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Helping People Help the Land



MAY 2012

Activity *report*



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Programs

Farm Bill financial assistance and easement programs have been nearly obligated for Fiscal Year 2012. The table below shows the original amount allocated and percentage rate of obligation for programs in Texas.

<u>Program</u>	<u>Allocation</u>	<u>Obligation Rate</u>
AWEP	\$ 5,747,000	94%
EQIP	\$65,328,000	82%
FRPP	\$ 3,100,000	Initial Offers Pending
GRP ³ (Easements)	\$10,400,000	Initial Offers Pending
WRP (Texas Based)*	\$11,000,000	Initial Offers Pending
WRP (GOMI)**	\$ 3,000,000	Initial Offers Pending
WRP-WREP***	\$ 4,000,000	Initial Offers Pending

*Regular funding for Texas

**GOMI – Gulf of Mexico National Initiative funding

***Newly funded WREP targeted area

Conservation Stewardship Program

We are working through the latest CSP signup, we had 827 applications for just over 1.5M acres. Nationally, there were 10.7 million acres offered. CSP has an annual acreage cap of 12.7M acres, however due to budget restrictions, the program acreage was reduced for this year.

Environmental Quality Incentives Program – Organic Initiative

USDA-NRCS has opened a second sign-up period for organic farmers and ranchers that closed on May 18th. Texas has plenty of funding for any interested applicant that may want to transition to organic or is already



Programs (cont'd)

certified organic. There is a payment limitation of \$20,000 per year with an \$80,000 payment maximum through the life of the 2008 Farm Bill. Applicants that need to address resource concerns above and beyond the organic practices offered are eligible to apply for “regular” EQIP and may have two contracts simultaneously on the same property.

National Water Quality Initiative

On Tuesday, May 8th, Secretary Vilsack announced the National Water Quality Initiative. This initiative in Texas will be in the Chambers Creek watershed above the Richland-Chambers reservoir in Ellis and Navarro Counties. Best management practices will be implemented to address dissolved oxygen, turbidity and siltation. The initial ranking period will end on May 18th, with a successive signup from May 20th through June 15th.



*NRCS State Conservationist Salvador Salinas announced the \$2 million in funding for the **National Water Quality Initiative (NWQI)** improve water quality in the Chambers Creek Watershed in Navarro and Ellis counties at Gary and Sue Price's 77 Ranch near Corsicana on Thursday, May 17.*

Gulf of Mexico Initiative

Zone 3 reports NRCS has \$250,000 allocated for EQIP for Gulf of Mexico Initiative (GOMI) and \$228,056 has been obligated on 11 contracts. Two temporary GOMI Soil Conservationists Temporary Appointments which start on June 17 in Refugio and Port Lavaca. They are Sam Schiwart, NRCS RMS Sterling City, Texas who will be in Refugio and Antonio “Tony” Resendez, NRCS SC, Caldwell, Texas who will be in Port Lavaca.

Wetlands Restoration Program

Zone 3 reports six Wetlands Restoration Program (WRP) applications are tentatively selected for funding,

five permanent easements, and one 30 year easement but final amount obligated is not available at this time.

Ogallala Aquifer Initiative

The program manager for the Ogallala Aquifer Initiative (OAI) in Zone 1 reports funding obligated is over \$1.6 million for 104 contracts on 51,319 acres. The OAI-12 funding obligated is over \$3.4 million for 101 contracts on 17,485 acres. To further activities and outreach for the Ogallala Aquifer Initiative (OAI), NRCS in Zone 1 has collaborated on a video project with the Texas Corn Producers. The video is a three part series of YouTube videos featuring drip irrigation for design, maintenance and management and field management. The following are draft versions of the videos to be posted with a final versions by late May. <http://youtu.be/UYNz9iUbbj4>, <http://youtu.be/YeLnYnXxItM>, <http://youtu.be/e4WBf9aNsqI>. The videos were developed to help producers understand the most important factors to know when considering drip irrigation as a irrigation method for conserving water resources.

Lesser Prairie Chicken Initiative

Zone 1 reports the Lesser Prairie Chicken Initiative (LPCI) current totals include eight contracts for \$272,608.00 on 11,209 acres. Please note more contracts are waiting to be funded this week for each of the landscape initiatives and statewide funds for EQIP. Texas public affairs staff has taken the lead in developing the national outreach efforts for the LPCI. This effort coincides with two specific trainings Texas rangeland management specialists and biologists from the state and zone levels have completed to organize and plan the LPCI in Texas. National LPCI Coordinator Jon Ungerer and NRCS Science Advisor Christian Hagan traveled to Texas to attend and present at both field workshops and meetings.

Conservation Innovation Grant

Zone 1 reports that NRCS has partnered with the North Plains Ground Water Conservation District to develop a video for the newly accepted Conservation Innovation Grant (CIG) in the northern Panhandle. Video content will feature some of the producers involved, background information and the current progress being made in the first year of the projects implementation. The District, along with the Texas Alliance for Water Conservation, Texas Tech University, and High Plains Underground Water Conservation District received the CIG in 2011 for almost \$500,000 to be used to demonstrate water efficient agricultural practices over the next three years.

Watershed Program

American Reinvestment and Recovery Act (ARRA)

- Construction has been completed on all ARRA projects. Nineteen dams were repaired (final cost \$13 million) and one dam was rehabilitated (final cost \$2 million).
- Work continues on two mitigation projects (Elm Creek Centex 34; Caney Creek 3A).

Watershed Rehabilitation Program

- Rehabilitation construction of Plum Creek FRS No. 5 (Hays County) is underway. Completion is expected around the end of June 2012.
- Design of East Fork above Lavon 2A (Collin County) is underway.
- Rehab planning for Plum Creek 6 (Hays County) is complete, and the plan has been authorized for funding by the Chief.
- Rehab planning for Olmitos-Garcias 7 (Starr County) is near completion. Public meeting to present the draft plan was held on April 23 in Rio Grande City.
- Work has begun on rehabilitation planning for 4 dams in Bexar County: Martinez 1, 2, 3, and Calaveras 10.

Watershed Operations Program

- Agreements are in place with the TSSWCB for engineering design and construction inspection of dam

repair projects funded by the TSSWCB Dam Repair program.

- Repair of Caney Creek 3A (Fannin County) is underway (minor erosion and vegetation).
- Construction of recreation facilities (Phase II) at Attoyac Bayou FRS 23A (Nacogdoches County) has been completed. Sponsors are planning to open the lake to the public by late summer.
- Design work continues on Big Creek (TriCounty) Sites 16, 17, and 19MP (Falls County).
- Work continues on the 404 permit for Elm Creek (1250) Site 1A Rev. (Taylor County).

Funding for Watershed Projects in FY 2012

Watershed Operations: No funding was received for Watershed Operations for FY 2012. Plans are to close the program. Projects currently funded and underway with funds carried over from last fiscal year will be allowed to continue until the funds are used up. No new projects will be initiated.

Watershed Rehabilitation: FY 2012 technical assistance (TA) funding was received for continuation of planning, design, and construction inspection on 4 ongoing projects. TA funding was not received for development of new rehabilitation plans in FY 2012. No financial assistance funding (FA – for construction) was received for FY 2012.

Events & Activities



Willie Holmon, soil conservationist with the USDA-Natural Resources Conservation Service (NRCS) in Bryan, gave a soil survey map review presentation at the TSFR/CBO inaugural meeting April 3 at the Carver Community Center in Navasota.

History is made by Texas Small Farmers and Ranchers CBO

A vision of having a state headquarters' office and training center has become a reality for the Texas Small Farmers and Ranchers Community Based Organization (TSFR/CBO). Recognizing the organization's unprecedented growth and commitment to outreach and education, the Navasota George Washington Carver Alumni Association, through a joint partnership agreement, has donated two wings of the Carver Community Center to the group. Founded in 1998, the organization is dedicated to assisting limited resource agricultural producers.

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