JANUARY 2014

Conservation Matters

THE TEXAS LAND, WATER AND WILDLIFE CONNECTION

Mills Scholarship applications due Jan. 31

The Texas Water Resources Institute (TWRI) is accepting applications for the 2014–2015 TWRI Mills Scholarship Program. TWRI anticipates funding three students up to $5,000 each for the 2014–2015 academic year. Applications are due by **Jan. 31**.

TWRI administers the competitive scholarship program, which is open to graduate students in water-related studies at Texas A&M University, Texas A&M University-Galveston and Texas A&M University-Qatar. This program is funded through the W.G. Mills Memorial Endowment. Since 2001, TWRI has funded scholarships for 151 students.

View the application guide or contact **Danielle Kalisek** at dmkalisek@tamu.edu for more information.

Deadline extended for Southwest Stream Restoration Conference submissions

The Southwest Stream Restoration Conference is set for **May 28–30**, at the Hyatt Regency Riverwalk in San Antonio. The conference theme is “Streams in a Dynamic World: Managing Today for Resiliency Tomorrow,” and the event will include presentations, panel discussions, exhibits and professional networking focused on ecosystem restoration, according to organizers.

Practitioners, managers, scientists and regulators are encouraged to attend. The deadline for abstract, poster and workshop proposal submissions has been extended to **Jan. 31**. Sponsorship/exhibitor opportunities are also available.

Registration is $425 for participants, $225 for guests and $125 students. For more information, visit southweststream.org, and follow the conference on Facebook. The Texas Water Resources Institute is a presenting partner of the conference.

RFP: National Competitive Grant Program

The Texas Water Resources Institute (TWRI) announces the Request for Proposals (RFP) for the FY 2014 National Competitive Grant Program by the U.S. Geological Survey in cooperation with the National Institutes for Water Resources (NIWR).

Proposals must be filed online at niwr.net by 3 p.m. CST on **Feb. 20**. The proposals will then be approved for submission to the National Competitive Grants Program by TWRI by **March 6**.

Proposals are requested on the topics of improving and enhancing the nation's water supply, including evaluation of innovative approaches to water treatment, infrastructure design, retrofitting, maintenance, management and replacement; evaluation of the dynamics of extreme hydrological events and associated costs; development of methods fo

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estimation of the physical and economic supply of water; alternative approaches and governance mechanisms for integrated management of groundwater and surface waters; and the evaluation and assessment of conservation practices. Proposals are sought in not only the physical dimensions of supply, but also the role of economics and institutions in water supply and in coping with extreme hydrologic conditions. Further information on these priority research issues is in the RFP.

Proposals may be for projects of 1 to 3 years in duration (discrete 12-month budget periods required) and may request up to $250,000 in federal funds. Proposals require a 1:1 match, thus successful applicants must match each dollar of the federal grant with one dollar from nonfederal sources. Federal funds may not be used to pay for indirect costs, but matching funds can be used for indirect costs. To fulfill part of the matching requirement, the applicant's negotiated indirect cost rate may be applied to both federal and non-federal direct costs. The indirect cost rate may not be applied to tuition and equipment costs.

More information is available at twri.tamu.edu/usgs-104g, and a copy of the RFP is also available at niwr.net/public/get_RFP/?type=104G. Additional information about proposal content, format, review process and registration with the NIWR system is available in the RFP.

UT hosting workshop on water projects in the age of SWIFT Feb. 21

The University of Texas School of Law is hosting a workshop, Water Conservation and Reuse Projects in the Age of SWIFT: New Funds and New Priorities, **Feb. 21** from 10 a.m. to 3 p.m.at the University of Texas at Austin.

The first workshop panel discussion will cover challenges and opportunities for funding conservation and reuse projects through the State Water Implementation Fund for Texas (SWIFT), and **Dr. Michael Webber**, UT Energy Institute deputy director, will deliver a lunch keynote. A second panel will discuss the potential for conservation strategies to meet Texas' water demand. **Dr. Kevin Wagner**, Texas Water Resources Institute associate director, will be speaking on the second panel.

Lunch will be provided. For more information, see www.utexas.edu/law/centers/energy/events, and to RSVP, contact **Gena Dawson** at gdawson@law.utexas.edu or 512.475.9328.

Quail Decline research awards announced

Texas A&M AgriLife is wasting no time in putting legislatively mandated dollars to work to find the cause of the widespread loss of wild quail across Texas, officials said.

"Quail research awards have been made and instructions given to the investigators," said **Dr. Jim Cathey**, Texas A&M AgriLife Extension Service wildlife specialist and project leader for the Reversing the Quail Decline Initiative. "Applied research proposals were submitted on **Nov. 11**, and award notifications made **Dec. 2**. Work on funded projects will be starting soon."

The $2 million initiative over two years includes dedicated research efforts as well as targeted education for landowners. Cathey serves as the initiative lead and works closely with **Dr. Dale Rollins**, the statewide coordinator for all efforts related to addressing quail decline in Texas. Of the 13 projects funded, those involved represent elements of The Texas A&M University System, as well as the University of North Texas, Texas Tech University and the Rolling Plains Quail Research Ranch.

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The funded projects include work on fire ant control; a statewide Geographic Information Systems quail decline landscape model; work on aflatoxins relating to chronic low-level exposure, development of an easy-to-use aflatoxin detection method and control of aflatoxins; parasite treatments; “soft-release” of wild quail into new habitat; feral hog ramifications; quail genomics; insecticide impacts; and measuring the success of translocating bobwhites and scaled quail into their former ranges.

Read the full AgriLife TODAY article for more information.

New report from Texas Comptroller analyzes drought economic impacts

Texas Comptroller **Susan Combs** has released a report examining the effects of the water challenges facing the state and offering recommendations to the Legislature. *Texas Water Report: Going Deeper for the Solution*, which revisits the effects of recent drought conditions, examines research-driven approaches for augmenting Texas’ water supply and proposes practical answers for the state’s growing thirst, according to the comptroller.

“Texas has been prone to cycles of drought for centuries, and there is no reason to expect that basic pattern to change,” Combs said. “Yet our state has changed, and its booming population and economy are creating an increasingly unquenchable demand for water.”

The report, which can be found at www.window.state.tx.us/specialrpt/water, also explains the $2 billion in new funding for water projects approved **Nov. 5** by voters in a constitutional amendment. Combs said Texans’ approval of Proposition 6 is a positive step toward assuring our water supplies, but additional innovative strategies are needed.

“We need a breakthrough in this field, and some of our state funding should be used for innovative technologies which increase conservation,” she said.

In the report, Combs recommends that the Texas Legislature establish a prize framework to reward those who develop proven new, cheap sources of drinking water. The report concludes that in order to continue to support its rapidly growing population, Texas must find cost-effective supplements to its reservoirs and aquifers.

Read the comptroller’s full news release for more information. An introductory YouTube video with more facts about Texas water also accompanies the report.

TWDB accepting agricultural conservation grant applications

The Texas Water Development Board (TWDB) annually requests grant applications to fund agricultural water conservation projects. TWDB is currently soliciting applications for projects from eligible political subdivisions and state agencies.

"Agricultural irrigation is the largest water-use sector in Texas, and conserving this resource is vital," said **Doug Shaw**, TWDB's agriculture and rural Texas ombudsman. "Many regions in Texas depend on a strong agricultural economy, and TWDB offers these grants to support this important industry."

Available funding includes $1.5 million for cost share of metering equipment in groundwater conservation districts that have rules requiring metering of groundwater withdrawals and $600,000 for water-use measurement and irrigation system improvement projects.

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Applications are due by noon on **March 12** with anticipated award date in mid-May. TWDB will be hosting a webinar about the application process and grant contract management in February, with further details to be posted at twdb.state.tx.us.

For more information, contact TWDB's Agricultural Water Conservation Team at 512.936.6090 or agconservation@twdb.texas.gov. Visit the TWDB Agricultural Conservation page to learn more about the programs and to see examples of projects previously funded through the TWDB Agricultural Water Conservation Grants Program.

Water and wastewater issues short course at Texas A&M April 15–16

The Global Petroleum Research Institute (GPRI) is hosting a short course, Water and Wastewater: Issues, Challenges, Solutions, and New Technologies, at Texas A&M University **April 15–16**. The course will include daily equipment demonstrations and cover practical aspects of separations technologies, case studies, system designs, industrial/commercial applications and field trials.

The registration fee for the short course is $1,095 and includes an eBook manual, daily lunches, refreshments, certificates of completion and pilot plant demonstrations. For more information, see www.gpri.org or contact **Carl Vavra** at carl.vavra@pe.tamu.edu or 979.862.1617.

GPRI is the managing partner of a cooperative effort to conduct critical research in the development of petroleum technology and is part of the Harold Vance Department of Petroleum Engineering at Texas A&M.

Texas A&M AgriLife salt cedar control team earns Vice Chancellor's Award

The Salt Cedar Biological Control Team has been honored with the Texas A&M AgriLife Vice Chancellor's Award in Excellence. The award was presented **Jan. 9** during the Texas A&M AgriLife Extension Service Centennial Conference in College Station. The Vice Chancellor's Awards in Excellence were established in 1980 to recognize the commitment and outstanding contributions of Texas A&M AgriLife faculty and staff throughout Texas and provide an opportunity to celebrate the achievements of those honored.

Team members recognized were **Dr. Jerry Michels**, Texas A&M AgriLife Research entomologist, and his research assistant, **Erin Jones**; **Dr. Allen Knutson**, AgriLife Research entomologist; and **Dr. Mark Muegge**, AgriLife Extension entomologist.

The high water-use rate and extensive stands of salt cedar, an estimated 450,000 acres in Texas, are of critical concern to agricultural operations and municipalities in West Texas. This team developed, implemented and evaluated a sustainable biological control strategy for salt cedar that will benefit Texas for years to come, the nomination stated.

The team established populations of the introduced salt cedar leaf beetle in all of the major watersheds of West Texas and provided technical assistance and education to landowners and managers on using biological control to the invasive species. Following a 10-year effort, the leaf beetles are now well established in all of those watersheds, according to the nomination.

Read the full AgriLife TODAY article for more information.

Invasive Plant and Pest Conference coming to Port Aransas Feb. 26–28

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Water and land management professionals, researchers and students are invited to the Texas Invasive Plant and Pest Conference **Feb. 26–28** at the University of Texas at Austin Marine Science Institute in Port Aransas. The conference is co-hosted by the Texas Invasive Plant and Pest Council, the Marine Science Institute and the Institute for the Study of Invasive Species.

According to organizers, the conference will include keynotes, concurrent sessions, posters and symposia designed to serve scientists, land managers, state and federal agencies, local governments and other professionals with an interest in Texas' invasive species. It will include plenary sessions featuring recognized speakers; concurrent sessions addressing coordination, prevention, early detection, management and research; more than $6,000 in student awards and travel grants; trade exhibits and poster sessions; a half day of field trips and workshops; and an awards banquet.

Continuing education credits are also available at the conference, including credits from Texas Department of Agriculture Pesticide Applicators License, Society of American Foresters Certified Forester, ISA Certified Arborist, Texas Nursery and Landscape Association Certified Landscape Professional.

Participants can register on or before **Feb. 11** to receive an early registration discount ($150 regular, $50 student). Registration increases on **Feb. 12** to $175 regular, $60 student.

For more information, see texasinvasives.org/professionals/conference.php.

New TWRI and IRNR publications

Groundwater Nitrogen Source Identification and Remediation in the Texas High Plains and Rolling Plains Regions, **P. Delaune, B. Scanlon, R. Reedy, R. Schwartz, L. Baumhardt, L. Gregory**, TR-451, 2013.

Natural Resources Training Courses

Texas Riparian & Stream Ecosystem Workshop – Lavaca River Basin	Feb. 25
Introduction to ArcGIS 10	March 25–26
Introduction to ArcGIS 10	May 13–14
Introduction to ArcGIS 10	July 29–30