Partnership Opportunities with NRCS and Other Agencies for Texas Upper Gulf Coast Landowners

Jim Rogers
Wildlife Biologist NRCS
Local Workgroup (LWG)

Convened by local SWCD to provide advice to NRCS on:

• Ranking resource concerns to address specific land uses
• Recommending allocation percentages to each land use
• Providing input to conservationists for program direction
• Gathering input from an advisory standpoint
• Making screening tool recommendations
• Public outreach efforts
Public Involvement

- Anyone can participate
- Local, state and federal agencies
- Agricultural organizations
- Local agri-businesses
- Impacted stakeholders
Beginning Farmer/Rancher

- Has not operated a farm or ranch or who has operated a farm or ranch for not more than 10 consecutive years. This requirement applies to all members of an entity.
- Will materially and substantially participate in the operation of the farm or ranch.

Socially Disadvantaged Farmer/Rancher

- A member of a socially disadvantaged group whose members have been subjected to racial or ethnic prejudice because of their identity as members of the group without regard to their individual qualities.
Veteran Farmer/Rancher

- Has not operated a farm or ranch or who has operated a farm or ranch for not more than 10 consecutive years. This requirement applies to all members of an entity.
- Will materially and substantially participate in the operation of the farm or ranch.
- Must be identified as a Beginning Farmer/Rancher
- A veteran farmer or rancher that is not considered a Beginning Farmer/Rancher does not meet the requirements of the Farm Bill designated “Veteran Farmer/Rancher”.
Conservation Programs

- EQIP
- CSP
- ACEP ALE
- ACEP WRE
EQIP offers financial and technical assistance to agriculture producers to promote agriculture production and environmental quality as compatible goals.
EQIP Guidelines

- No minimum acreage size or amount of practice units.
- No caps to restrict participation against large or small operations.
- Average Non-Farm Adjusted Gross Income is less than $900,000.00 for Conservation Programs.
- Payment limitation is $450,000 for the current farm bill’s life.
- No restrictions on the number of applications submitted by a participant.
- Payment method used will be the Payment Rate (PR) which reflects increases in agricultural input costs.
- Higher payment rate for historically underserved.
Conservation Stewardship Program (CSP)

- CSP pays farmers who are improving conservation treatment on their working lands.
- Encourages the continuation of practices that benefit soil, water and air resources.
- A person or legal entity cannot receive CSP payments exceeding $200,000 during any five-year period.
ACEP – Agricultural Land Easement (ALE)

- Helps landowners restore and protect grassland, including rangeland and pastureland, and certain other lands, while maintaining the areas as grazing lands.

- Program emphasis is on support for grazing operations, plant and animal biodiversity, and grasslands under the greatest threat of conversion.

- Enrollment options:
  - Permanent easements
A voluntary, non-regulatory, incentive-based program that helps private landowners, farmers and ranchers protect and restore wetlands on their property.

**Enrollment options:**
- Permanent easements
- 30-year easements
- 10 – year restoration agreement
Restoring Hydrology/Creating Shallow Water Habitats
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- Micro/macro topography
- Levees/water control structures
- Tree/shrub planting
Restoring Grassland

- Planting native grass
- Brush management
Restoring Grassland

- Prescribed grazing
- Cross-fencing
- Water developments
- Prescribed burning
Develop plan to maintain or create a mosaic of habitat elements
Contact Info

USDA Service Center locator

http://offices.sc.egov.usda.gov/locator/app?state=TX
“Biologists from USFWS and TPWD have brought a lot of the WRPs to us through their work with private landowners. Over the years they have worked with NRCS in a partnership to develop and enhance wetlands as well as restore grassland ecosystems.”
Programs through USFWS and TPWD

- Partners for Fish and Wildlife
- Landowner Incentive Program (LIP)
Partners for Fish and Wildlife

- can assist with projects in all habitat types which conserve or restore native vegetation, hydrology, and soils associated with imperiled ecosystems such as longleaf pine, bottomland hardwoods, native prairies, marshes, rivers and streams, or otherwise provide an important habitat requisite for a rare, declining or protected species.
Partners for Fish and Wildlife

- work one-on-one with private landowners and other partners to plan, implement, and monitor their projects.
- help landowners find other sources of funding and help them through the permitting process, as necessary

- http://www.fws.gov/SOUTHWEST/es/AustinTexas/Partners.html
Landowner Friendly Process

1. The landowner contacts the appropriate U.S. Fish & Wildlife Service (FWS) field office.
2. A PFW biologist will visit with the landowner to determine if a project is feasible.
3. If feasible, a project plan is developed, often with other conservation partner input.
4. A Cooperative Agreement, which contains both the landowner’s and FWS objectives, is provided to the landowner for review and signature.
5. Projects are reviewed, ranked, and selected based on merit and available funding.
6. If selected, the project will be submitted to the FWS Regional Office for processing and final approval.
7. Once approved, the landowner receives an Award Letter from the FWS. At that time project construction may begin.
Partners for Fish and Wildlife

Where Do We Work?

Native Grasslands
Native grasslands are some of our most imperiled habitats in North America. Today, less than one percent of the tallgrass prairie in Texas remains in relatively pristine condition. What remains of our native grasslands is being rapidly consumed by urbanization and brush encroachment.

Unique Restoration Activities
The PFW program also places a high priority on restoring unique or rare habitat types across the State. These include the longleaf pine forest in east Texas, South Texas brush, karst systems in central Texas, as well as specific habitats which support federally listed plants or animals.

Wetlands and Riparian Areas
More than half of the original 16 million acres of wetlands in Texas have been lost. Restoration of these systems can enhance groundwater recharge and discharge, sediment stabilization, toxicant retention, wildlife diversity, and recreation opportunities.

Outdoor Learning Areas
The PFW program funds outdoor learning areas (schoolyard habitats) which provide students with “hands-on” educational opportunities. These projects benefit fish and wildlife and the human communities that learn from them.

Lesser prairie-chickens on a PFW project site.
Photo Source: USFWS

Longleaf pine restoration project in east Texas.
Photo Source: USFWS

Landowner and future conservationists enjoying restored wetland area.
Photo Source: USFWS

Students using a schoolyard habitat.
Photo Source: USFWS
Partners for Fish and Wildlife

1. Duane Lucia  
   Lubbock  
   806-742-4737

2. Catherine Yeargan  
   Arlington  
   817-277-1100

3. Steve Arey  
   Arlington  
   817-277-1100

4. Jeff Reid  
   Lufkin  
   936-676-8546

5. Chris Harper  
   Austin  
   512-490-0057

6. Doug Phillips  
   Austin  
   512-490-0057

5. Brendan Witt  
   Austin  
   512-490-0057

6. Tim Anderson  
   Corpus Christi  
   361-994-9005

6. Chad Stinson  
   Corpus Christi  
   361-994-9005
Landowner Incentive Program (LIP)

- to meet the needs of private, non-federal landowners wishing to enact good conservation practices on their lands for the benefit of healthy terrestrial and aquatic ecosystems.
- LIP funding is made possible through a cooperative agreement with the USFWS Partners for Fish and Wildlife Program.

https://tpwd.texas.gov/landwater/land/private/lip/
Landowner Incentive Program (LIP)

- Find a Biologist Website
The Key

- Approach TPWD, NRCS, or USFWS
- Determine goals and objectives
- Plan first
Questions?
Natural Resources Conservation Service

Helping People Help the Land

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