

San Felipe Creek

The headwaters of San Felipe Creek are about 2.5 miles upstream of US 90 in Val Verde County. The creek runs downstream to its confluence with the Rio Grande in Val Verde County (Fig. 33). The creek is fed by the San Felipe Springs, three large and one small spring, one mile northeast of Del Rio, Val Verde County². The significant stream segment is within the Edwards Plateau ecoregion. The ecological significance of San Felipe Creek is based upon the following criteria:

1. Biological function – The aquatic and riparian habitats associated with the creek (Fig.40) support a diverse assemblage of invertebrates, reptiles, fish, and birds due to the overlap of the three ecological zones mentioned in the Devils River account. The riparian gallery forest is dominated by huisache, cottonwood, willow, and hackberry. Del Rio lies near the 100th meridian, which is considered the divide where eastern and western bird species overlap in distribution. Over 340 bird species have been observed in Del Rio and surrounding vicinity¹⁶.
2. Hydrologic function – San Felipe Springs, one of the largest spring systems in Texas, are the sole public water supply for the City of Del Rio (Fig. 41). They issue from the Georgetown Limestone of the Edwards (Balcones Fault Zone) Aquifer. Amistad Reservoir appears to have increased the flow of the springs by providing additional recharge and by directing the flow of Goodenough Springs and other inundated springs to San Felipe Springs². San Felipe Creek contributes to baseflow of the Rio Grande south of Del Rio.
3. Riparian conservation area – None identified.
4. High water quality/exceptional aquatic life/high aesthetic value – The flow from San Felipe Springs is very high quality water which supports contact recreation and public water supply uses and supports the rare species mentioned below. Sorola specifically mentions San Felipe Creek in Del Rio as a top birdwatching site¹⁶.
5. Threatened or endangered species/unique communities – The following rare species associated with aquatic or riparian habitats occur in or along this segment: Rio Grande darter (St.T), Proserpine shiner (St.T)¹⁰, and Devils River minnow (St.T). The Indigo snake (St.T) and Big Bend blackhead snake (St.T) occur in the riparian habitats.



Figure 40. San Felipe Creek below the springs in Del Rio (11/20/00)



Figure 41. City of Del Rio municipal water intake at one of the springs. This spring produces 90 million gallons a day (11/20/00).