

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 is identified in the 2020 Texas Clean Water Act Section 303(d) List of Impaired Water Bodies due to elevated bacteria levels. It was initially listed in 2010.

Primary contact recreation 2 was approved by EPA on May 19, 2020 and as a result of that approval and feedback received during the public comment period, TCEQ reevaluated the RUAA recommendation for Beals Creek. Based on the RUAA, the presumed use of primary contact recreation 1 (PCR 1) for Beals Creek should be revised to primary contact recreation 2 (PCR 2). PCR 2 applies to water bodies where site-specific information demonstrates that water recreation such as swimming or wading by children can occur, but it occurs less frequently than PCR 1 due to physical characteristics of the water body or limited public access.

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 1 use. Additionally, primary contact recreation was characterized as seldom occurring on Beals Creek, supporting reclassification to PCR 2. In accordance with §307.4(j)(3)(C) of the Texas Surface Water Quality Standards, TCEQ recommends a reclassification from PCR 1 to PCR 2 with the corresponding geometric mean criterion of 54 colonies *Enterococcus* per 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 presumed recreational use of Beals Creek in the Texas Surface Water Quality Standards, 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.