

FOREST STEWARDSHIP BRIEFINGS

Timber ◇ Wildlife ◇ Water ◇ Soil ◇ Best Management Practices ◇ Forest Health ◇ Recreation ◇ Aesthetics

WATER QUALITY SUCCESS STORY

from EPA website

For more information:

- <https://bit.ly/2Wv0jGt>
- <https://www.epa.gov/nps/nonpoint-source-success-stories-texas>

The Upper San Antonio River was listed as not meeting the contact recreation use criteria in the 1992 Texas Water Quality Inventory and Clean Water Act (CWA) section 303(d) list Integrated Report (IR). This was due to elevated fecal coliform.

Primary contact recreation usually includes swimming, water-skiing, skin-diving, surfing, and other activities likely to result in immersion. Secondary contact recreation classification is defined as activities where immersion is unlikely, such as boating, wading, and rowing. An almost infinite number of subcategories (e.g., wading, fishing, sailing, powerboating, rafting) could be included. Often fishing is considered in the recreational use categories.

Multiple state and federal agencies, such as Texas Commission on Environmental Quality (TCEQ), Texas State Soil and Water Conservation Board (TSSWCB), and USDA Natural Resources Conservation Service (NRCS), worked with local stakeholders to improve water quality in the Upper San Antonio River. The development and implementation of a watershed protection plan (WPP), urban and agricultural best management practices (BMPs), and local stakeholder engagement has helped reduce the concentration of bacteria in the Upper San Antonio River. With funding from the U.S. Environmental Protection Agency (EPA) and the TCEQ, the San Antonio River Authority completed a WPP in 2006, updated the WPP (accepted by EPA in 2015), and implemented two projects 2006 through 2018.

An early example of WPP implementation dates to 2008 when CWA section 319(h) funds paid for power washers to be used

on the San Antonio River Walk. This practice diverts runoff pollution that would otherwise run directly into the San Antonio River through sanitary sewers.

An example of education and outreach to citizens can be found in the highly visible BMP implementation at the San Antonio Mission Public Library. The library's proximity to the San Antonio River made it an ideal location to demonstrate Low Impact Development (LID) features to the public and educate developers. The constructed features include surface retention and infiltration structures, bioswales, stormwater roof collection systems, and rain gardens. Construction was completed in spring 2012. Monitoring results before and after installation demonstrate a reduction in the amount of stormwater runoff and pollutants leaving the site and entering the Upper San Antonio River.

The TCEQ also partnered with the Texas A&M Agrilife Research outreach program "Healthy Lawns Healthy Waters" to educate homeowners about rainwater management and lawn and landscaping practices through presentations, education materials, and providing free soil analysis.

A net decrease in bacteria concentrations in the Upper San Antonio River have been observed since implementation activities began. As BMPs recommended in the WPP continue to be implemented and have more time to become established, a greater decrease in bacteria throughout the waterbody is expected. Based on instream water quality data, this segment of the San Antonio River now meets the bacterial water quality standard and was delisted in the 2016 IR.

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BIRD CITY TEXAS INITIATIVE

from Texas Parks and Wildlife Department news release dated February 11, 2020

For more information:

- <https://bit.ly/BirdCityTX>
- www.birdcitytexas.org

Texas Parks and Wildlife Department and Audubon Texas, partners in the Bird City Texas Initiative, are proud to announce that four communities have received certification during the inaugural application cycle. Bastrop, Dallas, Houston, and Port Aransas have been recognized as the leaders in community action and bird conservation. These certified communities took action in three categories: community engagement, habitat management, and threat reduction for birds.

“We’re excited to join Audubon Texas in recognizing these four communities for the incredible work that they’ve done for birds, wildlife habitat, and connecting people with nature,” said TPWD Urban Wildlife Program Leader Richard Heilbrun. “It’s not easy to become a Bird City Texas community; it takes dedication and vision. We are confident that their accomplishments will lead to stronger, more resilient communities for people and birds.”

After the Bastrop County Complex Fire of 2011, **Bastrop** has been committed to restoring their rare Lost Pines ecosystem for birds and other wildlife that depend on it. They have also chosen to address light pollution by being a Dark Sky Community, specifically choosing not to light a prominent bridge in town for the benefit of migratory birds.

Dallas has restored hundreds of acres of native prairies throughout their city, benefiting many grassland bird species. They

have worked to reduce the amount of pesticides used to remove invasive plants during these restoration projects. They’ve also created an innovative outreach program that provides birding backpacks for urban youth.

Houston has done a fantastic job of creating nature centers throughout their entire community, providing outreach and bird-friendly resources for a wide range of demographics. This includes providing substantial resources about bird-friendly buildings. They have also promised to increase the number of prairies that are restored within their city limits.

After Hurricane Harvey, **Port Aransas** committed significant resources to restore coastal ecosystems and fix storm-damaged birding amenities. They clearly understand the link between bird habitat and eco-tourism, and have a brilliant nature preserve system that is managed to provide excellent bird habitat for coastal and migratory birds. They are continuing to acquire surrounding land to buffer these preserves.

Bird City Texas communities can use their bird-friendly designation to attract more of Texas’ 2.2 million birdwatchers who are major drivers in the state’s \$1.8 billion wildlife-viewing industry.

For communities interested in applying for certification, the 2020 Bird City Texas application cycle begins in early summer. See link in the sidebar.

For more information:

- <https://bit.ly/2SjVGxM>
- www.earthviews.com/industries
- <https://tours.fishviews.com/public/guadalupe-river#0>

ONLINE TOOL - FISHVIEWS

FishViews are 360° panoramic virtual tours of rivers and shorelines, even underwater views, for desktop or mobile devices, creating opportunities in water science, conservation, and recreation.

The company that produces FishViews is based in Wimberly, Texas, but they also do work in other parts of the country. Take a tour of a section of the Guadalupe River by following last link in the sidebar.

The maps are available to the public, but they are made for science. Each panoramic view comes with a GPS location, an underwater image, depth, and 12 water quality parameters such as temperature and pH. Local governments can use them to identify areas of concern. Entities working with water resources can gain greater insights and reduce field visits by viewing water quality data in context.

SFA AWARDED GRANT FROM NRCS

The USDA Natural Resources Conservation Service (NRCS) will invest nearly \$375,000 for five new projects that will drive public and private sector innovation in conserving natural resources in Texas.

The competitive Conservation Innovation Grants (CIG) program helps spur development and adoption of new conservation approaches and technologies.

Claude Ross, acting NRCS state conservationist for Texas, said “Last year’s applicants resulted in an impressive array of proposals that will ultimately benefit conservation efforts in Texas.”

NRCS funds Conservation Innovation Grants through the Environmental Quality Incentives Program (EQIP) and are designed to engage eligible producers in conservation activities that accelerate the transfer and adoption of innovative conservation technologies and approaches.

One of the Texas projects funded this year for \$75,000 was a proposal by Stephen F. Austin State University for “Establishment of Silvopasture Demonstration Area Using Native Grasses.”

The overall goal is to establish demonstration areas of several silvopasture practices and utilize the demonstration areas to

transfer agroforestry science and technology to producers and others.

Silvopasture is the deliberate integration of trees and grazing livestock operations on the same land, intensively managing these lands for both forest products and forage.

Stephen F. Austin State University’s Forestry and Agriculture programs are cooperating to implement this project. Texas AgriForestry Small Farmers and Ranchers (TASFR) also will be key partners, assisting with field days and outreach to historically underserved producers.

The objectives for this project are to:

- 1) Convert an existing 25-year-old loblolly pine plantation to silvopasture using two thinning methods.
- 2) Convert existing pastureland to silvopasture; and convert existing non-stocked forestland to native grass pasture, as a comparison to silvopasture and existing improved pasture.
- 3) Incorporate native grasses into the systems listed above.
- 4) Transfer silvopasture science and technology through field days, workshops, and other demonstrations of the project.

from NRCS news release dated May 6, 2020

For more information:

- <https://bit.ly/NRCSgrants>

CONSERVATION INNOVATION GRANTS

The U.S. Department of Agriculture (USDA) announced a \$15 million investment to help support the adoption of innovative conservation approaches on agricultural lands.

USDA’s Natural Resources Conservation Service (NRCS) is accepting proposals for Conservation Innovation Grants (CIG).

CIG projects inspire creative problem-solving solutions that boost production on farms, ranches, and private forests, and improve natural resources. This year’s priorities are water reuse, water quality, air quality, energy, and wildlife habitat.

The National CIG program supports early pilot projects or demonstrations of promising conservation approaches.

State NRCS offices are able to fund and hold their own CIG competitions in addition to the National CIG signup. Visit NRCS state office websites for information about state CIG competitions.

All U.S.-based non-Federal entities and individuals are eligible to apply. Grantees must match the CIG investment at least one-to-one. CIG applications must be submitted through **Grants.gov** by 11:59 p.m. EDT on **June 29, 2020**.

from USDA NRCS news release dated April 28, 2020

For more information:

- www.nrcs.usda.gov
- www.nrcs.usda.gov/wps/portal/nrcs/main/national/programs/financial/cig
- www.nrcs.usda.gov/wps/portal/nrcs/site/tx

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MAY THE FOREST BE WITH YOU

As the Coronavirus pandemic continues to impact the nation, our healthcare workers, first responders and essential workers are heroically keeping the nation afloat. But there's one underlying constant, or force, if you will, that touches and protects us all - the forest. Trees and forests are the foundation of many essential, everyday items, a key to our health and quality of life, and a backbone to our economy and workforce.

"The forest products industry supplies basic necessities ranging from diapers, toilet paper, paper towels, paper cups, and plates to panels, lumber, transmission poles, pallets, and packaging used to transport over 90% of all goods, foods, and medical supplies so desperately needed during these critical times," said Rob Hughes, Executive Director of Texas Forestry Association.

"In turbulent markets, long-term forestland investments are less cyclical than stocks and bonds because they serve a diversified set of industries," said Aaron Stottlemeyer, Texas A&M Forest Service Forest Resource Analyst.

Including direct, indirect, and induced impacts, the forest sector had a total economic impact of \$36.7 billion in industry output, according to Texas A&M Forest Service's 2019 Texas Economic Impact Report. For more info: <https://bit.ly/ForestWithYou>.



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