

**Texas AgriLife Research
Texas Water Resources Institute**

**Implementing the Pecos River Watershed Protection Plan through Invasive Species Control
(Saltcedar) and by Providing Technical and Financial Assistance to Reduce Agricultural Nonpoint
Source Pollution
FY 08 CWA 319(h)
TSSWCB Project No. 08-08**

Quarter no. 11 From 4.1.2012 Through 6.30.2012.

I. Abstract

Activity this quarter has focused on the continued implementation of WPP items. WQMPs continue to be developed and promoted, saltcedar leaf beetles continue to expand through project efforts and on their own and project related information continues to be disseminated across the watershed. Abnormally wet weather has prevented saltcedar debris burning as fuel moisture levels remain outside of designated burn prescription. The Upper Pecos SWCD Technician continues to enroll people for salt cedar spraying and debris burning. A series of field days was hosted this quarter highlighting some WPP implementation efforts, promoting the use of these implementation programs and discussing other pertinent issues. Additionally, the Watershed Coordinator and the Upper Pecos SWCD Technician attended numerous meetings throughout the watershed promoting the WPP and informing attendees of available opportunities.

II. Overall Progress and Results by Task

TASK 1: Project Coordination and Administration

Subtask 1.1: TWRI will prepare electronic quarterly progress reports (QPRs) for submission to the TSSWCB. Extension, SWCD Technicians and TFS will collaborate with TWRI to develop QPRs. QPRs shall document all activities performed within a quarter and shall be submitted by the 15th of January, April, July and October. QPRs shall be posted on the project website and distributed to all project partners.

The following actions have been completed during this reporting period:

- A. The Upper Pecos SWCD Technician submitted 11th QPR information to the Watershed Coordinator on July 13, 2012.
- B. TWRI submitted the Year 3, Quarter 3 report to TSSWCB on July 13, 2012.

90% Complete

Subtask 1.2: TWRI will host coordination meetings, conference calls, or TTVN meetings with the TSSWCB Project Manager and all Project Partners at least quarterly to discuss project activities, project schedule, lines of responsibility, communication needs, and other requirements. TWRI will develop lists of action items needed following each project coordination meeting and distribute to project personnel.

The following actions have been completed during this reporting period:

- A. No formal coordination meetings were held this quarter; however, numerous phone calls and meeting with selected members of the project team occurred this quarter.

90% Complete

Subtask 1.3: TWRI will perform accounting functions for Tasks 1, 4, 5, 6 and 7 and submit appropriate reimbursement forms to TSSWCB at least quarterly. The SWCD Technicians and Bookkeepers will perform accounting functions for Task 2 and will submit appropriate Reimbursement Forms to TSSWCB at least monthly. TSSWCB will manage project funds for Task 3.

The following actions have been completed during this reporting period:

- A. The Upper Pecos SWCD Technician submitted reimbursement forms to the bookkeeper.
B. To date, a total of \$191,293 has been spent, or approximately 33% of project funding has been spent through tasks 1, 4, 5, 6 and 7.

70% Complete

Subtask 1.4: TWRI will continue to host and maintain an internet website (<http://pecosbasin.tamu.edu/>) for the public dissemination of information pertaining to the implementation of the Pecos River WPP. Project partners will provide appropriate content matter for the website as needed.

The following actions have been completed during this reporting period:

- A. Website updates were made throughout the quarter as needed.
B. Website usage this quarter consisted of 429 individual site visits with approximately 74% of these being new visitors to the site.

85% Complete

Subtask 1.5: TWRI, in collaboration with Extension, TFS, and the SWCDs, will develop, complete and submit an aggregate final report to TSSWCB at the culmination of the project. This report will be provided in electronic and hard copy format. The TSSWCB project manager will set the appropriate due dates for this task.

The following actions have been completed during this reporting period:

- A. No Activity to report at this time.

0% Complete

Subtask 1.6: TWRI will hire (Months 1-3) and oversee (Months 4-36) the Pecos River Watershed Coordinator. This position will be responsible for the general oversight and coordination of all project activities, be responsible for reporting requirements and directing educational activities, and serve as the primary conduit for interaction with landowners and entities to facilitate the implementation of the WPP. The Pecos River Watershed Coordinator shall be stationed in the watershed at Fort Stockton.

- A. Subtask complete.

100% Complete

TASK 2: Promotion, Development and Implementation of WQMPs

Subtask 2.1: SWCD 213 and SWCD 235 will each hire one full-time District Technician to promote, develop, and implement WQMPs. SWCD 213 and SWCD 235 will each hire one part-time Bookkeeper to assist with project accounting functions.

The following actions have been completed during this reporting period:

- A. The Crockett SWCD District Technician resigned at the end of March and the Upper Pecos SWCD District Technician began covering duties of both districts in April.
- B. No plans are currently in place to rehire the Crockett SWCD District Technician position.

100% Complete

Subtask 2.2: To ease the development of the Final Report (Subtask 1.6), the District Technicians will submit quarterly updates to a template Final Report along with QPRs. The TSSWCB Project Manager will provide a template Final Report.

The following actions have been completed during this reporting period:

- A. The Upper Pecos SWCD Technician submitted 11th QPR to the Watershed Coordinator on July 13, 2012.

85% Complete

Subtask 2.3: The District Technicians will identify landowners in priority areas in the Pecos River watershed to periodically distribute notifications announcing the availability of financial and technical assistance for developing and implementing WQMPs.

The following actions have been completed during this reporting period:

- A. The Upper Pecos SWCD District Technician continued to identify landowners in priority areas for WQMP development in the Pecos River Watershed and distribute notifications to them of financial and technical assistance available.

90% Complete

Subtask 2.4: The District Technicians will develop and distribute flyers, brochures, letters, news releases and other appropriate promotional publications to encourage participation from landowners. The TSSWCB Project Manager must approve all announcements, letters, and publications prior to distribution.

The following actions have been completed during this reporting period:

- A. The Upper Pecos SWCD District Technician developed flyers and news releases to encourage landowners to attend the Pecos River Watershed Protection Plan 2012 Spring Field Days. The Texas Forest Service and the USDA NRCS released these news releases.

80% Complete

Subtask 2.5: The District Technicians will work with NRCS and AgriLife Extension to educate landowners and agricultural producers about water quality issues and how WQMPs and BMPs address pollutant loadings from agriculture. The District Technicians will support, promote, and participate in, as appropriate, any field days, demonstrations, site tours, or education events sponsored by NRCS and/or AgriLife Extension for the Pecos River watershed.

The following actions have been completed during this reporting period:

- A. The Upper Pecos SWCD District Technician planned, supported, promoted, and participated in the Pecos River Watershed Protection Plan 2012 Spring Field Days on April 23 - 24, 2012. During the Spring Field Days, the District Technician promoted WQMPs and BMPs that are available to cooperators.

85% Complete

Subtask 2.6: The District Technicians will work with organizations, such as Texas and Southwestern Cattle Raisers Association (TSCRA), Texas Wildlife Association (TWA), Texas Sheep and Goat Raisers Association (TSGRA) and Texas Farm Bureau (TFB), to educate their members on this opportunity to enhance the value of their operation and achieve water quality goals for the watershed at the same time. Additionally, the District Technicians will work with Irrigation Districts to educate their customers on this project.

The following actions have been completed during this reporting period:

- A. The Upper Pecos SWCD District Technician advertised the Pecos River WPP, WQMPs, biological control of saltcedar, and prescribed burning of saltcedar to Red Bluff WPCD, Ward CID #1, Ward CWID #3, Pecos CWID #3, Pecos CWID #2, and Reeves CWID #2.
- B. The Upper Pecos SWCD District Technician promoted the Pecos River Watershed Protection Plan, WQMPs, and BMPs available to landowners/cooperators at the Pecos Rotary Club luncheon on April 5, 2012.
- C. The Upper Pecos SWCD District Technician promoted the Pecos River Watershed Protection Plan, WQMPs, and BMPs available to landowners/cooperators at the Pecos River Compact Commission reception and meeting (booth) on April 9 - 10, 2012 in Pecos, TX.

90% Complete

Subtask 2.7: The District Technicians will meet monthly with SWCDs 213 and 235, and as needed with SWCDs 224, 231, 237, and 241, in order to efficiently and effectively achieve project goals; summarize activities and achievements made throughout the course of this project; and discuss project activities, project schedule, communication needs, deliverables, and other requirements.

The following actions have been completed during this reporting period:

- A. The Upper Pecos SWCD Technician met with SWCDs 209, 213, 224, 227, 230, 231, 235, 237, and 241 during their monthly board meetings.

90% Complete

Subtask 2.8: The District Technicians will cooperate and communicate with landowners and entities in the Pecos River watershed in order to efficiently and effectively achieve project goals and to summarize activities and achievements made throughout the course of this project.

Specifically, the District Technicians will, at least, participate in meetings scheduled under the auspices of the WPP. The District Technicians will maintain regular communication with the TWRI Pecos River Watershed Coordinator, TFS personnel, and the selected chemical saltcedar control contractor.

The following actions have been completed during this reporting period:

- A. The Upper Pecos SWCD District Technician maintained communication with the TWRI Pecos River Watershed Coordinator, TFS personnel, and landowners in the Pecos River Watershed.
- B. The Upper Pecos SWCD District Technician promoted the Pecos River Watershed Protection Plan, WQMPs, and BMPs available to landowners/cooperators at the Pecos Rotary Club luncheon on April 5, 2012.
- C. The Upper Pecos SWCD District Technician promoted the Pecos River Watershed Protection Plan, WQMPs, and BMPs available to landowners/cooperators at the Pecos River Compact Commission reception and meeting (booth) on April 9 - 10, 2012 in Pecos, TX.

90% Complete

Subtask 2.9: The District Technicians, with assistance from NRCS and TSSWCB as appropriate, will assist landowners in the development of WQMPs and associated Prescribed Grazing Plans. The District Technicians will develop at least 10 WQMPs above Girvin and 10 WQMPs below Girvin. Noting that the 10-year goal of the Pecos River WPP is to develop at least 120 WQMPs along the riparian corridor and 50 WQMPs in other portions of the watershed, the District Technicians shall strive to develop additional WQMPs beyond the minimum of 20; cost-share availability for additional WQMPs is dependent upon outcomes of Subtask 2.10.

The following actions have been completed during this reporting period:

- A. The Upper Pecos SWCD District Technician assisted landowners in the development of WQMPs in Reeves and Terrell Counties.
- B. To date, 7 WQMPs have been certified.

65% Complete

Subtask 2.10: The District Technicians, with assistance from NRCS and TSSWCB, will assist landowners in the Pecos River watershed in applying for and obtaining cost-share to aid in implementation of BMPs prescribed in WQMPs. This project provides \$200,000 in CWA §319(h) funding (TSSWCB project 09-02 provides an additional \$100,000 in CWA §319(h) funding) as cost-share through the TSSWCB WQMP Program with allocations of \$100,000 to each SWCD 213 and SWCD 235. Landowners shall be eligible to receive a maximum cost-share amount of \$15,000 from the TSSWCB §319(h) funds. The maximum cost-share rate shall not exceed 60% of the cost of implementation of the BMPs. The remaining 40% will be provided by the landowner. Cost-share will be based on actual cost not to exceed average cost of the practice.

The following actions have been completed during this reporting period:

- A. The Upper Pecos SWCD District Technician assisted landowners in applying for and obtaining cost-share in Pecos and Terrell Counties.
- B. To date, \$80,456.04 are obligated.

65% Complete

Subtask 2.11: *The District Technicians will prioritize WQMP development and cost-share applications consistent with the priority areas identified in the Pecos River WPP. Specifically, priority shall be given for operations nearest to the Pecos River or major tributaries and those lands where chemical saltcedar control and follow-up debris removal has been conducted.*

The following actions have been completed during this reporting period:

- A. The 9 SWCDs participating in the Pecos River Watershed Protection Plan defined the two top priorities for WQMP financial assistance eligibility:

Tier 1: Priority will be given to applicants requesting funds for land adjacent to the Pecos River on a first come, first served basis.

Tier 2: Priority will be given to applicants requesting funds for land adjacent to a major tributary of the Pecos River.

100% Complete

Subtask 2.12: *The District Technicians will assist landowners with WQMPs in acquiring financial assistance through USDA administered federal Farm Bill Programs, including but not limited to, the Environmental Quality Incentives Program (EQIP) 1) county-level funding based on resource concern priorities established by Local Work Groups and 2) any applicable State Resource Concerns], the Grasslands Reserve Program (GRP), and the Agricultural Water Enhancement Program (AWEP).*

The following actions have been completed during this reporting period:

- A. No new activity to report this quarter.

60% Complete

Subtask 2.13: *The District Technicians will conduct annual status reviews on all WQMPs developed and certified through the course of this project and any existing WQMPs (certified prior to this project) in the Pecos River watershed to ensure that the landowners implement BMPs as specified and agreed to in the WQMP implementation schedule. The District Technicians will document any follow-up technical assistance needed or necessary modifications to the WQMP implementation schedule.*

The following actions have been completed during this reporting period:

- A. No activity to report at this time.

0% Complete

Subtask 2.14: *The District Technicians will track utilization of obligated cost-share funds and, with assistance from TSSWCB and NRCS, will assist landowners in utilizing obligated cost-share funds on schedule.*

The following actions have been completed during this reporting period:

- A. The Upper Pecos SWCD District Technician tracked utilization of obligated cost-share funds in Pecos and Terrell Counties. The District Technician assisted landowners/cooperators in utilizing obligated cost-share funds on schedule

25% Complete

Subtask 2.15: *The District Technicians will create spreadsheets and maps describing and showing the location of all WQMPs developed and BMPs implemented through the project. These maps will not reveal the identity or exact location of any producer.*

The following actions have been completed during this reporting period:

- A. The Upper Pecos SWCD District Technician continues to create maps and spreadsheets describing and showing the location of current WQMP applicants.

45% Complete

TASK 3: Chemical Control of Saltcedar

Subtask 3.1: *The District Technicians will obtain permission to spray saltcedar, conduct debris removal (Task 5) and re-vegetation efforts. The SWCD 213 District Technician will work in the Pecos River, between Interstate-20 and Girvin, TX; and the SWCD 235 District Technician will work below Girvin down to the confluence with the Rio Grande. The District Technicians will also collect GPS coordinates of areas where chemical treatment will not be applied (e.g., sensitive areas, where permission is not obtained, or in areas where biological control is implemented).*

The following actions have been completed during this reporting period:

- A. The Upper Pecos SWCD Technician have obtained permission to spray saltcedar and are continuing to obtain permission to conduct debris burns along the Pecos River and its tributaries.

92% Complete

Subtask 3.2: *The District Technicians will send out notifications to landowners describing goals and asking for landowner cooperation. The letter will be accompanied by approved technical documents that illustrate the benefits of treating saltcedar. Contact information for the District Technician will be included. Verbal contact with the landowners that are not receptive to written communication will be made. The District Technicians will continue to promote participation in chemical treatment of saltcedar throughout the duration of the project.*

The following actions have been completed during this reporting period:

Subtask Complete

100% Complete

Subtask 3.3: *TSSWCB will take bids from qualified aerial herbicide applicators experienced in strategically applying pesticides to sensitive areas using helicopters and GPS coordinates to treat selected saltcedar. The budget allows for chemical treatment at \$220 per acre.*

The following actions have been completed during this reporting period:

Subtask Complete

100% Complete

Subtask 3.4: TSSWCB will contract with the selected applicator (Subtask 3.3) (chemical saltcedar control contractor) to treat an estimated 1,422 acres of saltcedar in segment 2311 of the Pecos River, between Interstate-20 and Girvin, TX and an estimated 353 acres of saltcedar in segments 2311 and 2310 of the Pecos River, between Girvin, TX and the Val Verde County line with ArsenalTM (Imazapyr) herbicide or a comparable generic version. The herbicide will be applied by helicopter in a selective manner using GPS guidance technology, to control saltcedar and having little or no effect on desirable plants and wildlife. General areas to be sprayed were developed from low-level, high-resolution aerial photography that was digitized and converted to GIS shapefiles. Areas will be ground-truthed by the District Technicians prior to initiating spraying. These files will be loaded into the helicopter's GPS system and will dictate where herbicide is applied.

The following actions have been completed during this reporting period:

Subtask Complete

100% Complete

Subtask 3.5: The District Technicians will be onsite with the TSSWCB contractor during aerial pesticide application to observe and document (Observation Checklist) the following: 1) chemical mixture, 2) chemical application, 3) treatment acreage, and 4) weather conditions.

The following actions have been completed during this reporting period:

Subtask Complete

100% Complete

TASK 4: Biological Control of Saltcedar

Subtask 4.1: Extension will coordinate site selection with the saltcedar spraying and debris removal efforts (Tasks 3 & 5) so that these areas do not overlap with biological control areas.

The following actions have been completed during this reporting period:

- A. Efforts continue to be made to ensure that burning areas and beetle release sites do not coincide.

90% Complete

Subtask 4.2: Extension will establish at least 10 release sites across the watershed. Beetles will be placed in protective enclosures and the beetle populations will be allowed to go through one regeneration cycle before being released.

The following actions have been completed during this reporting period:

- A. Extension began evaluating populations this quarter to determine when collection and subsequent releases can be made.
- B. New releases and supplemental releases are anticipated next quarter.

65% Complete

Subtask 4.3: *Extension will track and document the location of biological control sites and leaf beetle release dates and the subsequent acres of defoliated saltcedar on each site. Extension will create GIS maps showing the location of release sites and defoliated acres at each site.*

The following actions have been completed during this reporting period:

- A. No new activity to report this quarter.

50% Complete

TASK 5: Prescribed burning for saltcedar debris removal

Subtask 5.1: *TFS will coordinate with the District Technicians to obtain permission for debris burning activities from private landowners (Subtask 3.1).*

The following actions have been completed during this reporting period:

- A. The Upper Pecos SWCD Technician coordinated with TFS to obtain permission for debris burning activities.

60% Complete

Subtask 5.2: *TFS will draft the appropriate prescribed burn plans.*

The following actions have been completed during this reporting period:

- A. TFS has developed burn plans on areas where burning is planned in the near future.

30% Complete

Subtask 5.3: *TFS will work with the District Technicians to inform landowners of scheduled prescribed burns. Where practical, landowners and local prescribed burning organizations shall be involved in burning activities.*

The following actions have been completed during this reporting period:

- A. TFS has been working directly with landowners to notify them of their intent to burn.

30% Complete

Subtask 5.4: *TFS will conduct prescribed burning on standing dead saltcedar that has been chemically treated prior to this project along the main channel of the river, between Girvin, TX and the confluence of the Pecos River and Independence Creek, or about 138 river miles. As stated in the WPP, at least 3 years should have transpired between chemical treatments and prescribed burning in order to achieve the most effective kill rate of saltcedar and the most effective degree of debris removal. Controlled burns will only be conducted in areas where landowners have given permission for these activities to be carried out.*

The following actions have been completed during this reporting period:

- A. No activity to report at this time.
- B. Burning continues to be hampered in 2012 by wetter than normal conditions that have led to fuel moisture contents outside of the range specified in written burn plans.

0% Complete

TASK 6: Support and Facilitation of WPP Implementation, Education and Tracking

Subtask 6.1: *Extension will engage and facilitate Pecos River watershed landowners and other entities identified in the Pecos River WPP and work in cooperation with partner agencies to implement the Pecos River WPP. Extension will facilitate and host meetings of the landowners and partner agencies as needed, likely semi-annually at multiple locations across the watershed.*

The following actions have been completed during this reporting period:

- A. The Watershed Coordinator, Upper Pecos SWCD District Technician and other project personnel worked to plan, support, promote, and participate in the Pecos River Watershed Protection Plan 2012 Spring Field Days on April 23 - 24, 2012. During the Spring Field Days, the project activities were highlighted as were opportunities for technical and financial assistance.
- B. The Watershed Coordinator, Upper Pecos SWCD District Technician and project personnel prepared minutes of the 2012 Spring Field Days.
- C. The Summer 2012 was developed by the Watershed Coordinator and Upper Pecos SWCD District Technician with support from other project personnel and highlighted numerous project activities and other happenings around the Pecos River watershed.

80% Complete

Subtask 6.2: *Extension will assist governmental and non-governmental organizations in the Pecos River WPP, in identification and acquisition of resources (financial and technical) to enable WPP implementation. Extension will actively seek and pursue funding opportunities and work with partners to develop grant proposals.*

The following actions have been completed during this reporting period:

- A. Discussions were initiated with this quarter to gain local support and seek guidance on what WPP items future funding should be sought for.

65% Complete

Subtask 6.3: *Extension will evaluate progress toward achieving milestones established in the WPP. Extension will publish an addendum to the Pecos River WPP that describes modifications/updates to goals and milestones, explains new understandings of sources and cause of water quality issues, documents success in achieving goals and milestones and success in achieving water quality improvement and load reductions at least biennially. As the WPP was published in October 2008, this biennial addendum would most appropriately be published around October 2010, or soon thereafter.*

The following actions have been completed during this reporting period:

- A. Work on the Pecos WPP Addendum has not progressed as quickly as anticipated but is expected to accelerate next quarter.

25% Complete

Subtask 6.4: *Extension will facilitate and coordinate education and outreach activities as*

identified in the Pecos River WPP. Extension will develop and distribute press releases when warranted. Specifically, Extension will collaborate with NRCS and SWCDs to host workshops, field days, demonstrations, site tours, or other education events focused on each of the following topics:

- *Texas Watershed Steward Program (2 events)*
- *Lone Star Healthy Streams Program (2 events)*
- *Nutrient Management (2 events)*
- *Wildlife Management (3 events)*
- *Crop Management (2 events)*
- *Irrigation Management (3 events)*
- *Feral Hog Management (2 events)*

The following actions have been completed during this reporting period:

- A. No new activity to report this quarter.
- B. A Wildlife and Range Management Workshop will be held in Ozona next quarter where the Upper Pecos SWCD Technician will discuss WPP implementation and landowner opportunities.

70% Complete

Subtask 6.5: Extension will provide information to IBWC for inclusion in the Clean Rivers Program Basin Summary Report and Basin Highlights Report. Extension shall participate in IBWC-sponsored meetings of the Clean Rivers Program Basin Advisory Committee.

The following actions have been completed during this reporting period:

- A. No activity to report this quarter.

75% Complete

Subtask 6.6: Extension will develop and publish a semi-annual newsletter that is designed to keep landowners and entities informed of ongoing WPP implementation activities and other relevant information. The newsletter shall be distributed as most appropriate to individual landowners and entities in the watershed.

The following actions have been completed during this reporting period:

- A. The summer 2012 newsletter was developed and distributed via USPS and email this quarter and has been posted to the project website. See attached newsletter at the end of this report.

70% Complete

Subtask 6.7: The Watershed Coordinator will make deliberate efforts to increase awareness of the WPP and secure implementation support thereof from county and municipal governments, and irrigation districts throughout the watershed, as well as, the Red Bluff Water and Power Control District. The Watershed Coordinator will also work with the Pecos River Compact Commission and the New Mexico Environment Department (NMED) to explore mechanisms to

influence the implementation of management measures in New Mexico that have positive effect to the Pecos River in Texas.

The following actions have been completed during this reporting period:

- A. The Watershed Coordinator and Upper Pecos SWCD Technician have attended numerous public meeting throughout the watershed and updated meeting participants on project activities.

90% Complete

TASK 7: Compilation of Surface Water Quality Monitoring Data

Subtask 7.1: Extension will maintain and update Red Bluff release and delivery databases. USGS gaging station discharge data and TCEQ Clean Rivers Program water quality and streamflow data from established monitoring sites will be updated and maintained in existing databases by Extension. This task will build upon the existing water quality database developed under TSSWCB project 04-11.

The following actions have been completed during this reporting period:

- A. Updated Red Bluff release data was added to the website this quarter.

65% Complete

Subtask 7.2: Extension will collaborate with IBWC to assess water quality data collected through the Clean Rivers Program and other projects in relation to achieving load reductions described in the WPP.

The following actions have been completed during this reporting period:

- A. Work to assess water quality trends pre and post-WPP implementation is underway. These analyses will be incorporated into the WPP addendum.

20% Complete

III. Related Issues/Current Problems and Favorable or Unusual Developments

Adverse weather conditions continue to plague efforts to burn saltcedar debris along the river. Frequent rains have made moisture conditions higher than the burn plans allow.

Saltcedar leaf beetles are aggressively attacking saltcedar throughout the watershed and populations seem to be expanding nicely.

Lucas Gregory has assumed the role of watershed coordinator for the Pecos River effective May 17, 2012.

IV. Projected Work for Next Quarter

- The SWCD Technician will continue work on current WQMPs
- The SWCD Technician will work to secure additional WQMPs
- The SWCD Technician will send shape files to TFS for burning of dead debris
- The SWCD Technician will encourage producers to complete cost share practices in a timely manner.
- The Watershed Coordinator will continue to engage watershed landowners, work on developing the WPP addendum and coordinate planning for future WPP Implementation with watershed landowners.
- TWRI will continue to update the Pecos Basin Website to keep the public aware of activities in the watershed.



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.

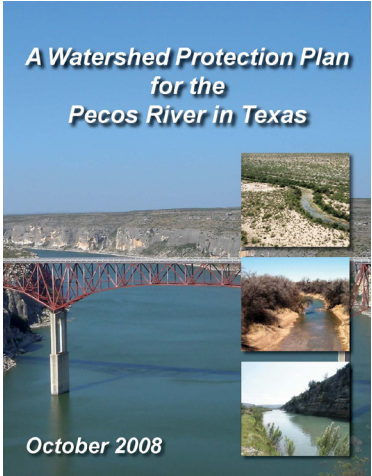
At this time, no indication or decision has been made regarding a replacement for the Pecos River Compact Commissioner position.

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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