

**BEDIAS CREEK SOIL &
WATER CONSERVATION
DISTRICT
WHO ARE WE ?**

What is a Conservation District? - A conservation district focuses on natural resource problems and solutions. There are almost 3000 conservation districts in the United States. With almost one in every county, they improved the quality of life for every American.

History and Origins: In the early 1930's, along with the greatest depression this nation ever experienced, came an equally unparallel ecological disaster known as the "Dust Bowl". The region's soil began to erode and blow away after a drought in the Great Plains. This created huge black dust storms that blotted out the sun and swallowed the countryside. Thousands of 'dust refugees' left the black fog to seek better lives. But the storms stretched across the nation. They reached south to Texas and east to New York. Dust even sifted into the White House and onto the presidents' desk. On Capitol Hill, while testifying about the erosion problems, soil scientist Hugh Hammond Bennett threw back the curtains to reveal a sky blackened by dust. Congress unanimously passed legislation declaring soil and water conservation a national policy and priority.

In 1937, President Roosevelt wrote the governors of all the States recommending legislation that would allow local landowners to form soil conservation districts. Since about three-fourths of the continental United States is privately

owned, Congress realized that only active, voluntary support from landowners would guarantee the success of conservation work on private lands.

The Bedia Creek Soil & Water Conservation District #428 was formed on March 20, 1941. Leon, Madison and the northern quarter of Grimes Counties make up the District today. The current Directors are George Delfeld, Chairman; Ernest Strack, Vice-Chairman, James Nevill, Secretary, Charlie Price and Gene Sollock. This board has been able to build on the strong foundations of the District's previous board members and continue to make it a truly Outstanding Conservation District.

The Directors of the Bedia Creek SWCD are elected for a four year term and are Volunteers. This SWCD Board works in conjunction with other government, county and city agencies. Their mission statement is:

"To promote conservation through
education and technical assistance.
Assisting land owners and land users
with conservation problems and
programs."

The Board has continued to strive for its members to gain more information and education thus having a greater ability to put into practice their mission statement.

The SWCD Board works in conjunction with other government, county and city agencies assisting the NRCS team and FSA in the Environmental Quality Incentive Program Local Work Group Meetings. They work with the County

Extension Agents and support the county hay shows as well as assist local government with information about Soil Stewardship week, making available educational handouts to local churches and schools. Bedias Creek SWCD works with and supports, through sponsor dues, the Brazos Valley Council of Governments, Deep East Texas Association, Post Oak Resource Conservation & Development, National Association Conservation Districts and the Texas State Soil & Water Conservation Board.

They regularly attend and participate in the Texas Conservation Area 4 Awards Program and in the past 10 years have had 10 winners in various categories. Since its beginning in {?} this District has had a representative in attendance at the Annual State Meeting of Texas State Soil & Water Conservation District Directors.

The District provides technical assistance to landowners, cooperators, units of government, urban residences, commercial concerns and other agencies, regardless of race, color, national origin or age by way of aerial maps, topographic maps, soils book information to list a few, as well as assistance in the field.

The Board has continued to strive for its members to gain more information and education thus having a greater ability to put into practice their mission statement. This is shown by the District initiating a tour of the Northwestern mine with which we have a cooperative agreement in reference to reclaimed land. The District provides 503 Water Quality Management Plans when needed and due to the

increase of Poultry Production in our area; to have a better understanding between the poultry producers and the contracting corporation the Bedias Creek SWCD Board requested a tour of the Sanderson Farms facilities.

By publishing a quarterly newsletter, following the standard set in 1956 with one of the first newsletters, Bedias Creek SWCD has strived to make conservation information available to landowners, land users and to the community. The District sponsors teams to participate in the Regional Wildlife Contest, Woodland Contest as well as supports the Soil Stewardship Public Speaking Contest. Increasing conservation awareness whenever possible.

There are 8 public schools within the District at which we are privileged to present informational programs concerning the Conservation Poster & Essay Contest and follow-up with award presentations for each school participating. This competition has resulted through-out the years, in several Texas Conservation Area 4 Poster and Essay winners. It has opened the doors to better conservation communication between teachers, District employees and students.

The Annual Land Judging Contest has drawn teams not only from our FFA area but several teams regularly attend from out of the District. Working closely with the NRCS and the additional help of a Soil Scientist we have been able to create an outstanding local contest to assist as a stepping stone to the Area and State competitions.

The foundation for this educational outreach was begun by the District as early as 1959.

The Clover Forage Field Day started about 1988 as a tail-gate symposium long before it became an annual event. NRCS-DC Jon Muncrief and Soil Conservation Technician James Cole assisted in developing it into a more organized educational outreach program. Director Gene Sollock was directly responsible for bringing legumes back into the area. Now it is a great tool to assist cooperators in better management practices, utilizing legumes to help get more for their investment. This program has had far reaching effects. Landowners throughout the United States as well as other countries have contacted our District Board Members with questions and requested tours.

The Bédias–Walker Districts were one the first, in our area, to begin a web site. In this day and age it is almost a must to assist Land Owners, FFA teams, Teachers, Students even Mom's and Dad's check it out to see the Contest Winners. The web site provides links to Aerial & Topographic maps, Soil Resources, Pond Manager Diagnostic Tool, Soil Testing instruction and many others. It is another way of reaching out causing educational awareness about the need of conserving our natural resources and how to begin.

The Bédias Creek SWCD encourages every landowner and landuser to become a conservationist and a faithful steward of the soil, water, plant, and wildlife resources for the benefit of all people.