

Minutes: Agricultural Workgroup Meeting

07/23/2013

Time Start: 1:30 pm

Time Stop: 2:30 pm

Members	Alternates	Interested Parties	TWDB Staff
Richard Egg Hughes Abell Steve Bednarz Kevin Wagner David Villarreal	Jay Bragg	Mark Howard	Comer Tuck Cameron Turner Mindy Conyers Katherine Thigpen

The meeting was called to order at 1:30 pm and roll call was taken.

TWDB staff discussed the marketing plan for the Blue Legacy Award in Agriculture, to be awarded in early December 2013. The plan focuses on a social media and email push during the month of July and August. Any ideas on groups or specific contacts that the information can be dispersed to should be sent to TWDB. Several workgroup members mentioned they have already or would spread the information: Texas Farm Bureau Facebook/Twitter page, Soil & Water Conservation Districts, NRCS Public Affairs Specialist, Texas Department of Agriculture Water Smart website, and the Texas Water Resources Institute server.

Nominations should be in by the end of August for the Agriculture Workgroup to begin narrowing down to the winners. With two forms to complete, one nomination form and one informational form, all need to work to make sure news of the award program reaches as many people as possible and give the committee enough time to go through all nominees. The award presentation will take place the first week of December. The workgroup agreed with the timeline and will send any contacts or help in any way they can to continue to promote the award.

Richard Egg gave a brief background on the history of the five Best Management Practices up for discussion and the review of the Agriculture BMPs that were developed by the Water Conservation Implementation Task Force. They are all still valid, but this would be a good update. These practices have been updated based on national USDA-Natural Resources Conservation Service practices. The Agriculture Workgroup has made comments and there has been a 30 day public comment period along with further editing by the workgroup.

The Workgroup went over each Best Management Practice one by one to discuss recent edits.

Land Leveling Best Management Practice: All members of the group felt this Best Management Practice was fairly straight forward and ready to go back to the Council. The only change was to add Temple, TX to the resources section when referencing the *Conservation Practice Standard for Irrigation Land Leveling*. The technical guide is a practice standard guide for Texas and should be referenced.

Conversion of Supplemental Irrigated Farmland to Dry-Land Farmland: There was significant discussion on this Best Management Practice. This Best Management Practice may not be applicable to all geographical regions. The BMP does go into specifics based on the original Best Management Practice developed by the Task Force. Managed pasture is often viewed as farmed land rather than native pasture or rangeland. Pasture land could be harvesting hay or a specific species that was planted.

There was significant discussion on rewording the permanent pasture definition. “Typical dry land farming consists of row crops such as corn and cotton as well as permanent pasture or permanent pasture is a common type of dry land farming.” There was a proposal to add the definition into the applicability section in parenthesis and define it as non-irrigated farmland or make it as broad as possible to avoid leaving anything out of this Best Management Practice.

The Workgroup discussed a separate Best Management Practice for a Conversion of Farm Land to pasture or range land or broadening the current BMP. When the BMP was originally considered it was limited to dry land farming. Range land could also be included. New title: “Conversion of supplemental irrigated farm land to a non-irrigated use.” The rest of the Best Management Practice is written in a specific format rather than extremely broad. This BMP would need to be rewritten as a broader topic.

The Workgroup proposes to create a new Best Management Practice that would be more encompassing while making a few editorial changes to the active Conversion of Supplemental Irrigated Farmland to Dry-Land Farmland Best Management Practice so that it can move on to the Council for approval.

Contour Farming: This Best Management Practice had a few minor changes. The workgroup agreed to amend the 3rd and 4th steps under Implementation but not remove them. There was also a discussion on terracing and contour farming under the “Scope and Schedule” section of the BMP. The Workgroup discussed what would be considered viable contour farming in Texas as opposed to practices in other states.

The Workgroup also posed a question on the literature review done prior to the BMP drafting. Prior literature review has been completed on this Best Management Practice and the Workgroup does not believe that additional review is necessary.

Additionally, TWDB staff checked with the Workgroup to make sure numbers in the “Cost-Effectiveness Considerations” section were accurate. The Workgroup agreed that \$1-3 per acre for the cost of surveying was accurate but would double check all numbers.

Furrow Dikes: The Workgroup agreed that this Best Management Practice was ready to move forward.

Brush Control Management: This Best Management Practice had several comments to be addressed and acted upon.

First, the Workgroup discussed the “Applicability” section in regards to the focus on large projects that are agency or government funded. There may be producers that are not government funded but according to the BMP guidelines would need to do a feasibility study to implement. Many smaller land owners or regional water groups wouldn’t be able to commission a large scale study.

One option put out to the group by TWDB staff was to break the “Applicability” portion into two sections.

- 1) Large (watershed) scale projects studied to determine potential increases in water yield providing water supplies for others.
- 2) Individual land holdings may receive benefits from this BMP such as grass management, reducing invasive species, soil conservation, restoration of natural vegetation and more.

The discussion turned to perhaps having two Best Management Practices as this one was already developed and still provided useful tools for water conservation. The Workgroup agreed to double check all figures in the practice and to develop a second Best Management Practice that was devoted more towards large scale brush control.

The meeting adjourned at 2:30 pm.