Solutions Spotlight
New York State is developing a Total Maximum Daily Load, or TMDL (sometimes known as a “pollution diet”) for the Mohawk River watershed, to reduce phosphorus overload. This plan will limit the amount of nutrients discharged by wastewater treatment plants and improve water quality for the 100,000 people who drink from the Mohawk.

What portion of our samples were safe for swimming?  How does weather affect bacteria levels?

No one swims in average (geometric mean) water, so to help understand risk this graph shows the percent of samples that met the single sample EPA guidelines for safe swimming, and the percent of samples that didn’t.

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 are above the safe swimming threshold. However, conditions vary from place to place.

More: Explore a watershed map, data from each sampling site, and other info at riverkeeper.org/water-quality/citizen-data/mohawk-river.
Community Science
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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.

About the Mohawk River
The Mohawk River is the largest tributary to the Hudson River and is also the Erie Canalway. More than 100,000 people use it as a source of drinking water.

Signs of Progress
The Town of Amsterdam has received a grant to study connecting sewers to homes along the Chuctanunda Creek, a tributary to the Mohawk River. This is a positive step to eventually reduce the untreated sewage entering the creek and eventually the Mohawk River. This was a direct result of the Friends of the Chuctanunda Community Group, and monitoring from our partner SUNY Cobleskill.

Mohawk River Water Quality 2015-2022

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