Solutions Spotlight

The NYS DEC Mohawk River Basin Program is implementing a Source Water Protection Program for the Mohawk Watershed that is being used when reviewing wastewater treatment plant discharge permits, and will lead to nutrient reductions and wastewater treatment plant upgrades.

What the Data Show

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>What portion of samples were safe for swimming?</th>
<th>How high were the bacteria levels?</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Half of samples met the EPA guideline for safe swimming. Since 2015, fewer samples have met this guideline each year.</td>
<td>Bacteria levels are greater after rainfall, which causes runoff, and can cause wastewater system overflows. The average bacterial level for samples taken in dry weather nearly met the safe swimming threshold. However, conditions vary from place to place.</td>
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</tbody>
</table>

More: Explore a watershed map, data from each sampling site, year-to-year patterns and other info at riverkeeper.org/water-quality/citizen-data/mohawk-river.
Why We Measure Bacteria

Fecal indicator bacteria such as *Enterococcus* ("Entero") usually do not make us sick. But because they live in the guts of warm-blooded animals, when these bacteria are present in water, pathogens that can make us sick may also be present.

Sources of fecal bacteria may include sewer overflows and failures, inadequate sewage treatment, urban or farm runoff, septic system failures, wildlife and contaminated sediment.

While research continues, the EPA has set thresholds to define if water is safe for swimming based on decades of science relying on measurements of these bacteria. Data are shown in Entero cells per 100 mL.

Sampling began in 2015 and expanded in *2016, **2017, ***2018*