

Section 1

Introduction

The purpose of this report is to identify and describe river and stream segments within the Brazos G Regional Water Planning Area (RWPA) (see **Figure 1-1**) that meet criteria for unique ecological value established by Regional Water Planning Guidelines (31 TAC, Section 357.8). This study is identified in the HDR Scope of Work Task 6A, Identification of Ecologically Unique Stream Segments, a part of Phase 2B, Development of the Brazos G Regional Water Plan.

Regional water planning groups may include in adopted regional water plans recommendations regarding the recognition of areas of unique ecological value within all or parts of river and stream segments located within the regional water planning area. Such recommendations may be forwarded to the Texas Water Development Board (TWDB), who will further consider river and stream segments of unique ecological value for inclusion in the state water plan. This process will include review of recommended sites identified in the approved regional water plans and coordination with the Texas Parks and Wildlife Department (TPWD) and Texas Natural Resource Conservation Commission (TNRCC). The Texas Legislature is the only political authority that may formally designate ecologically valuable areas for statutory protection. Legislative designation would prevent state agencies or political subdivision of the state from obtaining fee title or easements that would destroy the unique ecological value of the designated river or stream segment¹. However, the legislature may designate river and stream segments not included in the state water plan, and rely on other sources such as regional water plans and/or recommendations from constituents or stakeholders.

Regional water planning guidelines specify environmental criteria to be used in determining ecological value. These include: biological function; hydrologic function; occurrence of riparian conservation areas adjacent to rivers or streams that are owned or managed by public agencies;

¹ Texas Water Code Section 16.051(g)(1).

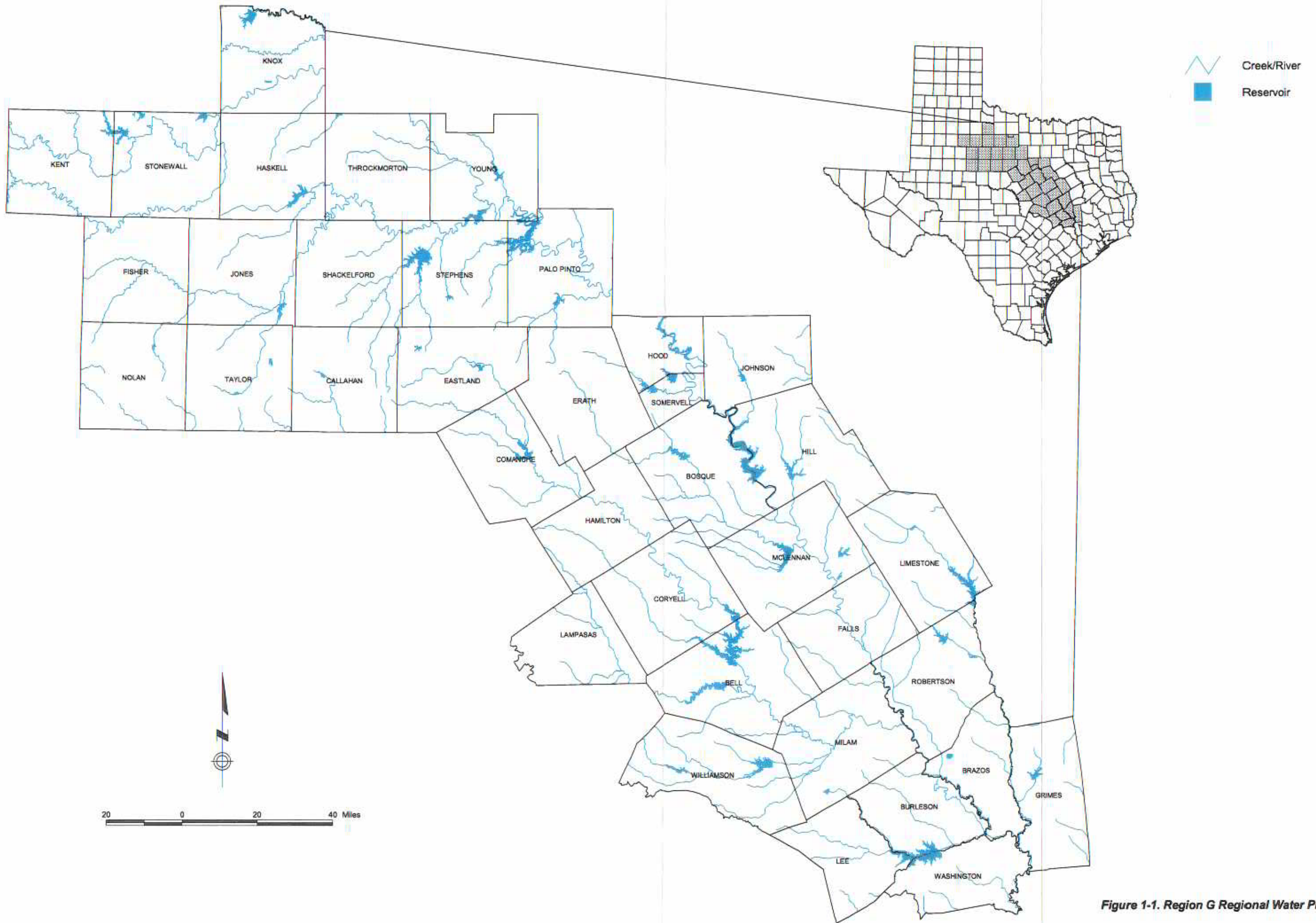


Figure 1-1. Region G Regional Water Planning Area

occurrence of high water quality, exceptional aquatic life, or high esthetic value; and occurrence of threatened or endangered species or unique communities. The objectives of this investigation were to locate, identify, describe, and map any river or stream segments within the Brazos G RWPA (**Figure 1-1**) that meet one or more of the above criteria for ecological significance. Stream segments discussed in this report may not correspond to the stream and river segments designated by the Texas Natural Resource Conservation Commission (TNRCC). Stream segment descriptions (**Section 3.2**) will reference overlapping TNRCC segments (including all or portions).

Although the designation of unique ecological river and stream segments is not a specific requirement in the development of regional water plans, the information developed will greatly improve planning efforts by identifying areas of substantially higher natural resource value and corresponding environmental sensitivity. Sound water development planning should seek to avoid adverse impacts to these areas as state and federal permitting agencies will typically require higher levels of mitigation to offset unavoidable adverse impacts, thus resulting in correspondingly higher project costs, increased development planning, and longer construction schedules.