

FY 2024 Environmental Program Work Plan

Water Conservation

Objective: Develop and implement water conservation initiatives to reduce annual household water use.

Task 1: Develop a Water Utility Customer Rebate Program:

Create financial incentive or rebate program targeting landscape modifications to:

- 1) reduce irrigated turf grass area,
- 2) eliminate existing sections of automated irrigation systems,
- 3) install xeriscape or
- 4) install rainwater harvesting devices.

Goal – Draft plan completed by January 2024. Ideally, the program would go live on 3/1/2024 before residents begin to replace turf grass lost during summer of 2023. This program will require pre and post site inspection. It's possible to request photos during the application process to meet pre-inspection requirements but to finalize incentive there needs to be a final site inspection.

COB Collaboration/Assistance – Utilities, Finance, Communications, Planning and Permitting

Key tasks – Develop program details and budget. Create application and streamline the submittal, review, approval, and reimbursement process. Create promotional materials including social media engagement and in person public outreach.

Measure of Success – Calculate annual reduction in total turf grass area. Use utility metered data to review water use before and after individual program participation.

Task 2. General Outreach and Education

Work with COB Communications to develop social media, billing mailers and website content. Coordinate and host workshops related to rainwater harvesting and turf grass management. Collaborate with the Cibolo Center for Conservation and the Boeren Chapter of the Native Plant Society to promote drought tolerant native plants within landscape designs.

Goal – Create outreach material and meet with Cibolo Center for Conservation and the Boeren Chapter of the Native Plant Society by March 1, 2024.

COB Collaboration/Assistance – Collaboration: Communications, Planning

Key Tasks – Creation of Outreach Materials

Measure of Success – Attendance at workshops, use of outreach materials, and social media engagement.

Task 3. Customer Demand Driven Outreach

Use billing data to identify high water users and the highest water consuming neighborhoods within the city limits. Direct outreach and education materials to these high annual water users and their neighborhoods.

Goal – Implementation for summer water season

COB Collaboration/Assistance – Utilities, Finance, Communications, Planning, Permitting

Key Tasks – Obtain and analyze billing data, prepare outreach materials for high water users, distribution during Summer 2024 water season.

Task 4. Water conservation during construction - Revegetation efforts.

Engineering and Mobility is in the process of revising revegetation methods in their COB Standard Specifications for Public Works Construction. These revisions will now include more drought tolerant native tall grass seed options and planting during appropriate seasons. The COB Environmental Planner has already initiated work with the Engineering and Mobility Construction Inspection team on the revised seed selections. The water conservation program will monitor projects that use approved native seed mixes to determine effectiveness at reducing irrigation needs during establishment.

Goal – Complete by the end of FY24

COB Collaboration/Assistance – Engineering and Mobility, Code Enforcement

Key Tasks – Update COB Standard Specifications

Task 5. City Council Report

Provide reports to City Council. The following topics are suggested:

- Present FY24 Water Conservation Plan
- Draft Rebate Program
- Outreach Education Material Overview
- Report on FY 24 Efforts

Urban and Community Forestry

Task 1: Tree Restoration Program: Working with Parks and Engineering, create FY24 Tree Restoration program goals for Council approval. The program will identify priority projects supported by the Tree Restoration Fund with a focus on tree planting opportunities and the care and maintenance of City trees.

Goal – Complete capital plan for Council consideration by February 2024.

COB Collaboration/Assistance – Parks, Engineering, CMO

Key Tasks – Develop capital and maintenance program for use of Tree Restoration Funds

Task 2. Riparian Habitat Restoration. In FY2024, The Tree Restoration Fund is being used to restore riparian habitat on a combined 4,600 linear feet of stream corridor within Boerne City Limits. In combination with revegetation using native riparian grasses, tree plantings along these stream segments will help stabilize the stream channel, reduce flood energy potential, and restore a riparian overstory to help reduce in-stream water temperature, increase in-stream dissolved oxygen levels, and improve aquatic life use.

- The Northrup Park Riparian Habitat Restoration Project will plant 35 trees along approximately 2,100 linear feet of Upper Cibolo Creek (UCC) disturbed during a new sanitary sewer utility installation.
- The Frederick Creek Riparian Restoration Project will plant 30 trees along approximately 2,500 linear feet of stream corridor disturbed during a sanitary sewer utility installation.

Task 3. City Council Report

Provide reports to the City Council. The following topics are suggested:

- Current and Proposed Tree Restoration Fund Projects and Pilot Oak Wilt Program
- FY 2024 – Riparian Habitat Restoration Presentation

Current Environmental Program Efforts

Urban Forestry Program

Program Development: In March of 2021, the City of Boerne hired its first Urban Forester and established the Urban and Community Forestry Program (UCFP) within the Planning and Community Development Department. The UCFP completed a full revision of the City's tree preservation and landscape ordinance that was adopted within the City of Boerne Unified Development Code effective in July 2021. Through enforcement of tree and landscape ordinances the program encourages environmentally responsible site design and works to preserve large trees, riparian habitat, and other sensitive natural features.

Tree Ordinance Highlights: Ordinance revisions removed all exemptions for protected trees, reduced the protected tree classification to 8-inches in diameter, increased preservation rates for residential and commercial projects, increased mitigation requirements for removal of protected trees and expanded the definition of the City's Tree Restoration Fund to allow for protection and restoration of riparian habitat and other sensitive environmental areas.

Tree Restoration Fund: Since the UCFP's creation, enforcement of the tree preservation ordinance has resulted in \$3.1 million in fee in lieu of mitigation payments into the Tree Restoration Fund.

Task 1: Tree Preservation: Enforce the city tree preservation ordinance with an overall objective to provide care and maintenance of trees on city-owned properties, advocate for the preservation of existing trees on residential and commercial development projects and work to engage the community on forest health issues with a specific focus on oak wilt.

Task 2. Oak Wilt Management Incentive Program: Facilitate the City's Oak Wilt Management Incentive Program which provides financial incentives to property owners for approved treatments and removals of oak wilt infected trees.

Task 3. Outreach and Education: Facilitate outreach and education efforts on tree preservation and forest health initiatives. This effort includes onsite consultation as needed with property owners and tree and landscape service providers, presentations to civic groups and local elected officials, and a formal workshop in collaboration with TAMU Forest Service and Texas A&M AgriLife to address oak wilt management strategies.

Task 4. Urban Wood Utilization Program: Expand the newly created Urban Wood Utilization Program to better utilize high value trees that are designated for removal and disposal within the city limits. Work directly with the Texas Forest Service on pilot program opportunities. Potential Texas Forest Service grant opportunities in December of 2023.

Task 5. Urban Heat Island Mitigation: The widespread devastating impacts of oak wilt throughout the city and our extraterritorial jurisdiction combined with forest canopy loss due to residential and commercial development has increased the urban heat island effect within Boerne's city limits. Using GIS tools, the UCFP has identified areas throughout the city experiencing the most significant heat island impacts. These areas are the target of tree giveaway programs utilizing non-oak species to increase tree diversity within these neighborhoods and promote overstory establishment free from oak wilt concerns.

Watershed Protection Programs

Task 1. Surface Water Quality Monitoring Program: Manage the city's surface water quality monitoring programs including compliance with the Boerne City Lake Water Quality Monitoring Quality Assurance Project Plan (QAPP). Serve as the quality assurance officer, data manager, and field supervisor for the approved QAPP.

Task 2. Clean Rivers Program: Oversee the Texas Commission on Environmental Quality (TCEQ) Clean Rivers Program monitoring within the Upper Cibolo Creek Watershed. Meet all requirements of the Clean Rivers Program QAPP.

Task 3. Contact Recreation and Aquatic Life Use Monitoring: Monitor surface water quality conditions within the Upper Cibolo Creek Watershed including Boerne City Lake to determine compliance with TCEQ and Texas Parks and Wildlife Department guidelines as it relates to safe contact recreation standards and aquatic life use criteria. Provide technical recommendations to city staff regarding implementation of management strategies that affect the quality and uses of Upper Cibolo Creek and Boerne City Lake.