What is a TMDL?

A TMDL, or Total Maximum Daily Load, describes the greatest amount of a pollutant, such as phosphorus or E. coli, that a waterbody can receive without impacting its designated use. Designated uses include fishing, general recreation, and general support of aquatic life. The load, or budget for the pollutant, is allocated among the known pollution sources in the watershed, and measures to reduce the pollutant are developed.

The Texas Commission on Environmental Quality (TCEQ) develops TMDLs for impaired waterways that exceed the pollutant load. In North Central Texas, the primary pollutant of concern is E. coli.

North Central Texas Council of Governments

This brochure was developed with funding from the Texas Commission on Environmental Quality (TCEQ).

The North Central Texas Council of Governments is working with stakeholders to implement bacteria TMDLs throughout the Dallas-Fort Worth region.

To view the current Implementation Plan or to utilize available resources, please visit www.nctcog.org/tmdl.

Created September 2021

What is a TMDL?

A guide for understanding Total Maximum Daily Loads and their importance to the North Central Texas region

North Central Texas Council of Governments

Where does E. coli come from?

E. coli can come from a variety of sources, including pet waste, sanitary sewer overflows, agricultural practices, wastewater treatment plants, illicit discharges, septic systems, wildlife waste, and more.

How are TMDLs Developed?

The TCEQ receives and reviews sampling and monitoring data for each waterbody that is reported in the Texas Integrated Report of Surface Water Quality biennially. Once a freshwater waterbody has exceeded the set limit for E. coli, the waterbody is added to the Texas Integrated Report's 303(d) list, officially categorizing it as impaired water body for bacteria.

Once a waterbody has been added to the list, the TCEQ develops technical TMDL information that includes specific details on the watershed, including land use, future growth expectations, and other items that may impact how the load is distributed.

After the technical TMDL document is complete, it is adopted by TCEQ, added to the Texas Water Quality Management Plan, and approved by the US Environmental Protection Agency. At this point, it is also added to the NCTCOG Implementation Plan.

What impacts do TMDLs have on Stormwater Permits?

- Permit holders for Municipal Separate Storm Sewer Systems (MS4s) must annually evaluate the status of their receiving waterbodies to determine whether or not they are impaired.
- Within two years of a waterbody's inclusion on the 303(d) list, the permit holder must comply with specific requirements to address the impairment.
- The permit holder must determine if they may be a source of E. coli and if so, the Stormwater Management Program, or SWMP, must identify potential significant sources and develop and implement focused Best Management Practices (BMPs) for those sources.
- The SWMP and annual reports must include information on targeted controls, measurable goals, identification of benchmarks, and monitoring or assessment of progress toward addressing the impairment.

How can TMDLs be addressed?

TMDLs can be addressed through implementing best management practices including but not limited to public education, regular monitoring, pet waste stations at parks, and more. Implementing best management practices can lead to impaired water bodies attaining water quality standards.

The North Central Texas Council of Governments (NCTCOG) Implementation Plan, or I-Plan, contains specific examples of best management practices and goals the help reduce bacteria in waterways. Permit holders may utilize these best management practices or develop their own.

North Central Texas TMDL Program

NCTCOG administers the regional TMDL program through grant funds received from the TCEQ. As part of this program, NCTCOG and stakeholders developed the I-Plan in 2013. The I-Plan outlines each impaired water body in the North Central Texas region, as well as strategic goals and best management practices that can be utilized to help address impaired water bodies in North Central Texas.

Additionally, this program also supports the TMDL Coordination Committee and the associated subcommittees, which meet regularly to help move the needle on addressing bacterial impairments and share information, challenges, and successes with peers. The TMDL subcommittees also guide special projects and workshops that are relevant to the TMDL program, including Feral Hog Forums, educational materials, and more.

Additional information, including the I-Plan, reports, and available resources, are available online at www.nctcog.org/tmdl.