



Pecos River Watershed Protection Plan Implementation

June 2012 Newsletter

New Watershed Coordinator in Place

As of May 17, 2012, Lucas Gregory assumed the role of Pecos River Watershed Coordinator. Lucas has been involved with the Watershed Protection Plan (WPP) as Texas Water Resources Institute's project



manager since 2006 and worked to develop the plan. You can reach him for questions or comments at 979-845-7869 or by email at lfgregory@ag.tamu.edu.

Water Quality Management Plan Priorities Areas Revised

Interest in voluntary participation in the Water Quality Management Plan (WQMP) program, offered through the Crockett and Upper Pecos Soil and Water Conservation Districts (SWCDs), was quite limited due to geographic limits set for the program. Initially, WQMPs targeted properties along the main stem of the Pecos River in Texas, but this area has now been expanded to include two primary priorities agreed on by the Upper Pecos, Sandhills, Trans Pecos, Crockett, Devil's River, Rio Grande-Pecos River, Toyah-Limpia, Big Bend, and High Point SWCDs.

WQMP applicants requesting funding for land adjacent to the Pecos River will be given Tier 1 priority on a first-come, first-served basis. Applicants requesting funding for land adjacent to a major tributary of the Pecos River will be given Tier 2 priority.

Cooperators are eligible for up to \$15,000 in financial assistance provided through the Pecos River WPP Implementation Project. Additional financial assistance to implement best management practices outlined in a WQMP is available through various USDA Farm Bill programs. If you or someone you know is interested in applying for assistance through this program, please contact Amy Porter at 432-445-3196 ext. 3 or amy.porter@tx.nacdnet.net

Pecos River Compact Commissioner Appointed to New Post

Effective June 8, 2012, Rick Rylander will no longer serve as the Pecos River Compact Commissioner for Texas. Gov. Rick Perry appointed Rylander to the Texas Water Development Board on May 9, 2012. His appointment as a board member is effective June 11, 2012 and will expire on Dec. 31, 2017.

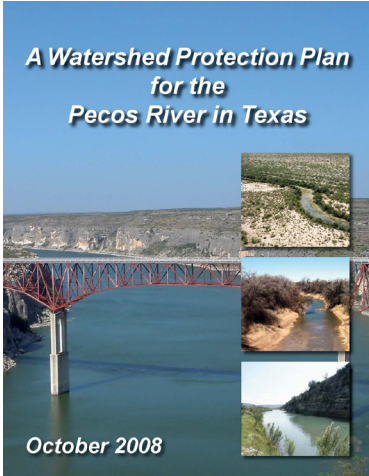
At this time, no indication or decision has been made regarding a replacement for the Pecos River Compact Commissioner position.

The Pecos River Compact Commission administers the Pecos River Compact established in 1948 between Texas and New Mexico. The Texas Legislature ratified the compact in 1949. Subsequently the New Mexico Legislature ratified the compact, and the U.S. Congress approved and the President signed it, making it both state and federal law. The compact, which applies to the Pecos River and its tributaries, protects the rights and interests of Texans by ensuring that New Mexico complies with the guidelines set forth in the compact.

Watershed Protection Plan Addendum in the Works

With the Pecos River Watershed Protection Plan several years old and efforts to implement the plan underway for some time, an update to the watershed plan is pertinent. This update is being referred to as an addendum because it will provide supplemental information to the original WPP. The addendum will serve several purposes, such as tracking implementation progress and achievement of WPP milestones and documenting changes in water quality since WPP implementation began. The addendum will also identify management changes needed to better address concerns across the watershed currently included in the plan and add other management needs that have arisen across the watershed over the last several years.

Future funding, at least from EPA's 319 grant program, also depends on the development and approval of this addendum. As such, it is critical that this addendum be developed quickly and delivered for TSSWCB and EPA review before September or October, when the next grant cycle starts. The current plan is to have a rough draft of the addendum sent out to landowners for review later this year and then host a series of public meetings soon thereafter to provide an overview of the addendum and allow for questions



Saltcedar Debris Burning Sign-Ups Continue

Plans are in place to burn saltcedar debris along the main stem of the Pecos River that was sprayed at least three years ago. Burning is scheduled to commence as soon as the conditions meet burn prescriptions, so sign up to burn as soon as possible. Signing up does not guarantee burning, but does get you on the list. If you are interested in debris burning, please contact Amy Porter.

and discussion. The addendum will then be revised based on feedback received at the meetings and sent to watershed landowners for their review before it is published.

In the interim, if you have thoughts or comments about what should be included in this addendum, please convey them to Lucas Gregory or Amy Porter.

Saltcedar Leaf Beetle Advance Continues

Following the harsh winter of 2010–2011, saltcedar leaf beetle populations drastically declined. The beetle, originally from Tunisia, fared much better than beetles from the island of Crete. As a result, during the summer 2011, Texas AgriLife Extension Service scientists established three new Tunisian saltcedar leaf beetle sites and released additional beetles at six other sites in the Pecos River. Currently beetles at each of these nine sites have emerged and are quickly defoliating saltcedar across the basin. Additionally, beetles have been observed defoliating saltcedar at several locations where prior releases were not made, clearly indicating that beetles will migrate in large numbers from location to location. One of these sites is near Sheffield and the other is



Saltcedar defoliation west of Fort Stockton

about 15 miles west of Fort Stockton on I-10, both in the median and along the feeder road. Drive out that way if you want to see the beetles in action.

Saltcedar leaf beetles are seen as a long-term management approach to dealing with the current saltcedar infestation. Although results are not instant like they are with chemical treatments, the cost to implement beetles is much less, and once populations are established, beetles will provide long-term maintenance. Additionally, defoliated trees do not produce seeds, thus minimizing the potential of future saltcedar growth.

This effort to establish saltcedar leaf beetles across the watershed is also being conducted as a part of efforts to implement the Pecos River WPP.

If you are interested in releasing beetles on your property, please contact Lucas Gregory or Amy Porter.

Texas Aquatic Ecoregion Project

Texas Commission on Environmental Quality (TCEQ) is planning to continue a project to assess water quality, in-stream habitat, aquatic life communities and riparian characteristics of ‘least disturbed’ streams in Texas. Independence Creek and Live Oak Creek in the Lower Pecos River watershed are on the list of streams and will be evaluated this summer during Aug. 9–13 and Sept. 20–24. This effort will refine the methods the state currently uses to evaluate aquatic life communities across the state. In total, 60 to 75 streams will be evaluated across the state over the next five years. For additional information or to provide input on this process, please contact Bill Harrison with TCEQ at 512-239-4602 or BHARRISO@tceq.state.tx.us.

Need Information?

For information on project happenings and other meetings in and around the watershed, please visit our website at pecosbasin.tamu.edu or contact:

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