

Wickson Creek (1209E) Recreational Use Attainability Analysis Summary and Recommendation

A recreational use attainability analysis (RUAA) was conducted on Wickson Creek (1209E) in the summer of 2010 to determine the appropriate recreational use and numeric criteria. Wickson Creek is an unclassified perennial water body that is approximately 33 miles in length. The creek is located in Brazos 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 2006.

The RUAA identified that the presumed use of primary contact recreation (PCR) for Wickson 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 recreational activities. Eight interviews were conducted with landowners who had property along or near the creek. Fishing was the only recreational use that was cited for the creek. No recreation had been witnessed and hunting was the only heard of activity. During the surveys an additional landowner informed field staff that no one would be recreating on their property. Graffiti and footpaths were seen at a couple of sites. Wickson Creek had an average thalweg of 0.62 meters (24.40 in) and had pools deeper than 1 meter. The thalweg depth was calculated from data from supplemental site visits. The average stream flow was 0.14 cubic feet per second; several sites had no flow. The Palmer Drought Severity Index (PDSI) indicated normal conditions during both field surveys. There are no public parks on Wickson Creek. Public access was moderate overall. All of the sites were at road crossings, but half of the sites had fences upstream and/or downstream of the access point. Wickson Creek flows through rural areas and most of the land is privately owned.

Fences, sinking mud, and instream obstructions decrease the likelihood of PCR use. Wickson Creek has a shallow average depth 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 Wickson Creek, from the confluence with an unnamed first order tributary (approximately 1.3 km upstream of Reliance Road crossing) upstream to the confluence with an unnamed first order tributary approximately 15 meters upstream of Dilly Shaw Road. 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 Wickson 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.