

Gibbons Creek (1209I) Recreational Use Attainability Analysis Summary and Recommendation

A recreational use attainability analysis (RUAA) was conducted on Gibbons Creek (1209I) in the summer of 2010 to determine the appropriate recreational use and numeric criteria. Gibbons Creek is an unclassified intermittent with pools water body that is approximately 23 miles in length. The creek is located in Grimes County. It was identified in the 2014 Texas Clean Water Act Section 303(d) List of Impaired Water Bodies due to elevated bacteria levels. It was initially listed in 2002.

The RUAA identified that the presumed use of primary contact recreation (PCR) for Gibbons 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 observed fishing and also non-contact recreation. Evidence of recreation included footpaths, a fire pit, and fishing tackle. Gibbons Creek had an average thalweg of 0.58 meters (22.83 in). No pools were documented during the field surveys. Flow was measured at two sites and the average was 0.4 cubic feet per second. The Palmer Drought Severity Index (PDSI) indicated normal conditions during both field surveys. Gibbons Creek Reservoir (1209N) is a reservoir located in the middle of Gibbons Creek. The reservoir is a separate segment with its own designated recreational use and numeric criteria and any use changes associated with Gibbons Creek will not apply to the reservoir. The creek flows through rural areas and most of the land is privately owned. Public access was moderate overall. All of the sites were at road crossings, and two had fences upstream and/or downstream of the access point. Other recreation impediments include steep slopes, private property signs, and debris in the water.

Limited access and steep banks decrease the likelihood of PCR use. Gibbons Creek has various impediments to access and no accounts of PCR, 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 for all of Gibbons Creek, from the confluence with Navasota River in Grimes County to SH 90 in Grimes County. This reclassification is appropriate due to “physical conditions related to the natural features of the water body” in accordance with reasons specified in 40 CFR §131.10(g)(5).

Prior to changing the currently assigned recreational use of Gibbons 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.