



## Public Health

### Mitigating *E. coli* bacteria in the Trinity River

In 2012, the Environmental Protection Agency's (EPA) National Pollutant Discharge Elimination System permit writers established bacterial indicator recommendations through the Recreational Water Quality Criteria Limits. These recommendations are for two bacterial indicators of fecal contamination, enterococci and *Escherichia coli* (*E. coli*). Section 304(a)(9) of the Clean Water Act directed EPA to publish new or revised water quality criteria recommendations for pathogens and pathogen indicators for the purpose of protecting human health. A pathogen indicator, as defined in section 502(23) of the CWA, is "a substance that indicates the potential for human infectious disease." Most strains of enterococci and *E. coli* do not cause human illness (that is, they are not human pathogens); rather, they indicate the presence of fecal contamination.

It has been found, sources contributing to *E. coli* contamination are from malfunctioning onsite sewage facilities, industrial/commercial illicit discharges, discharge from construction sites, pet waste, livestock and wildlife waste, illegal dumping of all kinds and stormwater runoff from parking lots or contaminated properties.

Therefore, in September 2013, the EPA and the Texas Commission of Environmental Quality approved a regional North Texas watershed Implementation Plan for Total Maximum Daily Loads for Bacteria in the Greater Trinity River Region.

Being one of many regional stakeholders, Tarrant County shares responsibility to help mitigate *E. coli* contamination in the unincorporated areas of the Trinity River's West Fork. As part of this ongoing effort, Tarrant County's Stormwater Team implements strategies to help mitigate *E. coli* through education and outreach to citizens and county employees, maintain websites with valuable information on pollution control, monitor areas of potential impact and regulate and prosecute violators under Texas Health and Safety Codes, if necessary.

To find out more or learn what you can do to help reduce *E. coli* contamination and/or any forms of pollution in Tarrant County, please go to our website at <https://www.tarrantcountytexas.gov/en/public-health/health-protection-and-response/environmental-health-promotion.htm> Or call directly to 817.321.5441.

To view the Implementation Plan, go to <https://resources.nctcog.org/envir/SEEClean/wq/tmdl/index.asp>.

To read about the FAQ: NPDES Water-Quality Based Permit Limits for Recreational Water Quality Criteria go to: [https://www.epa.gov/sites/production/files/2015-09/documents/npdes-water-quality-based-permit-limits-for-recreational-water-quality-criteria-faqs\\_0.pdf](https://www.epa.gov/sites/production/files/2015-09/documents/npdes-water-quality-based-permit-limits-for-recreational-water-quality-criteria-faqs_0.pdf)