



TMBC/Border Region Review

The newsletter for the Texas/Mexico Border Coalition CBO in partnership with UTPA and other border region organizations; providing information about TMBC and border-region projects, which are coordinated and enhanced through Project FORGE.

Issue 7

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TMBC closes fiscal year 2006

Another year has come and gone and the TMBC was hard at work with existing and new projects throughout the border region of Texas. The fiscal year started on October 1, 2005 and closed September 30, 2006.

The Frontera Agricultural Risk Management (FARM) Project is one of the longer-standing projects administered by TMBC. FARM is funded by USDA Risk Management Agency to help limited-resource, Hispanic producers make informed risk-management decisions for their operations. In the past year FARM: maintained a database of 33,504 producers in the TMBC service area; distributed 47,303 mail outs, and; hosted 625 participants at 13 TMBC training events.



A second TMBC-operated project provides manpower in local NRCS offices. Through this project, TMBC provided a total of five employees in Duval, Jim Wells, Starr, and Cameron County offices. Each employee assists an NRCS office with specific tasks,

including: receiving, processing, certifying, and paying EQIP and CRP applications and contracts. TMBC employees assisted with more than 2,300 EQIP and 62 CRP contracts.

The eFARM Project continued to provide computer/Internet and eGovernment training in rural areas in the Texas border region. eFARM is in its third year of funding from the Cooperative State Research, Education, and Extension Service.

The West Texas Telecom Ag Help Desk completed a full year of service in September 2006. The Help Desk is based at the University of Texas – Pan American provides telephone assistance on computer, Internet, and USDA-related subjects.

A recent addition to the TMBC workload is an agreement with the National Agricultural Statistics Service (NASS). Through the partnership, TMBC provided NASS with the names and addresses of Hispanic landowners

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Events Calendar:

January

- 24 CSREES Directors' Meeting
Louisville, KY

February

- 10 Risk Management Workshop
Hondo, Texas
- 23 Risk Management Workshop
Orange Grove, TX

March

- 2-4 Starr Co Youth Fair
Rio Grande City, TX
- 3 Heifer Pen Show at Starr Co Youth Fair
Rio Grande City, TX
- 5-9 Risk Management Workshop
Taos, NM
- 27 Risk Management Workshop
San Manuel, TX

eFARM provides eGov training



The Electronic Farm and Ranch Management (eFARM) project is funded by USDA Cooperative State Research

Extension and Education Service (CSREES) to provide Internet and computer training to farmers and ranchers, with a special emphasis on Hispanic producers in rural areas of Texas.

EFARM has been in existence since September 1, 2004 and has provided more than 324 sessions to more than 3,667 sign-in participants in rural communities along the Texas-Mexico border area.

During the Summer of 2006, Internet, computer, and eGovernment training classes were held in San Isidro, Texas in Starr County. Classes were held in the new

computer lab graciously made available to eFARM by the San Isidro ISD Superintendent and Technologist.

Participants of the training traveled from as far as twenty miles twice a week for the classes. One participant made the special effort to extend her workday to fit in the class before commuting an hour home.

eFARM Project Director Aisha Cruz states, "The turnout was exactly what we were aiming for. Most of the participants were ag producers and everyone was interested in the USDA programs and web site."

The ultimate goal of the eFARM Project is to help producers own and operate their farms and ranches as efficiently as possible. By

eFARM, Continued on page 2



eFARM

Computer, Internet, and eGov Training

Mondays & Thursdays
Mercedes Public Library
8:30am - 10:00am

Progreso Community Center
10:30am – 12:00pm

Elsa Public Library
1:00pm – 2:45pm

Tuesdays
Premont Public Library
3:00pm-4:30pm

Ben Bolt High School
5:00pm – 6:30pm

Alice Public Library
7:00pm – 8:30pm

Wednesday
Alice Public Library
8:30am – 10:00am

Ben Bolt High School
10:30am – 12:00pm

Premont Public Library
1:00pm – 2:30pm

WTTP Ag Help Desk

This telephone Help Desk is available toll-free for information and assistance about computers, Internet, USDA programs and USDA eGovernment, and agriculture in general.

1-800-230-5206

Monday – Friday
8am-5pm CST

Fiscal Year, continued from page 1

in the TMBC service area. The information will be used to contact producers about the 2007 Ag Census. In 2002, Hispanic producers were undercounted by 42 percent. At the close of the fiscal year, TMBC had provided NASS with more than 11,000 contacts.

A key event of the 2006 fiscal year was the First Southwest Regional Hispanic Farmer and Rancher Conference held in Edinburg, Texas. The focus of the Conference was



Hispanic agriculture producers from the southwest region of the United States. More than 125 producers and professionals

attended the Conference from all over Texas, New Mexico, South Carolina, Minnesota, California, Tennessee, Washington, Arizona, Michigan, Virginia, and Mexico.

For more information on the TMBC's past and future activities, contact TMBC.

eFARM, continued from page 1

using computers and the Internet to access USDA's eGov services, producers eliminate unnecessary travel and waiting time. All training participants in the eGov class signed up for USDA Level 1 access, which allows them to customize their own USDA web portal and receive pertinent e-mail updates about their agricultural interests.

One participant said of the class, "I feel the community will benefit and be able to take advantage of the many opportunities on the Internet as far as doing (business) with the USDA."

For more information about the eFARM



Training participants in San Isidro received various awards for their enthusiasm and success through the six-week training period.

Project and future classes, contact TMBC.

New partnership for TMBC

TMBC has entered into an exciting new partnership with two agricultural, non-profit organizations: the National Tribal Development Association (NTDA) and United Farmers USA (UFUSA). The purpose of this partnership is to empower the minority farmer and rancher through a unified voice.

NTDA is administering a unique project that includes three very distinct organizations from Texas, Montana and South Carolina. The project is to educate Hispanic, American Indian, and African-American farmers and ranchers about risk-management programs that are available in their respective areas.

In return, TMBC and United Farmers identify and report to NTDA any barriers that hinder or prevent minority farmers and ranchers from participating in USDA's Risk

Management Agency programs.

NTDA has prepared and shared a training manual for all organizations to use with farmers and ranchers on how to prepare risk-management plans that include the utilization of RMA programs. Each organization provides one-on-one support and will host training workshops where a survey will analyze how these programs are being utilized by minority farmers and ranchers.

To date the partnership has provided support to 444 Hispanic farmers, 246 African-American farmers, and 202 American Indian farmers. All three organizations have scheduled additional meetings.

Founded in 1995, NTDA is a national American Indian service organization that provides a wide range of economic-

Partnership, Continued on page 3

Get involved with the TMBC

With all the ways the TMBC is working to assist farmers and ranchers in the Texas/Mexico border region, you can help. Below are some suggestions on how to become involved:

- ◆ Sign up to be a member.
- ◆ Support TMBC events.
- ◆ Endorse TMBC principles and goals.
- ◆ Promote the TMBC.

Contact the TMBC if you are interested in working together.

TMBC CBO Directors and Staff

Chairman, Omar J. Garza
Santa Elena, Texas

Vice-Chairman, Larry Ernst
Leaky, Texas

Secretary, Homero Vera
Premont, Texas

Treasurer, Samuel Rodriguez
Rio Grande City, Texas

Director, Guillermo Benavides
Laredo, Texas

Director, David A. Garza
San Benito, Texas

Director, Mark Grijalva
Fabens, Texas

Director, Fidel del Barrio, PhD
Leaky, Texas

Director, Mario Escobar
Crystal City, Texas

Director, Ruben Carrasco
Presidio, Texas

Director, Rigoberto Delgado, PhD
El Paso, Texas

Director, Minerva Margo
Santa Elena, Texas

Project Director, eFARM,
Aisha Lee Cruz

Project Director, FARM,
Raul Villarreal, Jr.

Liaison, Cameron/Hidalgo County
Adrian de los Santos

Liaison, Hidalgo/Willacy County
Cecilia Davila

development and governance-type services to American Indian/Alaska Natives nationwide.

NTDA broke new ground by pursuing the specific goal of improving the governance and economy of Indian communities through the use of state-of-the-art computer hardware and software to enhance the marketability and exposure of NTDA members' tribes.

In 2002, UFUSA was established with a primary purpose of providing a wide range of outreach and technical assistance, including educational programs and resources to assist small farmer survival.

UFUSA provides leadership, agricultural-networking opportunities, and resources to help future generations become farmers, and strives to maintain and increase the number of minority farms and farmers. This organization is dedicated to facilitating equal access to information and resources from governmental agencies.

UFUSA makes every effort to provide a total package for farmers that includes farm, business and financial management, as well as cooperative marketing.

UFUSA is governed by a five-member board that is elected annually and is managed by National President Hezekiah Gibson and Administrative Coordinator Frances Benton-Gibson.

TMBC/UTPA internship produces professionals

The Texas/Mexico Border Coalition partners with the University of Texas – Pan American (UTPA) to provide paid internships to students looking to gain employment experience and earn an income.

“This is what it’s all about – helping our rural communities and giving opportunities to our young people,” said Omar Garza, TMBC Chairman.

After a year and a half, the first group of interns will graduate from UTPA and move on to full-time employment.

Roque Herrera, a Computer Information Systems major, was hired in 2004 to be a technician for the Ag Help Desk, a TMBC project that provides telephone, technical assistance to farmers, ranchers, and agribusinesses in rural communities.

After graduating this spring, Herrera left the Ag Help Desk to begin his career with the UTPA financial-aid office as a *Senior LAN Administrator*.

“While working for the Help Desk, I did a lot of networking, web pages, database development and maintenance, and some



hired at the Ag Help Desk, has been offered a lucrative position to work in Bentonville, Arkansas at the Wal-Mart Global Headquarters.

According to Ismael Delgado, staff supervisor for the Ag Help Desk, TMBC and UTPA are preparing to hire two more interns for the fall semester.

“Typically, we look for juniors and seniors who are majoring in Computer Information Systems or Computer Science,” says Delgado.

The interns can expect to work as technology-specialist phone operators who provide real, technical assistance to rural community residents.

For questions about the program and information about internship opportunities, contact Ismael Delgado at (956) 292-7542, or at the Ag-Help Desk located at the UTPA Annex, Room 160.

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