

South Leon River (1221B) Recreational Use Attainability Analysis Summary and Recommendation

A recreational use attainability analysis (RUAA) was conducted on the South Leon River (1221B) in the summer of 2010 to determine the appropriate recreational use and numeric criteria. The South Leon River is an unclassified perennial water body in central Texas, approximately 39 miles in length. It is currently listed on the 2010 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 the South Leon River 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. Interviews of landowners conducted during the study identified fishing and kayaking as personal uses on the stream. One individual had witnessed PCR and SCR activities and another had heard of PCR activities occurring on the stream. Indications of human use along the stream consisted of a rope swing and a rope tied to the base of a tree used for climbing up the bank. Physical characteristics of the stream include an average thalweg of 0.37 meters (14.57 in) and pools greater than one meter deep. Public access is very limited. There are six bridge crossings and the stream flows predominately through private land.

Naturally low water levels and limited accessibility decrease the likelihood of PCR use. The South Leon River has few public road crossings and a shallow average depth, supporting reclassification to SCR1. Secondary Contact Recreation 1 is not justified given the presence of pools greater than one meter deep. 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 the South Leon River, from its confluence with the Leon River south of Gustine in Comanche County to the upstream perennial portion of the stream south of Comanche in Comanche County. This reclassification is appropriate due to “natural, ephemeral, intermittent low flow conditions or water levels” in accordance with reasons specified in 40 CFR §131.10(g)(2).

Prior to changing the currently assigned recreational use of South Leon River 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.