

Walnut Creek (0838C) Recreational Use Attainability Analysis Summary and Recommendation

A recreational use-attainability analysis (RUAA) was conducted on Walnut Creek (0838C) in the summer of 2010 to determine the appropriate recreational use and numeric criteria. Walnut Creek is an unclassified intermittent water body with perennial pools that is approximately 19 miles in length. The creek is located in Tarrant and Johnson counties. 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 2006.

The RUAA identified that the presumed use of primary contact recreation (PCR) for Walnut 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 type of recreation occurring on the stream despite some locations being visited more than five times. Interviews with stakeholders indicated that they have never personally used or witnessed PCR on the stream. Evidence of PCR (rope swing) was found at one site although the field crew noted that there was no evidence of recent use. No evidence of SCR was found on the stream. Walnut Creek had an average thalweg of 0.75 meters (29.53 in) and contained substantial pools greater than one meter deep. The Palmer Drought Severity Index values ranged from very moist to extremely moist during field surveys. Public access is available at six public parks joined by the Linear Park Trail located in the City of Mansfield. Although public access is available, access to the stream is difficult at the majority of sites due to steep banks.

Difficult access into the stream decreases the likelihood of PCR use. Walnut Creek has steep banks 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 Walnut Creek, from the confluence with Joe Pool Lake up to the headwaters at Spring Street in Burleson. 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 Walnut 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.