

CONCLUSIONS

The primary water quality concern throughout the basin continues to be the elevated chloride and total dissolved solids concentrations. Elevated chloride and associated TDS concentrations increase the drinking water treatment costs, stress aquatic ecosystems and also creates a suitable environment for golden algae. Elevated levels of bacteria continue to be an issue of concern and are the cause of the majority of stream impairments in the Brazos Basin. Several bacteria related Watershed Protection Plans are currently underway to identify sources of contamination and to help in the development of reasonable remediation and control strategies. The task of addressing bacteria in the Brazos River Basin is particularly daunting because most of the issues are in small, rural, prairie streams which are characterized by low to intermittent flows with many potential nonpoint sources that may contribute to the impairment. Further, muddying the bacteria issue is discussion at the state level regarding the appropriateness of designating contact recreation use for small, rural streams with low to intermittent flow. In many of these small, rural streams compliance with the contact recreation standard is hindered by the natural features of the microwatershed. Routine monitoring continues to be conducted to document other water quality issues, including low dissolved oxygen levels that have been measured in many small tributaries throughout the basin.

Expanded ambient monitoring over the past decade has given water quality managers data to conduct better and more efficient assessments. Monitoring in watersheds that previously had limited data has improved the knowledge of water quality conditions in rural areas. The combination of data collection, analysis, education, stakeholder involvement, and reasonable implementation strategies are key factors in watershed management and the understanding of aquatic ecological systems.

The Authority will continue to monitor sites, analyze data, determine trends, and assist in the development of Best Management Practices to maintain the water quality in the Brazos River Basin. However, this effort has become increasingly difficult because Authority operational costs for CRP have increased steadily while the level of funding received by the Texas Clean Rivers Program (CRP) has not since the programs inception in 1991. This has forced CRP partner agencies to reduce sampling events and parameters collected, while the number of monitoring sites and parameters needed to meet the CRP goals are ever increasing. An increase in program funds is recommended to provide a constant, reliable source of water quality data. It is the BRA's opinion that the greatest attention should go to waterbodies with the greatest risk of not attaining water quality standards.

As an agency of the state, and in compliance with its mission, the BRA provides financial assistance as much as possible to alleviate some of the budget shortfalls, and also contributes to the CRP funding by payment of fees assessed to fund TCEQ's water programs. The Authority supports itself through contractual

agreements with governmental and non-governmental entities, limiting the additional funding required to adequately monitor the basin's many water resources. Nevertheless, the BRA will continue to work toward full attainment of the Clean Rivers Program goals.