

# FOREST STEWARDSHIP BRIEFINGS

Timber ◇ Wildlife ◇ Water ◇ Soil ◇ Best Management Practices ◇ Forest Health ◇ Recreation ◇ Aesthetics

## NPS POLLUTION MANAGEMENT REPORT

The Texas State Soil and Water Conservation Board (TSSWCB) announced the release of the 2020 Annual Report. The **Nonpoint Source Pollution Management in Texas – 2020 Annual Report** is published by the TSSWCB and the Texas Commission on Environmental Quality (TCEQ). This report is a culmination of the State’s efforts to ensure and improve the quality of water in Texas.

Each year, Congress appropriates federal funds to States through the U.S. Environmental Protection Agency (EPA) under the Clean Water Act §319(h) Nonpoint Source Grant Program. These funds are used to administer and implement the Texas Nonpoint Source Management Program. In order to continue receiving these federal funds, the State of Texas must report annually on successes in achieving the goals and objectives of the Program.

Efforts during fiscal year 2020 focused on collecting data, assessing water quality, and implementing projects in order to prevent or reduce the effects of nonpoint source pollution, along with educating the public.

This report highlights annual load reductions of various pollutants, and includes success stories achieved using various strategies in waterbodies across the state:

- ◇ Through implementation of the Lower Nueces River Watershed Protection Plan On-Site Sewage Facility (OSSF) Strategy, a reduction of *E. coli*, nitrogen, and phosphorus was achieved.
- ◇ To alleviate the impacts on water quality as a result of increasing development and construction in the Upper San Marcos River watershed, two

management practices were upgraded - a biofiltration pond and a storm water mitigation/erosion control project. Through these upgrades came a reduction in *E. coli*, nitrogen, phosphorus, and sediment.

- ◇ For thirty years, Lower Colorado River Authority (LCRA) has relied on a partnership between private landowners, Natural Resources Conservation Service (NRCS), and local soil and water conservation districts to administer the LCRA Creekside Conservation Program. Technical and financial assistance provided to agricultural producers for implementing best management practices on private property within the Colorado River watershed has led to a reduction in nitrogen, phosphorus, and sediment.
- ◇ Implementing agricultural best management practices in the Leon River watershed resulted in a reduction of nitrogen and phosphorus.
- ◇ Local partnerships and community involvement in the city of Boerne brought about a reduction of *E. coli* in Upper Cibolo Creek.
- ◇ Implementing conservation practices and conducting watershed outreach helped reduce *E. coli* concentrations in the Navasota River watershed.

Many local, regional, state, and federal agencies play an integral part in managing nonpoint source pollution. By coordinating with these partners to share information and resources, and to develop and implement strategies together, the State can more effectively focus its water quality protection and restoration efforts.

*from TSSWCB Press Release dated May 18, 2021*

For more information:

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## WHY THE SURGE IN LUMBER PRICES?

from Texas A&M Forest Service Press Release dated June 10, 2021

For more information:

- <https://tfswb.tamu.edu/content/article.aspx?id=31634>
- <https://bit.ly/3wg55Y5>

Lockdowns from the pandemic have led to some unexpected economic consequences, one of which has been a surge in lumber prices. Sawmills shut down at the onset of the pandemic, while Americans across the country – forced to work from home – found the time and energy to remodel, renovate and, in many cases, relocate. Demand for lumber went up, but supply went down: consequently, costs have skyrocketed over 300%.

In a simpler world, this would mean that everyday landowners who grow and harvest timber on their property become the beneficiaries of an unexpected boon. But, as it turns out, timber prices (i.e. the price of felled trees sold to sawmills as logs) haven't changed at all.

This divergence between the cost of timber and the cost of lumber is counter-intuitive, to say the least; but the reality is that both are part of incredibly complex, and surprisingly different, markets. Consumers set the price of lumber based on the demand for processed wood and single-family homes, while sawmills set the price of sawtimber based on what landowners are willing to get paid.

The problem for forest landowners is the abundance of ready-to-harvest timber. The surplus of harvestable trees is just one of many factors contributing to the flatline in timber prices, according to Rob Hughes, Executive Director of the Texas Forestry Association.

“Landowners have been struggling to get their timber harvested for a while,” said Hughes. “The mills are producing more wood than they have before, but it’s still not to the capacity of how much timber is being grown in their areas.”

A part of this divergence began with the housing crisis of 2008. Sawmills across the south had already been consolidating into fewer, more efficient locations. But with the sudden pitfall in demand, the number of sawmills were practically cut in half. A shortage of mill supplies and workers also contribute. The result is a buyer’s market. Landowners are competing with each other not only to sell their timber for a reasonable price, but to have their timber harvested in the first place.

*See the referenced article (sidebar) for possible landowner options and future possibilities.*

## KUDOS AND SHOUT OUTS

from TSSWCB Press Release dated May 10, 2021

For more information:

- <https://www.tsswcb.texas.gov/news/tsswcb-announces-2021-conservation-award-winners>

Each year the Texas State Soil and Water Conservation Board (TSSWCB) and the Association of Texas Soil and Water Conservation Districts (ATSWCD) recognize and honor individuals who dedicate themselves to the conservation and management of renewable natural resources.

The 2021 Conservation Award Winners:

**Conservation Farmer** – Todd Westerland, McLennan Co. SWCD #512

**Outstanding Soil and Water Conservation District** – Parker Co. SWCD #558

**Friend of Conservation** – Stephen Deiss, Victoria SWCD #346

**Conservation Rancher** – Broken W Partnership, San Patricio SWCD #324

**Conservation Teacher** – Sherrilyn Welch, Howard SWCD #243

**Wildlife Conservationist** – Quinn Ranch, McCulloch SWCD #249

**Poster Contest theme: “Healthy Forests, Healthy Communities”**

**Winner** – Cadence DelaRosa from Riviera, Kleberg-Kenedy SWCD #356

**Essay Contest topic: “Healthy Forests, Healthy Communities”**

**Winners** –

– Blaine Dahl of Channing, Hartley SWCD #152, 1st place, Junior Division

– Briana Latray of Groesbeck, Limestone-Falls SWCD #501, 1st place, Senior Division

## WETLAND RESERVE ENHANCEMENT

The U.S. Department of Agriculture (USDA) is investing up to \$17 million for conservation partners to help protect and restore critical wetlands on agricultural lands through the Wetland Reserve Enhancement Partnership (WREP). USDA's Natural Resources Conservation Service (NRCS) is prioritizing proposals that focus on assisting historically underserved producers conserving wetlands. Proposals from partners are due August 15, 2021.

Restored wetlands help to improve water quality downstream, enhance wildlife habitat, reduce impacts from flooding, and provide recreational benefits.

“Our goal is to support agricultural producers in their efforts to conserve natural resources on their land,” said Kristy Oates, state conservationist in Texas.

“Wetland Reserve Enhancement Partnerships help partners and producers work together to protect wetland ecosystems on working lands.”

Through WREP projects, eligible conservation partners protect, restore, and en-

hance high-priority wetlands on agriculture lands. WREP enables effective integration of wetland restoration on working agricultural landscapes, providing meaningful benefits to farmers and ranchers who enroll in the program and to the communities where the wetlands exist.

Eligible partners include Tribes, state and local governments, and non-government organizations. WREP partners are required to contribute a financial or technical assistance fund match. WREP funding is for fiscal year 2022, which begins on October 1, 2021.

Funding will be provided through the Agricultural Conservation Easement Program (ACEP), a Farm Bill conservation program. Through WREP, states, local units of governments, non-governmental organizations, and American Indian tribes collaborate with NRCS through cooperative and partnership agreements. These partners work with tribal and private landowners who voluntarily enroll eligible land into easements to protect, restore, and enhance wetlands on their properties.

*from USDA NRCS Press Release dated July 1, 2021*

*For more information:*

- <https://bit.ly/3xeG8xz>

## CONSERVATION WRANGLERS

Texan by Nature (TxN), a Texas-led conservation non-profit, announced the selection of the 2021 Conservation Wranglers. Conservation Wrangler is an accelerator program that catalyzes the very best Texan-led conservation projects occurring in the state. Selected projects are science-based and demonstrate a positive return on conservation for people, prosperity, and natural resources. The 2021 Conservation Wranglers will work with the Texan by Nature team, receiving 12-18 months of dedicated support with program management, strategic planning, marketing strategy, metrics capture and analysis, professional content production, and partnership development – whatever is needed to accelerate the project.

“Each year, Texan by Nature selects innovative projects that demonstrate replicable

conservation efforts in our state,” shared the former First Lady and Founder of Texan by Nature, Mrs. Laura Bush. “The Conservation Wrangler program proves that conservation is essential for the health of our natural resources, our people, and our economy.”

*2021 Conservation Wranglers:*

- **Texas Water Trade (TWT)**- Restoring Comanche Springs
- **Texas Longleaf Implementation Team (TLIT)** - Expanding longleaf ecosystem restoration in Texas
- **San Antonio Zoo** - Texas Horned Lizard Reintroduction Project
- **Audubon Texas** - Matagorda Bay Rookery Island Conservation

*from Texas by Nature Press Release dated April 1, 2021*

*For more information:*

- <https://bit.ly/ConservationWranglers>
- <https://texanbynature.org/>

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**Editorial Advisor:**

**Joe Pase, TFS-Retired; Lufkin, Texas**

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## HEALTHY CREEKS AND WATERWAYS

**Want to learn more about the role of riparian buffers and vegetation on the flow and health of waterways?**

North Central Texas Council of Governments (NCTCOG) conducted a webinar on this topic in March 2021. The recording of this online webinar is on NCTCOG's "Conserve North Texas" website: <http://conservenorthtexas.org/article/2021/healthy-creeks-and-waterways> .

Topics covered include:

- What riparian buffers and greenbelts are and their role and impact on water quality;
  - Denton County Greenbelt Plan as an example of focused planning efforts for riparian preservation and restoration;
  - Social and economic benefits of riparian buffer preservation and restoration;
  - Establishment of mowing ordinances;
  - Strategies for addressing public safety concerns and perceptions related to "no-mow" zones;
  - Resources and tools;
  - and more.
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