

## Arroyo Colorado Watershed Partnership meeting 12/4/2025

- ~13 stakeholders attended

Samantha presented meeting slides and led stakeholder discussions

- Briefed on Newsletter and rough overview of its contents
- Highlighted trash cleanup at Arroyo City with RGV Fishing Area and Waterways group
- Highlighted various education and outreach events with the watershed model and rainfall simulators (tabletop and large- scale versions)
  - Bentsen SP Outdoor Skills Showcase
  - Rio Reforestation event
    - » 13000 trees planted
    - » 1000 volunteers
  - Texas Butterfly Festival
  - Boo-Tanical Event - Cameron Co Master Gardener
  - Ag Awareness Day - Kids Kows & More ~ 600 kids total
    - » Rainfall demo conducted
      - Ronnie was glad to hear that we have larger rainfall simulator
        - Interested in having Samantha come and present at Kids Ag Day at Willacy Co Fair in January
        - Will be other opportunities to engage with stakeholder groups across the valley - Ronnie will reach out
  - Arbor Day Event: Forest Service, City of Edinburg, ESC 1

Rio Hondo Native Landscape Update

- NPSOT helped weed the landscape and remove invasives, aggressive plants too
  - 4 days w/ 3-6 volunteers each day
- Project Based Learning Materials
  - Curricula that integrates native landscape into 5-8 grade science classes developed
  - Texas Stream Team training provided too - will be used for science club to conduct water quality measurements in the Arroyo
- Educational Signage
  - Posts for 7 of 10 plants installed, other 3 will be located in spring to confirm plant IDs
    - Scarlet sage, Potato Tree, Goldeneye (may need to be replanted too)
  - Stormwater sign being developed and will be installed in spring as well

Stakeholder Q&A

- Are there any current wetland restoration/establishment proposals out there?
  - Some of the tree planting grants are wetland-ish
- Need for increased vegetative buffer is needed to reduce erosion and sedimentation along the Arroyo
  - Including plants for pollinators would be big benefit
    - Also a benefit for farmers - could do pollinator plantings near cropland/along the Arroyo

- NRCS/SWCDs have had program in the past - SWCDs don't currently have funds
    - NRCS is unknown
- USACE has been having meetings regarding watershed management across the Valley

#### Work Group discussions

- Highlight what is pending to be implemented as well as other updates were discussed
  - Need to start connecting with wastewater treatment facilities, colonia programs, etc. to implement wastewater infrastructure and reuse in the WPP
  - Add infographics/ dashboard tracking WPP implementation for visuals
- Habitat Restoration – restore the shoreline along the Arroyo
  - Living shoreline along the Adolph Thomae Park with continue
  - Have more wetland restoration along the Arroyo shoreline
  - There was a dredging project/ survey of Llano Grande Lake; re-look into it for a potential dredging project (POH was in support) and possibly use as another water source between Weslaco/Mercedes
  - San Benito applied for a \$750,000 grant to TPWD for the wetlands to use the San Benito wetlands as drainage areas too, but also to expand the San Benito wetlands and make it open to the public (restrooms, parking)
  - Get updates from the city of Los Fresnos and Los Fresnos ISD to assess the impact and utilization of the nature park
  - Santa Ana Wildlife Refuge is assisting with native plant restoration
  - American Forests are working to provide trainings on how to grow and maintain trees in collaboration with schools across the valley (seed initiative)
    - » shortage of seeds leads to working with private lands owners; their training does not provide CEU's though collaboration opportunities with the Valley Nature Center or Master Gardeners may lead to CEUs provided
    - » Also work with other stakeholders to develop curricula for schools
  - Expand green infrastructure; can help address flooding and reduce heat island effect (look into connecting green infrastructure to region 15 flood plan)
- Agriculture
  - Cotton has decreased significantly (59,000 acres planted this year)
  - Cotton has been converted to sesame or pasture, though urbanization continues to decrease farmland as well; input costs continue to remain high
  - Farmers are being paid not to farm (preventive planning), though results in soil being bare (resource concerns arise)
  - Opportunity to educate RMA/crop insurance/appraisal districts/tax assessors on the importance of conservation agriculture and crop residues
    - » Requires farmers to keep the land clean (no residues)
    - » Train them on why residues are good (organic matter, prevent soil erosion)
  - Possibly consider deep soil testing to analyze nutrients at depths beyond 6 inches (especially cotton with a greater rooting depth)
  - Under TSSWCB 319 program, about 60% croplands become hay land

## Website Updates

- Updates will occur by mid-January; we will continue to make other changes

## TXDOT Signage

- Need to eval locations, some are not accurate
- Still navigating TxDOT hoops

## Watershed Boundary

- Santa Rosa certainly needs attention
  - FM107 and FM 506
- Stakeholders identified other locations on the watershed map to prioritize when updating the boundary

