency reports; coordinating request for public information; coordinating the complaint process; and maintaining an open and relevant relationship between districts, agricultural interest groups, and the general public. Sponsored activities include: Soil and Water stewardship contests; Texas Conservation Awards Programs; Wildlife Conservation workshops; maintaining a conservation video library; supporting teacher workshops; providing conservation education demonstration models for schools; and coordinating district director training.

**Human Resources** responsibilities include: overseeing all personnel matters including benefits administration, state classification plan, payroll, leave accounting, employment, managerial, developmental and safety training. Human Resources also ensures that TSSWCB personnel practices are in compliance with state and federal regulations. Human Resources serves as a strategic partner with Executive Management and also consults and advises managerial staff regarding human resource matters.

**Brush Control** is a voluntary program in which landowners may contract with the state for cost-share assistance to remove water-depleting brush and enhance water availability. Working through local soil and water conservation districts, landowners develop resource management system plans addressing brush control, soil erosion, water quality, wildlife habitat and other natural resource issues.

**Soil and Water Conservation District Program Support** provides assistance to SWCDs and their employees through programs it administers and through TSSWCB field representatives that meet regularly with the SWCDs to provide guidance, training and consultation. The field staff also coordinates the activities of districts and provides a direct link between the TSSWCB and districts.



The **Water Quality Management Plan (WQMP) Program** assists agricultural and silvicultural producers in meeting the state's water quality goals and standards through a voluntary, incentive-based program. There are special requirements regarding Poultry WQMPs.

## **WORKFORCE PROFILE**

Information from the State Auditor's Office (SAO) Human Resources Analysis System annual average headcount report shows the agency had 59.25 employees during fiscal year 2005. Of the average 59.25 headcount, 17.5 employees were female and 41.75 were male.

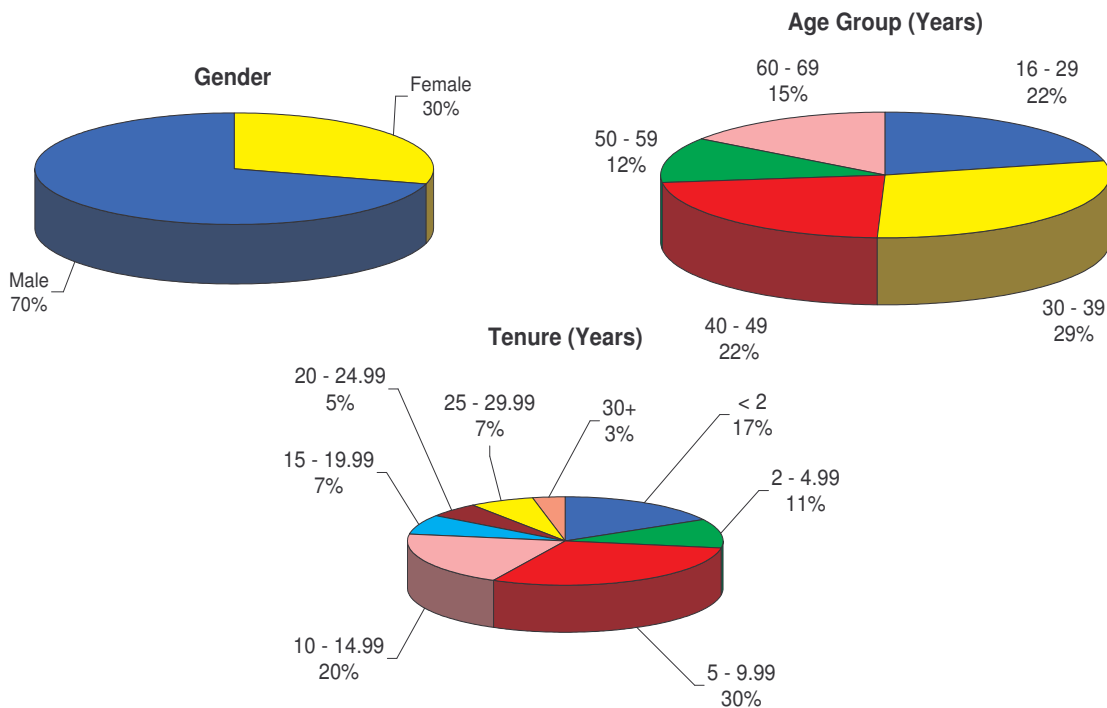
### ***Critical Workforce Skills***

Although the TSSWCB has qualified employees, there are several critical skills that are important to the agency's ability to operate. Without these skills, the TSSWCB could not provide basic services. These skills are listed below:

- Developing and promoting voluntary approaches
- Conservation Planning
- Database development and maintenance
- Providing a liaison with districts
- Providing technical assistance
- Project/Contract management
- Developing Water Quality Management Plans
- Coordinating activities of districts
- Strategic Planning
- Customer service
- Interpreting legal statutes
- Educating clientele

## Workforce Demographics

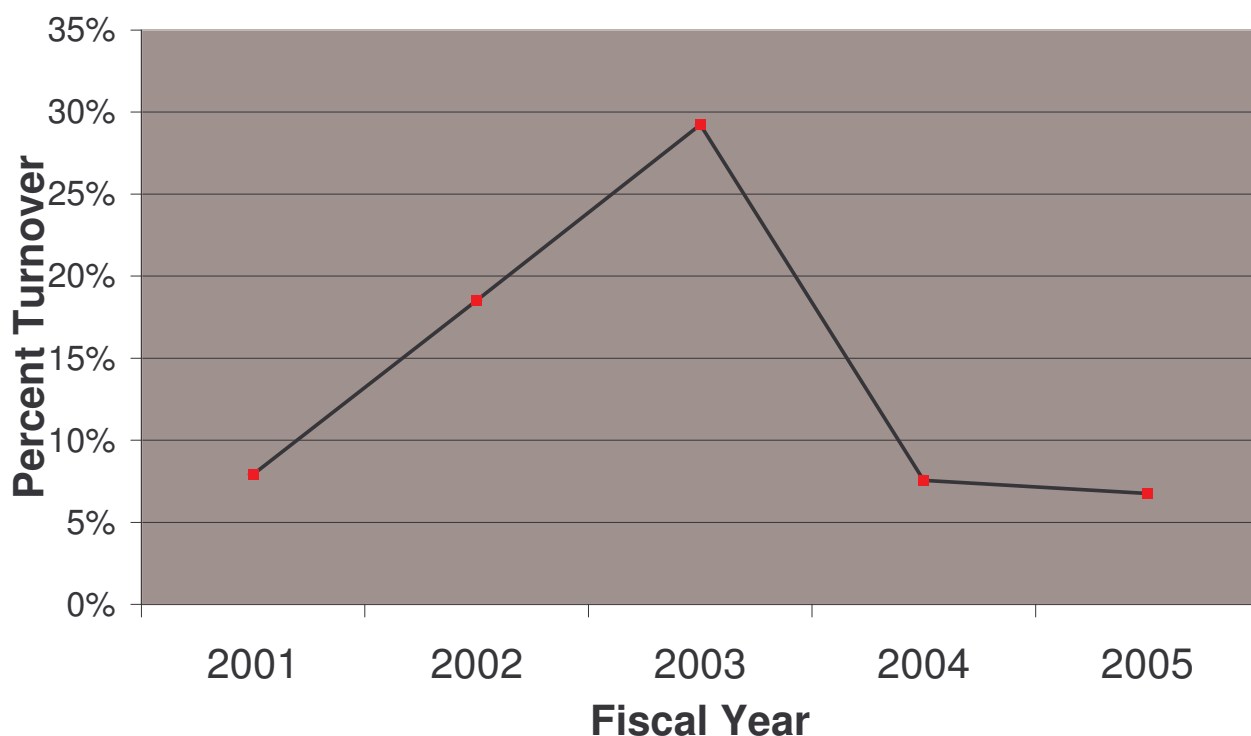
The following charts profile TSSWCB's workforce for fiscal year 2005. The average headcount was 59.25. Of that figure, 41.75 employees were male and 17.5 were female. Almost 50 percent of TSSWCB's employees are over the age of 40. Sixty-seven percent of employees have less than 10 years of service. These employees have the potential for continued service with the agency. Thirty-three percent of employees have over 10 years of service and have the ability to serve as mentors to the other staff. TSSWCB was created in 1939, therefore it is reasonable to have a substantial number of tenured staff.



## Employee Turnover

Turnover is an important issue in any agency, and TSSWCB is no exception. During the last five years, TSSWCB has seen an increase from 7.9 percent in fiscal year 2001 to 29.2 percent in fiscal year 2003. This turnover rate is higher than the State average. The following graph compares the TSSWCB turnover to that of the State over the last five fiscal years. Before 2002, TSSWCB's employee turnover rate was lower than the State percentage. In fiscal year 2002, an increase in turnover was due to voluntary separations along with retirement. In fiscal year 2003, TSSWCB had to eliminate a substantial number of positions due to budget restraints. This accounted for the 29.2 percent in turnover. As the chart demonstrates, turnover has significantly decreased since fiscal year 2003 to 7.5 percent in fiscal year 2004 and has decreased even lower in fiscal year 2005 to 6.7 percent. The turnover rate has been lower than the State average for the last 2 fiscal years. For the future, TSSWCB anticipates turnover to be below state average.

## Employee Turnover



### **Attrition**

TSSWCB has not experienced attrition for the last 2 fiscal years.

### **Retirement Eligibility**

Since over 25 percent of TSSWCB's employees are 50 years of age or older, retirement accounts for a considerable part of employees leaving the agency. Because almost 25 percent of the agency's employees are between the ages of 40 and 49, in the next 1 to 2 years, retirement will become increasingly significant. By fiscal year 2007, the agency could experience a potential loss of 10 employees, 8 of which are eligible for retirement in fiscal year 2006 alone. These employees have helped to further establish and improve the agency, and it is important to ensure that this knowledge and organizational experience is not lost.

## **FUTURE WORKFORCE PROFILE**

The ultimate goal is to ensure continuity of task performance in each area and program at TSSWCB. Employees approaching retirement eligibility should work with management to develop a succession plan for their program area.

TSSWCB workforce changes are anticipated to be driven by goals, strategies, performance measures, technology, work, workloads, work processes, program related federal grants, and federal contract programs.

The knowledge, skills and abilities necessary to perform specific functions and tasks within the agency requires an educated staff that has extensive information technology, project management, managerial and professional training. Written and verbal proficiency is essential in all agency positions. Individual skill development will also need to be accommodated to recruit, retain, train and motivate workers.

Projected future workforce knowledge needed includes the following:

- Negotiation and facilitation
- Strategic planning
- Project/Contract management
- Performance management
- Conservation planning

TSSWCB recognizes the need to maintain and improve current skill levels and anticipates projected future workforce skills needed includes the following:

- Knowledge of legislative processes
- Accounting services
- Technical planning
- Computer technology
- Decision making
- Communication
- Engineering services
- Database maintenance
- Customer service
- Public service

The strategic vision anticipates annual technological advances requiring knowledge and skill improvement. TSSWCB anticipates information will be processed faster and more accurately allowing for smooth transitions during staff changes.

TSSWCB foresees more electronic document exchange, more accountability and more reporting requirements.

TSSWCB also projects an increase in involvement addressing agriculture, silvicultural, and nonpoint source pollution concerns, water enhancement, and contracting to provide technical services for federal agriculture programs.

It is also recognized that additional future changes to strategies and goals are contingent on legislative activities, new initiatives defined by the TSSWCB and changes in state and federal laws. Economic trends in the marketplace would dictate our ability to retain and recruit employees with competitive job skills.



## ***Changes we anticipate in our workforce:***

### **Critical Functions**

- Expansion of water conservation/enhancement activities
- Addressing mandated deadlines/requirements for Poultry operations

### **Expected Workforce Changes**

- More direct relation with producers
- Increased use of technology to revise, increase efficiencies, streamline work processes enabling better communication between mobile staff members and an increasing mobile public
- Employees cross-trained in functional areas
- Increased number of Grant Managers, Project Managers, Contract Managers, Natural Resource Specialists, and Planners

### **Anticipated Increase/Decrease in Number of Employees Needed to Do the Work**

- Expect current staff to remain static
- Increased demands to be addressed by reallocation of workload within the agency

## ***Gap Analysis***

The projected retirement or loss of employees in technical and professional areas has the potential to create a shortage of expertise in various areas. Mentoring, coaching, cross training and succession planning along with improved on-the-job training must take on greater importance. The increased alliance on information technology requires lifetime learning for all employees.

## ***Strategy Development***

Our strategies to address gaps in our workforce agency-wide include: (dependent upon budget constraints) adequate salary; merit increases; monetary and non-monetary rewards for performance; flex time and/or telecommute opportunities; career, leadership and professional development; cross training, contract workers; and increased participation in agency programs. When possible, a mentoring process whereby replacement employees are hired prior to the current employee-retiring, contingent upon FTE issues is utilized as needed.

A continual review of the agency's Workforce Plan is conducted as business goals change.