

Press Release: Public Invited to Join Plum Creek Watershed Project

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COLLEGE STATION - People interested in planning and protecting the Plum Creek Watershed are invited to attend any of three upcoming meetings, said the state water quality coordinator for Texas Cooperative Extension.

"The Plum Creek Watershed provides water for tens of thousands of citizens of Caldwell and Hays counties and is affected by what happens in those and surrounding counties," said Mark McFarland, Extension soil fertility specialist and water quality coordinator. "We're encouraging residents in that area to attend these meetings as their input is vital to the process of developing and implementing a watershed protection plan."

Plum Creek rises in Hays County north of Kyle and runs south through Caldwell County, passing through Lockhart and Luling and then joining with the San Marcos River in northern Gonzales County, said McFarland.

Extension and Texas State Soil and Water Conservation Board are partnering with local citizens of counties served by the Plum Creek Watershed, as well as surrounding counties, to protect and improve that area's water quality.

The first Plum Creek Watershed Partnership meeting will be at 6:30 p.m. on April 10 at the Courthouse Annex in Lockhart. The annex is located at 1400B FM 20 East. The second and third meetings will also begin at 6:30 p.m. The second will be April 25 at Tobias Elementary School, 1005 East FM 150 in Kyle. The third will be April 26 at Luling Primary School, 118 West Bowie, in Luling.

"We need the help of area residents to develop our watershed protection plan and to educate others on water quality issues that will affect their lives and the future of their region," McFarland said.

A Texas Water Quality Inventory draft from 2004 noted that Plum Creek has elevated nutrient levels and is impaired by elevated bacteria conditions, he noted.

"These issues, along with the issues of urban development, plus oil and gas production and agriculture in the area, made the Plum Creek Watershed an ideal choice for us to develop a broad-range water quality improvement and protection plan," he said. "But to make that plan successful and 'carry the water' to other residents in the area, we need the involvement of concerned local citizens."

Extension and the conservation board are also partnering in the Texas Watershed Steward program, an effort which will provide science-based watershed education to help citizens identify and take action on water quality issues, McFarland said.

"This program will help people from throughout the state interested in water quality issues to become more directly involved in watershed management efforts in their area," he said. "Citizens can become Texas Watershed Stewards by attending watershed protection plan meetings being held in Lockhart during this year."

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

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