

Kerr County Soil & Water
Conservation District

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Kerrville, Texas 78028
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E-mail: kerrcountyswcd@tx.nacdnet.org
www.kerrcountyswcd.com



<https://www.facebook.com/kerrcoswcd>

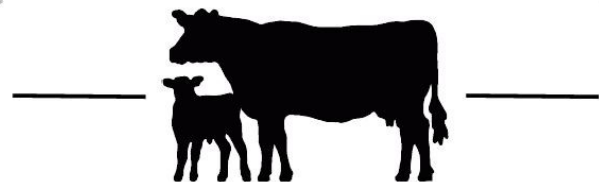


Meet Sid! I've hidden him inside this
Newsletter. The first person to find him and
post it on the Kerr County SWCD's
Facebook page gets a prize!

~Missie Dreiss, Kerr County SWCD District Technician

Save The Date!

COW POKES & LAND FOLKS



TEXAS A&M
AGRI LIFE
EXTENSION

Conference

Friday, May 5, 2023 8:00am - 4:00pm

Hill Country Youth Event Center ~ 3785 Hwy. 27 Kerrville, TX 78028

\$30.00 Early Bird Special ~ \$45.00 At The Gate

5 CEU's (Pesticide Lic.)

Please make checks payable to Kerr County SWCD and Mail to: 2104 Memorial Blvd. Ste. 103, Kerrville, TX 78028

KERR CO. SWCD NEWS

Kerr County Soil & Water Conservation District January 2023 Volume 13, Issue 1

Happy New Year!



Natural Resources Conservation Service • Texas

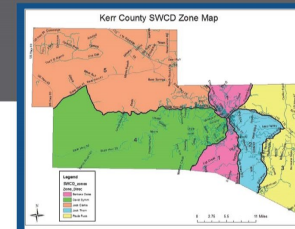
Helping People Help the Land

Cole Jacoby, Resource Team Leader
2104 MEMORIAL BLVD. STE 103
KERRVILLE, TEXAS 78028
830.896.4911 EXT 3
WWW.TX.NRCS.USDA.GOV

Kerr County 2022 Report

Conservation Implementation - A snapshot of success

Practice Name	Applied Amount
Brush Management (314) (Ac)	3,371
Fence (382) (Ft)	16,513
Livestock Pipeline (516) (Ft)	5,941
Prescribed Grazing (528) (Ac)	33,857
Pumping Plant (533) (No)	2
Range Planting (550) (Ac)	202
Upland Wildlife Habitat Management (645) (Ac)	23,148
Water Well (642) (No)	2
Watering Facility (614) (No)	8



Through conservation planning assistance in Fiscal Year 2022, the below conservation outcomes were accomplished in Kerr County:

Conservation plans were written on **32,810** acres of agriculture land.

Conservation practices were applied on **116,292** acres of grazing land.

Conservation practices were applied on **48,662** acres of land actively managed for wildlife habitat.

Conservation practices were applied on **75,581** acres to improve overall water quality.

Conservation practices applied on **92,409** acres to improve overall environmental quality.

Fiscal Year 2022 Farm Bill Program Investments

NRCS Program	Dollars **	Number of Contracts
Environmental Quality Incentives Program (EQIP)	\$ 270,183	14
Conservation Stewardship Program (CSP)	\$ 200,000	1

**Obligated

District Directors:

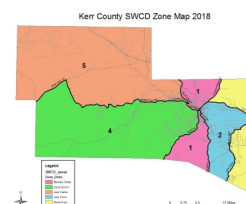
- Zone 1
Barbara Oates
- Zone 2
Jack Thorn, Vice-Chairman
- Zone 3
Paula Russ, Secretary
- Zone 4
David Symm
- Zone 5
Jack Clarke, III, Chairman

District Clerk

Denise Griffin

District Technician

Missie Dreiss



Natural Resources Conservation Service (NRCS)

Resource Team Leader

Cole Jacoby

Programs Assistant (Farm Bill)

Katy Meador

Soil Conservationists

Nathan Orsack

Preston Stull

Rangeland Specialist

Christian Hopkins

OFFICE HOURS:

NRCS 8:00-4:30 Mon-Fri

SWCD 9:00-3:00 Tues-Thurs

USDA Natural Resources Conservation Service | 2104 Memorial Blvd. Kerrville, Texas 78028 | 830.896.4911 | www.tx.nrcs.usda.gov

USDA is an equal opportunity provider, employer, and lender.

Spring Planting Season

Is Just Around The Corner

Kerr SWCD can take care of your seed needs! From custom grass mixes, wildlife/deer/dove mixes, tank dam mixes or specific species seed, we can order exactly what your needs call for! Call the office to discuss what you are looking for and get your seed in time for the Spring planting season! (830) 896-4911x3

Tips To Planting Seed

Always plant on fresh disturbed soil

Establish a firm seedbed

Don't plant too deep

Develop a root system

One of the most common mistakes when planting is not planting the seed into freshly disturbed soil. There have been several field plantings that farmers would begin planting and be rained out before finishing. Some would go back into the field and continue planting without disturbing the un-sown part of the field. The part of the field that was not disturbed after the rain would never have the stand that the freshly disturbed seedbed would have. The only exception to this is when the seed is planted with a no-till grass drill. The second problem that occurs when planting small seed is having a firm seedbed. When most fields are

plowed, air pockets are placed in the soil by the plow. During limited rainfall times, these pockets can allow the seed to germinate and then die when the roots grow into air pockets. With adequate moisture, the "raindrop splash" effect will firm the seedbed where there aren't any air pockets. Through years of planting it has been found that a seedbed can never be too firm. In fact, the firmer the seedbed, the better the stand. Some people will firm the seedbed by rolling it before planting the seed. Others will plant the seed then roll the seedbed. Both ways work in establishing a crop. We feel that rolling the seedbed before planting is more important than after and rolling before and after is best. The third problem in planting is the depth in which the seed is planted. The old timers had a saying that seven times the diameter of the seed is the maximum depth that any seed should be planted. The state of Oklahoma did a study, and found out that up to fifty percent of the wheat seed planted in Oklahoma never came up because it was planted too deep. Considering the size of wheat in comparison to grass and flower seed makes depth of planting critical to success. If a grass seeder with disk openers is used, then make sure that each disk has a depth band on it to insure proper depth placement. If the seed is broadcasted, firming the seedbed by rolling it will insure that the seed is not placed too deep. The fourth problem in planting seed is the amount of time that the stand needs to establish itself. The Government recommends one full growing season before grazing. This is a wise management practice. Perennials, unlike annuals, need to establish a root system before being grazed. Few stands, if any, have ever died during the winter of the first year if they were allowed to develop their root system. Several stands have been wiped out by grazing or haying the first season due to lack of root development.

Kerr County Blend	<i>Green Sprangle top</i>
\$45 per bag	<i>Plains Bristlegrass</i>
(5lbs. bag covers 1acre)	<i>Sweet Clover— Yellow Blossom</i>
<i>Little Bluestem</i>	<i>Sweet Clover—Silver River</i>
<i>Sideoates Grama</i>	<i>Burr Medic Clover</i>
<i>Switchgrass</i>	<i>Native Sunflower</i>
	<i>Foxtail Millet</i>



Kerr County SWCD Scholarship Program

Honoring Mr. Buck Menges

Deadline for applications

Thursday, March 30th

Do you have a graduating senior interested in pursuing a career in agriculture?

The Kerr County SWCD offers a **\$1,000 Scholarship** for students that reside in or attend/

attended school in Kerr County. Download the application from our website today!

www.kerrcountyswcd.com

Drought Recovery and Resilience on the Ranch

A big part of ranching in southwest Texas and the Edwards Plateau is enduring and recovering from drought. Thirteen of the past seventeen years have been below normal rainfall. The four remaining years were spent recovering from drought. The U.S. Department of Agriculture Natural Resources Conservation Service (NRCS) is working with landowners and managers to weather the storm of the current drought and assist them in being ready for the next one. Let's start by talking about the current health and condition of our soil and vegetation.

The lack of perennial grass forage production in a drought leads to a decrease in litter cover on the soil. Litter is simply the dead leaves of plants that are laying on the soil surface. This litter is fed on by insects, bacteria, fungi, earthworms, and other critters we often refer to as microorganisms or soil life. As microorganisms feed on litter, they incorporate it into the soil as organic matter. Organic matter contains secretions from microorganisms that act as binding agents to hold soil particles together and give soil structure. A soil with good structure has space between soil particles to hold water and nutrients. A soil without structure becomes compacted and resists the movement of water into and through it.

Next time you're out in the pasture, stick your pocketknife into a bare soil. Then stick it into a soil that is covered by leaf litter. Notice how much easier the knife goes into the soil that is covered? Cover equals organic matter, which equals healthy soils. Management practices such as Prescribed Grazing and Range Planting, offered by NRCS, can be implemented to increase cover.

A soil without cover is also susceptible to erosion because it is exposed to raindrop impact and lacks the organic matter to hold soil particles in place. Pay attention to the bases of bunch grasses in your pasture after a rain, if they appear to be sitting up on a pedestal this is because soil has washed out from around them. Soil that is exposed also receives negative impacts from the sun. Exposed soil can reach temperatures exceeding 140°F, at which point living plants, seeds, and microorganisms are killed.

The health of perennial grasses in pastures was very apparent after the rains that occurred in late August and early September. Pastures with ground cover and at least a few inches of grass stubble greened up much quicker and have grown more forage compared to pastures that had extensive bare ground and little to no grass

stubble. This is for two reasons: First, the ground that was covered absorbed and held more water due to higher organic matter and infiltration rates. Second, the plants themselves had more energy stored in the stems, plant base and roots.

What do your pastures look like? Is the soil covered with plant material or is the soil exposed? The areas with some standing plant material and most of the ground covered by dead, laying plant material will continue to be more drought resistant and recover quickly when rain does come. If the soil is mostly bare, with large interspaces between plants, it will take more time to recover.

Nature has a way of healing itself, and with time, these areas will recover if not heavily grazed. This process is called succession. Annual grasses and weeds will come back in these areas first. Some of these can be utilized by livestock and wildlife. Despite our negative image of weeds, these lower successional plants can establish on degraded soils, setting the stage for higher successional plants that are more palatable for livestock and wildlife. As more organic matter returns to the soil, microorganism populations will increase. Seed from surrounding sites will get dispersed in these areas by wind and animals and perennial grasses and forbs will begin to establish. This process could take years to return the land back to pre-drought conditions.

Having a plan in place to deal with these issues is the first step to ensuring a healthy system. The NRCS can assist in planning conservation management strategies that build resiliency and longevity to your current grazing systems.

There are a few options to speed up the recovery process:

• Grazing management

Crucial for any other alternatives to be successful.

Match the number and type of livestock to forage type and production. Adjust numbers according to current conditions. Give pastures adequate rest between grazing periods and use minimum grazing heights of key plants to determine when to rotate.

• Re-seeding areas to adapted plant species that meet your management goals.

Use a diverse mix of plants including perennial grasses, legumes and forbs to promote soil health.

Follow seedbed preparation recommendations from your local NRCS or Extension Service office.

Defer grazing until plants are well established; for spring planting do not graze until the first frost.

• Using a pasture renovator, subsoiler or other mechanical methods to break up surface compaction and allow rainfall to infiltrate.

Mechanical methods are a one-time temporary approach and are best followed by re-seeding. It can sometimes cause a compaction layer deeper in the soil, especially if repeated. It will also temporarily reduce organic matter, soil moisture, and soil structure.

USDA offers a suite of programs to help producers recover from losses to drought as well as build resilience to future challenges. This includes disaster assistance, loans, risk management, and conservation programs. A list of state programs and initiatives available to assist you can be found at [Texas | Natural Resources Conservation Service \(usda.gov\)](http://Texas | Natural Resources Conservation Service (usda.gov)). There may be other alternatives that you have heard of or tried. I encourage you to be creative and proactive in your approaches to restoring degraded areas. Try different methods in small areas to see what works best for your operation to achieve your goals. Keep these key soil health principles in mind as you experiment with solutions to cope with drought: Keep the soil covered; promote a diversity of plants; and, disturb the soil as little as possible.

For more information or if you would like assistance on developing or implementing practices on your land to endure or recover from drought, contact your local NRCS office or visit us online at <http://www.tx.nrcs.usda.gov>. NRCS can help with all of the items mentioned in this article, including determining carrying capacities, key plants, and grazing heights. Financial assistance is also available for implementing practices that protect our soil, water, and other natural resources. These services are available free of charge through a partnership effort between the local Soil and Water Conservation Districts and the NRCS.

Kason W. Haby

**Rangeland Management Specialist
Edwards Region Grazing Land Conservation Initiative**

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Hondo, TX 78861

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