

LCRBC Deplores Toxic Spill on Skull Creek

Supports county and state action to halt contamination

COLUMBUS, Texas (April 17, 2019) — The Lower Colorado River Basin Coalition said it deplores a series of toxic spills on Skull Creek that have killed fish and endangered wildlife and humans, and it supports county and state efforts to stop the contamination and prosecute the offenders.

On April 12, the State Attorney General won a temporary restraining order against Inland Environmental and Remediation Inc., an oil and gas recycling company, on grounds that public health and environment are threatened by waste discharges from its Altair facility into Skull Creek. Over the past two months, a dark oily substance with foul odor has been seen three times in the creek, which flows into the Colorado River south of Altair.

“The creek is dead,” said Colorado County Judge Ty Prause, who is a member of Coalition Executive Committee. “Our immediate concern is gauging the possible risks to people and animals – and we need answers now from regulatory agencies.”

In early February, when the first spill was sited, Prause reported it to the TCEQ, Texas Parks and Wildlife Department and the Texas Railroad Commission. “All we got for two months was the agencies taking water samples, testing on site, pointing fingers at each other about whose jurisdiction it was, and no information to keep our citizens informed until the filing of a lawsuit Petition last Friday,” said Prause.

“Surely we should expect and receive better communication and true partnering with local government from TCEQ, RRC and Parks and Wildlife when there is a real emergency,” he continued. “These agencies are supposed to serve as guardians and stewards of our State’s precious resources and this event in Colorado County has highlighted the need for reform.”

Feeling a need for action, the Colorado County Commissioners Court passed a resolution on April 8 to enable the county to convene a grand jury and conduct a criminal investigation into the contamination.

Finally on April 10, the TCEQ provided a toxicology report and on April 12 filed suit against Inland Environmental, including the temporary restraining order request. The AG’s office may seek statutory penalties.

“We’re concerned about downstream,” said Wharton County Judge Philip Spenrath, also a member of the Coalition Executive Committee. Wharton County is just south of Colorado County along the Colorado River.

On April 16, the Lower Colorado River Authority authorized its general manager to “take all actions necessary” to pursue enforcement actions for violations of water quality rules.

“LCRA is alarmed by the water quality data we are seeing downstream of the Inland facility,” LCRA General Manager Phil Wilson said in a statement. “We are very concerned, and we are considering taking action to resolve this issue quickly to protect water quality in the creek and the Colorado River.”

The Lower Colorado River Basin Coalition is urging all agencies to act promptly and to prosecute offenders to the full extent of the law.



ABOUT THE LOWER COLORADO RIVER BASIN COALITION

The Lower Colorado River Basin Coalition (www.waterdownstream.com) seeks a fair and balanced approach to water management of the Colorado River for all parties under all conditions – drought and flood. Equitable river management requires that river waters keep flowing downstream of Longhorn Dam all the way to the Matagorda Bay.

The Coalition is made up of broad and diverse interests from Travis County to Matagorda Bay, including: counties, cities, small communities, school districts, chambers of commerce, realtors, developers, businesses, industry, private landowners, agricultural groups, ag businesses, farmers, ranchers, conservation groups, environmental organizations, hunting and fishing guides and lodges, birding groups, nature tourism businesses, and others.

Contact for the Lower Colorado River Basin Coalition

Kirby Brown
210.213.2805
kbrown2@ducks.org