

# **Mill Creek Watershed Protection Plan**

## **Implementation Updates**

Evgenia Spears, Ph.D.  
Watershed Coordinator  
Texas A&M AgriLife Extension Service

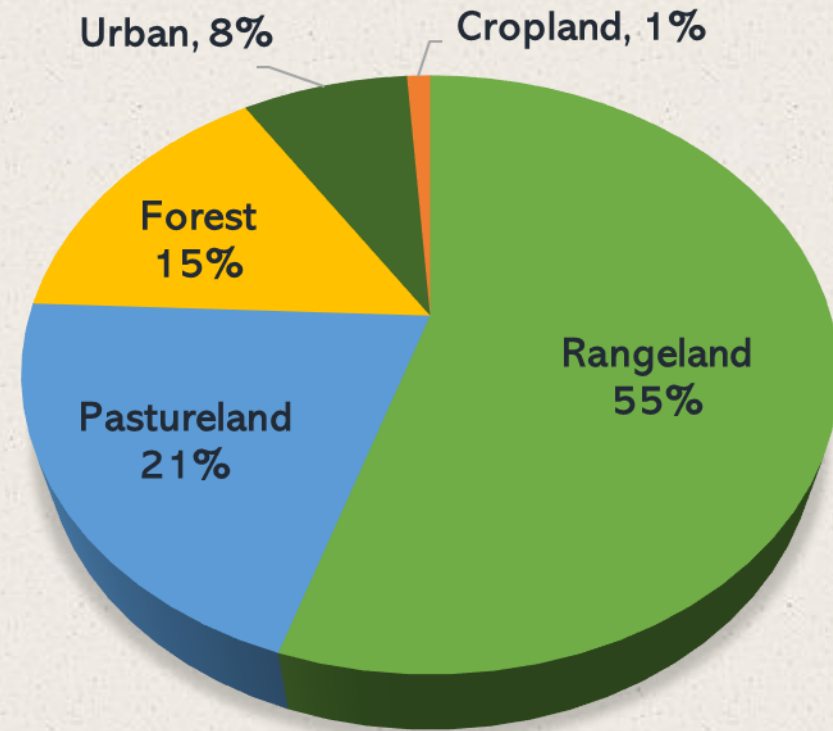
**December 8, 2021**



# Mill Creek Watershed

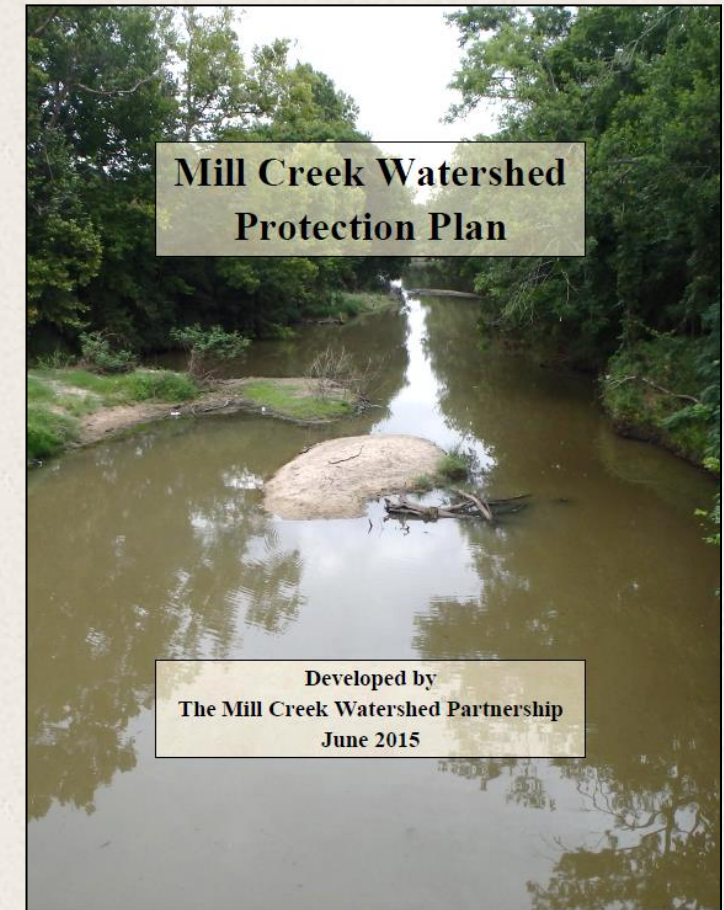


- 263,450 acres
- Predominantly rural and privately-owned
- Permitted discharges: the City of Bellville, City of Industry, and City of Burton; and Kieke Egg Farm



# Mill Creek Watershed Protection Plan (WPP)

- 2014 – Mill Creek listed impaired
  - Elevated levels of *E.coli* bacteria
- January 2015 – WPP initiated
- February 2016 – WPP accepted by EPA
- WPP functions to restore and protect water quality in Mill Creek
- All measures are voluntary
- Heavy focus on public outreach and education





# Major Sources of Pollution

- The bacteria originates from nonpoint sources
- Potential sources identified in the WPP:
  - Urban (e.g., stormwater, pet waste)
  - Agriculture (e.g., livestock, cropland)
  - Wastewater (e.g., failing septic systems)
  - Wildlife and non-domestic animals (e.g., feral hog, deer)



# What Is Being Done?

- Public outreach and education
- Watershed-wide Cleanup Day
- Routine water quality monitoring
- Water quality management plans (WQMPs)
- Online Homeowner Maintenance of Septic Systems class





# Public Outreach and Education

- Many events and programs had to be canceled or postponed
- 2021 Watershed Cleanup Day
- Face-to-face programs are back!
  - Partnership Meeting (February 10)
  - Mill Creek Cleanup Event (April)
  - Healthy Lawns Healthy Waters (summer 2022)





# 2021 Cleanup Day

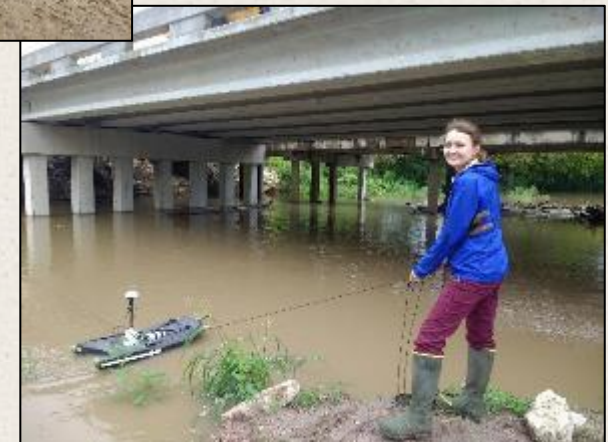
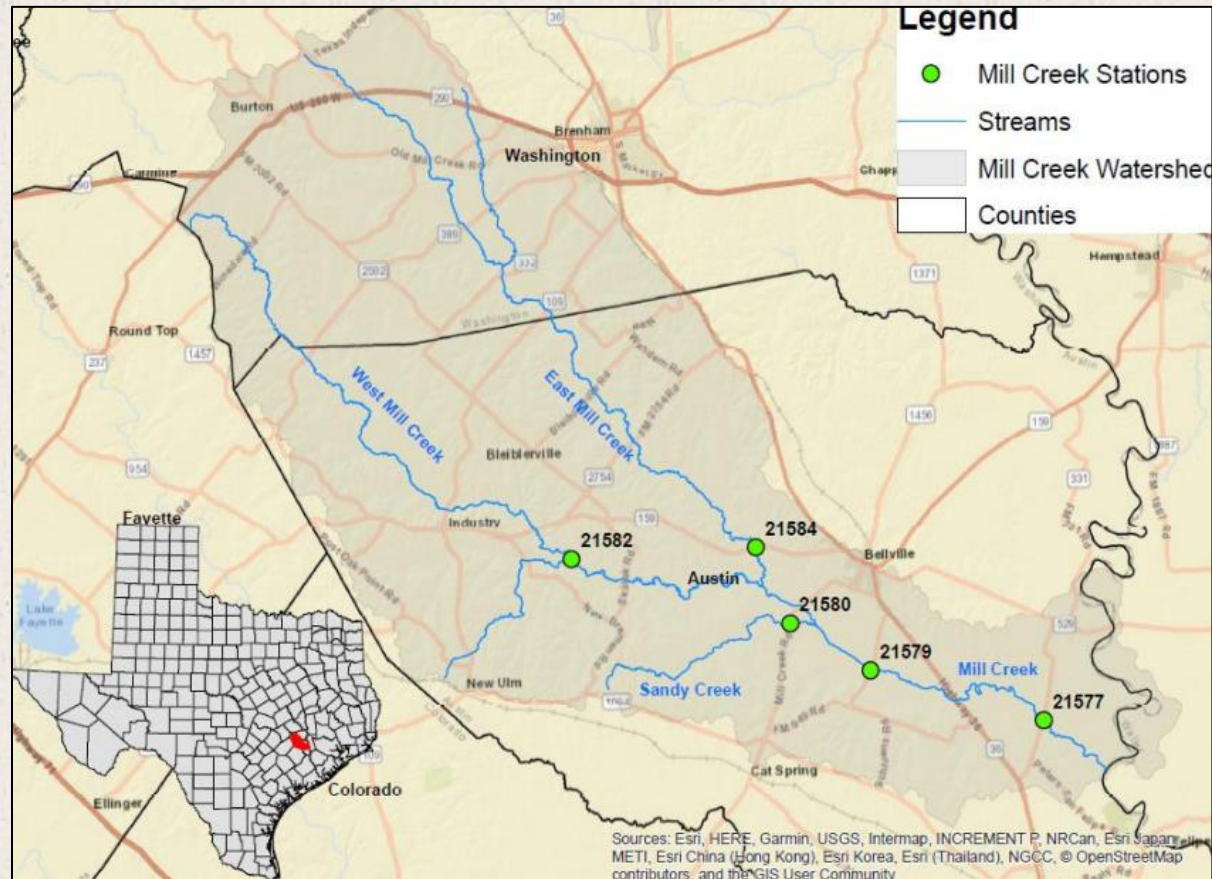
- Targeted private landowners in the watershed
- Centralized trash drop-off spot at Bleiblerville VFD
- 600 pounds of trash and debris removed





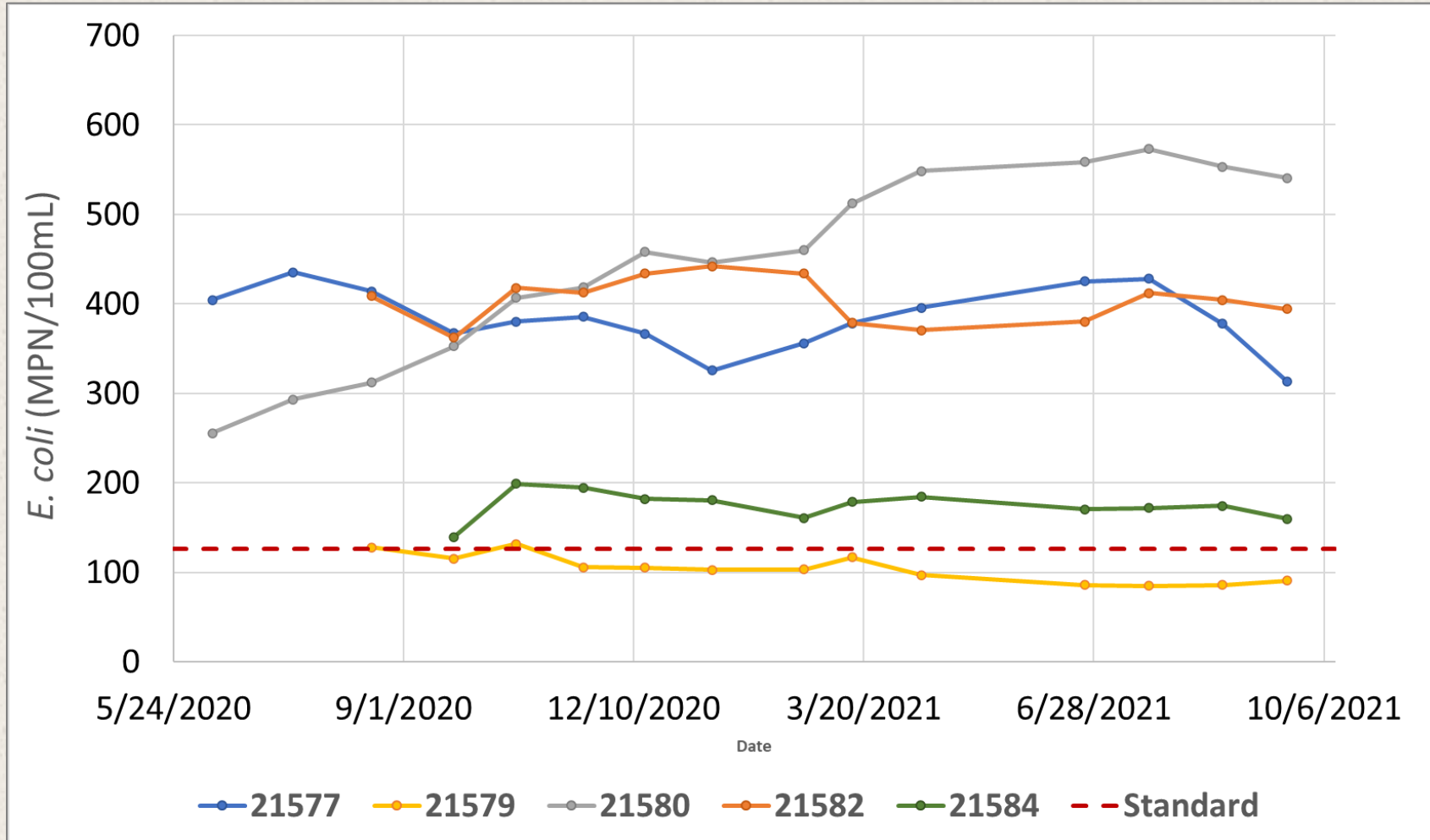
# Routine Water Quality Monitoring

- Monthly monitoring at 5 locations along the creek
- In partnership with the Texas Water Resources Institute





# Water Quality: *E. coli* Trends



## MC sampling locations:

21577 – MC @ FM 331

21579 – MC @ FM 2429

24580 – Sandy Creek @ MC Rd.

21582 – W MC @ Tiemann Rd.

21584 – East Fork MC @ FM 159

**Standard: 126 MPN/100mL**



# Homeowner Maintenance of Septic Systems Online Course

- Available via AgriLife Learn
- 7-hour course with quizzes
- 30 days to complete
- Course fee: \$150
- Eligible for certification in Austin and Washington Counties  
(other counties – check!)



## COURSE INFORMATION

An aerobic septic system, or aerobic treatment unit (ATU), uses oxygen to breakdown both dissolved and solid constituents into gases, cell mass, and non-degradable material contained in wastewater. This online course will teach you how to properly maintain and operate your ATU.

### Topics

- Understand the basic operation and maintenance activities for an ATU
- Be a better consumer in the onsite wastewater treatment industry
- Have the knowledge needed to understand and communicate with maintenance providers

### Course Details

**Cost:** \$150

**Duration:** 30 days from sign-up date

To register, go to [tx.ag/EnrollAerobicTreatment](https://tx.ag/EnrollAerobicTreatment) and click 'Enroll Now'.

Available to Texans in approved counties starting **April 1**.

Visit [tx.ag/HomeAerobicTreatmentSystems](https://tx.ag/HomeAerobicTreatmentSystems) for more information.



### Contact

Dr. Anish Jantrania  
[Anish.jantrania@ag.tamu.edu](mailto:Anish.jantrania@ag.tamu.edu)



# Want to Get Involved?

- Mill Creek Watershed Partnership Meetings
- Stay in touch with your CEA
- Visit [www.millcreek.tamu.edu](http://www.millcreek.tamu.edu) and subscribe to our newsletter
- Find us on Twitter and Facebook: [@MillCreekWater](https://twitter.com/MillCreekWater)
- Reach out to the Watershed Coordinator at [millcreek@ag.tamu.edu](mailto:millcreek@ag.tamu.edu) or **(979) 845-2862**





# Mill Creek WPP Partners





# THANK YOU!

Evgenia Spears, Ph.D.  
Watershed Coordinator  
Texas A&M AgriLife Extension Service  
[millcreek@ag.tamu.edu](mailto:millcreek@ag.tamu.edu)  
(979) 845-2862







# Water Quality Management Plans in Mill Creek Watershed

By Faith Chase

Austin County SWCD District Technician






# What is a Water Quality Management Plan(WQMP)?

- Site-specific plan for land improvement measures developed through Soil and Water Conservation Districts (SWCD) and the Texas State Soil and Water Conservation Board (TSSWCB) for agricultural lands
- Provides farmers and ranchers a voluntary opportunity to achieve a level of pollution prevention or abatement consistent with state water quality standards
- Includes appropriate and essential land treatment practices, production practices, management measures, or technologies applicable to the planned land use
- Best available management and technology as described in Natural Resources Conservation Service (NRCS) Field Office Technical Guide (FTOG)





# Benefits of a WQMP

- Abate/prevent erosion and promote conservation
  - A strategic “management” plan for your operation
  - Demonstrate that voluntary conservation programs promote agricultural production and environmental quality as compatible goals
  - Resolve water quality complaints through a voluntary process with SWCD and TSSWCB
- 





# How to get a WQMP?

- An individual requests planning assistance through their local SWCD
- The WQMP is usually developed by the SWCD Technician with NRCS and TSSWCB
- The WQMP is approved by the landowner, the SWCD and NRCS and then certified by the TSSWCB
- Producer implements the WQMP on their land
- Annual status reviews are conducted to ensure that the landowner implements BMPs as agreed to in the implementation schedule



# Financial Assistance

State and Federal (TSSWCB) or Federal (NRCS) assistance is obtainable for certain conservation practices

## ➤ TSSWCB

- WQMP Financial Assistance
- Clean Water Act Section 319(h) funding (must be in the Mill Creek Watershed)

## ➤ NRCS

- Farm Bill Programs
- Environmental Quality Incentives Program (EQIP)





# What if I have a plan written and I want to make changes or cancel it?

- WQMPs are flexible and voluntary
- If you want to change something, it can be done at ANY time\*
- If you decide you no longer want to participate in the WQMP program on your property, for ANY reason it can be canceled at ANY time\*

\*If the plan is cancelled, cost-share will need to be refunded.



# Mill Creek Watershed: **Progress Report**

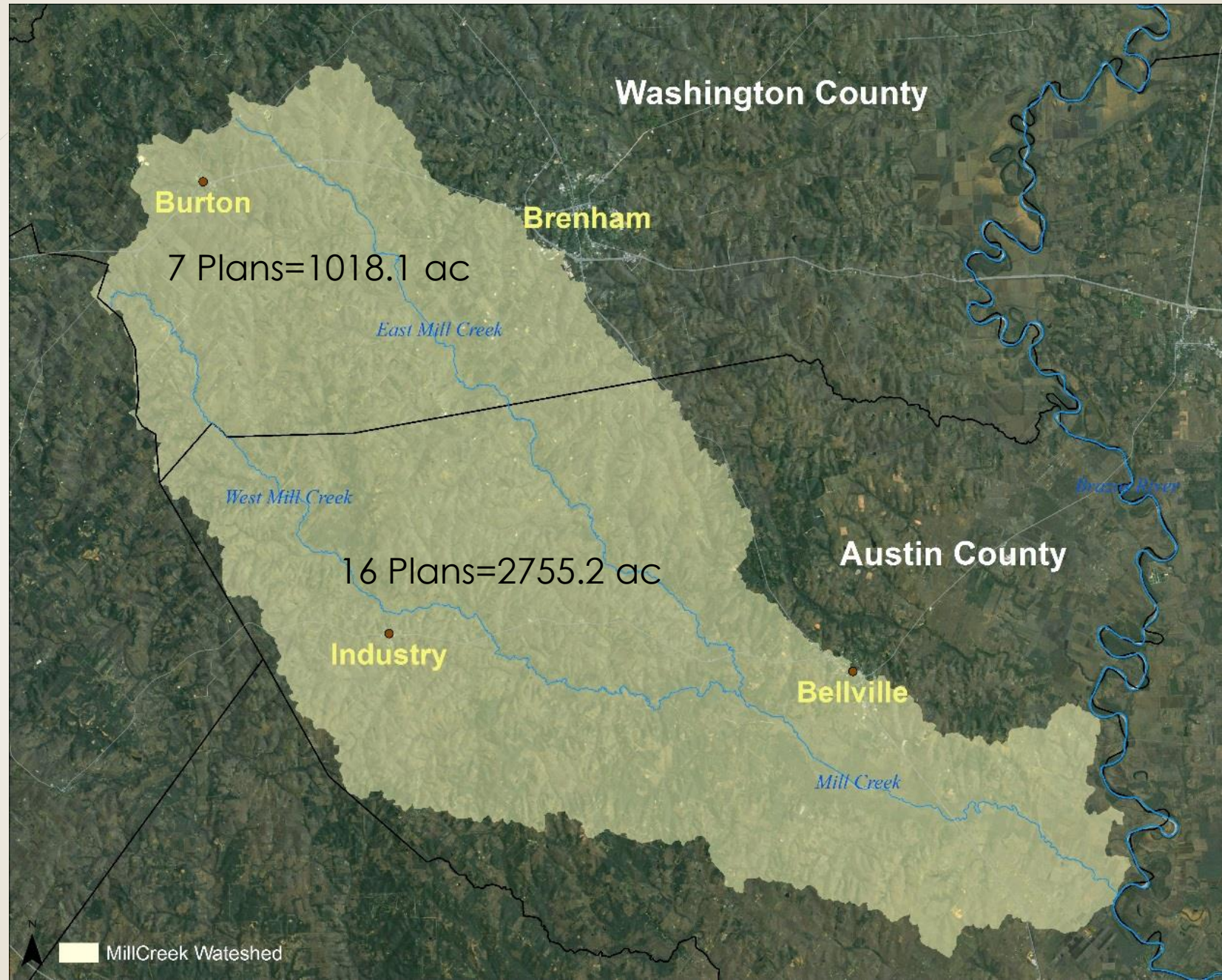
Beginning in 2017, which includes two three-year grant periods  
(2017-2019, 2020-2022)



# How it's going?

County	Austin	Washington	Totals
Plans Developed	16	7	23
Acres Implemented	1443.8 ac	779.7 ac	2223.5 ac
Financial Incentives Paid Out	\$68,238.23	\$7522.16	\$75,760.39
Acres to be Implemented within 12 mos	553.2 ac	238.4 ac	791.6 ac
Financial Incentives to be Paid within 12 mos	\$65,670.00	\$30,000.00	\$95,670.00
Plans in development	3	0	3
Acres under development	758.2 ac	0 ac	758.2 ac
Total Acres	2755.2 ac	1018.1 ac	3773.3 ac

# Mill Creek Watershed







# Questions?

Contact Faith Chase at:

[faith.chase@tx.nacdn.net](mailto:faith.chase@tx.nacdn.net)

Austin County Soil & Water Conservation District (MWF)

1351 W Main St, Ste. B, Bellville, TX 77418

(979) 865-3139 Ext. 3

Washington Soil & Water Conservation District (TTh)

2305 Becker Dr. Ste. C Brenham, TX 77833

(979) 830-7123 Ext. 3

Funding for this effort is provided through a Clean Water Act §319(h) nonpoint source grant from the Texas State Soil and Water Conservation Board and U.S. Environmental Protection Agency.