

Response to Public Comments

Seven Total Maximum Daily Loads for Indicator Bacteria in Lake Houston, East Fork San Jacinto River, West Fork San Jacinto River, and Crystal Creek Watersheds

Tracking Number	Date Received	Affiliation of Commenter	Summary of Request or Comment	Summary of TCEQ Action, or Explanation
001	3/17/2016	Bayou Land Conservancy	<p>The commenter shared information about the growing impact of sand and gravel mining operations within the project's watershed, particularly the western portion. The Bayou Land Conservancy actively lobbies the state legislature for legislation related to these mining activities, including an ongoing effort to require forested buffer zones at least 300 feet wide separating mines from river banks. The commenter asserts that such buffers would help filter rainfall runoff, decreasing both sediment and bacteria loadings in rivers and streams. They also encourage applying protective measures to water bodies that aren't currently considered to be impaired to prevent impairment and the need for future cleanup, which would be more difficult after problems have arisen.</p>	<p>The TCEQ agrees that rainfall runoff events can have a significant impact on bacteria concentrations in the water bodies found in TMDL project area, and that vegetated buffers and other best management practices for reducing bacteria concentrations should be considered throughout the project's watershed.</p> <p>The coordination committee for this project voted to join the effort of the approved <i>Implementation Plan for Seventy-Two Total Maximum Daily Loads for Bacteria in the Houston-Galveston Region</i> developed by the Bacteria Implementation Group (the "BIG I-Plan"), and the BIG members in turn voted to add the area covered by this project to their implementation efforts.</p> <p>The BIG I-Plan addresses stormwater in "Implementation Strategy 4.0: Stormwater and Land Development." The coordination committee for this project and the BIG members recognized that this project adds a significant area to the original BIG I-Plan's area, and that area, much of which is more rural in nature, may have sources of bacteria that are different (or of a different magnitude) from that of the original I-Plan. They also</p>

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				<p>recognized that the I-Plan may need to be modified to better address all bacteria sources throughout the expanded I-Plan's area. Interested parties are encouraged to become active through the BIG I-Plan's work groups to ensure that topics such as buffer zones are considered. No changes have been made to the TMDL document based on this comment.</p>
002	3/19/16	Concerned Citizen	<p>The commenter indicated that the bacteria problems in the project area are caused by flood water passing over septic tanks, cattle pastures, wastewater treatment facilities, and forested areas.</p>	<p>The TCEQ agrees that water from flooding or other rainfall-related events can have a significant impact on bacteria concentrations in the water bodies found in TMDL project area. The BIG I-Plan addresses stormwater in "Implementation Strategy 4.0: Stormwater and Land Development." The TCEQ encourages the commenter to actively attend and participate in the BIG I-Plan's work groups and assist in developing ways of addressing stormwater in this project's watershed. No changes have been made to the TMDL document based on this comment.</p>
003	3/20/16	Concerned Citizen	<p>(a) The commenter shared personal knowledge of a business that dumped raw sewage into an area stream in the past, and wondered if they or others like them continue to take part in such illegal activities today. The commenter was supportive of continued water quality testing in the area.</p>	<p>(a) The TCEQ agrees that illegal activities have the potential to cause locally high bacteria concentrations in the water bodies found in TMDL project area. The BIG I-Plan addresses the need for increased inspections of existing facilities in "Implementation Activity 1.3: Increase Compliance and Enforcement by the TCEQ." The TCEQ encourages the commenter to actively attend and participate in the</p>

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			<p>(b) The commenter also brought up the plan for an interbasin transfer of water from the Trinity River to Lake Houston to augment drinking water supplies, expressing concern about a recent fish consumption advisory issued by the Texas Department of State Health Services (DSHS) for dioxins and polychlorinated biphenyls (PCBs) in various fish species in the Trinity River.</p>	<p>BIG I-Plan's work groups and assist in developing ways of addressing not only compliance and enforcement at existing facilities, but also for reporting illegally dumped waste into water bodies in the project area. No changes have been made to the TMDL document based on this comment.</p> <p>(b) The TCEQ appreciates the commenter's concern about the quality of drinking water in the project area. This project focuses on high bacteria concentrations and the impaired primary contact recreation use. The DSHS Seafood and Aquatic Life Program's web page (<www.dshs.state.tx.us/seafood/>) will have the latest information about this advisory. No changes have been made to the TMDL document based on this comment.</p>
004	3/20/16	Concerned Citizen	<p>The commenter indicated that the land application of sewage sludge can be a source of bacterial and chemical contamination of water bodies during rainfall runoff events.</p>	<p>The TCEQ appreciates the commenter's interest in improving water quality within the project's watershed. The TMDL focuses on broad sources of potential bacteria contamination. However, the BIG I-Plan describes specific ways to address such sources.</p> <p>The BIG I-Plan includes sludge as a potential source of bacteria in "Implementation Strategy 1.0: Wastewater Treatment Facilities," and identifies the need for further research in "Research Priority 10.4: Additional</p>

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				Research Topics.” No changes have been made to the TMDL document based on this comment.
005	3/29/16	Concerned Citizen	The commenter recommended regulations to require sand and gravel mining operations to maintain vegetated greenbelts between mining activities and rivers to help filter sediment and bacteria from runoff that would otherwise reach the water.	See the response to Comment 001. No changes have been made to the TMDL document based on this comment.
006	4/2/16	Concerned Citizen	The commenter expressed concerns about the validity of the Bayou Land Conservancy’s data and motivations.	Bayou Land Conservancy data were not used in the development of these TMDLs. All data used in the development of these TMDLs were acquired from sources with rigorous quality assurance and quality control programs in place and are assumed to have been verified and validated according to the requirements of the respective programs. Additionally, data compilations created for this project have been visually screened for errors. No changes have been made to the TMDL document based on this comment.