

Recreational Use Attainability Analysis for White Oak Creek

Website: <http://tiaer.tarleton.edu/ruaa>

White Oak Creek

White Oak Creek is a tributary of the Sulphur River and flows north of Naples in Morris County to the upstream perennial portion of the stream east of Sulphur Springs in Hopkins County. The watershed includes approximately 471,603 acres that runs through a mostly rural area that is predominantly hay and pasture with some mixed forest. The City of Sulphur Springs (population 15,868) and Mount Vernon (population 2,678) are within the watershed. Small portions of the cities Como, Talco, Millers Cove, and Omaha reach the watershed.

What is a Recreational Use Attainability Analysis (RUAA)?

A RUAA is a specific type of Use Attainability Analysis that is conducted to evaluate and determine the correct category of recreational use appropriate for a particular water body. RUAAs are typically site specific studies that assess reasonably attainable recreational uses that can occur based on the physical and flow characteristics of a stream, examples include water depth and persistence of flow. In order to assess historical and existing patterns of recreational use, individuals and organizations within the watershed are asked to complete a survey sharing their knowledge of the water body.

How did we get here?

All creeks, rivers, streams and lakes in Texas have a recreational use category designated to them by the Texas Commission Environmental Quality (TCEQ). White Oak Creek's current recreational use category is Primary Contact. Each designation has a corresponding bacteria limit which is monitored by a state or county entity for the TCEQ. White Oak Creek is one of many rural waterbodies listed on the *2014 Texas 303(d) List*. This list is part of the Texas Integrated Report which describes the status of Texas' natural waters based on historical data. It is required by law to be revised and released every two years. White Oak Creek is listed as impaired due to elevated levels of *E. coli*, the indicator bacteria, used to assess the possible presence of pathogens that may increase the risk of illness when ingested while participating in contact recreation in the waterbody.

Why this approach?

The Texas State Soil and Water Conservation Board (TSSWCB) has taken the initiative to re-evaluate the more rural streams that TCEQ has listed as impaired under the "Primary Contact" recreational use standard. To do this, TCEQ and TSSWCB, use the RUAA process which documents information that will either confirm or deny whether primary contact recreation is taking place.

Funding

Funding for this project is provided through a State Nonpoint Source Grant from the Texas State Soil and Water Conservation Board. The Texas Institute for Applied Environmental Research (TIAER) at Tarleton State University is the managing entity for this RUAA. The project period extends from November 1, 2015 through November 30, 2017.

Public Participation

Local landowner cooperation and input from the public is crucial to identify survey sites along the creek and access survey sites on private property. Local city/county officials, landowners, as well as the general public will be consulted on their knowledge of how the stream is being used. Public meetings will be held throughout the project to allow stakeholders to provide input and remain informed as the study moves forward.

Project Objectives

- Conduct a Recreational Use Attainability Analysis to document factors that support or hinder recreational use and the actual level, if any, and types of recreational use occurring.
- Facilitate public participation and involvement throughout project activities so that stakeholders make informed decisions about the future of their watershed



Contact Information

Leah Taylor

Texas Institute for Applied Environmental Research at
Tarleton State University
(254) 968-0513
ltaylor@tiaer.tarleton.edu

Mitch Conine

Texas State Soil and Water Conservation Board
(254) 773-2250 ext. 233
mconine@tsswcb.texas.gov

