

## Beals Creek (1412B) Recreational Use-Attainability Analysis Summary and Recommendation

A recreational use-attainability analysis (RUAA) was conducted on Beals Creek (1412B) in the summer of 2016 to determine the appropriate recreational use and numeric criteria. Beals Creek is an unclassified intermittent with pools water body that is approximately 81 miles in length. The creek is located in Howard and Mitchell counties. It was identified in the 2018 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 that the presumed use of primary contact recreation (PCR) for Beals 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. Field staff conducted sixty-four interviews with landowners and stakeholders. Interviewees reported three personal use instances of PCR (swimming, wading children) and three witnessed accounts of PCR (tubing, wading children, rope swing). ATV use was the most common activity reported from stakeholders. Beals Creek had an average thalweg of 0.45 meters (17.71 in) and thirteen substantial pools deeper than 1 meter. Stream flow was normal during the surveys. General public access for Beals Creek is moderate. Many of the sites had steep slopes. There are no public parks on Beals Creek. There are five bridge crossings. Field staff recorded twelve sites with industrial structures on or adjacent to the creek (active oil pipelines, petroleum extraction points, railroad materials).

Steep banks, lack of public access, industrial structures and dense vegetation decrease the likelihood of PCR use. Additionally, primary contact recreation was characterized as seldom occurring on Beals Creek, 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 or 165 colonies Enterococci/100mL, for all of Beals Creek, from the confluence of the Colorado River south of Colorado City in Mitchell County to the confluence of Mustang Draw and Sulphur Springs Draw in Howard County. This reclassification is appropriate due to “natural, ephemeral, intermittent or low

flow conditions or water levels prevent the attainment of the use” in accordance with reasons specified in 40 CFR §131.10(g)(2).

Prior to changing the currently assigned recreational use of Beals 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.