

# CHAPTER 7

## EDUCATION AND OUTREACH

### INTRODUCTION

An essential element to the implementation of this WPP is an effective education and outreach campaign. Long-term commitments from citizens and landowners will be necessary for achieving comprehensive improvements in the Kickapoo Creek watershed. The education and outreach component of implementation must focus on keeping the public, landowners and agency personnel informed of project activities, provide information about appropriate management practices and assist in identifying and forming partnerships to lead the effort.

### WATERSHED COORDINATOR

The role of the Watershed Coordinator is to lead efforts to establish and maintain the working partnerships with stakeholders. The Watershed Coordinator also serves as a point of contact for all things related to WPP development, implementation and the WPP itself. A full-time watershed coordinator position is recommended to support WPP implementation.

The future role of the Watershed Coordinator is perhaps most important. The Watershed Coordinator will be tasked with maintaining stakeholder support for years to come, identifying and securing funds to implement the WPP, tracking the success of implementation and working to carry out adaptive management strategies. Simply put, the Watershed Coordinator is the catalyst to keeping WPP implementation on track.

### PUBLIC MEETINGS

Throughout the course of developing the WPP, stakeholder engagement has been critical. Public meetings held to develop the WPP with local stakeholders began January 2022. Five meetings were held, including general stakeholder meetings. Meetings were also held for county officials and local SWCDs to engage stakeholders in the planning process.

Throughout the process, local stakeholders participated in the many public meetings, one-on-one meetings and workshops associated with the WPP development. Stakeholders were present from both counties of the watershed (Henderson and Van Zandt) and represented agriculture and landowners. Some agencies involved in the planning process include: City of Edom, Angelina & Neches River Authority, Trinity-Neches SWCD, TSSWCB, and NRCS.

### FUTURE STAKEHOLDER ENGAGEMENT

The Watershed Coordinator will play a critical role in this transition by continuing to organize and host periodic public meetings and needed educational events in addition to seeking out and meeting with focused groups of stakeholders to identify and secure implementation funds. The coordinator will also provide content to maintain and update the project website, track WPP implementation progress and participate in local events to promote watershed awareness and stewardship. News articles, newspapers and the project website will be primary tools used to communicate with watershed

stakeholders on a regular basis and will be developed to update readers periodically on implementation progress, provide information on new implementation opportunities, inform them on available technical or financial assistance and other items of interest related to the WPP effort.

## EDUCATION PROGRAMS

Educational programming will be a critical part of the WPP implementation process. Multiple programs geared towards providing information on various sources of potential pollutants and feasible management strategies will be delivered in and near the Kickapoo Creek watershed and advertised to watershed stakeholders. An approximate schedule for planned programming is provided in Chapter 6. This schedule will be used as a starting point for planned programming and efforts will be made to abide by this schedule to the extent possible. As implementation and data collection continues, the adaptive management process will be used to modify this schedule and respective educational needs as appropriate.

### Elementary School Watershed Education Programs

#### Low Impact Development Training Program

#### Construction Inspection Registration Course

#### Annual Inspection & Maintenance Certification Course

#### *Texas Stream Team*

The Watershed Coordinator will coordinate with the Meadows Center for Water and the Environment to start a volunteer monitoring program for the Kickapoo Creek watershed using their existing Texas Stream Team program. The program will help train community members, students, educators, and all interested parties to conduct supplemental water quality monitoring around the watershed.

#### *Healthy Lawns*

The Healthy Lawns and Healthy Waters Program aims to improve and protect surface water quality by enhancing awareness and knowledge of best management practices for residential landscapes. This program would be beneficial in the more urbanized part of the watershed, the City of Brownsboro, and can teach homeowners how to care for their lawns appropriately to reduce the risk of NPS pollution entering Kickapoo Creek.

#### *Urban Riparian and Stream Restoration Workshop*

Stream restoration projects demonstrating sites were discussed during the stakeholder meetings. The Kickapoo Creek Watershed Coordinator can coordinate with the Texas Water Resources Institute to deliver and host the Urban Riparian and Stream Restoration Workshop in the watershed. The program discussed natural vs traditional restoration and the unique stressors faced by urban streams.

#### *Feral Hog Management Workshop*

The Watershed Coordinator will coordinate with AgriLife Extension personnel to deliver periodic workshops focusing on feral hog management. This workshop will educate landowners on the negative impacts of feral hogs, effective control methods, and resources to help control these pests. Workshop frequency will be approximately every 3-5 years unless there are significant changes in available means and methods to control feral hogs.

#### *Lone Star Healthy Steams Workshop*

The Watershed Coordinator will coordinate with AgriLife Extension personnel to deliver the Lone Star Healthy Streams curriculum. This program is focused on expanding stakeholders' knowledge on how beef cattle, horse, and poultry producers can improve grazing lands and practices to reduce NPS pollution. They also offer a component of feral hog management. This statewide program promotes the adoption of BMPs that have been proven to effectively reduce bacterial contamination of streams. This program provides educational support for the development of CPs by illustrating the benefits of many practices available for inclusion in a CP to program participants. This program will likely be delivered in the watershed once every 5 years or as needed.

#### *OSSF Operation and Maintenance Workshop*

Once OSSFs in the watershed and their owners have been identified, OSSF rules, regulations, operation, and maintenance training will be delivered in the watershed. This training will consist of education and outreach practices to promote the proper management of existing OSSFs and to garner support for efforts to further identify and address failing OSSFs through inspections and remedial actions. AgriLife Extension provides the needed expertise to deliver this training. Additionally, an online training module that provides an overview of septic systems, how they operate, and what maintenance is required to sustain proper functionality and extend system life will be made available to anyone interested through the partnership website.

#### *Texas Well Owners Network Training*

Private water wells provide a source of water to many Texas residents. The Texas Well Owners Network Program provides needed education and outreach that focuses on private drinking water wells and the impacts on human health and the environment that can be mitigated by using proper management practices. This includes a brief session on the proper operation and maintenance of OSSFs as they are commonly used in close proximity to private drinking water wells. Well screenings are conducted through this program and provide useful information to well owners that will assist them better in managing their water supplies.

#### *Riparian and Stream Ecosystem Education Program*

Healthy watersheds and good water quality go hand in hand with properly-managed riparian and stream ecosystems. Delivery of the Riparian and Stream Ecosystem Education Program will increase stakeholder awareness, understanding and knowledge about the nature and function of riparian zones. Additionally, the program will educate stakeholders on the benefits of riparian zones and the BMPs that can be implemented to protect them while minimizing NPS pollution. Through this program, riparian landowners will be connected with local technical and financial resources to improve management and promote healthy watersheds and riparian areas on their land.

#### *Wildlife Management Workshops*

Periodic wildlife management workshops are warranted to provide information on management strategies and available resources to those interested. The Watershed Coordinator will work with AgriLife Extension Wildlife Specialists and TPWD as appropriate to plan and secure funding to deliver workshops in and near the Kickapoo Creek watershed. Wildlife management workshops will be advertised through newsletters, news releases, the project website, and other avenues as appropriate.

### *Public Meetings*

Stakeholder meetings will be held periodically and be used to achieve several major goals of WPP implementation. Public meetings will provide a platform for the Watershed Coordinator and project personnel as appropriate to provide WPP implementation information including implementation progress, near-term implementation goals, and projects, information on how to sign-up or participate in active implementation programs, appropriate contact information for specific implementation programs and other information as appropriate. These meetings will also keep stakeholders engaged in the WPP process and provide a platform to discuss adaptive management in order to keep the WPP relevant to watershed and water quality needs. This will be accomplished by reviewing implementation goals and milestones during at least one public meeting annually and actively discussing how watershed needs can be better served. Feedback will be incorporated into WPP addendums as appropriate.

### *Newsletters and News Releases*

Watershed newsletters will be developed and sent directly to actively engaged stakeholders at least annually or more often if warranted. News releases will be developed and distributed as needed through the mass media outlets in the area and will be used to highlight significant happenings related to WPP implementation and to continue to raise public awareness and support for watershed protection. These means will be used to inform stakeholders of implementation programs, eligibility requirements, when and where to sign up, and what the specific program will entail. Lastly, public meetings and other WPP-related activities will be advertised through these outlets.

ANRA publishes a yearly basin highlight report which discusses surface water quality in the Angelina & Neches River Basins. Watershed updates and implementation plans can be announced in these newsletters.

Events