

Texas Water Resources Institute

Evaluation and Demonstration of BMPs for Cattle on Grazing Lands for the Lone Star Healthy Streams Program State General Revenue Nonpoint Source Grant Program FY2010 Workplan 10-52

Quarter no. 1 From 6/1/10 Through 8/31/10

I. Abstract

The project was initiated this quarter. Calvin Clary was hired as the Graduate Student to perform field and lab work and data analysis for the project. A project kick-off meeting was held on June 24. The QAPP was developed and submitted to the TSSWCB for review and approval. The McGregor Research Center was identified as the site for conducting many of the structural BMP evaluations. A prefab shade structure was ordered and will be assembled at McGregor next quarter. The first of three assessments of the shade structure will be conducted September 21 through October 12. Evaluations of grazing management at the Welder Wildlife Refuge, Beef Cattle Systems Center, and USDA-ARS at Riesel continued as well. Next quarter, a coordination committee meeting, LSHS Program Development Committee meeting, and meetings with LSHS Steering Committee members will be conducted.

II. Overall Progress and Results by Task

TASK 1: Project Administration and Coordination

Subtask 1.1: TWRI will prepare electronic quarterly progress reports (QPRs) for submission to the TSSWCB. QPRs shall document all activities performed within a quarter and shall be submitted by the 15th of December, March, June, and September. QPRs shall be posted to the project website and distributed to all project partners.

The following actions have been completed during this reporting period:

- a. The first QPR is due September 15, 2010.

0% Complete

Subtask 1.2: TWRI will perform accounting functions for project funds and will submit appropriate Reimbursement Forms to TSSWCB at least quarterly.

The following actions have been completed during this reporting period:

- a. No invoices have been submitted to date. The first invoice is expected to be submitted next quarter.

0% Complete

Subtask 1.3: TWRI will host coordination meetings, conference calls, or TTVN meetings with the TSSWCB and SCSC, and include as appropriate SAML, ESSM, and USDA-ARS, approximately quarterly to discuss project activities, project schedule, communication needs, deliverables, and other requirements. TWRI will develop lists of action items needed following each project coordination meeting and distribute to project personnel. These coordination meetings may be held concurrently with TSSWCB project 09-06 coordination meetings.

The following actions have been completed during this reporting period:

- a. On June 24, AgriLife Extension, TSSWCB, and TWRI met to discuss the project contract, budget, and deliverables.
- b. The next project meeting is scheduled for September 28 following the LSHS Program Development Committee Meeting.

12.5% Complete

Subtask 1.4: TWRI and/or SCSC will attend and participate in public meetings as appropriate in order to communicate project goals, activities and accomplishments to affected parties. Such meetings may include, but are not limited to, the Annual Meeting of Texas SWCD Directors, the TSCRA Annual Convention and various leadership meetings, the TFB Annual Convention and various leadership meetings, Clean Rivers Program Basin Steering Committee meetings, and watershed stakeholder meetings for certain TMDLs and WPPs.

The following actions have been completed during this reporting period:

- a. TWRI will attend the TSSWCB Work Session on September 15 and the Annual Meeting of Texas SWCD Directors on October 25-27.

12.5% Complete

Subtask 1.5: TWRI and SCSC will develop and disseminate project informational materials, including, but not limited to flyers, brochures, news releases, and other appropriate promotional publications. As appropriate, TWRI will include information about the project, as appropriate, in the tx H2O, New Waves e-letter, AgriLife News, USDA-ARS News, and livestock industry trade publications. TSSWCB will be provided such informational materials and publications developed by TWRI and SCSC for review prior to distribution.

The following actions have been completed during this reporting period:

- a. No progress to report this quarter.

0% Complete

Subtask 1.6: TWRI will continue to host and maintain an internet website <http://grazinglands-wq.tamu.edu/> for the dissemination of information.

The following actions have been completed during this reporting period:

- a. This quarter, the website (<http://grazinglands-wq.tamu.edu/>) was viewed by 39 unique visitors (10 in June 2010, 15 in July 2010, and 14 in August 2010).

12.5% Complete

Subtask 1.7: TWRI and SCSC will continue to utilize the LSHS Project Steering Committee organized through TSSWCB project 06-05. At a minimum, membership shall be composed of TSSWCB, certain SWCDs, AgriLife Extension, AgriLife Research, TWRI, USDA-NRCS, USDA-ARS, TDA, GLCI, TFB, TSCRA, ICA, and TCFA. This LSHS Project Steering Committee will provide input on the evaluation of BMP effectiveness, identification of demonstration sites, modifications to the LSHS curriculum, and general project coordination. This LSHS Project Steering Committee will meet as frequently as needed, likely annually. This Project Steering Committee may meet concurrently with the Program Steering Committee established through TSSWCB project 09-06.

The following actions have been completed during this reporting period:

- a. TWRI and SCSC plans to meet with members of the LSHS Project Steering Committee on October 19 in conjunction with the Ag Council Meeting and on October 25 in conjunction with the Annual Meeting of Texas SWCD Directors.

12.5% Complete

Subtask 1.8: TWRI, in collaboration with SCSC and SAML, will develop and submit a Final Report at the culmination of the project. This Final Report will document project performance related to each project goal, measure of success, and task. A draft of this Final Report will be submitted to TSSWCB for review prior to finalizing the document. This Final Report, and any associated project Technical Reports, will be permanently housed in the TWRI online Reports Database.

The following actions have been completed during this reporting period:

- a. No progress to report this quarter.

0% Complete

TASK 2: Quality Assurance

Subtask 2.1: TWRI will develop a QAPP for activities in Task 3 consistent with EPA Requirements for Quality Assurance Project Plans (QA/R-5) and the TSSWCB Environmental Data Quality Management Plan.

The following actions have been completed during this reporting period:

- a. The QAPP was submitted to the TSSWCB on August 30, 2010.

95% Complete

Subtask 2.2: TWRI will submit revisions and necessary amendments to the QAPP as needed.

The following actions have been completed during this reporting period:

- a. No activity to report. The first revision is due August 2011.

0% Complete

TASK 3: Evaluate and Demonstrate BMPs To Reduce Fecal and Bacteria Loading From Cattle on Grazing Lands

Subtask 3.1: SCSC, with assistance from TWRI, will continue the evaluation of grazing management and stocking rates/densities at the Brazos Bottom (BB1, BB2, BB3), Welder Wildlife Refuge (WWR1, WWR2, WWR3) and Riesel (SW12, W10) demonstration sites. Runoff samples from three grazing treatments [no grazing, moderate grazing, and heavy grazing (2 x moderate grazing)] will be evaluated at the Brazos Bottom and Welder Wildlife Refuge and from two grazing treatments [no grazing and moderate grazing] will be evaluated at Riesel. ISCO automated samplers will be used to collect flow integrated samples and data on runoff quality and quantity and rainfall amounts and intensity. E. coli and other bacteria (i.e., Enterococcus, fecal coliform) levels in runoff will be measured and bacteria loadings will be determined. SAML will analyze all samples using EPA-approved methods as outlined in the QAPP. SAML is NELAC certified for E. coli and will use EPA-approved methods for analysis of all samples.

The following actions have been completed during this reporting period:

- a. Beef Cattle Systems Center
 - Equipment maintenance was performed on June 21, July 6, July 9, and August 3.
 - Sites BB2 and BB3 were grazed June 21-July 2.
 - Runoff samples were collected on June 9.
- b. Welder Wildlife Refuge
 - Equipment maintenance was performed on June 4, June 23, July 2, July 22, August 25, and September 13.
 - A grazing treatment was attempted on June 21 using the Welder's Brahman cattle; however, all cattle had gotten out by the morning of June 22. Grazing will again be initiated on September using Lynn Drawe's gentler Angus cattle.
 - No runoff occurred this quarter.
- c. Riesel
 - No runoff occurred this quarter.

12.5% Complete

Subtask 3.2: SCSC, with assistance from TWRI and ESSM, will evaluate the effectiveness of certain structural BMPs in modifying cattle movement to change fecal deposition patterns and reducing bacteria runoff. BMPs that have been identified as needing evaluation include (1) portable shade facilities/structures, (2) protected stream access points or stream crossing, (3) rip-rap application designed to limit cattle access to riparian areas, and (4) alternative water supplies designed to draw cattle away from waterbodies. Changes in cattle movement will be evaluated using GPS collars as described in Subtask 3.5. Reductions in bacteria contributions will be calculated based on the reduced time cattle spend in the stream and riparian area. Evaluation of protected stream access points or stream crossings will be dependent on finding a suitable cooperator where USDA-NRCS is designing and constructing this practice.

The following actions have been completed during this reporting period:

- a. The shade structure has been ordered from a manufacturer and being shipped to McGregor. It will be erected next quarter.

5% Complete

Subtask 3.3: SCSC will continue to gather information from the growing body of literature on 1) bacteria fate and transport, 2) effects of grazing cattle on bacterial levels in waterbodies, and 3) effect of BMPs designed to minimize grazing cattle impacts on riparian areas and bacteria loading. A compendium of this literature will be posted on the project website.

The following actions have been completed during this reporting period:

- a. No activity to report.

0% Complete

Subtask 3.4: SCSC will identify cooperator(s) to conduct the BMP demonstration and evaluation with assistance of the LSHS Project Steering Committee, local SWCDs, USDA-NRCS, TWRI, and local AgriLife Extension agents. For the evaluation of protected stream access points or stream crossings, and possibly alternative water supplies, SCSC and TWRI will work closely with USDA-NRCS and local SWCDs to identify potential cooperators where these practices are being planned. Funding will be provided to the cooperator(s) as needed to implement BMPs and participate in the BMP demonstration and evaluation. SCSC and TWRI will encourage the cooperator(s) to obtain a certified WQMP from the TSSWCB.

The following actions have been completed during this reporting period:

- a. The effectiveness of shade, rip-rap, and alternative water will be conducted at the McGregor Research Center. The stream crossing may also be evaluated at McGregor pending identification of a cooperator by the NRCS.

75% Complete

Subtask 3.5: SCSC and ESSM will assess cattle behavior in response to BMPs to be evaluated in Subtask 3.2 utilizing Lotek GPS collars to determine the amount of time cattle spend in the stream and riparian areas before and after BMP implementation. TWRI will assist with GPS collar data analysis.

The following actions have been completed during this reporting period:

- a. Shade will be evaluated September 21-October 12.

0% Complete

Subtask 3.6: SCSC will transfer results from BMP effectiveness studies to landowners, natural resource agencies, and others through the LSHS Program and other publications in order to increase BMP adoption rates and participation in federal and state technical and financial assistance programs. SCSC, with assistance from TWRI and USDA-ARS and in cooperation with local SWCDs and local Extension and USDA-NRCS staff, will conduct at least 1 field day at a demonstration sites to highlight the BMP effectiveness studies and promote adoption of BMPs by ranchers.

The following actions have been completed during this reporting period:

- a. No activity to report.

0% Complete

Subtask 3.7: In order to determine and document the synergistic effectiveness of BMPs prescribed in a WQMP in reducing bacteria loading from grazing cattle, a team consisting of SAML, USDA-ARS, SCSC TWRI, and others as appropriate, will design a water quality monitoring regime for evaluating whole-farm effect of implementing WQMPs on livestock operations. This team will work with the LSHS Project Steering Committee and other project partners to identify prospective cooperating ranches across an array of ecoregions and climatic zones. To the extent possible, the monitoring regime will be designed for watersheds with on-going WPP or TMDL development or implementation. The monitoring regime will be designed such that results are transferable to other watersheds. The monitoring regime will take advantage of all available and suitable methodologies, including Bacterial Source Tracking (BST). The monitoring regime will be incorporated into a proposed scope of work and budget.

The following actions have been completed during this reporting period:

- a. No activity to report.

0% Complete

Subtask 3.8: Through TSSWCB project 09-50, USDA-ARS is developing an easy-to-use Texas BMP Evaluation Tool (TBET) to aid in science-based BMP selection on-farm and cost-effective conservation spending. Specifically, TBET is being designed to 1) assist land managers and agency planners in conservation practice decision-making related to on-farm (field-scale) alternatives and effectiveness, and 2) facilitate evaluation and reporting of agricultural nonpoint source load reductions from WQMP implementation. SCSC and TWRI will work with USDA-ARS to incorporate findings from the BMP evaluations in this project into TBET, to the extent practical.

The following actions have been completed during this reporting period:

- a. No activity to report.

0% Complete

Subtask 3.9: SCSC, with assistance from TWRI and TSSWCB, will work very closely with the USDA-NRCS to provide USDA-NRCS with the information they need to establish a practice standard for Livestock Shade Structure as a BMP to effect cattle movement and fecal deposition patterns and impact pollutant loading and water quality. Examples of this practice standard (717) exist in South Carolina, Georgia, Florida, and Virginia.

The following actions have been completed during this reporting period:

- a. No activity to report.

0% Complete

Subtask 3.10: SCSC, with assistance from TWRI, will develop technical reports, refereed journal articles, Extension Fact Sheets, and other publications as appropriate, summarizing the results of the demonstrations (grazing management treatments and structural BMP evaluation) and the analysis of the impacts of BMPs on bacteria runoff.

The following actions have been completed during this reporting period:

- a. No activity to report.

0% Complete

III. Related Issues/Current Problems and Favorable of Unusual Developments

- N/A

IV. Projected Work for Next Quarter

- Prepare and submit Year 1, Quarter 1 Progress Report on September 15.
- Submit invoice for first quarter.
- Host coordination meeting on September 28.
- Attend the TSSWCB Work Session on September 15
- Attend the Annual Meeting of Texas SWCD Directors on October 25-27
- Meet with members of the LSHS Project Steering Committee on October 19 in conjunction with the Ag Council Meeting and on October 25 in conjunction with the Annual Meeting of Texas SWCD Directors.
- Continue monitoring runoff at Beef Cattle Systems Center, Welder Wildlife Refuge and Riesel
- Begin evaluation of the effectiveness of shade September 21 through October 21