



NEWS

GUADALUPE-BLANCO RIVER AUTHORITY
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Elementary Students Join Plum Creek Water Monitoring Effort

Students from six elementary schools in the Plum Creek Watershed are playing an active role this year in an innovative water monitoring program

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FOR IMMEDIATE RELEASE

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SEGUIN -

In October 2006, Guadalupe-Blanco River Authority (GBRA) Education Coordinator Cinde Thomas-Jimenez met with local curriculum directors and principals to propose that watershed area students participate in the Plum Creek water quality monitoring effort for the 2006-2007 school year.

After receiving enthusiastic approval from the administrators, Thomas-Jimenez then met with and trained the participating science teachers. She also spent over a week in classrooms using a tabletop watershed model to illustrate and discuss watersheds, nonpoint source pollution and the Plum Creek project directly with the students. Water monitoring test kits, all needed supplies, watershed map posters and student workbooks were donated to the schools by GBRA.

A total of 760 fourth and fifth grade students, as well as 18 teachers, have already conducted the first of three rounds of water quality testing. Students are using the Texas Watch model for their monitoring and are testing water from Plum Creek for Temperature, Dissolved Oxygen, pH, Turbidity, Nitrates and Phosphates. Additional testing rounds will be conducted in February and May 2007.

The Plum Creek watershed effort is in the early stages of developing a Watershed Protection Plan

The watershed, which is 52 miles long, covers 388 square miles and includes portions of the City of Buda, and the Cities of Kyle, Lockhart and Luling. It is the focus of a unique Multi-Agency Partnership that uses a proactive approach to encourage stakeholders to work together to protect and improve the water quality of impaired watersheds.

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The partnership/protection plan is being facilitated by the Texas Cooperative Extension (TCE) and funded by the Texas State Soil and Water Conservation Board (TSSWCB) through a grant from the Environmental Protection Agency (EPA). The EPA, TSSWCB, and the Texas Commission on Environmental Quality (TCEQ) selected Plum Creek as a pilot watershed protection planning effort in Texas.

Land uses in the Plum Creek watershed vary widely. Rapid urban growth in the northern region can contribute to nonpoint source pollution. In addition, there are a number of wastewater treatment plants that use Plum Creek and its tributaries as their discharge point. In the middle to southern regions, agricultural activities, along with petroleum and gas production activities, may also be causes of nonpoint source pollution.

GBRA already conducts ongoing water quality monitoring funded by TCEQ's Clean Rivers Program. Current results indicate concerns about the bacterial and nutrient levels in Plum Creek. The combined uses of the land, and the effects of these uses on water quality in Plum Creek, make it an excellent candidate for a watershed-wide education effort.

The Texas Cooperative Extension has agreed to host a site on the Plum Creek Watershed Partnership website (<http://pcwp.tamu.edu/index.html>) for students to post their results. The website will also contain a discussion forum where the students can post questions and discussion topics to interact with the stakeholders, scientists, and agencies involved. Ideally, students will review and discuss their results with students in other parts of the watershed.

This project also provides opportunities for students to present their findings in a public setting, such as a PTA, school board or city council meeting, a County Commissioners Court session, or even to the GBRA Board of Directors.

Later this spring, GBRA will have a model of the Guadalupe River Basin available to set up at schools or public meetings to promote an understanding of nonpoint source pollution. Students participating in this project could assist with presenting the model and promote discussion about nonpoint source pollution in the watershed where they live and go to school.

The Partner Schools include Negley Elementary (Hays CISD- cooperating teacher Meagan Maddux); Tobias Elementary (Hays CISD, cooperating teacher Tammy Garza); Hemphill Elementary (Hays CISD cooperating teacher Julie Parsons); Science Hall Elementary (Hays CISD cooperating teacher Elaine Hanson); Plum Creek Elementary (Lockhart cooperating teacher Jennifer Lickert); and Luling Shanklin Elementary (Luling CISD, cooperating teacher Cris Chonka).

For more information about the project, please contact one of the Partner Agencies:

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