

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

Quarter no. 4 From 7/01/06 Through 9/30/06

I. Abstract

Continued progress was made this quarter by the education program. This quarter, 515 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 Turf Management Meetings, the Cotton Field Day, Pesticide Safety Workshops, Rio Grande Valley Boll Weevil Program Advisory Committee Meetings, EQIP Meetings, Master Gardeners Meetings, the Sugarcane Field Day, Waste Chemical Collection Program, Wild in Willacy Program, Country Cleanup Program, and elementary school education programs. This brings the total number of participants in project educational activities to 1,808.

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.

33% 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.

33% 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 4 Progress Report to TSSWCB on October 16th.

33% 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 July 6-7, August 3, and September 21, programs on Irrigation and Fertilizer Management for athletic fields were provided to attendees (14) of Turf Management Meetings in Cameron County.
- b. Ninety-three (93) Cameron, Hidalgo, and Willacy County producers were provided information on cotton harvest aids, whitefly, fertility management, water quality regulations, boll weevil eradication, crop physiology, cotton varieties, irrigation, and new developments at the Cotton Field Day Event on July 12.
- c. Pesticide Safety Training was provided to 10 Cameron and Hidalgo County producers on August 2. Topics included principles of integrated pest management, non-chemical alternatives, pest features, ground and surface water protection, laws and regulations, pesticide labels, endangered species, Worker Protection, record keeping, personal protection, application equipment, and calibration.
- d. Thirty-eight (38) Cameron County Master Gardeners established the Fall Drip Irrigation Vegetable Garden at the San Benito Veterans Academy on August 27.
- e. Seventy-two (72) Master Gardeners and others interested participated in the *Xeriscape Program* held to educate homeowners on the 7 principles to conserving water in the landscape.
- f. On September 20th, the Sugarcane Field Day was held, educating 63 sugarcane farmers from Cameron, Hidalgo, and Willacy Counties on field operations, genetic breeding for variety improvement, economics of varieties, nutrition, trash management, water use, irrigation sensors to measure irrigation, genetic improvement through biotechnology, and the soil testing campaign.

33% 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. No progress to report this quarter.

33% 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. EQIP Meetings were held on August 22nd and September 6th in Cameron and Hidalgo Counties, respectively, to discuss EQIP Program provisions, EQIP Program application process, and nutrient management plans. A total of 28 producers and other interested parties were in attendance.
- b. TCE and TWRI participated in the *Meeting of the Arroyo Colorado Watershed Steering Committee and Partnership* held on August 30th in Weslaco.
- c. Producers disposed of approximately 300 containers used pesticide and 55 gallons of used motor oil at the *Willacy COOP Country Cleanup*.
- d. On September 25th, approximately 25 residents of Cameron, Hidalgo, Willacy, and Starr Counties participated in Waste Chemical Collection.

33% Complete

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

- On July 18th, a conference was held for Extension staff on the water conservation result demonstrations from the Agriculture Demonstration Initiative Project.
- Twelve (12) participants from Cameron, Hidalgo, Willacy, and Starr Counties took part in the August 15 Rio Grande Valley Boll Weevil Program Advisory Committee Meeting to discuss the boll weevil eradication program, cotton stalk destruction program, and cotton residue management.
- Extension presentations on small farm ponds and wildlife were made to approximately 160 participants of the *Wild in Willacy*.
- 4th graders from Pittman Elementary in Raymondville participated in lessons that focused on water conservation, water quality and natural resources as part of the *Water Conservation School Enrichment Program*.

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 on October 17th.
- The Valley Cotton Growers Meeting will be held on October 17th at the Texas A&M Research and Extension Center in Weslaco.
- Continue to work with the TSSWCB and other stakeholders in the Arroyo to finalize and implement the Agricultural Component of the Watershed Protection Plan.
- A Nutrient Management Workshop will be held on October 27th at the Texas A&M Research and Extension Center in Weslaco.
- A Reduced Tillage/Nutrient Management Field Day will be held on November 8th in Willacy County.