



Improving Water Quality in South Central Texas

One TMDL for Bacteria in the Atascosa River

Water Quality in the Atascosa River

The state of Texas requires that most streams, lakes, and bays be suitable for swimming, wading, fishing, a healthy aquatic environment, and use as a source of drinking water. These requirements may vary somewhat for specific bodies of water. In the Atascosa River, concentrations of bacteria exhibit levels which may pose a potential health risk for swimmers.

In response to these conditions, the TCEQ Total Maximum Daily Load Program is developing a total maximum daily load (TMDL) project to determine the measures necessary to restore water quality in the Atascosa River.

The goal of a TMDL is to determine the amount (or load) of a pollutant that a body of water can receive and still support its designated uses. This allowable load is then allocated among all the potential sources of pollution within the watershed, and measures to reduce pollutant loads are developed as necessary.

Bacteria from human and animal waste may indicate the presence of disease-causing microorganisms, which pose a threat to public health. People who swim or wade in the creek or ingest contaminated shellfish may be at risk.

Learn more about water quality standards and monitoring by reading *Clean Water for Texas: Working Together for Water Quality*, available on the Web at www.tceq.org/goto/tmdl/.

Description of the Atascosa River Watershed

The main portion of the Atascosa River (Segment 2107) is formed by the union of the north and west prongs of the river in extreme northwestern Atascosa County, southeast of Lytle. From its origin, the Atascosa River flows approximately 103 miles into Live Oak County between Choke Canyon Reservoir and Three Rivers, where it joins the Frio River. The Atascosa is part of the Nueces River Basin, which includes the cities of Poteet and Pleasanton and the communities of Campbellton and Whitsett. The watershed is characterized by level to rolling land dominated by open grasslands, as well as cacti, weeds, thorny shrubs, and trees such as mesquite, live oak, and post oak. The watershed is recreationally



important for deer and quail hunting. The river is the setting for Atascosa River Park in Pleasanton.

Project Development

The TCEQ contracted with the Texas Institute for Applied Environmental Research (TIAER) to conduct TMDLs and coordinate public involvement in the Atascosa River Watershed. Water quality monitoring began in the summer of 2002 and continued through August 2004. The data has been analyzed, and the TCEQ is in the process of developing TMDLs for bacteria in the Atascosa River.

Public Participation

Public participation is an important component of the Atascosa River TMDL project. A formal stakeholder group will be created to address the problems in the watershed. The TCEQ will encourage local involvement with the help of the existing Basin Steering Committees established for the Clean Rivers Program. In general, these committees are made up of representatives from:

- Cities
- State Agencies
- Federal Agencies
- Regional Regulatory Agencies
- Citizen Groups

- Water Utilities
- Universities
- Private Industries
- Independent Consultants
- Agricultural Groups
- Individuals

For More Information

To find out more about upcoming meetings and progress of the project, contact:

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Texas State Soil and Water Conservation Board

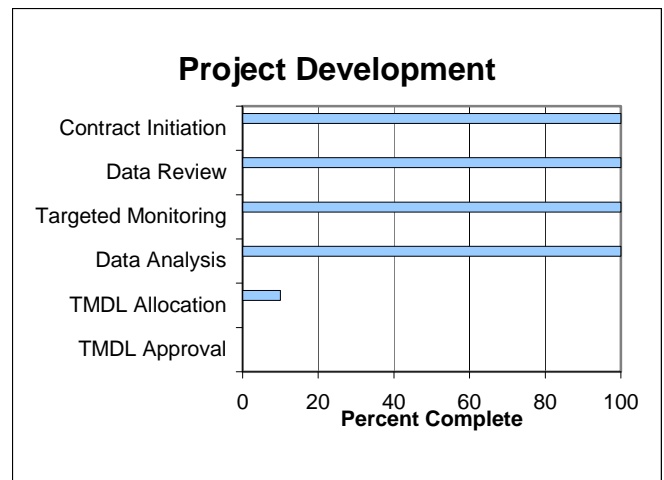
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Nueces River Basin

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Project Development Status

Start: November 2004
Projected End: March 2010



TMDL Project Highlights

- Flow duration models are being developed to evaluate sources of bacteria.
- There will be additional data collection to evaluate bacteria levels in the lower portion of the segment.
- Current monitoring is focused on data collection in tributaries to evaluate potential sources of bacteria.
- Draft report describing bacteria impairment is currently in final revisions.