



Improving Water Quality in Oso Bay and Oso Creek

Two TMDLs for Bacteria

Water Quality in Oso Bay and Oso Creek

Water quality testing has found that concentrations of bacteria are sometimes elevated in both the bay and the creek. Bacteria from human and animal waste may indicate the presence of disease-causing microorganisms that pose a threat to people who swim or wade in them—activities called “contact recreation” in the state’s standards for water quality; the term refers to all recreation in which people come in direct contact with the water.

In response to these conditions, the TCEQ initiated a project to develop two total maximum daily loads for Oso Bay and Oso Creek. The goal of a TMDL is to determine the amount (or load) of a pollutant that a body of water can receive and still support its beneficial uses. The load is allocated among the potential sources of pollution within the watershed, and measures to reduce pollutant loads are developed accordingly.

Learn more about water quality standards, monitoring, and TMDLs by reading *Clean Water for Texas: Working Together for Water Quality*. For general information about how TMDL projects are structured, read *The TMDL Process in Texas*. Both documents are available on the TCEQ’s Web site at <www.tceq.org/goto/tmdl/>.

Description of the Watersheds

The Oso Bay watershed drains an area of approximately 255 square miles and is located in the northern-most portion of the Nueces-Rio Grande Coastal Basin. The bay is an enclosed, shallow body of water situated along the southern shore of Corpus Christi Bay, with a surface area of approximately 7 square miles.

Oso Bay receives fresh water from Oso Creek, a stream whose flow is dominated by permitted discharges, and exchanges saltwater with Corpus Christi Bay. Ecologically, Oso Bay provides habitat for many plants and animals, and plays an influential role in water purification and storm protection.

Corpus Christi is the only major metropolitan area that lies within the watershed’s boundaries. The only other large community within the watershed is Robstown. The watershed is wholly contained within Nueces County. Economic activities in and around the bay include oil and gas refining and production, agriculture, manufacturing, and tourism.



TMDL Development

The TCEQ initiated the project for Oso Bay and Oso Creek in September 2004. In March 2006, the TCEQ separated development of the TMDLs for the bay and the creek, with the advice and consent of the stakeholder advisory group. The TMDL for Oso Bay will be developed before the TMDL for Oso Creek.

Public Participation

Public participation is important to the success of the project. For this reason, the TCEQ formed a stakeholder group to advise them during development of the TMDLs for Oso Bay and Creek. The group includes representatives from:

- state and federal agencies
- industries
- citizen groups
- local governments
- universities
- water districts
- agricultural interests
- environmental groups
- other water user groups

For More Information

For more information about this project, contact one of the staff listed on this page. Or visit our Web site at <www.tceq.org/goto/tmdl/>.

TCEQ Contact:

Larry Koenig, Total Maximum Daily Load Program
Ph. (512) 239-4533, lkoenig@tceq.state.tx.us

Earlene Lambeth, Total Maximum Daily Load Program
Ph. (512) 239-3129, elambeth@tceq.state.tx.us

Oso Bay TMDL Development Status

Start Date: September 1, 2004

Projected End Date: 2007

TCEQ Adoption: August 22, 2007

Submitted to EPA Region 6:

September 14, 2007

EPA Region 6 Approval:

Oso Creek TMDL Development Status

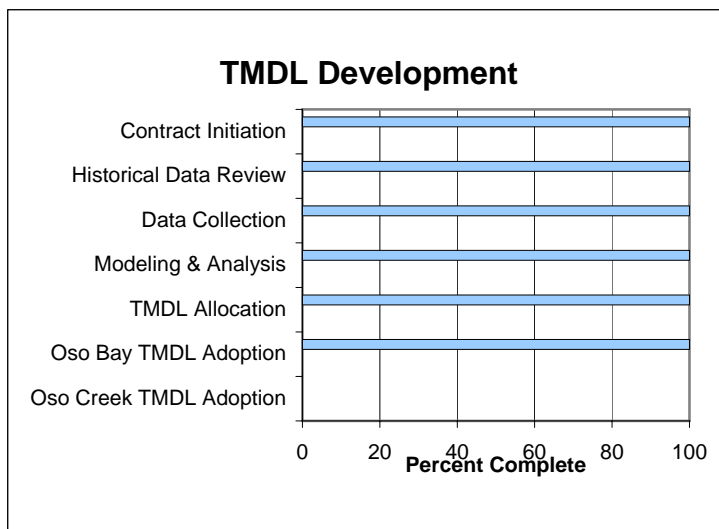
Start Date: September 1, 2004

Projected End Date: 2009

TCEQ Adoption:

Submitted to EPA Region 6:

EPA Region 6 Approval:



TMDL Project Highlights

- Public advisory group meetings were held in January 2005, June 2005, August 2005, January 2006, May 2006, and February 2006, at the Texas A&M University–Corpus Christi campus.
- Following the sixth meeting, the Bay and Creek TMDLs were separated; each will be drafted and processed as a separate but related document.
- The draft Oso Bay TMDL was released for a public review and comment period extending from May 16 through June 15, 2007.
- The Oso Bay TMDL was adopted by TCEQ on August 22, 2007. The Oso Bay TMDL was submitted to EPA for approval on September 14, 2007.
- Additional studies of bacteria sources and quantities are underway in the Oso Creek watershed. TMDL development for the creek will proceed as those studies provide sufficient information, in coordination with the Texas State Soil and Water Conservation Board.