The Caldwell County Feral Hog Task Force
Development and Implementation of a Feral Hog Action Plan

Texas Watershed Coordinator Roundtable
Waco, Texas
July 31, 2014
Caldwell County Statistics

- Located in Central Texas
- 38,066 total population
- Land area = 547 miles²
- Land in farms = 476 miles²
- Primary watershed is Plum Creek
- Suitable feral hog habitat = 518 miles²
- Preliminary feral hog population estimate range per statewide values¹
  - Average Density = 6,552 (12.65/mi²)
  - High Density = 8,495 (16.4/mi²)

¹ Average and high density population estimate per "Feral Hog Population Growth, Density and Harvest in Texas, 2012"
The Plum Creek Watershed

- 397 square mile drainage
- Tributary to the San Marcos River
- Plum Creek was placed on the 2004 Texas 303(d) list for exceeding the primary contact recreation water quality standard for bacteria (*E. coli* < 126 cfu). To date, all 3 segments remain impaired.
- Plum Creek Watershed Partnership *established* 2006
- Plum Creek Watershed Protection Plan *published* 2008
- Feral hogs identified as a *significant source* for bacteria, sediment and nutrient loading in watershed
- 2012 TCEQ Integrated Report concerns: DO, Habitat, Nitrate, Orthophosphorus, Total P.
Watershed Protection and Adaptive Management

2012 Update to Plum Creek Watershed Protection Plan

DEVELOPED BY
THE PLUM CREEK WATERSHED PARTNERSHIP

May 2012

www.plumcreek.tamu.edu
Adaptive Management...
Hays and Caldwell County programs facilitated by Plum Creek Watershed Partnership

Program conducted October 1, 2012 through December 31, 2012

$2 per tail bounty instituted (receipt from Certified Holding Facility also accepted)

Over $1,000 in prizes donated

Hays County results:
- 110 feral hogs harvested
- 57 individuals educated (3 workshops)

Caldwell County results:
- 1,025 feral hogs harvested
- 68 individuals educated (2 workshops)

$5,000 Grant Awarded
Resolution 16-2013 established 5-year support from Caldwell County

8 Member Leadership Committee established
- Landowners
- County representatives
- TPWD and Plum Creek Watershed Partnership

Manage $5,000 Hog Out Grant
- Purchased wireless trap w/ 1 year service agreement
- Purchase 9 game cameras

Developed the Caldwell-Hays Feral Hog Action Plan

CHAMP Grant Proposal and Establishment of Business and Landowner Cooperatives
25 Letters of Support

$30,000 requested from TDA

$55,163 in matching funds

- County/Volunteer In-Kind - $14,444
- Caldwell County - $10K
- Hays County - $10K
- SH130 - $5K
- Caldwell County Farm Bureau - $3.5K
- Plum Creek Conservation District - $1K
- Guadalupe-Blanco River Authority - $1K
- Hays County Farm Bureau - $500
- Wireless Traps - $429
- Goin and Associates - $740
- Wildlife Capture Services - $200
- Landowner Participation Contributions $8,350
The Texas Department of Agriculture is proud to continue our partnership with Texas counties in the ongoing struggle against feral hogs. I am pleased to announce Caldwell County has been selected to receive a grant in the amount of $30,000 for the County Hog Abatement Matching Program Grant (CHAMP).

As feral hogs continue their overwhelming growth in Texas, I am proud to partner with those officials and landowners at the most local level — where the impacts and solutions are most apparent. That’s why over the past few years, I have set aside a portion of existing state funding for local initiatives through the Hog Out County Grant program. And now we’re complementing that with CHAMP to encourage regional efforts, because feral hogs don’t stop at county lines.

These programs will strengthen the state’s feral hog abatement initiatives by allowing local officials to determine and implement the best abatement activities for their region and to implement these activities in a coordinated and concentrated manner with other regions of the state.

I appreciate your participation in this effort, and congratulate Hays County as well on this well-deserved grant to help further control the feral hog population in your area. Please contact Karen Reichel, grants coordinator, with any questions at (512) 556-2450 or Karen.Reichel@TexasAgriculture.gov.

Sincerely yours,

Todd Staples

TS/MJ/mj

cc: The Honorable Burt Cobb
CHAMP Grant Summary

- Implementation of the Caldwell / Hays Feral Hog Action Plan (Year 1)
- Administered by the Caldwell County Feral Hog Task Force (CCFHTF)
  - CCFHTF Leadership Committee (includes an appointed representative for Hays County)
- $85,000 in total funding ($55,000 in local funding)
- Landowner cooperative programs
  - Bounty program
  - Aerial Control
  - Professional Hunting/Trapping Services
  - Smart Traps
  - Drop Net
CHAMP Grant Summary cont

Key Aspects

- High Intensity / Short Duration
- Population *and* Damage Reduction

Project Goals

- Reduce feral hog population in Caldwell and Hays County by 5,835 individuals within 1 year
- Quantify and reduce short-term and long-term economic impact of feral swine in Caldwell and Hays County
- Encourage and enhance landowner participation in feral hog management through cooperative and incentive programs
- Information transfer to stakeholders in the Plum Creek Watershed and surrounding areas
- Develop sustainable funding structure for continuation of programs
CHAMP Highlights through June 2014

- Programs Implemented October 2013 and will run through August 31, 2014
  - $5 Bounty Program
    - Over 150 approved participants
    - 50 landowner surveys completed
    - 281 submissions (average 11.6 tails and/or receipts)
    - 3,265 total hogs verified 9/1/13 through 6/30/14
  - Aerial Control
    - Contract with private company
    - Texas Wildlife Services / Voluntary Reporting
    - 573 feral hogs removed
  - Contracted Professional Hunting / Trapping
    - 4 months of service on over 2,000 acres
    - 259 feral hogs removed
  - Smart Traps / Voluntary Reporting
    - 506 feral hogs removed

“Hog Hunters Appreciation Brunch, Raffle and Awards”

“Log Your Hogs”

2 Feral Hog Workshops

August 2014 Jackpot Competition
CHAMP in Pictures
Caldwell/Hays County Feral Hog Action Plan
Results through June 30, 2014

Caldwell - Hays Reported Feral Hog Harvest
Sept. 1, 2013 through June 30, 2014

Reporting Method

- **Bounty Program = 3265**
- **Aerial Control = 573**
- **Voluntary Reporting = 505**
- **Professional Trapping = 259**
Caldwell/Hays County Feral Hog Action Plan Results through June 30, 2014

Caldwell - Hays Reported Feral Hog Harvest
Sept. 1, 2013 through June 30, 2014

1 Year Goal = 5,835
Total 9/1/13 through 6/30/14 = 4,602

Program Goal
Total Harvest Reported

Caldwell County FERAL HOG TASK FORCE
Caldwell County Feral Hog Population Reduction Based on 70% Reporting Rate through CHAMP Programs

Caldwell County Harvest Rate Requirements Based on High Density Feral Hog Population\(^1\) (16.4 Hogs / Mile\(^2\))

\(^1\)Highest population density estimate used for "Feral Hog Population Growth, Density and Harvest in Texas, 2012"
Next Steps

- **September Landowner Interviews**
  - Work with Texas A&M AgriLife Extension to design landowner survey
  - One-on-one with Leadership Committee Members
  - Harvest Reporting Rates through CHAMP
  - Property Damage Estimates
  - Baseline determination and trend analysis
  - Suggestions for moving forward

- Geographic and Temporal Analysis for Reported Feral Hog Harvest

- Final Report to TDA
Understanding the demographic makeup of local communities is critical to designing a feral hog management plan that will achieve stakeholder goals.
Early Takeaways

- **Effective Bounty Program Components**
  - Inclusive program, quality controls and high participation
  - Cooperative effort among landowners and hunters/trappers
  - More properties under feral hog management
  - Enhanced communication with stakeholders
    - Building large contact database
    - Educational opportunities
    - Media popularity leading to increased outreach and awareness

- **Smart Traps** must be used strategically

- Drop nets are not user friendly for inexperienced landowners
Early Takeaways cont.

- Creative programs to revitalize cooperators are important!
  - Events and Awards

- Total Cost per reported feral hog harvested September 1, 2013 through June 30, 2014 is $8.98 for all programs
  - Aerial Control and Professional Trapping are expensive but important tools
  - Volunteers are critical to keeping costs low and community engagement high
Early Takeaways cont.

- Investing in county-based programs should be viewed as one of the most effective ways to control feral hog populations throughout Texas as a whole
  - Local resources
  - Local solutions
  - Community involvement...Crafting the message
  - Grassroots organizing for sustainable management

...Just look at Caldwell County
Thanks!

Nick Dornak,
Plum Creek Watershed Coordinator

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