



Improving Water Quality in Brandy Branch Reservoir

Assessing the Fish Consumption Use

Water Quality in Brandy Branch Reservoir

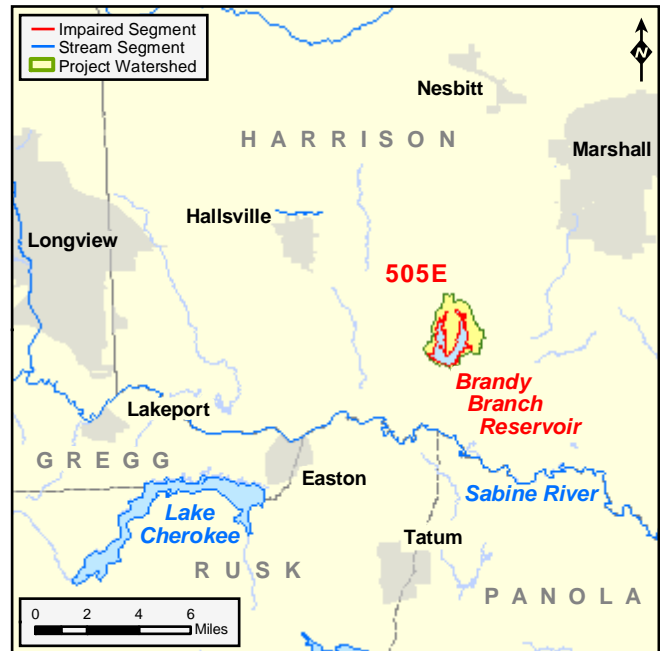
The state of Texas requires that water quality in Brandy Branch Reservoir (Segment 0505E) be suitable for swimming, wading, fishing, and a healthy aquatic environment. However, elevated concentrations of selenium were found in the tissue of fish collected from the reservoir. As a result, the Texas Department of State Health Services (DSHS) issued an advisory in May of 1992, restricting the consumption of fish from the reservoir.

In response to this condition, the Total Maximum Daily Load (TMDL) Program initiated a project to determine whether the consumption of fish from the reservoir still posed a threat to human health. The TCEQ worked with the DSHS to collect fish samples, conduct laboratory analyses, and prepare a characterization of the possible risks to consumers from all contaminants found in fish tissue samples.

Selenium is a naturally occurring element that is widely but unevenly distributed in the earth's crust. It is also an essential dietary element that prevents damage to tissues by oxygen. However, when consumed in amounts higher than the recommended daily allowance (RDA), selenium is toxic to humans and animals. The DSHS advisory included all species of fish found in Brandy Branch Reservoir and provided specific recommendations for limiting fish consumption.

Fish Are Now Safe to Eat

After assessing all the data collected and characterizing the risks associated with all the contaminants found in fish tissue, the DSHS concluded that consumption of fish from Brandy Branch Reservoir does not pose a threat to human health. The fish consumption advisory was rescinded on October 14, 2004. The impairment "selenium in fish tissue" was proposed for delisting on the draft 2004 303(d) List (part of the Draft 2004 Texas Water Quality Inventory and 303(d) List). The delisting will be complete if the U.S. Environmental Protection Agency approves it when they review the state's draft list. The schedule of special monitoring and analysis of Brandy Branch Reservoir fish is concluded.



Brandy Branch Reservoir Watershed

Brandy Branch Reservoir, which is also known as Hallsville or Pirkey Lake, is located southwest of Marshall in Harrison county. The reservoir is an impoundment of Brandy Branch Creek in the Sabine River Basin. The area vegetation consists of mixed pine and hardwood forests.

The 1,242-acre reservoir was constructed in 1983 to serve as a cooling pond for a steam-electric power plant. Boating and fishing attracts many people to the reservoir each year.

Public Participation

The TCEQ communicated the progress of this project through the Sabine River Basin Steering Committee created by the Texas Clean Rivers Program. The project was a collaborative effort involving the TCEQ, the DSHS, the Texas Parks and Wildlife Department (TPWD), and the Sabine River Authority (SRA).

For More Information

For more information about this project, contact one of the TCEQ staff listed on this page.

Dania Drogolewicz,
TMDL Program,
(512) 239-3449, ddrogole@tceq.state.tx.us

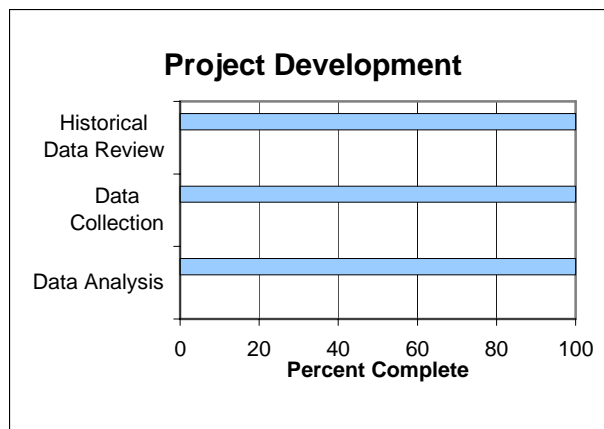
Mike Prater, TCEQ Region 5-Tyler
(903) 535-5167

To learn more about how water quality is measured and monitored, read *Clean Water for Texas: Working Together for Water Quality*. For general information about how TMDL projects are structured, read *The TMDL Process in Texas: What You Need to Know*. Both documents are available on the Web at www.tceq.org/goto/tmdl/.

Project Development Status

Start Date: January 2002

End Date: October 2003



Project Highlights

- At a meeting held September 2001 with representatives from the DSHS, the TPWD, and the TCEQ, staff decided that the human health risks associated with fish consumption from Brandy Branch Reservoir should be reassessed.
- The TCEQ contracted with the DSHS in January 2002, to conduct a human health risk assessment. Work consists of fish sampling; the analysis of fish specimens for volatile organic compounds (VOCs), semi-volatile organic compounds (SVOCs), polychlorinated biphenyls (PCBs), pesticides, and a metals panel including arsenic (As), cadmium (Cd), copper (Cu), lead (Pb), selenium (Se), zinc (Zn), and mercury (Hg). Project staff will prepare conclusions and recommendations based on the analysis.
- The quality assurance project plan (QAPP) was finalized by the TCEQ and the DSHS and approved by the EPA.
- The DSHS completed its risk characterization and concluded that consuming fish from Brandy Branch Reservoir does not pose a threat to human health. The fish consumption advisory was rescinded on October 14, 2004.
- The "selenium in fish tissue" impairment was proposed for delisting on the draft 2004 303(d) List (part of the Draft 2004 Texas Water Quality Inventory and 303(d) List). The delisting will be complete when the draft 2004 List is approved by the U.S. Environmental Protection Agency.