

Plum Creek Watershed partnership completes long-term sustainability meetings

Members of the Plum Creek Watershed Partnership have signed an interlocal agreement to support long-term sustainability of the partnership and to secure matching fund commitments for a new water conservation-related grant. (Texas AgriLife Extension Service photo)

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CENTRAL TEXAS — Meetings were held recently with members of Plum Creek Watershed Partnership — a collaboration of cities, agencies, organizations and citizens in Central Texas — to help ensure long-term sustainability of the partnership and secure matching funds for a new grant proposal, said partnership officials.

The Guadalupe-Blanco River Authority led the effort to develop and submit a new three-year grant proposal for \$360,000 of additional funding from the Texas State Soil and Water Conservation Board. The purpose of the grant is to fund a local watershed coordinator position and implement educational activities related to watershed protection and management, according to partnership participants.

The coordinator position would be located in Lockhart, but will work across the entire watershed area, especially Caldwell and Hays counties, said Nikki Dictson, Texas AgriLife Extension Service program specialist in College Station and current project coordinator. The new coordinator will conduct water resource and related environmental outreach and education efforts across the watershed, as identified in the watershed protection plan.

“The partnership is currently in the third year of implementation of the Plum Creek watershed protection plan funded through the Texas State Soil and Water Conservation Board by a Clean Water Act grant, and there already have been numerous efforts toward improving water quality within the watershed,” Dictson said. “This project already has obtained over \$2 million in grant funding to implement a protection plan for the Plum Creek watershed.”

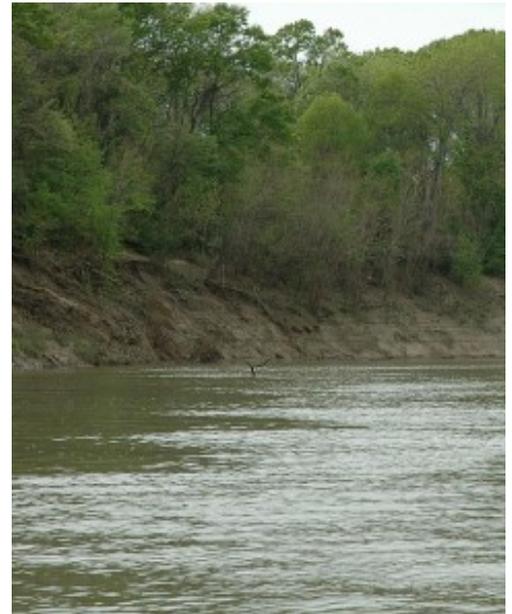
Debbie Magin, director of water quality services at the Guadalupe-Blanco River Authority, said the new funding will provide the partnership with a dedicated coordinator based in the watershed area, plus an enhanced ability to educate and inform watershed residents of all ages about the need for improved water quality and conservation.

“Long-term sustainability of the partnership has been a major discussion for the last three years,” Dictson said.

Dictson and Magin coordinated sustainability meetings with area city councils, county commissioners, water boards and other entities within the partnership to provide updates on the watershed protection project and coordinate development and approval of the interlocal agreement.

“These meetings resulted in the development of an interlocal agreement with area partner entities to provide the 40 percent local matching funds required to secure the new implementation grant,” Dictson said. The \$120,000 annual budget for the new project will require \$48,000 in matching funds.

The 12 collaborating entities that have signed the interlocal agreement are: Caldwell County, Hays County, the cities of Lockhart, Luling, Kyle, Umland and Buda, the Guadalupe-Blanco River Authority, Plum Creek Conservation District, Polonia Water Supply Corporation, the Hays County Soil and Water Conservation District and the Caldwell-Travis Soil and Water Conservation District.



A breakdown of participating entities and funding for the new grant can be found at the Plum Creek Watershed Partnership website at: <http://pcwp.tamu.edu>.

“As part of this effort, a variety of training programs will be conducted in the watershed to target different potential sources of water pollution, including homeowner workshops for on-site septic systems and aerobic systems, nutrient management for urban areas and agricultural crops, feral hog management, as well as a municipal officials’ workshop on reducing pollution and managing growth,” Magin said. “The coordinator will track the projects that are ongoing and assist the partners with obtaining additional technical and financial resources needed to improve water quality.”

Dictson noted that the next quarterly meeting of the Plum Creek Watershed Partnership will take place at 6:30 p.m. on Aug. 11 at the Lockhart State Park, 4179 State Park Road in Lockhart, and that those interested in getting involved or learning more about the project should attend.

The park is south of Lockhart off U.S. Highway 183 and Farm-to-Market Road 20. To reach the park, go southwest on FM 20 for two miles to Park Road 10, then travel one mile south on Park Road 10.

Funding for the Plum Creek Watershed Partnership was made available through a Section 319(h) Clean Water Act nonpoint source grant from the Texas State Soil and Water Conservation Board and U.S. Environmental Protection Agency.

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