

Alarm Creek (1226H) Recreational Use Attainability Analysis Summary and Recommendation

A recreational use attainability analysis (RUAA) was conducted on Alarm Creek (1226H) in the summer of 2012 to determine the appropriate recreational use and numeric criteria. Alarm Creek is an unclassified intermittent with perennial pools water body in Erath County, TX, approximately 17 miles in length. It is currently listed on the 2014 Texas Clean Water Act Section 303(d) List of Impaired Water Bodies due to elevated bacteria levels. It was initially listed in 2010.

The RUAA identified evidence indicating the designated use of primary contact recreation (PCR) 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 recreational activities. Two interviewees reported past instances of personal and witnessed PCR. One interviewee stated that they had swimming holes on their property in the 80's that were used, but that they had been unused and dry for years. The second interviewee reported that, at an unknown time in the past, children waded in the stream until it became polluted. Evidence of use included an old pair of swimming trunks, a child's toy, a grill, and fishing tackle. Physical characteristics of the stream include an average thalweg of 0.11 meters (4.33 in), no flow, three impoundments, and no substantial pools. At the time of the surveys, Alarm Creek had a mid-range Palmer drought index. Public access to Alarm Creek is very limited and there are no public recreation areas on the creek.

Limited public access and shallow average depths decrease the likelihood of PCR use in the stream. 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 Alarm Creek, from its confluence with the North Bosque River, upstream to its headwaters 3 miles west of Stephenville in Erath County, excluding reservoir UB17. 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 Alarm 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.