

Jan. 27, 2006

Texas Cooperative Extension Partnering in Watershed Pilot Program

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COLLEGE STATION – Texas Cooperative Extension and the Texas State Soil and Water Conservation Board have partnered to protect and improve water quality in Texas' watersheds.

TSSWCB and Extension will provide guidance and technical assistance to local stakeholder groups in developing and implementing watershed protection plans. Watershed protection plans are designed to reduce pollution entering lakes and streams by implementing best management practices. Local stakeholders, including citizens and private and public entities will help identify and promote implementation of the selected practices.

In 2005, the Wharton Regional Watershed Coordination Steering Committee (WCSC) was created to prioritize watersheds in the region and oversee the program.

"It's composed of water quality professionals from across the service area, including state and federal agencies, river authorities, national estuary programs, and councils of government," said Nikki Dictson, Extension program specialist..

The WCSC considered key factors affecting water quality in watersheds across the region, including land use, urban development, industrial activity, listing on the 303(d) list, and agricultural nonpoint source pollution potential.

WCSC recently selected the Plum Creek Watershed as the pilot watershed for the program. Plum Creek Watershed begins in Hays County north of Kyle, and continues south through Caldwell County, including the cities of Lockhart and Luling, to its confluence with the San Marcos River in north Gonzales County.

To support these efforts, Extension is developing the Texas Watershed Steward Program.

"The program will provide science-based, watershed education to help citizens take action to address local water quality impairments by working through the watershed protection plan process," Dictson said.

Key project partners include the Guadalupe-Blanco River Authority and the Plum Creek Conservation District. In addition, citizens throughout the watershed will be able to participate and will be kept informed as the planning process moves forward. The Plum Creek Watershed Partnership will begin by forming the local stakeholder group early in 2006.

"This group will be composed of individuals with a vested interest in water quality in the watershed who are willing to guide the watershed planning process," Dictson said.

The goal of the program is to develop and implement a plan that protects water resources in the region now, and into the future.

For more information on the Texas Watershed Steward Program, contact Dictson at (979) 458-3478, email n-dictson@tamu.edu or visit the Web at <http://watershedsteward.tamu.edu> .