



TCEQ honors partnership

The Texas Water Resources Institute was recently selected as the winner of the Texas Environmental Excellence Award in the civic/community category for its Arroyo Colorado Watershed Partnership.

Presented annually by the Governor of Texas and the Texas Commission on Environmental Quality (TCEQ), the awards spotlight the state's highest achievements in environmental preservation and protection.

"This award is definitely an honor for the institute, but the real credit goes to the farmers and other project participants who have made this partnership such a success," said Dr. Neal Wilkins, the institute's director.

Jaime Flores, an institute program coordinator and watershed coordinator for the Arroyo Colorado Watershed Protection Plan (WPP) Implementation project, said the partnership is composed of more than 700 people representing federal, state and private organizations, agricultural producers and other interested individuals concerned with identified water quality problems in the Lower Rio Grande Valley's Arroyo Colorado. The partnership published its WPP in 2007, one of the first watershed protection plans in the state, he said.

"Through multiple projects and the cooperation of many stakeholders, the institute and partnership have achieved 75 percent of the goals set forth in the plan," Flores said. "University scientists and city officials are working alongside farmers and schoolchildren to monitor, clean-up and educate others about the Arroyo."



The Arroyo Colorado Watershed Partnership (ACWP) received a Texas Environmental Excellence Award. Pictured from left to right: Tony Reisinger, Texas Sea Grant coastal and marine resources agent; Carlos Rubinstein, TCEQ commissioner; Allen Berthold, TWRI project manager; Dr. Bryan Shaw, TCEQ chairman; Gov. Rick Perry; Zak Covar, TCEQ executive director; Dr. Kevin Wagner, TWRI associate director; Jaime Flores, ACWP watershed coordinator; Dr. Jude Benavides, ACWP steering committee chair and the University of Texas-Brownsville assistant professor; and Toby Baker, TCEQ commissioner. Photo courtesy of TCEQ.

The institute began coordinating the Arroyo Colorado program in 2007, working closely with the partnership, TCEQ, Texas State Soil and Water Conservation Board and the Texas General Land Office to implement practices to improve water quality, according to Allen Berthold, an institute project manager.



The Military Sustainability Program received a 2012 Superior Service Award in the team category. Pete Gibbs, Texas AgriLife Extension Service associate director for state programs (far left), and Ed Smith, AgriLife Extension director (far right), present the award to Texas A&M Institute of Renewable Natural Resources team members Todd Snelgrove, AgriLife Extension program specialist; Brian Hays, AgriLife Extension program specialist; and Roel Lopez, the institute's associate director. Other team members (not pictured) are Bill Ross, natural resources policy consultant with Brooks, Pierce, McLendon, Humphrey and Lenord, LLP, and Justin Tatum, program specialist with the Texas Watershed Management Foundation.

INRR wins 2012 Superior Service Award

The Texas A&M Institute of Renewable Natural Resources recently received the Texas AgriLife Extension Service's 2012 Superior Service Award in the team category for its Military Sustainability Program.

The annual Superior Service Awards recognize AgriLife Extension faculty and staff members who provide outstanding performance in Extension education or service to the organization.

"Although relatively new, the Military Sustainability Program has accomplished much through the innovation and diligence of each of its team members," said Dr. Neal Wilkins, the institute's director. "Each member has used his expertise to help develop numerous programs that ensure military readiness while also protecting natural resources."

"Military readiness ensures our troops are ready for combat and is dependent on the ability for the military to test and train on its land," Roel Lopez said.

"This program supports the military's training mission through improving land management practices, training military natural resource professionals and developing regional partnerships," Lopez said.

The program is a collaborative effort of the institute with federal natural resource agencies, state agencies, private landowner groups and the U.S. Department of Defense, he said.