Peach Creek TMDL Stakeholders Meeting
GVEC, Gonzales, Texas
8/27/2003

Stakeholders Present: Mike McCall (BGRA), James Grimm (Texas Poultry Federation), Calvin Spacek (Gonzales County SCTWAC-EAA), M.G. Hodges III (Cal-Maine), Barry Miller (Gonzales County Underground Water Conservation District), Linda Rathmann (Gonzales County Soil and Water Conservation District), Shari Johnson (Gonzales County Soil and Water Conservation District), Mark Walker (Gonzales USDA-NRCS), Dan Cozier (Holmes Foods), Harold Grauke (Tyson), Troy Penshorn (Tyson), Oren Remmer (Gonzales County Soil and Water Conservation District), Reg Othold (Cal-Maine)

Meeting crew: James Miertschin (JMA), Wendy Block (H&C)

Others Present: Victor Palma (ELOMM), Jeremy Walther (ELOMM)

Meeting began at 12:05 PM
James Miertschin did introductions, described purpose of meeting
Went through series of Powerpoint slides describing the prior data assessment, results of supplemental sampling, and next phase activities

Main points of presentation:

- 2000 TCEQ assessment showed impairment for fecal coliform
- JMA assessment – confirmed impairment for fecal coliform
- Impairment at one station, CR 353
- Supplemental monitoring, 4 stations, 10 surveys
- Present plot of sampling survey results for E. coli
- Present plot of station geometric means for E. coli
- Means at 3 of 4 stations exceed 126 org/100 ml for E. coli – additional evidence that the stream is impaired for contact recreation use and further study is needed
- BST activities: library of fecal sources, sampling for unknowns
- Next phase activities
- Stakeholder information

Questions:
Q: Does stagnant water elevate bacteria levels?
A: Bacteria levels could be higher in stagnant pools.

Q: Have you sampled wild hogs? There are a lot of wild hogs in the watershed.
A: We have some fecal source samples from wild hogs, but not sure at this point if any were from the Peach Creek watershed.

Q: When were the past samples taken?
A: They were taken regardless of flow conditions, but most ended up being collected at low or normal flow regimes.

Q: Has Southwest Research Center Laboratory (San Antonio) done any work with Peach Creek?
A: Not sure if they have done any studies of E.coli.

Q: Does your method of testing for E. coli also identify other bacteria?
A: We used two different methods. We started with Standard Methods 9222 for E. coli, with which you also identify Fecal coliform. We finished with a new EPA Method for E. coli, the modified mTEC method (1103), which gives only E. coli.

Comment from Mike McCall (GBRA): GBRA has been collecting samples for some time. They previously used the Standard Methods 9222 method, but they converted to the IDEXX method. It has the disadvantage of being a most-probable number method. His understanding of the new modified mTEC E.coli test is that it is much better than the older one. It's much easier to interpret the results.

Q: Does Flatonia dump into the headwaters of Peach Creek?
A: Flatonia has a permit to discharge into Peach Creek. Keep in mind that they have disinfection requirements as part of their effluent treatment system. Waelder, on the other hand, has a pond system and may not have a disinfection system.

Comment from Mike McCall (GBRA): Waelder has a disinfection requirement.

Q: What do we do if we determine that the source of the pollution is wildlife?
A: Gave an example of an East Coast TMDL involving raccoons. You can trap and remove source. Or, stakeholders can decide what to do. If they do not want to remove the source, as a group you can initiate the process to change the standards to account for the pollution from the wildlife source. Water quality standards can be site-specific.

Q: Where are the sampling stations?
A: US 90, FM 1680, CR 397, CR 353. We will use these same 4 stations for supplemental sampling in the next phase, plus a couple of major tributaries and the point sources.

Q: Did you do any sampling or any studies on the segment of Peach Creek above US 90?
A: No. Our study was defined as the lower 25-mile reach of Peach Creek.

Q: Why not move up the creek and sample different stations to provide more information on the potential source of bacteria?
A: Our scope was defined for the lower 25-mile reach. But, it may be a good idea to do some work in the upper reach. We can see if the TCEQ will be receptive to moving farther up into the watershed.

Q: What are the two point sources?
A: Walder and Flatonia (municipal wastewater plants)

Q: On fecal samples, do you just run DNA/ribotying, or do you perform other tests as well?
A: I believe that the A&M AREC group will run only ribotyping for our project, but they may decide to apply other methods as well.

Q: Do they ribotype everything they find?
A: No, the sample has to be fresh.

Q: When was the sample collected that shows a big spike? What was the flow condition?
A: It appears that it was August 7, 2003 from the plot. I am not sure at this time what the flow condition was – we just recently received all of the sampling data.

Q: When you have stagnant pools, do you get a lot of bacteria?
A: In general, the bacteria decays after 5-7 days, so it doesn't just sit there indefinitely. But, a stagnant pool could be subject to replenishment of the bacteria from sources such as wildlife.

Q: How do Peach Creek levels of bacteria compare with other creeks?
A: Two of our other study segments, Salado Creek and Upper San Antonio River had higher levels of bacteria than Peach Creek, but Medina River had lower levels than Peach Creek (it's actually being removed from the 303d list). In general, there are not a lot of creeks this size that are being studied for bacterial impairment through the TMDL process. I would not be surprised if other small creeks in the area also showed relatively high bacterial counts.

Q: Is flow higher on these other creeks? If their flows are higher and their counts are higher, then they are in a worse situation than Peach Creek, right?
A: It's possible. Salado Creek has a typical flow of 15 cfs, while the Upper San Antonio River has a flow on the order of 80 cfs this past summer.

Comment: There are two flowing wells near the lower end of the study segment that provide the baseflow for the creek.

Q: What's the next step in the study?
A: Runoff and Baseflow studies, then modeling and allocation (2 years from now)

Q: When will you have BST results?
A: We expect to receive results from AREC this fall – no solid date yet, but it is expected to be provided in the next Fiscal Year.

Comment from James Grimm: We would like a meeting before next August. We would like to have a meeting as soon as the BST results are available.
Response from JMA: It is not in the scope to have more than one meeting per year. There is a cost associated with a stakeholder meeting.

Comment from James Grimm: Do not understand what cost is associated with the meeting.
Response from JMA: There is some cost associated with notification, preparation of the presentation, and the meeting itself. We can discuss this issue with TCEQ and they may be agreeable to an additional meeting.
Comment from unidentified person: We do not need to meet until we know what the BST results are and what they mean.

Note: In response to several references during the meeting to an abundance of wild hogs in the watershed, JMA discussed potential fecal source sampling locations with two attendees after the meeting. The information was used to arrange contacts for an additional effort to obtain wild hogs library samples in the watershed.