

Buck Creek Watershed Partnership

August 2010 Newsletter
<http://buckcreek.tamu.edu>

Proposed Removal of Buck Creek from the 2010 303(d) List

When the Texas Commission on Environmental Quality (TCEQ) released the draft of the *2010 Integrated Report* (previously known as the *Texas Water Quality Inventory and 303(d) List*) this spring, the proposed removal of Buck Creek from the list for its previous bacteria impairment was included. Water quality data collected beginning December 2001 through November 2008 was used for this assessment and included 257 individual *E. coli* samples from Buck Creek. The geometric mean of the samples assessed was 97.6 colony forming units (cfu) of *E. coli* per 100 mL of water and is below the state's *E. coli* standard of 126 cfu/100 mL; thus the recommendation for removal from the 303(d) List. TCEQ intends to take action on the 2010 integrated report in late August 2010; the USEPA will then need to take action on the report. So for now, Buck Creek is still considered an impaired water body, but this should change upon EPA's approval of the new 303(d) List.

The removal of Buck Creek is a direct result of the efforts of local landowners. Stakeholders have adopted and implemented numerous management practices discussed during stakeholder meetings and educational workshops; these practices have certainly influenced the quality of water in Buck Creek. We commend you on your efforts and look forward to further improving Buck Creek. Strategies already implemented by landowners, in addition to other BMPs, are included in the WPP.

The concern for elevated nitrate levels in Buck Creek above the state's screening level of 1.95 mg/L still exists. During the latest water quality assessment, eight of nine samples evaluated exceeded the 1.95 mg/L screening level and the overall average nitrate level recorded was 3.86 mg/L. This concern and ways to reduce nitrate levels in the creek are included in the Buck Creek WPP.

Watershed Protection Plan Update

Work on the draft of the Buck Creek Watershed Protection Plan has continued slowly since the last project update. TSSWCB has continued to review the WPP and we are anticipating comments soon. We apologize for not getting the WPP to you sooner. You will hear from us as soon as it is ready for you to review.

In the meantime, if you have additional thoughts or comments regarding the draft's historical section, please let Lucas Gregory know and he will work to address your comments. You can download the draft WPP at the Buck Creek project website at <http://buckcreek.tamu.edu/media/1664/WPPDraft.pdf>. Lucas can also be contacted for a paper copy. Please provide your mailing address when requesting a paper copy.



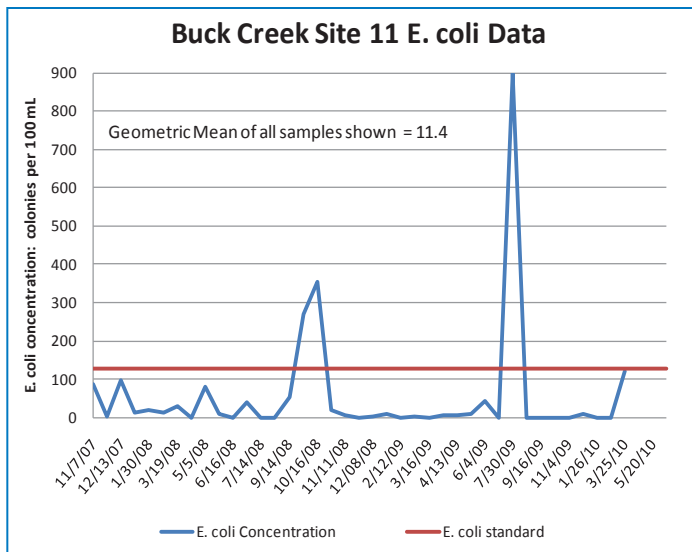
Project Happenings

Since we last met, there have been some milestones for Buck Creek:

- In March 2010, USDA-Animal and Plant Health Inspection Service (APHIS) and Texas AgriLife Research in Vernon cooperated on an aerial feral hog hunt at no charge to landowners along the creek who agreed to participate. The cooperative effort included more than 30,000 acres of land and yielded the removal of 258 feral hogs. Additional fecal samples from some of these hogs were collected to add to the Texas *E. coli*

Bacterial Source Tracking Library. We also discovered hogs hiding underneath brush piles so we suggest getting rid of or at least checking brush piles to ensure that feral hogs are not using them for cover.

- We have completed water quality monitoring of the creek for the WPP Development Project and have submitted data to TSSWCB for review and for submission to TCEQ for use in future integrated reports.



- We have submitted a proposal to TSSWCB for continued funding to conduct additional monthly monitoring for a 24-month period. This funding will bridge the gap between sampling that was conducted to support development of the WPP and sampling to be conducted to track water quality improvements from implementation of WPP.

Possible Funding for Septic Systems

We came across a potential source of funding from the Texas Water Development Board (TWDB) for anyone interested in adding a septic system, repairing an old failing system, or adding a system for hunters to dump their black water into at camp sites. The funding is a 30-year low or no interest loan from the State Revolving Fund. There is potential for principal forgiveness in some cases, making this similar to grant funding. Several people have already expressed interest in these funds; however, a public entity will need to apply for the funds. If you or anyone you know are interested in learning more about this potential source of funds, please contact Phyllis for more info. We anticipate developing a proposal for submission to TWDB in early 2011. Find out more at http://www.twdb.state.tx.us/assistance/financial/fin_infrastructure/cwsrffund.asp.

Next Stakeholder Meeting TBD

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