

# The Arroyo Colorado Watershed Partnership NEWSLETTER



## Education Grants and LID Projects

Texas A&M University-Kingsville in coordination with 10 Lower Rio Grande Valley (LRGV) local partners was awarded \$3,486,400 in grants within the FY2010-2012 grant cycles.

These funds come from the Texas Commission on Environmental Quality and the U.S. Environmental Protection Agency through a federal program authorized under Section 319 of the Clean Water Act.

These projects work to ensure that low impact development (LID) measures are put into practice in cities within the LRGV and the Arroyo Colorado Watershed. These projects will serve to promote environmental stewardship while educating visitors about LID.

Education of visitors, stakeholders and both private and public representatives of the building industry will boost public interest in utilizing effective best management practices (BMP)s in current and planned regional developments and construction projects. Likewise, the educational and outreach component of these projects will be available to student visitors by way of organized presentations and/or tours to the project sites.

### In the FY10 grant cycle, the projects involved were:

*Monte Bella Park Trail, Brownsville*—The city will construct well needed park amenities to optimize recreational and ecological use of the park adjacent to the World Birding Center. LID BMPs to be implemented are: pervious cover parking lot and walking trails, a green roof and a rain water collection system.

*Amigos Del Valle Center, San Juan*—The center represents leadership opportunities for the city to take the lead on live green roof technologies. This project may also bring social, aesthetic, environmental and financial benefits to the city. In addition to the green roof, rain gardens, a rainwater harvesting system, and a bio-swale will be included.

*Valley Nature Center, Weslaco*—The center is working to replace the current 70-year-old building to give students and families safe access to environmental educational opportunities. The BMPs to be implemented are: green pervious walking trails, a pervious service road, rainwater collection system and a treatment to the wetland with native and riparian plantings.

*La Feria Recreation Center, La Feria*—The new recreation center site is in a prominent location in the city and is expected to become a focal point for the community. The LID facilities will provide great opportunities to educate local students and the public. The BMPs to be implemented are: a pervious parking lot and rain gardens.

### In the FY11 grant cycle, the projects involved were:

*Harlingen Water Works System (HWWS), Harlingen*—This project will help establish ordinances for future developers and entities to keep the “green technologies” prominent in the scope. The BMPs to be implemented are: pervious pavement and a bio-swale.

*Weslaco Public Library, Weslaco*—The city seeks to install water allocation cisterns at the public library to recycle water for use within the landscaping needs of the library. By implementing this project, the city hopes the library will serve as a model for other Weslaco buildings in terms of showing methods to improve water conservation, lower water utility cost and demands and lower nonpoint source pollutants from rooftops.

*Alton Fire Station, Alton*—The city is projected to use a pervious pavement in the fire station (heavy load traffic) as its first LID project. The city hopes the project will help to encourage other communities, architects, engineers and developers to use these types of technologies.

*Cameron County Drainage District No. 1*—The county is transforming the 45-acre tract behind its offices and maintenance building and along the main drainage ditch into an educational public park. BMPs to be implemented are: bioretention areas, wetlands for biofiltration, pervious pavement and a rainwater harvesting system.

### In the FY12 grant cycle, the projects involved were:

*Harlingen Water Works System (HWWS), Harlingen*—This project completes the project initiated in the FY11 319 grant. A traditional parking lot will be constructed with a biofilter/raingarden in lieu of a more traditional valley gutter. A rainwater harvesting system will be added to the Fleet Maintenance Building and a wetland will be constructed to catch any stormwater before it drains from the site.

*Alamo Sport Complex, Alamo*—LID practices and “green technology” components will be constructed at the Alamo Sports Complex. A pergola will be constructed with solar panels and a rainwater harvesting system will be added. A rain garden surrounding a storm drain and a pervious concept trail will also be built.

*La Joya City Hall, La Joya*—The city is planning to construct a new city hall using the unique terrain at the site location. Because the highest elevation of the site is a ledge feature, the building will be constructed on top of the ledge. The parking lot will be built on a gentle slope adjacent to the ledge using pervious material. Stormwater runoff will drain to a pond below the ledge feature.



## Licensing for Stormwater Programs

The Lower Rio Grande Valley Stormwater Task Force is endorsing a bill during this legislative session that would create a licensing program for stormwater professionals, stormwater contractors and other stakeholders conducting Texas Pollutant Discharge Elimination System (TPDES)-related activities and/or providing services associated with the TPDES stormwater program.

“Local governments, commercial and industrial facilities, construction contractors and other regulated entities are required to comply with TPDES regulations,” said Jaime Flores, Arroyo Colorado Partnership watershed coordinator. “Since TPDES is a complicated program and does not have specific standards or formal training requirements, there is a lack of knowledge, consistency and direction to enforce regulations.

“A formal licensing program, administered by the state, could support permittees and regulated entities who are dedicated to protecting waters of the state,” he said.



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The licensing program would define such stakeholders as individuals or entities qualified to plan, develop and implement a TPDES-stormwater pollution prevention plan, conduct general stormwater management activities associated with the TPDES stormwater program, including offering or providing TPDES-regulated entities and clients with professional, laboratory, training and construction services in connection with such activities.

Anyone engaged in TPDES-related stormwater activities would have to provide proof of a current license. All licensed individuals would have to have the Identification Card issued by the department on a regulated site at all times. To obtain the license, individuals would have to meet experience and education requirements, pass an exam and pay exam and annual licensure fees. The bill would allow such licensees to perform TPDES-related stormwater activities. TCEQ would oversee the licensure program under the bill.

In addition to promoting the TPDES programs, the licensing program would also promote watershed protection, nonpoint source and point source pollution and the total maximum daily load program.

“State-regulated stormwater professional licensing program and standardized comprehensive training needs the same level of importance as the protection of potable water and waste water processing has been given,” Flores said.

Licensing can standardize professional services, provide industry and academic guidance, mandate certified continuing education, ensure proper administration and implementation of water quality and pollution reduction requirements and avoid adverse impacts of non-compliance with water quality regulations, he said.

## New Watershed Grants

### *Task Force Border 2012 Signage Grant*

The Lower Rio Grande Valley-Texas Pollutant Discharge Elimination System (LRGV-TPDES) Stormwater Task Force received a \$30,000 grant from the Texas Commission on Environmental Quality’s Border Initiative to install pollution prevention and educational signage in the Arroyo Colorado watershed. Educational signage will identify native trees and plants at city parks and school gardens.

The money will also be used to pay for billboards with pollution prevention awareness messages along HWY and Business 83.

“The idea for the grant was to ride the momentum that we have created over the last several years in our outreach and education programs and continue to get the message out to more and more residents within the watershed,” said Cheryl Flores, task force grant writer.

### *SPC Demonstration Project-TAMUK/UTPA*

Texas A&M University-Kingsville (TAMUK) received a National Science Foundation grant to conduct a Solar Powered Circulator (SPC) demonstration project in the Zone of Impairment in the Port of Harlingen Turning Basin. The project would consist of taking baseline measurements of the phycolgy of the water in the demonstration area and then deploying the SPC.

TAMUK is partnering with the University of Texas-Pan American to conduct the phycological assessment of the water in the demonstration project.

The SPCs are designed to circulate large amounts of water throughout the water column by pumping the anaerobic water from the bottom of the Arroyo bringing it to the surface where it can mix with the surface water with better dissolved oxygen (DO) levels.

If the SPCs work, there would be a better distribution of DO throughout the water column. The SPCs are also useful in preventing harmful algal blooms (HAB). HABs in the Arroyo Colorado are referred to as “red” and “brown” tides because the bloom gets so thick that the color of the water changes where the bloom is present. These tides become so prolific that they deplete the DO in the water and result in fish kills anywhere the tide is present.

## Arroyo Welcomes New Assistant



Ashley H. Gregory is the newest addition to the Arroyo Colorado Watershed Partnership, serving as the Texas A&M AgriLife Extension Service assistant for the Texas Water Resources Institute. She will specifically be working on the Cost Share Education project as well as the Rio Grande Basin Initiative Efficient Urban Irriga-

tion Workshops, facilitating local activities of the projects and implementing field days and educational meetings with local commodity groups and county extension agents.

Prior to joining the institute, she was a research assistant with the AgriLife Extension Horticulture Department working on good agricultural practices and on-farm food safety plans and implementation. She also worked with various variety and chemical trials for specialty crops in the Rio Grande Valley.

Ashley earned a bachelor’s in agriculture business from Texas State University in San Marcos and is currently working on a master’s in plant and soil science at Texas A&M University-Kingsville.

