



Improving Water Quality in Tres Palacios Creek A Project to Protect Recreational Uses

Since 2006, bacteria concentrations in Tres Palacios Creek (Segment 1501) have regularly been found at high levels. High concentrations of bacteria, which are found in both human and animal waste, may indicate a health risk to people who swim or wade in the water body—activities called “contact recreation” in the state’s standards for water quality.

In response to these conditions, people who have a stake in the watershed are working with the TCEQ to develop a total maximum daily load (TMDL) and a plan to implement it. A TMDL is like a budget—it determines the amount (or load) of bacteria that the creek can receive and still support safe recreation. The allowable load is then allocated among categories of sources within the watershed. The implementation plan (I-Plan) outlines the measures that will be used to reduce pollution.

Learn more about water quality standards, monitoring, and TMDLs by reading *Preserving and Improving Water Quality*, available on our website at www.tceq.texas.gov/goto/tmdl/.

The Tres Palacios Creek Watershed

The Tres Palacios Creek watershed is 268.5 square miles in area and is located along the Texas Gulf Coast midway between the cities of Victoria and Houston. The creek flows into Tres Palacios Bay, and then into Matagorda Bay. Segment 1501 is the portion of Tres Palacios Creek that is influenced by tidal action, meaning the tidal segment receives freshwater inflows from the watershed and saline water from Tres Palacios Bay.

Project Development

The TCEQ began this TMDL project in 2014. The Texas Water Resources Institute (TWRI) has been providing support for the technical work as well as stakeholder engagement.

The tasks of TWRI personnel include compiling and analyzing all available bacteria data and considering sources of the bacteria and their relative contributions, along with stakeholder outreach and development. TWRI staff (with the help of the Texas Institute for Applied Environmental Research (TIAER)) have completed a technical report of their investigations and a draft of the TMDL report.



Public Participation

In all its TMDL projects, the TCEQ gathers opinions and information from people who represent government, permitted facilities, agriculture, business, environmental, and community and private interests in the watershed. TWRI has been coordinating public participation in this project, including public meetings, which began in July 2015 and will continue throughout the project duration. They are working on forming a Coordination Committee to guide the decision-making process, and then work groups to drive specific aspects of the project. These stakeholders will develop the TMDL I-Plan, which will guide efforts to improve water quality.

For More Information

Contact one of the people listed, or visit the project website at:

<www.tceq.texas.gov/waterquality/tmdl/>

Or:

<<http://matagordabasin.tamu.edu/>>

TCEQ Project Manager

Lauren Oertel, TMDL Program
512-239-3604
Lauren.Oertel@tceq.texas.gov

Texas Water Resources Institute

Allen Berthold, Research Scientist
979-845-2028
taberthold@ag.tamu.edu

TMDL Development Status

Start Date: 2014
Projected End Date: 2020
TCEQ Adoption:
EPA Region 6 Approval:

I-Plan Development Status

Projected End Date:
TCEQ Approval:

TMDL: Percent Complete

| | 10 | 20 | 30 | 40 | 50 | 60 | 70 | 80 | 90 | 100 |
|--------------------|----|----|----|----|----|----|----|----|----|-----|
| Data Collection | █ | █ | █ | █ | █ | █ | █ | █ | | |
| Assessment | █ | █ | █ | █ | █ | █ | █ | █ | | |
| TMDL Development | █ | █ | █ | █ | █ | █ | | | | |
| Stakeholder Review | | | | | | | | | | |
| TCEQ Adoption | | | | | | | | | | |

I-Plan: Percent Complete

| | 10 | 20 | 30 | 40 | 50 | 60 | 70 | 80 | 90 | 100 |
|--------------------|----|----|----|----|----|----|----|----|----|-----|
| Plan Development | | | | | | | | | | |
| Stakeholder Review | | | | | | | | | | |
| TCEQ Approval | | | | | | | | | | |

Project Highlights

- Public meetings began in July 2015.
- The TWRI and TIAER have completed a technical report on their investigations, and a first draft of the TMDL.
- Work has begun to form the Coordination Committee that will develop the I-Plan.

Visit our website at: <www.tceq.texas.gov/goto/tmdl/>