

San Miguel Creek (2108) Recreational Use-Attainability Analysis Summary and Recommendation

A recreational use-attainability analysis (RUAA) was conducted on San Miguel Creek (2108) in the summer of 2015 to determine the appropriate recreational use and numeric criteria. San Miguel Creek is a classified intermittent with perennial pools (ephemeral in upper half) water body that is approximately 66 miles in length. The creek is located in Frio, Atascosa, and McMullen 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 2006.

The RUAA identified that the presumed use of primary contact recreation (PCR) for San Miguel 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. Seventeen interviews were conducted with stakeholders and landowners. One interviewee reported that they had personally used and heard of PCR occurring on the stream. San Miguel Creek had an average thalweg of 0.45 meters (17.71 in) and no pools deeper than 1 meter. One month before the surveys there was a widespread rain event that resulted in a flood. All sites had flowing water during the first surveys. The second field surveys occurred during low flow to no flow conditions. The thalweg had dropped from 0.55 meters (21.65 in) to 0.34 meters (13.39 in) at the time of the second survey. The Palmer Drought Severity Index at the time of the surveys was moderately moist to extremely moist. Public access is available via bridge crossings, however private property fencing often limits access to the area adjacent to the bridges. Most sites were only accessible via private property and there are no public parks on the creek. Access from the stream bank was moderately easy to difficult due to steep and vegetated banks.

Limited public access, absence of substantial pools, and stream bank conditions decrease the likelihood of PCR use on San Miguel Creek. 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 San Miguel Creek, from the confluence of San Francisco Perez and Chacon creeks in Frio County through southwestern Atascosa County to the confluence of Mustang Branch Creek and Choke Canyon Reservoir in northern McMullen 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 San Miguel 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.