

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

Quarter no. 11 From 4/1/08 Through 6/30/08

I. Abstract

This quarter, 244 residents from Cameron, Hidalgo and Willacy Counties were educated. Total number of attendees who have benefited from the Arroyo Colorado Education Program is now 5,024.

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. The AC Watershed Coordinator participated in the Arroyo Colorado Steering Committee meeting and TWRI provided a summary of ag education activities to the Steering Committee at the meeting on April 24, 2008

85% 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. A special Ag Workgroup Session was held in preparation for the upcoming Ag Issues Workgroup Meeting in July. Meeting Summary is included in Appendix A.
- b. TWRI, in anticipation of additional funds remaining in the project, requested a 6 month no-cost extension during this quarter. If approved, the new project end date would be February 28, 2009.

85% 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 3, Quarter 3 Progress Report to TSSWCB on July 15, 2008.

85% 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:

Date	Event	County	Description	Attendance
4/8/08	Master Gardener Leadership Team	C	Develop plans of water efficient landscape	6
4/16/08	Master Gardener Class	C	Principles of Irrigation, Water Conservation, Irrigation techniques	27
4/17/08	Master Gardener Program	H	Turfgrass Management, including water conservation, varieties	15
4/22/08	Master Gardener Leadership Team	C	Developed plans for composting demonstration	6
5/6/08	Master Gardener Leadership Team	C	Developed plans for rainwater harvesting demonstration	7
5/07/08	Pesticide Safety Training	CH	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, calibration and continuing education units.	8
5/14/08	Master Gardener Class	C	Use of native plants	27
5/20/08	Master Gardener Leadership Team	C	Develop plans for composting tour	6

6/16/08	Master Gardener Class	C	Tour arboretum, ID native plants	27
6/17/08	Master Gardeners	C	Master Gardeners present arboretum plans to county commissioners court	5
6/18/08	Rio Farms Sorghum Field Day	CH	Variety trial, sweet sorghum research, sorghum market outlook, sorghum checkoff, FSA update	106
6/24/08	Waste Pesticide Collection Planning	CH	Site selection for waste pesticide collection day to be held in the Fall	4

85% 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. None to report at this time.

80% 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. None to report at this time.

80% Complete

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

- Two possible projects related to education of integrated pest management practices and water quality issues for agricultural producers were submitted during the first part of 2008. One project, “An Integrated Farm Management Education Program” was funded by US EPA Region 6 Strategic Ag Initiative Program and is slated to begin September 1, 2008 pending arrival of a signed contract. The second

program, "Pesticide Education in the Coastal Zone of the Arroyo Colorado Watershed," funded through the General Land Office, is slated to begin October 1, 2008. Both programs support and enhance existing excellent educational programs in the watershed and help meet the goals of the watershed protection plan.

IV. Projected Work for Next Quarter

- Education efforts will continue.

Appendix A

Special Ag Workgroup Meeting May 29, 2008 Summary

Attendees:

Pam Casebolt
Aaron Wendt
Lee Munz
Brad Cowan

Andy Garza
Laura De La Garza
Cecilia Wagner

Increasing the maximum of cost-share:

- TSSWCB will recommend increasing the maximum allowed per individual from \$10,000 to \$15,000 at the July Board Meeting. The one-time rule would remain. But they are working on the sub-application process. A producer can multiple times, but in the end, the total cost share he could receive is the cap (\$15,000). Current rule is that the producer has to apply for all of the cost share at one time.
- TSSWCB clarified that the Water Quality Management Program has a statewide rule of \$10,000 maximum. SWCDs can then set their own maximum but it can not exceed \$10,000. The fact that the AC districts are bringing this to the board, it would affect the entire program statewide. At that point, the districts then have to take action to up their maximum. But even then, the existing workplan that is leading the cost-share program has a maximum set in it at \$10,000 so if the Board and then the districts take action, they would have to follow with contract amendments to make sure the AC program can use the maximum passed by the Board.

Targeting Producers:

- Is there a map of all producers who have received cost share, what cost-share practices they have implemented and who have WQMPs?
 - Yes, this is part of Task 3 of the Ag Assessment Project
 - With retirement of Rosenthal, development of map was delayed. Kannan was waiting on TSSWCB to deliver the data, which occurred in mid-May 2008
 - Kannan will then develop a map, which is in progress now
- From map, information about targeted education programs can be developed including the possibility of direct mailing, contact and cost-share priorities.

Future funding needs:

- With 319 funds coming again, what additional funds are needed to address ag issues in the AC?
 - Andy mentioned wanting more funds to provide assistance from the technical side (i.e. provide follow-up to producers who have developed a WQMP). Currently Ronnie Ramirez writes plans, but could they allocate more of his time to follow up.

- This would go along the lines of weaning the producers off of 319 for cost-share and rather use 319 for technical assistance and keep using the 503 as cost-share money.
 - Current 503 allocations: Hidalgo - \$85,500; Cameron – \$48,000 to \$50,000
 - Current 319 workplan for costshare: Cameron – \$56,000 (started with \$550,000); Hidalgo – \$56,000 (started with \$230,000)
- With the current budget, Andy feels they have enough funds to carry them through Aug 2009 to provide technical assistance. **But it is clear that next year, we will need a 319 proposal to TSSWCB to provide technical assistance for WQMPs and maintaining cost-share practices and we would just rely on the 503 program for actually implementing practices.**

Increasing the number of eligible practices:

Existing Practices

- The WQMPs is site-specific to the producer doing it. Table 11 and Table 12 in the WPP consist of practices that we are targeting and those that we would like to target for WPP implementation, respectively. *Note: TSSWCB has a master list of cost shareable practices, which do not necessarily include ‘management practices’.* Tables 11 and 12 include both management practices and implemented practices.
- Additionally, the 319 workplan defines which practices can be funded. The 319 workplan says cost-share will be provided to practices that reduce nutrient loading (mostly table 11 if you want a list)
- List of approved practices is available on the TSSWCB web site.
 - **Pam will email everyone the TSSWCB practice list.**
 - **Andy will email the District’s practice list.**
 - From these lists, we need to know which are management practices, which are practices that are cost-shareable, and which are funded by 319, 503 and NRCS, which are Cameron County, which are Hidalgo County.
 - **Andy will send an initial list and then from there, we can modify it if necessary.**

Adding Practices

- Aaron is interested in Channel Stabilization and Channel Bank Vegetation. The reason they are probably not on the list is because 1) they are not installed often or 2) they are not cost-effective. Many practices ‘not on the list’ take a lot of money. We would need to present it to the Board and provide justification of its effectiveness and prove that people would actually put them into place to get them added to the list.
- What is an example of bank stabilization?
 - Cedar Creek (near Dallas) – producers have implemented practices along the creek. But in the AC – it is probably the drainage ditch stabilization, which is not the grower’s responsibility but rather the drainage districts.
 - Would 319 funds help drainage districts? Yes – which is the point of the TWRI/TAMUK study where we are quantifying the effects of the drainage ditch vegetation.
- What about Constructed Wetlands as a possible practice?
 - Currently not on the TSSWCB list, which would require the entire process that was described above of getting the board to approve an additional practice. NRCS

has a program under the current farm bill that is wildlife habitat development, which could possibly be considered wetland development.

Practice Fact Sheets

- TSSWCB BMP manual (<http://www.tsswcb.state.tx.us/files/contentimages/bmp.pdf>).
- NRCS also has fact sheets on most of their practices. Also field office tech guide
- Fact sheets should be brief and educational: what is the practice; why we are doing it (its impact on the AC), and a map on the back. Provide a little more detail than the bmp manual and a little less detail than the FOTG.
- Needed Fact Sheets:
 - Rotation
 - Residue mgnt
 - Irrigation mgmt
 - Tailwater recovery
 - Landlevaing – definition, benefits, where practice applies, pictures with it.
 - Bank stabilization