

## Minutes: Agricultural Workgroup Conference Call

2/12/13

Time Start: 10:00 am

Time Stop: 11:00 am

<b>Members</b>	<b>Alternates</b>	<b>Interested Parties</b>	<b>TWDB Staff</b>
Richard Egg Richard Eyster Steve Bednarz Wayne Halbert Scott Swanson	Jay Bragg	Angie Martin Stacey Pandey	Cameron Turner Vanessa Escobar

The meeting was called to order at 10:00 am and roll call was taken.

The meeting began with discussion on the workgroup's best management practices (bmp) revision process. Richard Egg provided a brief update on some minor changes and edits made to the following practices:

- Irrigation Scheduling
- Volumetric Measurement of Irrigation Water Use
- On Farm Irrigation Audit
- Crop Residue Management and Conservation Tillage

Since the revisions to these practices have been through a public comment period, the workgroup decided to take these to the March 6th council meeting for a vote of approval.

The next item on the agenda was a discussion on the Blue Legacy Award in Agriculture. Staff explained that in the past couple of years there has been a low rate of participation in receiving award nominations. There also seems to be a need to promote the award more effectively and improve upon how and where the awards are presented. The following ideas and thoughts were shared:

### Improve the Award Promotion

- Contact the State Conservationist (USDA-Natural Resources Conservation Service), Salvador Salinas, and inquire about the best method for partnering with the Council to promote and advertise the Blue Legacy Award.
- Inquire about printing an article on the Blue Legacy Award in some key publications such as the Southwest Farm Press (contact Ron Smith, <http://southwestfarmpress.com/contact> ) and the High Plains Journal ([http://www.hpj.com/journal/resources/index\\_contact.cfm](http://www.hpj.com/journal/resources/index_contact.cfm) ).
- Contact the four regional program directors of the Agrilife Extension Service. Inquire about partnering with them to proactively participate in promoting the Blue Legacy Awards as well as participate in nominating local producers.

### Improve the Nomination Application Process

- Extend the time frame that applicants have for completing and submitting a nomination application.
- Make the nomination process a two-step process.
  - Step 1) nominations are received on a simple short form. This will simplify the process and allow for groups, agencies or organizations to nominate others.
  - Step 2) narrow down the candidates based on the information received in the short forms. Notify the short list of candidates that they are being considered for the award and ask them to provide more information about their operation or organization by completing the longer award application.

### Improve the Award Presentations to Winners

- Seek opportunities to present the awards to winners in a setting that will receive positive attention for the winners. For example, farm and ranch shows or commodity symposiums.
- Rotate the venues for which award presentations take place. For example, pick different farm and ranch shows in different regions of the state each year.
- Work with local entities such as local chambers of commerce, counties, or groundwater conservation districts to identify venues or events where we can present a local winner with their awards.
- Possibly have separate award presentations at separate sites around the region or state to recognize individual winners.

The next item on the agenda was a discussion on *Report 347 Surveys of Irrigation in Texas*. A brief overview was provided on the past editions of this report. The last one was printed in 2001. In the past this report has focused on agricultural irrigation by county, district, river basin, water sources and other data that the Natural Resource Conservation (NRCS) service took the lead in compiling and analyzing. It also documented trends in irrigation efficiency.

Recently both the Texas Water Development Board (TWDB) and the Texas State Soil and Water Conservation Board have received external inquiries into the possibility of accessing a current version of the report. Due to these requests, staff wanted to discuss the interest level and the feasibility of developing an update or similar type of report. It was suggested that it would be really beneficial to document trends in irrigation efficiency, water use, average yields, and to discuss the impacts that drought has had. Such a report would match the goals of the Water Conservation Advisory Council well, in terms of monitoring trends in agricultural conservation implementation.

There was discussion on how in years past this report was very time intensive and required a lot of staff time for NRCS to compile all the data. At this point this is not an effort that NRCS could commit to taking the lead. If such a similar effort was desired then it would probably be necessary to look into funding sources. It was also pointed

out that it may not be necessary to duplicate such an in depth report but rather pull together some information and data from available sources in order to develop a new report.

There was some discussion on the best available sources and methods for acquiring key data. The workgroup suggested that a workshop be held after the May 9<sup>th</sup> Council meeting to have an open discussion on the best available data resources as well as to explain how TWDB currently estimates irrigation water use. In line with that there would be a more in depth discussion on the potential for a new report about agricultural irrigation.

The conference call adjourned at 11:00 am.