

# Agribusiness



## Integrated approach

Technician aims to help landowners address interrelated soil, water conservation needs



PHOTO BY DAVID LOWE

**Jacki Bakker, a full-time conservation technician who recently began work for the Hill Country Soil & Water Conservation District, examines a plant at a wetland area in the park on FM 580 West.**

By **DAVID LOWE**  
Staff Writer

Jacki Bakker is eager to help landowners and the environment as the new district conservation technician for the Hill Country Soil & Water Conservation District.

Mrs. Bakker began her work for the soil and water conservation district April 1 and is based out of the Natural Resources Conservation Service field office

at 502 S. Key Ave., Suite E.

Her position is funded by an Environmental Protection Agency grant intended to address water-quality concerns -- especially low dissolved oxygen -- in the Lampasas River watershed. The area that drains into the river includes land in Lampasas, Bell, Burnet, Hamilton, Mills and Williamson counties.

As a result, Mrs. Bakker works with landowners in those

counties to help them implement "best management practices" for grass, soil and water health. Once management practices -- which range from brush clearing to rotational grazing to repair of wetland areas -- are implemented and maintained according to program guidelines, a landowner can receive a 60 percent reimbursement up to \$15,000 from the Hill Country Soil & Water Conservation District, Mrs. Bakker said.

The EPA grant provides for a total of \$60,000 in cost-sharing reimbursements over a three-year period, said Tom Casbeer, chairman of the Hill Country Soil and Water Conservation District's board of directors. He said he expects the local district can seek more grant funding if it receives a good number of applications for land-management cost-sharing.

Casbeer said he believes the district conservation technician, along with grant funding for conservation practices, will give Lampasas County and nearby areas more resources to address needs for the land and water. "This brings in incremental personnel and incremental money," Casbeer said.

The Texas Legislature long ago created the framework for local districts to hire soil and water conservation technicians, he said. This is the first year, however, for the Hill Country Soil & Water Conservation District to have a full-time staff member to assist landowners.

Mrs. Bakker works with the Natural Resources Conservation Service and the Texas State Soil & Water Conservation Board. The technician estimated about 20 percent of her time is in the office and the other 80 percent is spent working in the field. She visits ranches upon request, provides services such as soil samples and forage assessments, and develops strategies for property owners to implement to meet their specific goals for their land.

Mrs. Bakker said she enjoys the time she spends on the land to address soil and water matters.

"I am more than willing to come out and slog through the mud and dirt and grime and help people out as much as I possibly can," she said, "because in reality, I love clean water. I love the environment. I love the outdoors, and if we don't do something to take care of it, we won't have it."

The interest in natural resources developed early for the Navy veteran, who earned a technical associate degree in environmental science technology from Clover Park Technical College in Lakewood, Wash. Mrs. Bakker, who also holds a bachelor's degree in speech communications from Northern Arizona University, moved to Texas about three years ago. A master naturalist, she said she has enjoyed learning about the plant life of the Lone Star State.

Mrs. Bakker said grasses, soils and water bodies are intricately

linked, and the health of one environmental component affects the health of the others.

"There's so much connection between soil health and water quality," she said.

For that reason, landowners can ask the soil and water conservation technician for help with a variety of work -- including practices not directly in a wetland area, she said. Mrs. Bakker said cross-fencing and rotational livestock grazing, for example, protect grasses from being overgrazed while also preventing soil erosion and sedimentation that hurts water quality.

Brush clearing also is a major focus in this area, Casbeer and Mrs. Bakker said. In fact, Casbeer said about 80 percent of natural resource program funding in Lampasas County goes toward brush control and reseeding of native grasses. The main emphasis is on cedar, but there also are efforts to control mesquite and cactus.

Please see **SOIL**, page 5

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# Soil, water technician seeks to help area landowners

Continued from page 4

Casbeer said. Mrs. Bakker said brush management is important because thinning out overgrowth allows more moisture to reach the soil and recharge underground aquifers.

Other ranch projects that qualify as helping soil and water, Mrs. Bakker said, include rejuvenating riparian areas by leaving natural

vegetation along stream banks, and leaving ungrazed "filter strips" or "field borders" at the edges of pastures. Stock tanks also are beneficial, the district conservation technician said, as they give livestock an alternative water source and limit the time animals spend around sensitive creekbank areas.

Mrs. Bakker said the overall

goal of funding management practices in the area is to improve the Lampasas River watershed for agriculture, recreation and other human uses.

"It's up to us as the citizens of the watershed to look out for the watershed," she said.

She also said those who apply for cost-sharing through the Hill Country Soil & Water

Conservation District will find the process is fairly simple. Funding decisions are made locally, as the Hill Country Soil & Water Conservation District board evaluates applications and determines which ones receive reimbursements.

"This is from the folks in the watershed to the folks in the watershed," Mrs. Bakker

said. "This is local, and we want to make sure that [people] understand that. There's a lot less hoops to jump through than you would [face] if you went into the government programs, but at the same time, we're wanting to help you as a local organization trying to help local folks."

Even if a property owner does not qualify for reimbursement for

a management practice, technical assistance is available at no cost, Mrs. Bakker said.

The technician encouraged those in the Lampasas River watershed who want to improve the health of their land and water to contact her at the NRCS office at 512-556-5572, extension 3.

"Come talk to us," she said. "Call us. Help us help you."



PHOTOS COURTESY OF DR. STEVE FORSYTHE

## State competitors

The Lampasas FFA horse judging team competed Saturday at the state contest held at the Texas Tech University Equestrian Center. Senior McKenzie Thornton, far left, was high-point team member. Also pictured from left are Carolyn Laborde, Kayla Bellamy and April Meeks.



## Students at work

Lampasas High School Career and Technical Education students, working with MW Hail Construction Inc., poured an 80-by-25-foot slab Wednesday using a pump truck and manpower. The slab completed phase one of a building project as part of the students' lab activities.

# Pecan Field Day scheduled May 4 in San Saba

The Texas A&M AgriLife Extension Service and the San Saba County Pecan Growers Association will host the annual Pecan Field Day Monday at the San Saba Civic Center.

Registration, which is \$35 at the door, will begin at 8 a.m., and the program will start at 9 a.m. A brisket lunch will be provided by the Miller family.

Speakers and topics for this year's program are: Scott Anderson, Brown County Extension agent, laws and regulations; Bill Ree, pecan specialist in College Station, general orchard management; Bob Whitney, pecan pathology.

College Station, general orchard management; Bob Whitney, pecan pathology.

Several commercial exhibitors will have equipment and products available. The program will include time for participants to visit with these supporters of Pecan Field Day.

Five continuing education units are being offered for those who have a private, non-commercial or commercial applicator license. Credits are one general, two integrated pest management, and two laws and regulations.

For more information, call the San Saba County Extension office at 325-372-5416.

## Cattle Auction

The report from the April 22 Lampasas Cattle Auction follows.

**Cattle and calves:** Estimated receipts 356 compared to 339 last week and 263 at this time last year.

Compared to last week, feeder steers and heifers \$3-\$5 lower. Slaughter cows and bulls steady.

Feeder cattle accounted for 79 percent. Slaughter cows and bulls accounted for 21 percent.

**Steers:** 300-400 lbs., \$2.67-\$3.20 lb.; 400-500 lbs., \$2.58-\$2.90 lb.; 500-600 lbs., \$2.33-\$2.67 lb.; 600-700 lbs., \$2.13-\$2.45 lb.; 700-800 lbs., \$1.94-

\$2.37 lb. **Slaughter cows:** under 800 lbs., \$.30-\$49 lb.; 800-1,100 lbs., \$.50-\$89 lb.; 1,100-1,350 lbs., \$.90-\$1.24 lb.

**Heifers:** 300-400 lbs., \$2.32-\$3.02 lb.; 400-500 lbs., \$2.47-\$3.02 lb.; 500-600 lbs., \$2.18-\$2.44 lb.; 600-700 lbs., \$2.02-\$2.82 lb.; 700-800 lbs., \$1.80-\$2.06 lb.

**Slaughter bulls:** 1,000-1,300 lbs., \$1.10-\$1.30 lb.; 1,300-2,100 lbs., \$1.32-\$1.47 lb.

**Bred replacement cows:** aged cows, \$2,200-\$2,400 per head.

**Cow/calf pairs:** aged cows with baby to 300-pound calf, \$2,325-\$2,500 per pair.

## Farm Estate Auction May 2, 2015 @ 10 am

3219 Burnet County Road 208, Lampasas Texas 76550  
We will be liquidating farm and ranch equipment of the late Harlan Russell

**Directions:** 6.5 miles North West of Briggs on Hwy 183 or South of Lampasas 13 miles on Hwy 183 and across the road from Kifaru Exotic Animal Auction facility, turn West on BCR 208 and go 3 miles auction site will be on your left. Watch for Signs. Parking will be on your right of auction site.

**Preview:** Will only be Friday May 1st from 9 am till 5 pm and of course Saturday morning before the auction beginning at 8 am.

**Terms:** Everything must be paid in full, during or by the conclusion of the auction. Cash or Credit Cards (Visa, MasterCard and Discover) will be accepted. There will be a 3% charge for credit card use. If you are a "new buyer" (never purchased anything at one of our auctions) you will need to get a letter of credit from your bank for the amount you intend to spend. Loader will be available the day of the sale and from 10 am till Noon on Sunday. All items purchased must be removed before end of day on Sunday May 3, 2015.

### Partial List

**Tractors:** JD 4455, IH Case 685 XLC with Great Bend 570 loader, IH 70 Farmall with QT 5000 loader. **Equipment:** JD 468 Mega wide plus round baler, NH 1411 diskbine cutter conditioner, Vermeer R23A Twin Rakes, Kewanee 1000 folding tandem 21 ft. NH 617 disk cutter, JD 1630 plow, JD 1010 field cultivator 24 ft. JD 8850 grain drill, NH 495 cutter conditioner, JD 210 tandem offset, Anhydrous applicator, JD 4 bottom 1250a moldboard, Brillion roller with seed box, V ripper, JD 670 wheel driven 5 bar hay rake, JD pull type 13 shank spring chisel, 13 shank V ripper 3 pt. JD 1350 mold board, Van Brunt 12 ft. grain drill, Hay forks, pallet forks, bucket, Bearcat gain roller, Quick hitch, DeWeeze bale mover, track plow, Hydraulic post driver, fuel tank tool box and pump, Honda air compressor **Trailers and Vehicles:** Tumble bug, Dugan GN cattle trailer 14 ft. GN Load-Max 24ft. trailer, Dump trailer high side, Single axle trailer, 5 bale hay van, 2002 Dodge pickup, old salvage Jeep, Vintage Glass fill gas pump, shop tools and equipment and lots more. "Everything will sell as is where is" Announcements made from the auction block take precedence over previous announcements or preprinted materials. You must have a valid Ag/Timber or resale certificate on file or presented to office when you register to obtain tax exemptions. NOT RESPONSIBLE FOR ACCIDENTS! Everyone is welcome, but come at your own risk. Call for more details or info. Items may be deleted without notice. No Buyers Premium.

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## Hats in the Ring

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**Jerry Grayson**

Pol. adv. paid for by Jerry Grayson.



**Christian Toups**

Pol. adv. paid for by Christian Toups Campaign.



### Lampasas City Council, Place 1



**Kouwende "KC" Cann**

Pol. adv. paid for by Kouwende "KC" Cann.



**Wanda Bierschwale**

Pol. adv. paid for by Wanda Bierschwale.



**Chris Harrison**

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### Lampasas City Council, Place 2



**Regina Bertrand**

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**Robert McCauley**

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### Lampasas City Council, Place 6



**Jennifer Centunzi**

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**TJ Monroe**

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### Lampasas School Board, Place 2



**Lisa Canales-Dibble**

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**Randy Morris**

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### Lampasas School Board, Place 3



**Rick Baxter**

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**Dan Claussen**

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**Alanna Cook**

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Early Voting: April 27-May 5

Election: May 9

Advertise your candidacy before your opponent beats you to the race! Call Teresa for details. 512-556-6262, Ext. 28