

OVERVIEW

Riverkeeper and our Wallkill River watershed partners have been testing the water for the fecal-indicator bacteria *Enterococcus* (“Entero”) since 2012. Sources of fecal contamination may include sewage infrastructure failures, sewer overflows, inadequate sewage treatment, septic system failures, agricultural runoff, urban runoff, and wildlife.

Samples were collected monthly (approx. May to October) at 25 locations by local residents and processed by Riverkeeper. A total of 685 samples have been analyzed since 2012. This water quality monitoring study is designed to learn about broad trends. The data can help inform choices about recreation in the creek, but cannot predict future water quality at any particular time and place. To see all the results visit www.riverkeeper.org/water-quality/citizen-data/wallkill-river.

WATERSHED SNAPSHOT

These results are for non-tidal sites only.

As measured against the Environmental Protection Agency’s recommended Beach Action Value for safe swimming:



After rainy weather:



As measured against the EPA’s recommended geometric mean (a weighted average) criterion for safe swimming:

EPA GM threshold	Wallkill River GM
30 cells/100 mL	380.7 cells/100 mL

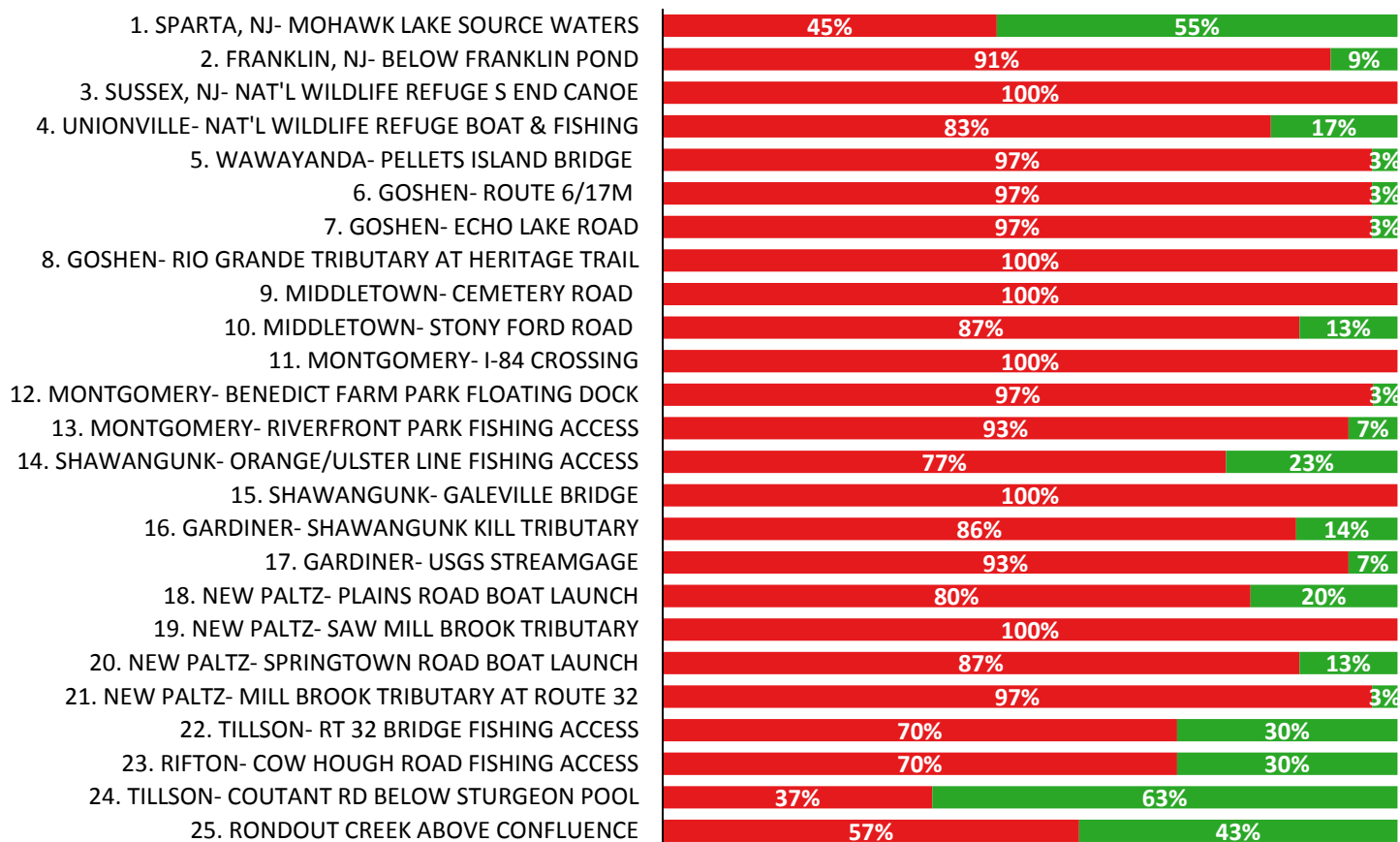
3 Best Sites	3 Worst Sites
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Tillson- Below Sturgeon Pool (#24) Sparta, NJ- Mohawk Lake source waters(#1) Rifton- Cow Hough Rd (#23) 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Goshen- Rio Grande tributary at Heritage Trail (#6) Montgomery- I-84 Crossing (#11) Goshen- Route 6/17M (#6)

DAY-TO-DAY WATER QUALITY

Riverkeeper assesses water quality using the EPA’s science-based 2012 Recreational Water Quality Criteria, which define recommended concentrations of Entero per 100 ml of water (“Entero count”) consistent with “primary contact recreation.” This includes swimming, bathing, water play by children and other activities where ingestion of water or full immersion of the body is likely.

In this figure, the red bar shows the percentage of samples at each sampling site that have exceeded an Entero count of 60, the EPA-recommended Beach Action Value. Above this level, the EPA recommends public notification, and possible temporary beach closure.

PERCENTAGE OF WALKKILL RIVER SAMPLES EXCEEDING EPA’S BEACH ACTION VALUE, 2012-2016



■ % Beach Advisory (>60 cells/100 mL) ■ % Acceptable (0-60 cells/100 mL)

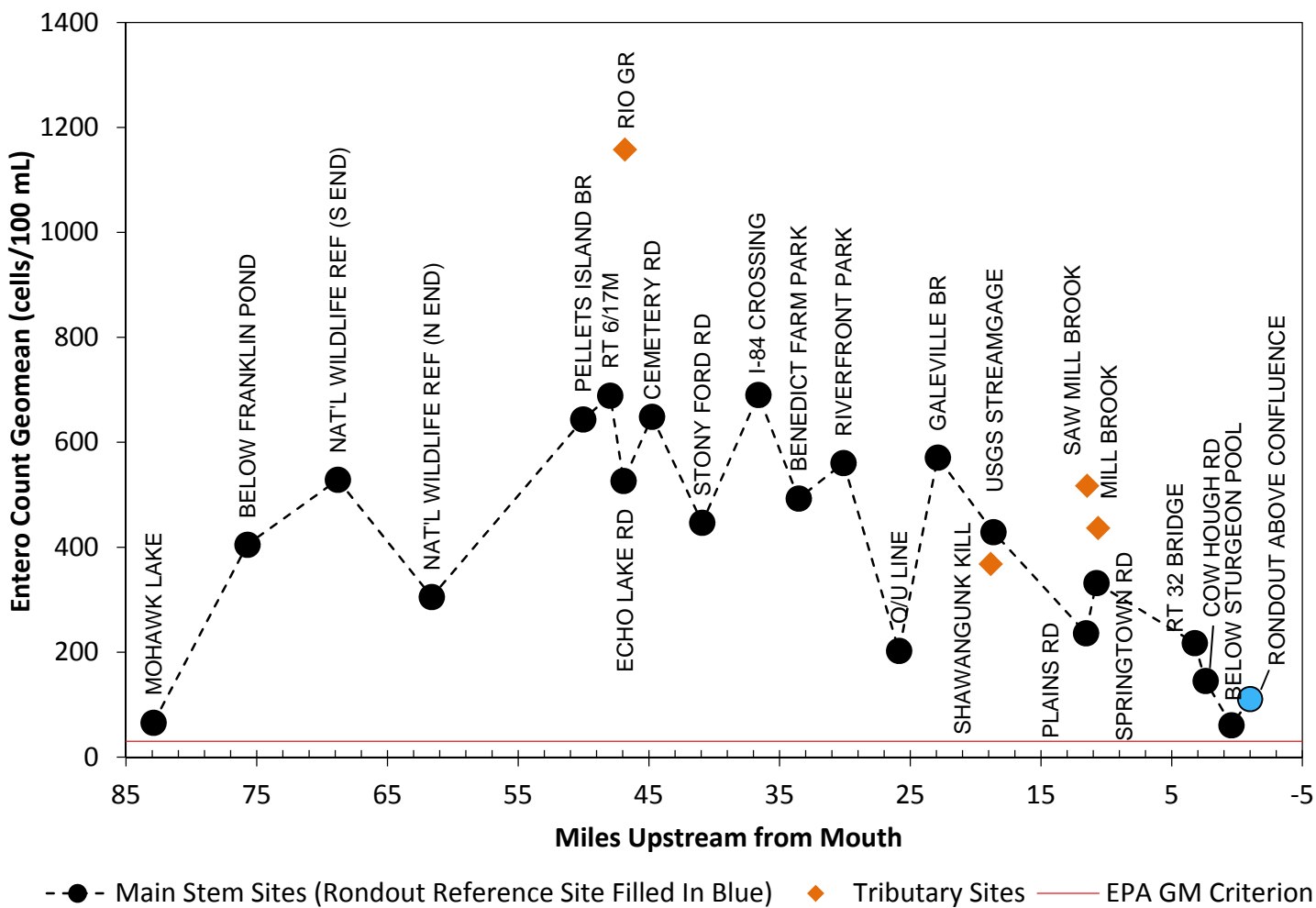
WHAT DO THESE RESULTS MEAN?

Comparing sample results to the BAV gives information about day-to-day water quality. Nearly all the times we sampled, at nearly all locations, water quality was unsuitable for swimming and other primary contact. At several sampling sites, samples have never showed water suitable for primary contact. Conditions improve downstream in Tillson, but are still unsafe for swimming.

WATER QUALITY OVER TIME

The Geometric Mean (GM) describes the maximum allowable average Enterococci count to protect swimmers' health, as measured over time at any given location. Water at a site with a high GM has a high average level of contamination. To avoid exposure to chronic contamination, the GM, a weighted average, should not exceed 30. EPA recommends weekly sampling. Over time, monthly sampling should reveal similar information. If a site's GM exceeds 30, steps should be taken to reduce contamination.

GEOMETRIC MEANS AT WALKKILL RIVER SAMPLING LOCATIONS, 2012-2016



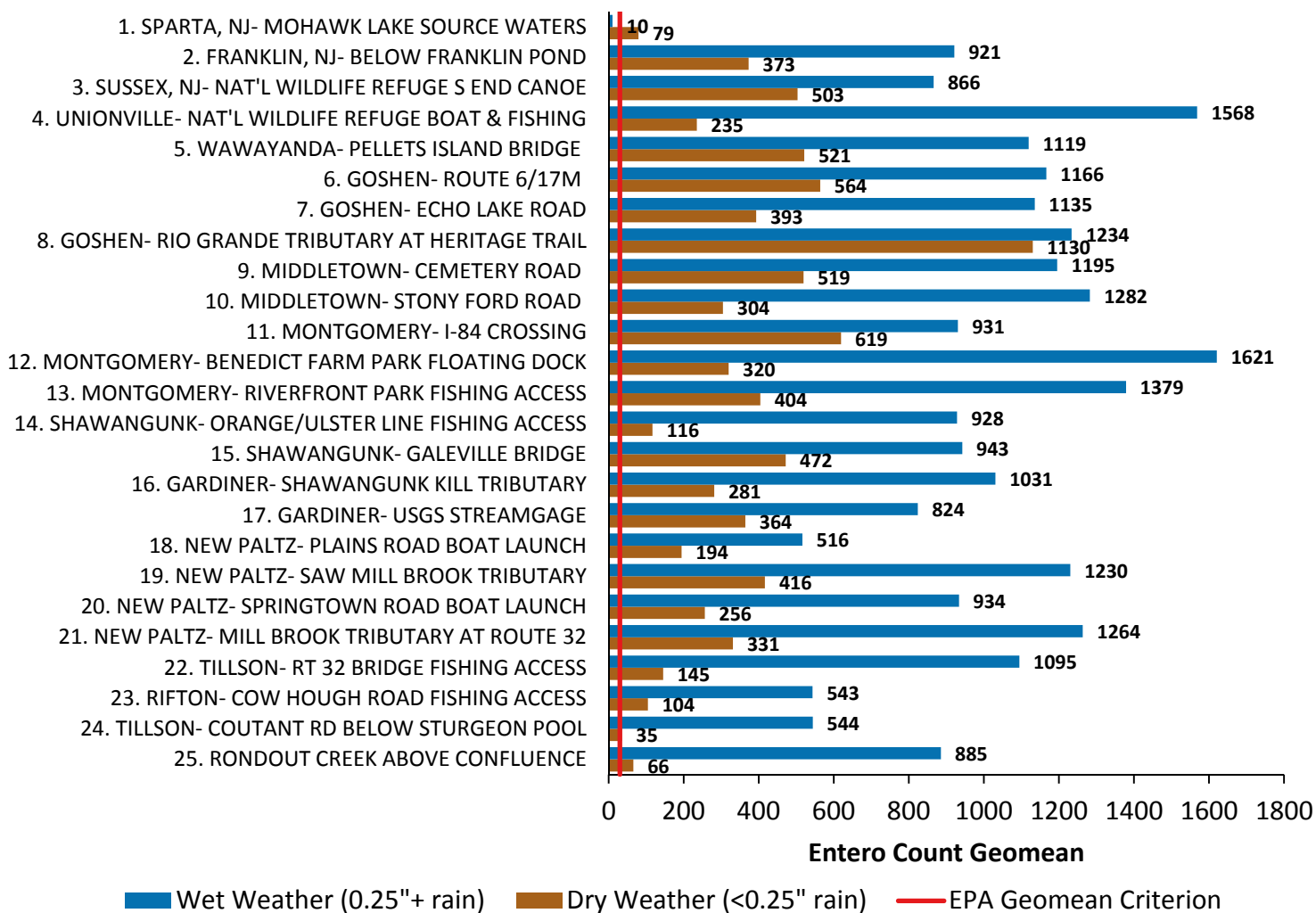
WHAT DO THESE RESULTS MEAN?

The average water quality at Walkkill River sampling sites varied along the course of the stream, with the best water quality near the Walkkill's source at Mohawk Lake and its confluence with the Rondout Creek. However, at most sites, GMs were 10 to 20 times the threshold, and even at the best sites, GMs were twice the EPA's recommended threshold.

HOW DOES STORMWATER AFFECT WATER QUALITY?

In combined sewer systems, heavy rains trigger releases of untreated sewage directly into waterways. Even in systems where stormwater and wastewater are separated by design, leaks and cross-connections lead to stormwater infiltration into the wastewater system. The increased flows lead to infrastructure failures during storms. Stormwater runoff from streets, feedlots and farms, and areas with failed septic systems can also deliver fecal contamination to streams. This figure shows Enterococci (Enterococci) counts after dry (less than 0.25 inches of rain in the 4 days leading up to sampling) and rainy weather (0.25 inches or more).

GEOMETRIC MEANS IN THE WALLKILL RIVER DURING WET AND DRY WEATHER, 2012-2016



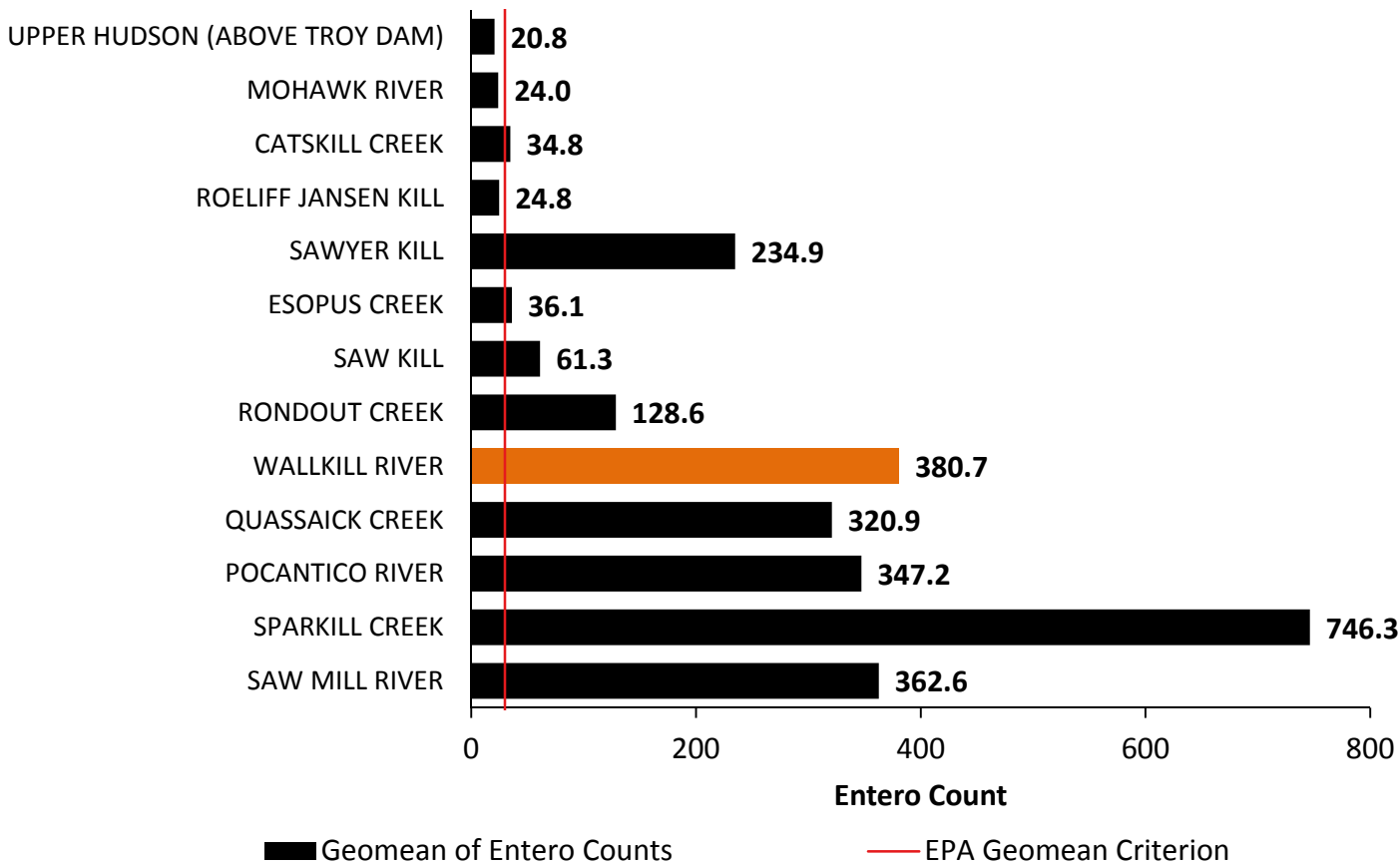
WHAT DO THESE RESULTS MEAN?

Rainfall greatly increased Enterococci counts in our Wallkill River samples. However, even if there were no rain, all sites in the Wallkill River would exceed EPA safe-swimming criteria. Sites with the largest difference between dry and wet weather water quality are places where stormwater controls could make the biggest reductions in fecal contamination.

HOW DOES THE WALLKILL COMPARE WITH OTHER HUDSON TRIBUTARIES?

Overall, our sampling data shows that water quality in tributaries is worse than in the Hudson River Estuary, and that tributaries are contamination sources to the Hudson. Average water quality varies among tributary watersheds. The figure below shows the Geometric Mean (weighted long-term average) of all sample results for all non-tidal sites within each watershed studied to date. Date ranges vary.

GEOMETRIC MEANS OF ALL NON-TIDAL SITES IN ALL TRIBUTARIES SAMPLED, 2010-2016



All samples were processed by Riverkeeper except as follows. Mohawk River and Upper Hudson samples processed by SUNY Cobleskill and Riverkeeper. Roeliff Jansen Kill and Saw Kill samples processed by Bard Water Lab. Quassaick Creek samples processed by EnviroTest. Pocantico River (2016), Sparkill Creek (2016), and Saw Mill River samples processed by The Sarah Lawrence College Center for the Urban River at Beczak.

When comparing among all watersheds sampled, the Wallkill River ranks:

- 2nd** worst in terms of Overall GM
- 3rd** worst in terms of Dry Weather GM
- worst** in terms of Rain Response

WHAT DO THESE RESULTS MEAN?

The Wallkill River has one of the highest overall levels of contamination (as measured by the weighted average of samples, the GM) that Riverkeeper and partners have measured, and day-to-day sampling results show that water quality was rarely safe for swimming when and where we tested. The Wallkill also has the largest wet-weather increase in Entero counts that we have measured. Where contamination is present in dry weather, sources should be identified; and overall, actions to reduce stormwater runoff should be a long-term priority.

COMMUNITY SCIENCE HAS IMPACT

In 2015, Riverkeeper submitted community monitoring data to the NYS DEC, to ensure that it factored into the state's water quality assessment and regulation. These data will help DEC determine where to target its routine monitoring of diverse water quality parameters, set to take place in the Hudson Valley in 2017-2018. The community science data also resulted in new listings of fecal contamination in the statewide water quality inventory, and more yet to be released. These listings will give affected municipalities more competitive standing for when applying for federal and state water quality improvement grants. Riverkeeper's data and advocacy contributed to the establishment of the NY Water Grants program, which has allocated \$400 million for community infrastructure grants available since 2015.

WHAT YOU CAN DO

Riverkeeper's water quality sampling program relies on scores of samplers to collect water samples. But the data is only a starting point. Documenting problems is the first step, but solutions require many people working locally. You can organize stream walks, test water flowing from outfalls, contact those responsible for our infrastructure, and spread the word. Reach out to your local municipality, or work with your CAC/ECC or watershed group. Riverkeeper has resources for support, but we need your help!

NEXT STEPS FOR RIVERKEEPER

In 2016, Riverkeeper sampled or supported 16 tributary and shoreline sampling projects, in addition to our longstanding Hudson River Estuary monitoring project. With our organizational partners, we sampled 411 locations over 795 river miles, from Lake Tear of the Clouds to NY Harbor. In addition to Entero, we and our partners measured wastewater tracers (sucralose and caffeine); pharmaceuticals, pesticides and industrial compounds; and parameters related to wastewater pollution, like nutrients and dissolved oxygen. In 2017, Riverkeeper will continue working with our network to monitor water quality in even more streams, and will collaborate with researchers and regulators on several Entero source tracking projects, including one in the Rondout-Wallkill watershed. This work is made possible by many funders, including the New York State Environmental Protection Fund through the Hudson River Estuary Program of NYSDEC.

For more information visit www.riverkeeper.org/water-quality/citizen-data