

**Education of Best Management Practices in the Arroyo Colorado Watershed
FY 05 CWA 319(h)
TSSWCB Agreement No. 05-10**

Quarter no. 3 From 4/01/06 Through 6/30/06

I. Abstract

Progress was made this quarter to coordinate this project with ongoing efforts throughout the Lower Rio Grande Valley in order to maximize the effectiveness of this project. Several meetings were held to discuss coordination of the project with the Arroyo Colorado Watershed Steering Committee and Partnership and the TCE ProAg Program.

Significant progress was made by the education program this quarter. This quarter, 573 agricultural producers and residents from Cameron, Hidalgo, and Willacy Counties were provided training on turfgrass management, nutrient management, water conservation, residue management, integrated pest management (IPM), and other best management practices, through Rio Grande Valley Boll Weevil Program Advisory Committee Meetings, TCE Field Tours, Rio Fest / Earth Day, Pesticide Safety Workshops, Master Gardeners Meetings, CropMan Model Training Programs, In-Home Water Conservation Training and Demonstrations, the Grain Sorghum Field Day, and the Sugarcane Field Day. This is the highest number reached in a quarter so far for this project. This brings the total number of participants in project educational activities to 1,293.

II. Overall Progress and Results by Task

TASK 1: Project Coordination

Subtask 1.1: Conduct quarterly meetings as appropriate with project participants (TWRI, TCE, TSSWCB, SWCDs, NRCS, Arroyo-Colorado Watershed Coordinator, TAMU Kingsville, etc.) to discuss project schedule, completion of deliverables, outreach and participation strategies, communication needs and other requirements.

The following actions have been completed during this reporting period:

- a. No progress to report this quarter.

25% Complete

Subtask 1.2: TWRI will submit project strategies / programs and project status as necessary to the Ag Issues Workgroup via TSSWCB for inclusion in the Watershed Protection Plan.

The following actions have been completed during this reporting period:

- a. No progress to report this quarter.

25% Complete

Subtask 1.3: TWRI will prepare electronic quarterly reports and submit to TSSWCB

The following actions have been completed during this reporting period:

- a. Submitted Year 1, Quarter 3 Progress Report to TSSWCB on July 14th.

25% Complete

Subtask 1.4: TWRI and TCE will develop a final project report and submit to TSSWCB.

0% Complete

TASK 2: Conducting Local Educational Meetings

Subtask 2.1: Meetings will serve to educate individuals on specific crop production techniques. Each of the following meetings will be held on an annual basis.

- *2 cotton production meetings in Hidalgo, Cameron and Willacy Counties*
- *1 sorghum production meeting in Hidalgo, Cameron and Willacy Counties*
- *1 sugar cane production meeting in Hidalgo County*
- *1 citrus production meeting in Hidalgo County*
- *1 vegetable production meeting in Hidalgo County*
- *County / multi-county Pesticide Applicator Safety Training and Continuing Education*

The following actions have been completed during this reporting period:

- a. On April 5th, a Cameron Master Gardener Class was held by TCE, providing 12 Master Gardeners in Cameron and Hidalgo Counties with information with turfgrass and nutrient management.
- b. The Cameron Master Gardeners worked throughout the quarter to establish a water efficient garden at Los Indios Community Center as part of the Cameron Master Gardeners Water Conservation Community Project.
- c. On April 6th, over 100 people were in attendance for a demonstration of the use of drip irrigation on vegetable gardens at the San Benito Veterans Academy. The demonstration was sponsored by the Cameron Master Gardeners Program.
- d. On April 10th and May 18th TCE provided a discussion of proper residue management to lead cotton growers from Cameron, Hidalgo, Willacy, and Starr Counties during the Rio Grande Valley Boll Weevil Program Advisory Committee Meeting.
- e. Twenty-one (21) learned the conservation practice of using native plants in the landscape on April 21st when TCE helped coordinate a tour of the native plant refuge in Rio Grande City.
- f. An educational exhibit on native plants and water conservation in the garden was provided for the 200 in attendance at the Rio Fest Earth Day on April 22nd.
- g. TCE provided 12 Cameron Master Gardeners instruction on water conservation and the use of drip irrigation in the landscape on April 28th.

- h. Pesticide Safety Training was provided on May 3rd to 6 producers from Cameron and Hidalgo Counties. Topics included: the principles of integrated pest management, non-chemical alternatives, pest features, ground and surface water protection, laws and regulations, pesticide labels, endangered species protection, Worker Protection Standards, record keeping, personal protection, application equipment, and calibration.
- i. Seven (7) individuals from Cameron County participated in CropMan Model Training on May 10th to learn about Best Management Practices for row crops.
- j. TCE taught 6 home owners water conservation and drip irrigation methods during In-Home Water Conservation Training on May 11th. Following this, six (6) in-home water conservation result demonstrations were established on June 21st.
- k. Four (4) individuals from Cameron County participated in CropMan Model Training on May 10th to learn about Farm Evaluation and nutrient and water management.
- l. Seventy-five (75) producers from Cameron, Hidalgo, and Willacy Counties attended the Grain Sorghum Field Day on June 2nd to learn about new varieties available, management practices, insect control needs, and other related topics.
- m. On June 5th, training on water management, water conservation, and drip irrigation was provided to 60 teachers from Cameron and Hidalgo Counties by the Master Gardener Teacher Training.
- n. On June 6th, the Sugarcane Field Day was held, educating sugar cane farmers from Cameron, Hidalgo, and Willacy Counties on planting techniques and proper herbicide and insecticide use.

25% Complete

Subtask 2.2: Meetings, demonstrations and other educational activities will serve to educate individuals on nutrient management techniques. Specifically:

- *A soil testing campaign will be conducted within the 3 counties to promote proper use of fertilizers.*
- *When available, summarized data will be collected from TAMU-Kingsville and compiled into educational fact sheets or presented.*

The following actions have been completed during this reporting period:

- a. On April 27th, the Arroyo Colorado Planning Meeting was held to discuss possible nutrient management training for agricultural producers in Cameron, Hidalgo, and Willacy Counties.

25% Complete

Subtask 2.3: Meetings and promotional events will serve to advertise and educate individuals on related programs addressing water quality. For example, TCE will:

- *Promote cost-share programs (319(h), EQIP, etc.).*
- *Educate producers or assist SWCDs in development of water quality management plans.*
- *Educate producers on involvement and development of the Watershed Protection Plan and the potential effects of its implementation.*

The following actions have been completed during this reporting period:

- a. On April 27th, a conference call between TCE and TWRI was held to discuss the possibility of coordination the Arroyo BMP Education Project with the “Texas Stewards of Ag-land Resources: T-STAR” project.
- b. TCE and TWRI participated in the *Meeting of the Arroyo Colorado Watershed Steering Committee and Partnership* held on May 25th in Weslaco.
- c. TCE Specialists from College Station and TCE County Extension Agents from Cameron, Hidalgo, and Willacy Counties met on June 6th with agricultural leaders from the Lower Valley to further discuss how BMP education could be enhanced through implementation of a ProAg Program in coordination with the “Texas Stewards of Ag-land Resources: T-STAR” project.

25% Complete

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

- On April 18-19th, Forage Production Training was provided in Hidalgo County providing professional improvement for County Extension Agents on all aspects of forage production.
- On May 9-10th, Turfgrass Management Training was provided in Hidalgo County providing professional improvement for County Extension Agents on all aspects of turfgrass management.

IV. Projected Work for Next Quarter

- A quarterly meeting with TWRI and TCE will be scheduled for next quarter to discuss the project schedule, completion of deliverables, outreach and participation strategies, communication needs and other requirements.
- Participate in the Arroyo Steering Committee meeting scheduled for August 17th.
- Continue to work with the TSSWCB and other stakeholders in the Arroyo to finalize and implement the Agricultural Component of the Watershed Protection Plan.
- The A&M Center Cotton Field Day will be held at the Hiler Research Farm in Weslaco on Wednesday, July 12th from 9:30-1:00. Fertility Management and Regulations on Water Quality and Irrigation will be a Program Topic.
- A Turf Management Planning meeting will be held in July in Cameron County to discuss the initiation of a turf management demonstration planned for September.
- A Pesticide Safety Training Program will be held in August for producers in Cameron and Hidalgo Counties.
- In September, a poly-pipe versus furrow result demonstration will be established on corn in Cameron County to demonstrate the benefits of this BMP.
- A Master Gardener Xeriscape Program is planned for September.