

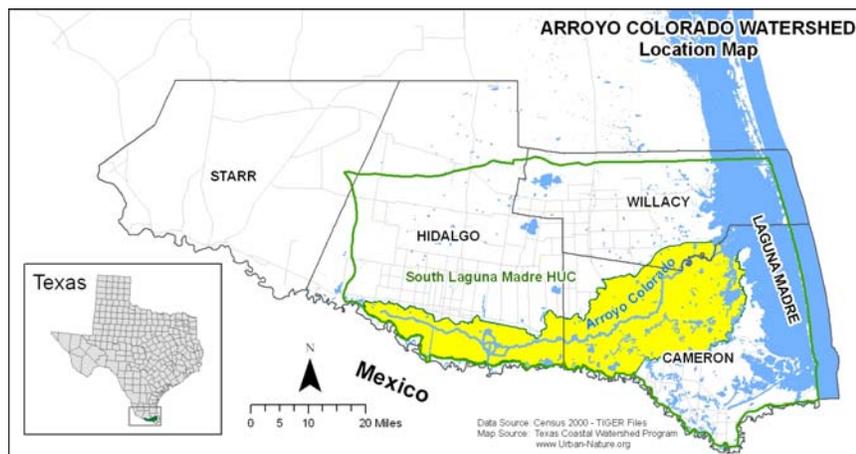


ARROYO COLORADO



LOWER RIO GRANDE VALLEY
DEVELOPMENT COUNCIL

The Arroyo Colorado is a stream of water that serves us in many ways. It begins near the City of Mission, stretches 90 miles through the heart of the Lower Rio Grande Valley and empties into the Laguna Madre. As the primary source of fresh water to the Laguna Madre, the Arroyo Colorado now serves many purposes, including flood control; a receptacle for treated wastewater from city treatment plants; a channel for storm water runoff; a route for commercial barge traffic; and a place for family and tourist recreation. Because of these uses, the Arroyo Colorado is currently on the state's list of impaired water bodies because it cannot sustain oxygen levels needed to support many species of aquatic life. During the period from 1990-2004, an estimated 26 million fish died in 19 state-documented fish kills.



Problems that threaten the Arroyo Colorado: Nutrients and sediments—most fish kills are linked to low oxygen in the water caused in part by too many nutrients (nitrogen and phosphorus) and sediments being washed into the waterway. Nutrients come from our wastewater treatment plants, farm fields, and home lawns. Sediments come from stream erosion, construction sites, and farm fields. **Bacteria**—bacteria in the water pose health threats to wildlife and humans. Bacteria come from wild and domestic animals, improperly maintained or placed septic systems, and sometimes from our municipal treatment systems. **Storm water runoff**—did you know it is illegal to dump waste and pollution into storm drains? Anything poured into the storm drain can make its way into the Arroyo Colorado and Laguna Madre. Storm drains are important to prevent flooding but storm water is generally not treated so pollutants are transported down the stream. And, “we all live downstream”.

Our Community Responds: A plan involving 17 Valley cities has been developed to improve water quality and stream habitat associated with the Arroyo Colorado. The top strategies of the plan are improved wastewater infrastructure and treatment, agricultural best management practices, wetlands, and habitat conservation and restoration. **How can you help?** Get to know the Arroyo Colorado and support local efforts to repair or replace outdated wastewater treatment facilities and infrastructure. Learn about wetlands and their ability to cleanse water. Support habitat conservation and restoration. Do not tolerate littering! **Become part of the Arroyo Colorado Watershed Partnership**, a coalition of organizations and individuals interested in a clean environment and a prosperous economy. Visit www.arroyocolorado.org for more information.