

Plum Creek Watershed Partnership Under Way; Meetings Set for Kyle and Luling

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COLLEGE STATION – People interested in protecting and improving the water quality of the Plum Creek Watershed are invited to attend upcoming meetings concerning that water source, said the state water quality coordinator for Texas Cooperative Extension.

"The Plum Creek Watershed Partnership is a partnership of local citizens and regional, state and federal agencies to develop and implement a strategy relating to current and future water issues affecting citizens of Caldwell and Hays counties," said Mark McFarland, Extension soil fertility specialist and water quality coordinator. "We're encouraging citizens of these and surrounding counties to attend these meetings. We need their input to devise a comprehensive water quality management plan for this watershed and to put that plan into effect."

The next meeting will begin at 6:30 p.m. April 25 at Tobias Elementary School, 1005 East FM 150 in Kyle.

Another will take place at 6:30 p.m. April 26 at Luling Primary School, 118 West Bowie, in Luling.

Refreshments will be served a half-hour prior to the start of both meetings.

Plum Creek rises emerges in Hays County north of Kyle, flows south through Caldwell County passing near Lockhart and Luling, then joins with the San Marcos River near the Gonzales County line.

The Plum Creek Watershed provides water for irrigation and livestock for residents of Caldwell and Hays counties. It was chosen as the "pilot" location for water quality planning efforts due to monitoring that showed elevated bacteria and nutrient levels in Plum Creek, said McFarland.

Extension is working in partnership with the Texas State Soil and Water Conservation Board to facilitate a water quality plan and associated public education and awareness efforts for the Plum Creek watershed area.

"We'll need the help of area residents in educating others served by the watershed about water quality issues and how to address those issues," said Brian Koch, Wharton region watershed coordinator for the state board. "Their involvement is key to writing the plan

and their ideas are crucial to what decisions our planning committee makes on what to include in it."

Plum Creek Watershed program partners and area residents have been very positive about efforts to date, said Koch, referring to the partnership's initial meeting in Lockhart on April 10. The meeting was attended by more than 50 Plum Creek Watershed partners, including many area residents.

"The first meeting was a success," added McFarland. "We had a good turnout and made some really good progress in solidifying the partnership's efforts and opening a dialogue with area residents. We're hoping for an even better turnout for the meetings in Kyle and Luling."

Hays County Commissioner Susie Carter is slated to open the meeting in Kyle, and Caldwell County Commissioner Charles Bullock has been invited to open the Luling meeting.

To help residents understand what they can do to influence water quality issues in their area, Extension and the state board are also partnering in the Texas Watershed Steward program.

"The program will help people from throughout the state, including those served by the Plum Creek Watershed, become more aware of water quality issues and what they can do about them," said Nikki Dictson, Extension program specialist.

Plum Creek Watershed area residents can become stewards by attending protection plan meetings to be held in Lockhart during this year, she added.

More information on the Plum Creek Watershed Partnership can be found at: <http://pcwp.tamu.edu> .

More information on the Texas Watershed Steward program can be found at: <http://watershedsteward.tamu.edu> .

Residents wanting to attend one or both of the upcoming meetings or needing additional information can contact Dictson at (979) 458-3478 or Koch at (979) 532-9496.