

Recreation Uses & Criteria

Chapter 307 Subchapter 7

Existing water quality standards

How we got here

Options for change

Recreation uses - now

- Contact recreation – activities involving a significant risk of ingestion of water
 - Wading by children
 - Swimming
 - Water skiing, diving, surfing
 - Assumed -- unless shown otherwise

Recreation uses - now

- Noncontact recreation – activities not involving a significant risk of ingestion
 - Fishing
 - Commercial & recreational boating
 - Limited contact from shoreline activity
- 8 water bodies are noncontact use
- Houston Ship Channel: no recreational use

Recreation criteria - now

	<u>Geom mean per 100 ml</u>	
	<u>Contact</u>	<u>Noncontact</u>
<i>E. coli</i> (fresh)	126	605
Enterococci (salt)	35	168
Fecal coliform (all)	200	2,000

Early recreation criteria

- 1973 Texas standards
 - Subject to U.S. Clean Water Act of 1972
 - Criteria were for fecal coliform
 - Urban bayous – some noncontact use
 - Uses based in part on BPJ
 - Some revised to contact use by 1981

Recreation standards - history

- Changes in federal regulations in 1983
- Use-attainability analyses required for uses less than “fishable/swimmable”
- Some early UAAs disapproved by EPA
- Lawsuit on Texas Standards in 1986
 - SCOT, EDF, Sierra Club vs. EPA
 - One complaint was lack of UAAs

Recreation standards - history

- 1988 WQ standards revisions:
 - Most water bodies at contact recreation
 - Contact recreation assumed for small, unclassified streams
- Up until mid 1990's:
 - Listing impaired waters - much less formal
 - TMDLs - mainly for dissolved oxygen

History: 2000 WQ Standards

- Changed *E. coli* in freshwater and Enterococci in saltwater
- Compliant with federal Beach Act of 2000
- Continued to allow fecal coliform as an alternative indicator during transition
- Considered, but did not adopt, wet-weather exemption for streams and rivers

Continuing bacteria issues?

- 36% of assessed streams “impaired” for elevated bacteria indicators
- Non-human sources common
- Attainability concerns
- Primary contact recreation not an appropriate “use” in some water bodies

Options for recreation standards: examples

- Broaden contact recreation categories
 - Primary contact recreation
 - E. coli: 126 per 100 ml (geom. mean)
 - Enterococci: 35 per 100 ml geom. mean)
 - Secondary contact recreation
 - E. coli (fw): 630 per 100 ml (geom. mean)
 - Enterococci (sw): 175 per 100 ml (geom. mean)
 - Noncontact recreation

Options for recreation standards: examples

- Evaluate “presumed” uses for small water bodies, like intermittent streams
- Review assessment procedures:
 - Are samples representative?
 - Emphasize geom. mean criteria, rather than single-sample maximums?
- Establish better UAA framework

WQ Standards Revisions

- Ongoing - with advisory workgroup
- Recreation criteria - 5/16/07 workgroup
- Revisit recreation - next workgroup
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