

## **Texas Watershed Planning Short Course**

Proper training of watershed coordinators and water professionals is needed to ensure that watershed protection efforts are adequately planned, coordinated and implemented. To provide this training, the Texas Watershed Planning Short Course was developed through a coordinated effort led by the Texas Water Resources Institute and funded by the U.S. Environmental Protection Agency through the Texas Commission on Environmental Quality.

The Texas Water Resources Institute partnered with the Texas AgriLife Extension Service, Texas AgriLife Research, Texas State Soil and Water Conservation Board, Texas Commission on Environmental Quality, U.S. Environmental Protection Agency, Texas State University-River Systems Institute and the Texas Institute for Applied Environmental Research to develop and conduct this short course.

Since 2008, four week-long Watershed Planning Short Courses have been hosted, providing training to over 160 watershed professionals on sustainable proactive approaches to managing water quality throughout the state. The Watershed Planning Short Course provides guidance on stakeholder coordination, education, and outreach; meeting the U.S. Environmental Protection Agency's nine key elements of a watershed protection plan; data collection and analysis; and the tools available for plan development.

Along with the Watershed Planning Short Courses, water professionals were invited to attend Texas Watershed Coordinator Roundtables, held bi-annually, to (1) provide a forum for establishing and maintaining dialogue between watershed coordinators, (2) facilitate interactive solutions to common watershed issues faced throughout the state, and (3) add to the fundamental knowledge conveyed at the short courses. More than 220 water professionals attended the three Texas Watershed Coordinator Roundtables held in Temple, Georgetown and Dallas. Topics of discussion included sustainable organizational structure for long-term watershed protection plan implementation; the U.S. Environmental Protection Agency's Region 6 review guide of watershed-based plans; strategies and expectations for demonstrating successful implementation and financing watershed protection plans.

Additional workshops also offered to further familiarize watershed coordinators with watershed management tools provided by the U.S. Environmental Protection Agency included Getting In Step Workshops and Key EPA Internet Tools for Watershed Management courses. The Getting In Step Workshop aims to improve the effectiveness of nonpoint source outreach in Texas and the internet tools course familiarizes users with online watershed management tools provided by the U.S. Environmental Protection Agency.

More than 100 watershed professionals participated in four Getting In Step Workshops offered in Houston, Austin, Dallas and Georgetown. Nearly 40 watershed professionals participated in the two Key EPA Internet Tools for Watershed Management courses offered in San Marcos and Dallas. Also, the Texas Water Resources Institute coordinated with Wildland Hydrology to provide an Applied Fluvial Geomorphology Short Course with 40 water resource professionals participating to better understand the fundamentals and general principles of river behavior.

To assist watershed professionals in searching for funding programs, the Texas Water Resources Institute worked with the Environmental Finance Center at Boise State University to update the Directory of Watershed Resources to include Texas-specific funding programs. The Environmental Finance Center Network is an EPA-sponsored, university-based program providing financial outreach services. The Directory of Watershed Resources is an on-line, searchable database for watershed restoration funding. The database includes information on federal, state, private, and other funding sources and assistance and allows Texas users to query information in a variety of ways including by agency sponsor or keyword, or by a detailed search.

In total, the combined courses, workshops and meetings have reached out to more than 350 watershed coordinators and water professionals and will continue to do so by hosting bi-annual Watershed Coordinator Roundtable meetings and training opportunities.