

Protecting Water Quality



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<http://lampasasriver.org>

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Water Quality Issues

Based on routine water quality sampling of the Lampasas River, the river was identified as impaired in 2002 because of elevated bacteria concentrations. High bacteria concentrations do not support contact recreation, which is defined as recreational activities involving a significant risk of swallowing water, such as wading by children or swimming.

The Lampasas River

The Lampasas River begins in western Mills County and flows southeast for 75 miles before it is dammed 5 miles southwest of Belton to form Stillhouse Hollow Lake. The approximately 1,250 square mile Lampasas River watershed lies within the larger Brazos River Basin. The watershed is primarily rural with few urban areas which include the city limits of Lampasas and portions of the city limits of both Copperas Cove and Killeen along with a portion of Fort Hood Military Reservation. Other small communities of Adamsville, Star, Kempner and Oakalla are also located in the watershed. Although the population in the northern region of the watershed remains stable, the areas in the southern are rapidly developing and transitioning from rural to urban areas. As development and population growth continues, the portion of urbanized land will grow and play an increasingly important role in the hydrology and water quality of Lampasas River and its tributaries.

The Lampasas River Watershed Partnership

The Lampasas River Watershed Partnership, a collaboration of local citizens, cities, counties, and state and federal agencies, was formed to restore and protect water quality in the Lampasas River. The Partnership is comprised of a Steering Committee, two topical workgroups, and a Technical Advisory Group. The Partnership completed a Watershed Protection Plan (WPP) in 2013 and is now working toward full implementation. The WPP identifies potential sources of pollution and provides a basic strategy to restore and protect water quality in the Lampasas River and its tributaries. The plan received EPA approval in September 2013.

The Steering Committee was formed as the decision making body for the Partnership. Work groups were created by the Steering Committee to address specific issues, identify and make recommendations on implementation strategies, and support development of the WPP. A Technical Advisory Group composed of personnel from key state and federal water quality agencies provided support and guidance.

Through a federal Clean Water Act §319(h) grant from the Texas State Soil and Water Conservation Board, Texas A&M AgriLife Research is facilitating the stakeholder process for implementation of the Watershed Protection Plan.

Current Implementation Activities:

- ◆ On-Site Sewage Facility (OSSF) Inventory Project
- ◆ Education and outreach measures outlined in the WPP
- ◆ Collect intensive water quality data to measure trends and changes in water quality
- ◆ Assist local counties and conservation districts in the development of proposals to bring technical assistance and financial incentives for improving septic systems and implementing conservation practices on agricultural land.

Lampasas River On-Site Sewage Facility Inventory Project

Protecting Water Quality

The Lampasas River Watershed Partnership identified failing OSSFs as a potential pollutant source for the river and listed it as a high priority for the Lampasas Watershed Protection Plan (WPP). Since much of the watershed is rural and not served by a municipal wastewater collection system, OSSFs, also known as septic systems, are the primary method of waste disposal.

During the development of the WPP, The Partnership estimated approximately 8,244 OSSFs in the watershed; however, the permitting, recording, and inspection of OSSFs varies greatly between counties and more accurately identifying these systems is the first hurdle in addressing failing and malfunctioning systems in the watershed. It is estimated that upwards of 10% of these systems may be failing, many of which are also located in riparian zones.

Through a federal Clean Water Act §319(h) grant from the Texas Commission on Environmental Quality, Texas A&M AgriLife Research has developed an On-Site Sewage Facility (OSSF) inventory using a GIS spatial analysis and database system. The Lampasas OSSF Inventory incorporates attributes related to OSSF data (type, age, permit records), and environmental conditions throughout the watershed. The Inventory and database will allow the Partnership to more accurately identify the number and locations of OSSFs within the watershed. This will allow for more targeted efforts to address systems which may be failing, whether due to age or location, etc.

Texas A&M AgriLife Extension recently submitted a proposal in response to TCEQ's FY19 Request for Proposals for Clean Water Act §319(h) Program to inspect, repair and /or replace OSSFs in a targeted area (to be determined) within the watershed. This proposal also includes tasks to update the OSSF inventory on a yearly basis as well as educational programs for citizens with homes served by OSSFs.

