



## Improving Water Quality in the Sandy and Wolf Creeks Watersheds

# A Project to Protect Recreational Uses

In two stream segments in the Sandy and Wolf creeks watersheds, bacteria concentrations are sometimes higher than the criteria set to protect the safety of recreation. High concentrations of bacteria, which are found in both human and animal waste, may indicate a health risk to people who swim or waded in the water body—activities called “contact recreation” in the state’s standards for water quality.

Bacteria are commonly found in the intestines of warm-blooded organisms such as humans, livestock, poultry, cats, and dogs. Bacteria from human and animal waste often indicate the presence of disease-causing microorganisms, which can pose a health threat to people who engage in contact recreation.

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

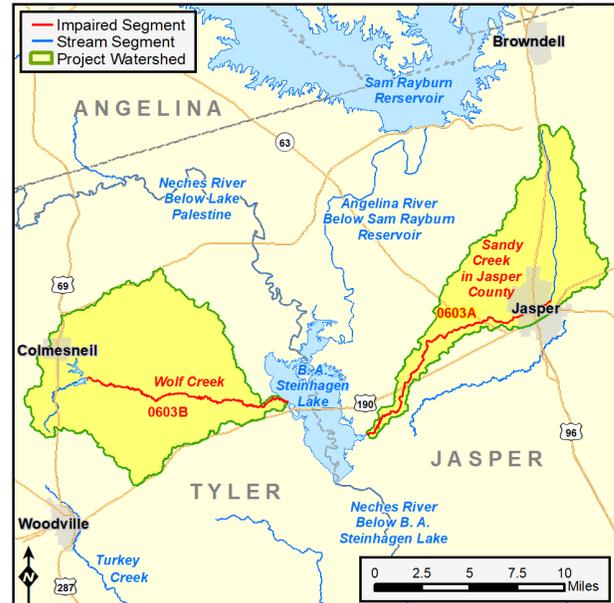
Learn more about water quality standards, monitoring, and TMDLs by reading [Preserving and Improving Water Quality](#)<sup>1</sup>, available on our website and in print.

### The Sandy and Wolf Creeks Watersheds

The watersheds lie in east Texas about sixty miles north of the city of Beaumont. Sandy and Wolf creeks are tributaries to B.A. Steinhagen Lake. The watersheds include the cities of Colmesneil in Tyler County and Jasper in Jasper County. Wolf Creek flows east before emptying into B.A. Steinhagen Lake. Sandy Creek flows southwest through Jasper before emptying into the lake.

This project includes two stream segments:

- **Sandy Creek in Jasper County**  
(Segment 0603A)  
From the confluence of B.A. Steinhagen Lake southwest of City of Jasper in Jasper County to the confluence of Big and Little Sandy Creeks in City of Jasper in Jasper County.



- **Wolf Creek**  
(Segment 0603B)  
From the confluence of B. A. Steinhagen Lake southeast of Colmesneil in Tyler County to the upstream perennial portion of the stream south of Colmesneil in Tyler County.

The Sandy Creek watershed is about 57 square miles. The dominant land cover includes forest (45%), shrub/scrub (13%), and developed (15%). Jasper is the largest city in the watershed, with a population of 7,584 in 2018.

The Wolf Creek watershed is about 83 square miles. The dominant land cover includes forest (50%) and grassland/herbaceous (14%). Colmesneil is the only town in the watershed, with a population of 590 in 2018.

### Project Development

TCEQ began this project in 2018. The Texas Water Resources Institute (TWRI) is providing support for the technical work, as well as stakeholder engagement.

TWRI completed a technical support document in 2020 that compiled and analyzed all available bacteria

<sup>1</sup> <https://www.tceq.texas.gov/publications/gi/gi-351>

data and considered sources of the bacteria and their relative contributions.

TCEQ has completed a draft TMDL based on that TWRI data and analysis and expects to release it for public comments in October 2022. TWRI and stakeholders have begun developing the I-Plan.

In addition to the TMDL and I-Plan, stakeholders will consider developing a watershed protection plan (WPP) to address other issues in the watershed.

### Public Participation

In all its projects, TCEQ seeks to gather opinion and information from people who represent government, permitted facilities, agriculture, business, environmental, and community and private interests in the watershed. TCEQ solicits advice from the public at meetings and through print and electronic media notices.

TWRI is coordinating stakeholder participation. Stakeholders are advising TCEQ on the TMDL allocations and developing the I-Plan.

### For More Information

Contact the project manager listed below, or visit the project webpage at:

[www.tceq.texas.gov/waterquality/tmdl/nav/118-sandy-wolf-creeks-bacteria](http://www.tceq.texas.gov/waterquality/tmdl/nav/118-sandy-wolf-creeks-bacteria)

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### TMDL Development Status

**Start Date:** 2018

**TCEQ Adoption:**

**EPA Region 6 Approval:**

### I-Plan Development Status

**Start Date:** 2020

**TCEQ Approval:**

### Project Highlights

- A Watershed Stewards Workshop was held in May 2019 in Jasper.
- TWRI completed their technical support document in June 2020.
- TCEQ has completed a draft TMDL and expects to release it for public comments in October 2022.
- TCEQ and TWRI held online meetings with the Coordination Committee on February 2, 2021 and May 17, 2021 to continue developing the I-Plan.

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