

Kerr County Soil & Water
Conservation District

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The Kerr Co. SWCD offers camp scholarships to conservation-oriented camps such as the Texas Youth Range Workshop or Texas Brigades Camps for youth!

Teacher scholarships are also available for the "Studies in Natural Resources" Workshop!

Please contact us for more information!

Annual Youth Range Workshop

The 57th Annual Youth Range Workshop, sponsored by the Texas Section Society for Range Management, will be held June 19-24, 2011 at the Texas Tech University campus in Junction, Texas. It is the oldest range and natural resource training opportunity for Texas 4-H and FFA youth in the state. The YRW strives to provide hands-on training as a way of reinforcing ecological principles, critical thinking, and how to make decisions.

This Workshop will provide 40 FFA and 4-H youth from across the state with an intensive 6 days of hands-on training and learning by up to sixteen volunteer range professionals in the state. Participants are exposed to actual land management practices through field trips to private ranches and a wildlife management area. These field trips emphasize goals of land ownership and management and the response of vegetation to practices conducted for livestock, wildlife, recreation, and rangeland restoration.

Applications will be accepted until 40 participants have been selected. All nominations should be registered and active 4-H or FFA members and willing to participate fully in all activities of the workshop. It is open to youth ages 14-18, and is better if the student has at least a year of high school left following the Workshop as youth who have participated can serve as leaders for training other youth in the following year.

The cost of the workshop is \$280 to be paid upon acceptance to the Workshop. This fee must be raised locally (e.g. banks, Chamber of Commerce, service clubs, Soil & Water Conservation District, etc.) Applications and information can be found at: www.rangelands.org/texas/youtheducation.htm

Sponsor This Newsletter!

The District is currently seeking sponsors for its quarterly newsletter!

Get your business advertising space in this conservation publication and support your county's SWCD!

*Contact Deanna at :
deanna.pfeffer@tx.nacdnet.net
or 830-896-4911 x 3
for more information!*

KERR CO. SWCD NEWS

Kerr County Soil & Water Conservation District

April 2011 Volume 2, Issue 2

Kerr Co. SWCD Annual Fish Sale

The Kerr County Soil and Water Conservation District is having their Annual Fish Sale April 22. Stock or replenish your tanks this spring with a variety of fish species, including: channel catfish, blue catfish, bluegill, bream, red ear sunfish, bass, crappie, fancy koi, goldfish, fathead minnows, shiner minnows, or redhorse minnows (grass carp available with state permit only).

Contact the office for assistance on deciding what species are best for you and stocking rates, or an order form. Orders should be placed by April 13th to guarantee delivery of your order.

The delivery of fish will take place at the Kerr County Ag Barn on Highway 27, time to be announced, on April 22.

Larger custom orders can be placed year-round, so please contact us if you would like to have more information on this.

Spring 2011 Fish Order Prices

Channel Catfish	\$.50 - .85	Grass Carp	\$14 *State Permit Required
Blue Catfish	\$.90	Redhorse Minnows	\$35 / 100
Bluegill	\$.45 - .85	Shiner Minnows	\$12 / lb
Largemouth Bass	\$.95	Fathead Minnows	\$12 / lb
Hybrid Bream	\$.50	Goldfish	\$12 / lb
Red Ear Sunfish	\$.55	Fancy Koi	*Price Upon Request
Crappie	\$.90		



Kerr Co. SWCD Field Day on April 8

The Kerr County SWCD hosts its first Field Day this month. Many thanks go out to all of those that have contributed to this event, including the Flagler Ranch, Natural Resource Conservation Service, Texas Parks & Wildlife Department, Texas Agrilife Extension Service, and Texas Department of Agriculture.

We are expecting a great crowd and speakers, and are having lunch cooked by the Ingram Bass Club. Look for this event to be held annually in the future!

Thanks to Our Sponsors!

Flagler Ranch
Lyssey & Eckel Feeds
Ranchers ATV & Tractor
Caffey Bar 6 Game Ranch
Stay Tuff Fencing

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Dates of Interest:

- April 8 : Kerr Co. SWCD Field Day
- April 18 : Kerr Co. Prescribed Burn Assoc. Meeting, Extension Classroom
- April 22 : SWCD Fish Sale Delivery, Ag Barn
- April 26 : Brush Mgmt Training, Kerr WMA
- May 16 : Kerr Co. Prescribed Burn Assoc. Meeting, Extension Classroom
- June 20 : Kerr Co. Prescribed Burn Assoc. Meeting, Location TBA

Water and Growth—Connected?

By : Mike Mecke, Kerrville, Retired Natural Resource Manager & Water Specialist

YES! It seems the destiny of Texas is to grow. Our ranches are being divided up, sold and resold for mostly non-agricultural purposes. Usually, every sale puts a new owner in place (often, not on the land) who is more distantly connected to the land, water, agriculture and the local community. We are exploding in population from within and from out-of-state – all together it is a very serious picture. Texas, for the most part, has limited water resources. Much of the growth is occurring along or west of I-35 and I-37, which is a region known for frequent and often severe droughts. The semi-arid Central Texas' Hill Country is where vegetation and climate from the East meets plants and climate from the West and the deserts beyond. And now it is where old, largely German or just pioneer-settled towns meet tens of thousands of new comers..... us! A high percentage of our new Hill Country newcomers came here from wetter regions or out of state. At least, that seems to be true in Kerr, Kendall and Gillespie Counties. Many of our younger or new Texans did not endure the **Drought of the Fifties**, as many older residents did. That intense seven to ten year drought (depending upon where you lived) was a character builder and a severe trial especially for Texas farmers and ranchers. Some turned to new irrigation afterwards. Many did not make it. You must read our Texas "bible" for those times written by the late, great Elmer Kelton **"The Time it Never Rained."** Elmer was at his best in that absorbing fifties novel of a family and a boy growing up on a Texas ranch at that time. As you read, he makes you feel that hot, dusty drought and the social conditions of the fifties - they endure in your mind! Growth and expanding population, home building and new businesses seem to be the main goals of most city officials, councils and the development community. That viral disease has seized even small town Texas. The Hill Country seems to be a major target area due to its beauty, climate, springs, many rivers and convenient location to major cities. We seem to be in the process of sometimes killing or destroying what we came here to enjoy and appreciate in these rugged ranches and quaint small towns with their history and peaceful rural life. The Hill Country and many areas of Texas cannot handle a lot of growth simply because the water supplies are not there to support higher populations, especially during prolonged, severe drought. Many new residents now want their homes and towns to resemble "back home" with large lush green landscapes, parks and golf courses. I have even seen Kerr ranch owners mowing and trimming rangelands as you would a golf course! Decades ago, water was not an issue in most of Texas. Now it is!

There is little or no understanding of a term that is familiar to ranchers called **"carrying capacity"**. On a ranch or in a pasture, it means the numbers of animals, including livestock, deer and exotics, which can be maintained for good production, without damaging the desired rangeland vegetation. In good years and in drought these numbers will be managed to fit the conditions. It is always limited by the production of desired forage and by rainfall. Personally, I think towns, cities, counties and regions also have a sustainable carrying capacity for people. **Water is the limiting factor usually.** There is a practical and ethical limit to how much water we can beg, borrow, buy or steal from adjoining neighbors without damaging either them or the environment. These issues are now facing Texans from Amarillo south to the Rio Grande Valley and from El Paso east to Dallas, San Antonio or Houston. Many areas of the state are now beginning to realize that our groundwater – **aquifers** – do not exist on county lines, so geographic groups of counties utilizing the same aquifers are forming Groundwater Management Areas (GMA's). In Kerr, we are in GMA-9. This is an improvement in groundwater management and protection as people then work together to arrive at plans for water pumping and to derive a view of what they want their aquifer to look like in the distant future.....maybe: the same level as now, or wells averaging 20 ft. lower, or other standards? It is causing some heartburn for people in neighboring counties or towns with differing goals or other factors for their groundwater and their area's growth. Some of us live in small towns because we like small towns. Others may want unlimited growth or financial rewards and would be happy to see a big city grow up in our Hill Country. Too much well pumping affects groundwater levels and then spring flows. This can be a disaster for our springs, creeks and rivers - especially in a long drought. All Hill Country streams arise from springs. Downstream bays and estuaries would then suffer from reduced freshwater flow and nutrients. It is all connected isn't it? Excessive growth is becoming more and more important across the state as we continue to grow in often poorly planned or not well organized developments and communities. Or when rangeland watersheds/catchments are poorly managed affecting aquifer recharge and streamflows. Manage your property properly – keep every drop where it falls! That is a great goal for all of us. **Get involved locally** in water meetings. Texas needs to have **smart growth**. Water is **NOT** like any other "commodity" as there is no substitute!

Truly, **Water is Life!**

Farm Service Agency (FSA) Update

The Livestock Forage Disaster Program (LFP) provides financial compensation to eligible producers who suffered grazing losses due to drought in 2011.

Eligible producers who obtained NAP coverage or Rainfall Insurance may receive assistance for grazing losses due to drought.

The sooner you come in, the sooner you will be paid. For additional information about LFP, including eligible livestock criteria, contact the Kerr/Bandera Counties FSA office at 830-896-4911 x 2.

2011 LFP Sign-Up Deadline—January 31, 2012

Brush Management Certification Training

Brush Management Certification Training for landowners, land managers, and brush control contractors will be held April 26 at the Kerr WMA located at 2625 FM 1340, Hunt, Texas.

Certification for brush management will be provided by the Texas Department of

Agriculture. In addition, TPWDC will offer "certification" that allows the holder to control cowbirds, which are nest predators.

The workshop will consist of classroom training in the morning and field training in the afternoon. Participants should

dress accordingly. Registration is from 7:45 to 8:15 am. The workshop will conclude at approximately 4:15 pm.

To attend this training, individuals are encouraged to pre-register by contacting the Kerr County AgriLife Extension Office (830-257-6568). A pre-

registration fee of \$25 will cover lunch, refreshments, and a training manual. The deadline for pre-registration is 5 working days before the event.

Registration after this deadline or at the door will be \$35.

Available NRCS Programs

Through the 2008 Farm Bill, NRCS has several programs that aid in the conservation of natural resources. The Environmental Quality Incentive Program (EQIP) is designed to assist agricultural producers in enhancing their land with certain management practices. These can include brush management,

livestock water systems, fencing, seeding, and other beneficial practices. The Wildlife Habitat Incentive Program (WHIP) is designed for landowners who focus more on wildlife management than agriculture and most of the practices are the same as EQIP's. The Grassland

program to improve grazing management and protect rangeland from development with either rental or easement options. The Conservation Stewardship Program (CSP) is a program that provides incentives to producers that have implemented conservation

addressing additional resource concerns.

The NRCS accepts applications for its cost-share programs year round. For additional information about any of these programs, please contact the Kerrville NRCS office at 830-896-4911 x 3.

NRCS is an Equal Opportunity provider and employer.

UGRA's Rainwater Catchment System Rebate Pilot Program Begins

The Upper Guadalupe River Authority (UGRA) recently launched a rebate program to promote water conservation and watershed stewardship through rainwater harvesting. The Rainwater Catchment System Rebate Pilot Program will be available to anyone with a Kerr

county address and will reimburse eligible applicants up to \$50 when they provide proof of purchase of rainwater catchment system equipment.

This incentive program is open to businesses or individuals who will initiate rainwater harvesting

in Kerr county. Purchases of rainwater catchment system equipment made between March 24, 2011 and September 30, 2011 are eligible for the rebate and payment by UGRA is subject to the availability of funds. For more information, contact UGRA at (830) 896-5445.



Conservation Tip: Spring Pond Management

Spring is a great time to build, improve, or manage your ponds. Improving and managing your existing pond can mean implementing several practices, some of which need to be done yearly. Fertilization of the vegetation to increase food supply for fish species is recommended from April to June. As the vegetative food supply increases, your fish production will also increase. On the opposite hand, aquatic weed control is also recommended from April to August. This is used to eliminate undesirable plant species that may take over a pond and choke out other beneficial plants and fish in some cases. It can also be used to simply reduce the amount of vegetation in general if needed. Any renovations to a pond, such as increasing the depth, creating different levels of depth, adding or reducing structures, and adding features such as piers, are best done in the spring.

With rainfall low recently in Kerr County, it's

a great time to add fish structures while ponds are naturally low. Structures should be placed between 2 to 6 feet deep. They can be made of a variety of items, such as rocks, tires, or old Christmas trees or cedar tree skeletons (make sure there is no foliage left on the skeleton prior to submerging). Tree skeletons may have to be staked down if position is important or can be left to float until saturated, when they will sink. Structures should be added at a rate of one to every 1 - 3 acres, or no more than 3 per acre.

Stocking and restocking your pond can also be done in the spring, depending on your stocking goals. If you are stocking forage species in preparation of stocking predatory species at a later date, either adult or juvenile size fish can be added. If you are stocking adult bass, then adult forage species must be stocked to assure establishment. If fingerling

bass are being stocked, forage species should be stocked in the fall before to assure establishment and food supply. The following list provides the recommended stocking rate for each species for each surface acre:

30 - 3+'' or 500 - 1 - 3'' Bluegill

15 - 3+'' or 250 - 1 - 3'' Red Ear Sunfish

500 Shiners

500 Fathead Minnow

20 - 4+'' or 50 - 1 - 4'' Largemouth Bass

Catfish are stocked according to whether they will be fed or unfed. Unfed catfish should be stocked at 100 per surface acre (along with 1000 fathead minnows), while fed catfish can be stocked up to 1000 per surface acre.

Supplemental feeding and harvesting of fish can take place year round. Above all, have fun managing and utilizing your pond!