

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

Quarter no. 5 From 10/01/06 Through 12/31/06

**I. Abstract**

Continued progress was made this quarter by the education program. This quarter, 679 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 for row crops; and information on potential new crops in the valley. Large meetings included the Valley Cotton Meeting, the Rio Farms Crops Meeting, the Sugar Growers Annual Meeting and a Nutrient Management Field Day and Workshop. This brings the total number of participants in project educational activities to 2,487.

**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. On Nov 14, TWRI met with project participants in Weslaco to discuss project activities including hiring an Extension Assistant to provide the three County Agents assistance with education activities related to the project. A position description was drafted and will be posted during the next quarter.

**42% 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. TWRI provided comments to the draft Watershed Protection Plan for the Arroyo Colorado Watershed. The final copy of the Plan should be released during the next quarter.

**42% 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 2, Quarter 1 Progress Report to TSSWCB on January 16, 2007.

**42% 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 Oct 1, sixty (60) Cameron County volunteers worked to establish a drip irrigation system in a school vegetable garden.
- b. Two (2) Cameron County turf and athletic field managers received instruction on Oct 5 on the development of an irrigation and fertilizer management plan as part of the SAFE (Sport Athletic Field Education) Program.
- c. A rain harvesting program for landscape use was provided to twelve (12) Master Gardeners in Cameron County.
- d. One hundred forty (140) growers in Cameron, Hidalgo and Willacy Counties participated in the Valley Cotton Meeting on Oct 17. Cotton producers received timely information to assist them in being more profitable; a boll weevil eradication program update; and information on beet armyworm insecticides, whitefly management and cotton varieties.
- e. On Oct 27, three (3) Hidalgo County producers participated in farm visits to evaluate progress of a new crop, sesame, and gather information on producing the crop.
- f. The Rio Farms Crops Meeting was held on Oct 31 was attended by one hundred eight (108) producers from Hidalgo, Cameron and Willacy Counties. Topics at the meeting included: cotton, corn, sorghum and soybean varieties; nutrient, insect and disease management; new crops such as southern peas, wheat and sesame; proper cotton stalk destruction; and information on the soil testing campaign.
- g. A Pesticide Safety Training was held for twelve (12) Cameron and Hidalgo County producers on Nov 11. The topics at the training included information on: 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; calibration and continuing education units.

- h. A two-day Rain Harvesting Training was held on Nov 16 and 17 for thirty-two (32) participants from Cameron and Hidalgo Counties.
- i. On Nov 21, the Hidalgo Leadership Advisory Board met and the twenty-two (22) member Board received information on the nutrient management program for 2007.

#### **42% 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 Oct 25, fifty-nine (59) growers in Cameron, Hidalgo and Willacy Counties participated in a Nutrient Management Workshop to obtain information on soil testing, sorghum & corn fertility, fertility in the cotton patch, soil fertility in a reduced tillage system, sulfur fertilization and the start of the soil testing campaign. Information on the EQIP program and its role in nutrient management assistance and water quality management plans were provided.
- b. A Nutrient Management Field Day was held on Nov 8 where sixty three (63) Rio Grande producers from Cameron, Hidalgo and Willacy counties learned about cotton, corn and sorghum row crops. The program also addressed minimum tillage; residue management; fertilization; soil sampling; GPS soil sampling; pesticide rules and regulations; stalk destruction; FSA agricultural loans; the soil testing campaign; and NRCS and TSSWCB cost-share programs.
- c. The soil testing campaign was kicked off at the Sugar Growers Annual Meeting on Nov 20 for sixty (60) producers from Cameron, Hidalgo and Willacy Counties.

#### **42% 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. Educational programs were held on Nov 29 and 30 to provide twenty-five (25) producers in Cameron and Hidalgo Counties details of the EQIP program and

encourage them to apply. Information on the soil testing campaign was also provided at the meeting. The meeting flyer is posted in Appendix A.

- b. In conjunction the Ag Demonstration Initiative Project, an educational program was held on Dec 1 for fifty-three (53) Cameron County Producers to provide information on EQIP, its application process and nutrient management plans. Also in conjunction with this meeting, a water conservation program was held at the Harlingen Irrigation Pumping Center.

**42% Complete**

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

- On Oct 4, Hidalgo County hosted two (2) Afghan Scientists and provided a tour of the irrigation infrastructure and project demonstrations within the County.
- On Nov 14, The 3 county agents, Brad Cowan, Enrique Perez and Omar Cavazos, received the "District 12 Award in Excellence" for Multi-County Programs for their work in the Arroyo Colorado Education Project.
- Hidalgo County project participants provided updates of project activities including nutrient management programs to state legislators during early December.
- The project participants presented an award to Hidalgo County Farm Bureau for assisting and supporting the many educational programs (including nutrient management education) within the county. Approximately fifty (50) participants were present for the volunteer recognition event.

### **IV. Projected Work for Next Quarter**

- The Extension Assistant Position will be announced and the hiring process will begin.

**Appendix A**

**EQIP Program Information Meeting Flyer**

Environmental  
Quality  
Incentives  
Program



Presentation by  
**NATURAL RESOURCES CONSERVATION SERVICE**  
On  
**2007 State Concern for Water Quantity  
in Lower Rio Grande Valley Irrigation Area**  
Cameron • Hidalgo • Maverick • Starr • Willacy Counties

***Meeting Dates***

Wednesday, November 29, 2006  
11:30 - 1:30  
Rio Red Room  
TAMU-K Citrus Center  
Weslaco

**LUNCH PROVIDED BY SPONSORS**

Thursday, November 30, 2006  
11:30 - 1:30  
TexaSweat Building  
901 Business Park Drive  
Mission

Friday, December 1, 2006  
11:30 - 1:30

Harlingen Irrigation District Pumphouse  
9 miles South of Expressway 83 on Rangerville Rd to  
dead-end at Bus. 281, jog to West and then South on  
Trevino Road for 1/2 mile.  
Call HID at 956-423-7015 for directions

**RSVP to Martha Trejo, Texas Citrus Mutual, (956) 584-1772**

***EQIP Sign-up Deadline is December 15***

**Why should you attend?**

1. All applicants for last three years have been funded
2. Discussion among growers with *Dwight Head, NRCS Engineer, Corpus Christi* to clarify finer points of this relatively new program
3. Valley needs to take advantage of one of few programs for cost share for water conservation. There is plenty of water behind dams now, but we will almost certainly have water shortages in future.
4. Funding for this program may not be as plentiful in future.

***Hosted By:***



Harlingen Irrigation District  
**ADI**  
Ag Water Conservation  
Demonstration Initiative