

1.11.9 Piney Creek

Piney Creek is a fourth order stream that begins in east Houston County and flows approximately 57 miles into the Neches River southeast of Lufkin. The creek flows southeasterly through the Davy Crockett National Forest for the majority of its length before turning easterly about four miles southeast of Groveton. The drainage basin size is 264 square kilometers (102 square miles) (Bayer et al. 1992). The creek has a loam and clay dominated substrate and a moderate canopy of vegetation (Kelly 1995). The riparian forest observed at the FM 358 crossing was dominated by sweet gum (*Liquidambar styraciflua*), sycamore (*Platanus occidentalis*), box elder (*Acer negundo*), and sugarberry (*Celtis laevigata*). Piney Creek was identified as one of the least impacted streams of the South Central Plains ecoregion (Bayer et al. 1992). A survey of freshwater mussels in the Davy Crockett National Forest found Piney Creek contained the greatest number of mussel taxa with six species present (Feaster 1998). Because freshwater mussels are indicators of good water quality and are often the first organisms to decline during adverse conditions (Resh and Rosenberg 1993, Howells et al. 1996), the presence of six species supports Piney Creek's designation as a least impacted stream. Fish collections from Piney Creek have yielded a total of thirty-four fish species, including three species intolerant of degradation (Appendix C) (Bayer et al. 1992, Kelly 1995). The ecologically significant stream segment is from the confluence with the Neches River upstream to the headwaters in east Houston County.

- **Riparian conservation area-** fringed by the 162,012-acre Davy Crockett National Forest.
- **High water quality/exceptional aquatic life/high aesthetic value-** identified as a South Central Plains ecoregion reference stream for diversity of benthic macroinvertebrates (Bayer et al 1992).
- **Threatened or endangered species/unique communities-** significant due to presence of the creek chubsucker (*Erimyzon oblongus*) (SOC/St.T) (Bayer et al. 1992).



Figure 44. Piney Creek at FM 358 in Trinity County (8/14/01).