



USDA-CSREES 2006 National Water Quality Conference

Water for West Texans - A New Extension Program

WEST TEXAS! What a wild, scenic area it is. And what a rugged, self-sustaining and pioneering-type of person settled West Texas! From the earliest paleo-Indians, Apaches, Comanche - to the Spanish and Mexican settlers, later, the first Anglo ranchers – all learned to know, respect and preserve the rare and precious waters or perish. West Texans never had to be taught that their water resources, whether flowing in the Pecos or Rio Grande Rivers or from a spring or lying below ground in an aquifer, were precious – this is instinctive to people living and working in arid climates and in deserts. Truly here, “**Water IS Life!**” or, “**Agua ES Vida!**”

Historically, considerable irrigation water was produced by both rivers. Increased upstream demands for irrigation and domestic uses, plus saltcedar invasion and periodic drought, has resulted in less water and poorer quality water. The balance of the irrigation is from ground water or from still flowing springs. Other historic springs in the region once produced pure irrigation waters and provided recreation for many, but now are dried up due to overuse of aquifers and poor watershed management. This program has been developed to assist residents of the region through a variety of methods including: educational exhibits and presentations, demonstrations, workshops and seminars, applied research programs, publications, media articles and through collaborative efforts with a diverse group of agencies, governmental units and non-profits. **Really, the name says it all.....Water for West Texans! But sustainability for the region is a key issue and it is a goal to assist ALL West Texans to have a permanent supply of pure water. All of our water resources have great value and are irreplaceable – even our saline ground waters now produce valuable crops, from cotton to shrimp - or can be treated and used for many purposes, including drinking water.**

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