

Mud Creek (0201A) Recreational Use Attainability Analysis Summary and Recommendation

A recreational use attainability analysis (RUAA) was conducted on Mud Creek (0201A) in the summer of 2014 to determine the appropriate recreational use and numeric criteria. Mud Creek is an unclassified intermittent with pools water body that is approximately 36 miles in length. The creek is located in Bowie County. It was identified in the 2014 Texas Clean Water Act Section 303(d) List of Impaired Water Bodies due to elevated bacteria levels. It was initially listed in 2002.

The RUAA identified that the presumed use of primary contact recreation (PCR) for Mud Creek should be revised to secondary contact recreation 1 (SCR 1). SCR applies to water bodies where water recreation can occur, but the nature of the recreation does not involve a significant risk of ingestion. SCR 1 applies to intermittent and perennial freshwaters where site-specific information demonstrates that primary contact recreation has little to no likelihood of occurring due to physical characteristics of the water body such as shallow depths or lack of pools.

During the field surveys, field staff did not observe any form of recreation occurring on the stream. Interviews with stakeholders and landowners indicated that they have never personally used or witnessed PCR on the stream. Boating, fishing, and hunting were the most common activities documented from interviews. Mud Creek had an average thalweg of 0.65 meters (25.59 in) and had two pools deeper than 1 meter. Stream flow was normal during both surveys. At the time of the surveys, Mud Creek had an incipient wet spell according to the Palmer drought index. Public access is available at nine of 11 survey sites via bridge crossings; however, access into the stream is overall moderately difficult due to steep banks and dense vegetation. There are no public parks on the creek.

Steep banks, deep mud, and dense vegetation decrease the likelihood of PCR use. Mud Creek has numerous impediments to recreation and no accounts of PCR, supporting reclassification to SCR1. In accordance with §307.4 (j)(3)(C) of the Texas Surface Water Quality Standards, the TCEQ recommends a reclassification from PCR to SCR1 with the corresponding geometric mean of 630 colonies *E. coli*/100mL for all of Mud Creek, from the confluence of the Red River upstream to the headwater near the intersection of US 82 and Bowie CR 3403. This reclassification is appropriate due to “physical conditions related to the natural features of the water body” in accordance with reasons specified in 40 CFR §131.10(g)(5).

Prior to changing the currently assigned recreational use of Mud Creek in the Texas Surface Water Quality Standards, the TCEQ would provide additional public notice and opportunity for public comment. In addition, the U.S. Environmental Protection Agency would review this proposed change under the provisions of the federal Clean Water Act.