

## Prairie Creek (0606A) Recreational Use Attainability Analysis Summary and Recommendation

A recreational use attainability analysis (RUAA) was conducted on Prairie Creek (0606A) in the summer of 2014 to determine the appropriate recreational use and numeric criteria. Prairie Creek is an unclassified perennial water body that is approximately 12 miles in length. The creek is located in Smith 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 Prairie 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 observed people fishing. One interviewee reported that they had observed swimming once. There were no other instances of PCR on Prairie Creek. Fishing is a common recreation activity on this stream. Prairie Creek had an average thalweg of 0.70 meters (27.55 in) and one pool deeper than 1 meter. Stream flow ranged from normal to low. The Palmer Drought Severity Index (PDSI) indicated slightly wet conditions during both field surveys. There are no public parks or boat docks on the stream. All of the study sites were at public road crossings. In most of these locations, private property boundaries generally limited access to directly around and underneath road crossings. Access down the stream bank at road crossings was moderate due to low banks; however, steep slopes and dense vegetation were common upstream and downstream of the crossings.

Limited public access and abundant log obstructions decrease the likelihood of PCR use, 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 Prairie Creek, from the confluence with the Neches River to an unnamed tributary approximately 0.6 km downstream of the US 69 bridge crossing. 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 Prairie 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.