Lampasas River Watershed Partnership

UPDATES

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Partnership News

This past November, the Lampasas River Watershed Partnership (LRWP) celebrated 10 years since its inception! It's hard to believe that we have been at this, working together for 10 years. Our watershed protection plan (WPP), which was finalized and accepted in 2013, was developed through the efforts of our Steering Committee, with guidance from our Topical Work Groups and our Partnership members. The process for development of WPPs in Texas has been streamlined and made more efficient through the subsequent years, but our group of dedicated stakeholders were in the trenches and on the ground floor. Our WPP was the 4th to be accepted in the state of Texas. As of fiscal year 2019, there were 31 watershed protection plans in Texas accepted by the U.S. Environmental Protection Agency (EPA) with an additional 15 under development. Our efforts in the Lampasas River watershed laid the groundwork and helped to develop the framework used by many of these newer WPPs. So, happy birthday to our Partnership stakeholders and thank you for your continued support!

LRWP Reorganizes Steering Committee

The LRWP began with a Steering Committee comprised of 19 local citizens and stakeholders, all voted in by the Partnership in November 2009. Members serving on the Steering Committee reflected diversity in areas of interest as well as the diverse geography within the watershed. Throughout the development and implementation of the WPP, the membership has changed as members' needs have changed focus or moved into or out of the area. In July 2019, the original Steering Committee agreed to restructure the committee to a smaller, more manageable group. This new Steering Committee is comprised of 7 positions, 4 topic specific positions (city government, county government, agriculture producer and wildlife producer) and 3 at-large positions. Thank you, to our Steering Committee members Mr. Tom Casbeer (Agriculture Producer), Mr. Chris Meis (Wildlife Producer), Mr. Finley deGraffenried (City Government), Commissioner Dickie Clary (County Government) and our three At-Large members, Mr. Scott Brooks, Mr. Kenneth Schoen and Mr. Donald Parrish. We'd like to thank all of our previous Steering Committee members for their work and dedication to the needs of our watershed. The Steering Committee also updated and revised the Partnership Ground Rules to reflect current goals.

Conservation Assistance

Our technical and financial assistance for landowners program has moved into its sixth year. This program is administered through the Hill Country Soil and Water Conservation District (SWCD), in close collaboration with the USDA Natural Resource Conservation Service (NRCS), with funding from the Texas State Soil and Water Conservation Board (TSSWCB) through

a Clean Water Act §319(h) grant from the U.S. Environmental Protection Agency. Our District Technician, Lee Gernentz, is housed in the Lampasas USDA Field Office and works with landowners from across the watershed to develop Water Quality Management Plans (WQMPs). A WQMP is a site-specific plan developed through and approved by the local SWCD for agricultural or silvicultural lands which is driven by the needs of the landowner. The plan includes appropriate land treatment practices,

production practices, management measures, technologies or combinations thereof. The purpose of WQMPs is to achieve a level of pollution prevention or abatement determined by the TSSWCB, in consultation with local soil and water conservation districts, to be consistent with state water quality standards. Through this program, producers within the Lampasas River watershed are eligible for up to $15,000 in financial assistance to implement conservation practices outlined in the WQMP. Common conservation practices implemented under this program include Forage and Biomass Planting, Range Planting, Cross Fencing, Prescribed Grazing, and Brush Management. Through this program, 27 WQMPs have been developed, encompassing 21,485 acres since January 2014. For more information about this program, please call Gernentz at (512) 556-5572, extension 3.

Addressing OSSFs in the Watershed

During the development of the WPP, The Partnership estimated approximately 8,244 on-site sewage facilities (OSSF), also known as septic systems in the watershed. Home septic systems are used to treat wastewater before the wastewater is dispersed back into the environment; malfunctioning septic systems can cause bacteria to contaminate the environment. However, the permitting, recording, and inspection of OSSFs varies greatly between counties and more accurately identifying these systems is the first hurdle in addressing failing and malfunctioning systems in the watershed. The Partnership recognized this as the first hurdle to overcome to address failing and malfunctioning systems in the watershed.

AgriLife Research, in collaboration with Texas A&M Biological and Agriculture Engineering Department, recently wrapped up a project which developed a watershed-wide database that was populated with data from various sources to locate and identify OSSFs within the watershed. This project produced a geodatabase with concise locations and details about the OSSFs that are already in place within the watershed. AgriLife Research and the Partnership will utilize this database to identify critical areas. This will allow more efficient use of a funds by targeting those areas that have a higher probability of making the greatest impact on improving water quality.

Recently, AgriLife Extension, along with AgriLife Research, secured additional funding from the Texas Commission on Environmental Quality through a Clean Water Act §319(h) grant from the U.S. Environmental Protection Agency to address failing septic systems within the watershed. These funds will be available to residents to repair or replace systems and will cover the cost of up to 100% of 15 systems. This program is completely voluntary. If you have concerns about your septic system failing, be on the lookout for upcoming information about the program!

Educational Opportunities

While COVID 19 has delayed our educational programming for the near future, we had a busy first few months of 2020. In January, we partnered up with the folks at Lampasas County Water Control and Improvement District #1 (WCID) and the Hill Country SWCD to cohost a short seminar on the functions and water quantity/quality benefits provided by the Sulphur Creek Flood Control Structures to the citizens of Lampasas. This program was attended by over 100 participants.

We also collaborated with the City of Copperas Cove and Keep Copperas Cove Beautiful to host a program about rainwater collection in March. This program, Saving From a Rainy Day – A DIY Rain Barrel Class, allowed local citizens to learn about the many benefits rainwater catchment systems provide and then build a rain barrel to take home. We had 54 folks build and deploy 50 rain barrels in the community!

To be added to our contact list, visit www.lampasasriver.org

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