

Successful first year of Texas Well Owner Network trainings

Story by Danielle Kalisek

In November, the Texas Well Owner Network (TWON) wrapped up its first full year of “Well Educated” trainings — with more than 600 participants successfully educated at 13 trainings throughout Texas.

Texas A&M AgriLife Extension Service specialists in soil and crop sciences and biological and agricultural engineering conducted the free, six-hour TWON trainings. Topics included household wells; improving and protecting water resources; groundwater resources; septic system maintenance; well maintenance and construction; water quality; and water treatment. Well owners could also bring water samples to the trainings to be analyzed for nitrate, total dissolved solids, arsenic and bacteria.

Private well owners are responsible for monitoring their own water well quality to ensure that their drinking water and all other aspects of their water system are safe. This training helps landowners better understand testing, inspection and maintenance of their wells.

Each attendee receives a TWON Well Owner’s Handbook that details information presented in the training. Those who bring in water samples receive a well-water screening analysis report and information on fixing or treating any identified well problems.

In addition to the six-hour “Well Educated” training, TWON offers voluntary private water well screening events, known as “Well Informed screenings.” A Well Informed session gives well owners the opportunity to have their well water samples screened for common contaminants including fecal coliform bacteria, nitrates and high salinity. The screening of the water sample is followed by a one-hour explanation of the screening results and water well protection practices. To date, 40 screenings have been held with more than 2,700 samples screened. As a result, participants have a better understanding of the relationships between practices in or near wells and the quality of water available for drinking and irrigation.

Though this year’s trainings wrap-up in November, the project has received new funding to continue the Well Educated and Well Informed trainings through 2016. Interested well owners can check out twon.tamu.edu often for updated training dates and locations as well as for other water well information and resources.

Funding for the TWON is through a Clean Water Act nonpoint source grant provided by the Texas State Soil and Water Conservation Board and the U.S. Environmental Protection Agency. The project is managed by the Texas Water Resources Institute. 💧



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Photo by Leslie Lee, Texas Water Resources Institute.

TWRI welcomes new staff

Joel Andrus joined the Texas Water Resources Institute (TWRI) in September 2013 as a Texas A&M AgriLife Extension Service associate. Andrus is assisting in program planning and development in water resources. He is leading TWRI’s ***Basin Approach to Address Bacterial Impairments in Basins 15, 16 and 17*** project, funded by the Texas Commission on Environmental Quality.

Through this project, TWRI will implement a new paradigm for addressing multiple bacterial impairments simultaneously within certain Texas river basins. The Colorado-Lavaca (15), Lavaca (16) and Lavaca-Guadalupe (17) basins are the focus for this effort. The project team will address four individual bacterial impairments on segments of Tres Palacios and Arenosa creeks and on two segments of the Lavaca River.

Before joining TWRI, Andrus spent eight years as a consulting engineer, helping various government agencies in Utah and Nevada address water-related issues. He earned a Bachelor of Science degree in applied physics and a Master of Science in civil engineering with a water resources emphasis, both from Brigham Young University. He is currently pursuing a doctorate in water management and hydrologic sciences from Texas A&M University. 💧