

How's the Water in the Wallkill River?

Citizen-Led Water Quality Testing and the Goal of Safe Swimming

Since 2012 Riverkeeper and citizen scientists have tested monthly from May to October for the presence of *Enterococcus*, an indicator of fecal contamination, at 21 locations in the Wallkill River and its tributaries.

Enterococcus ("Entero") is a genus of bacteria that lives in the intestines of humans and other warm-blooded animals. Entero counts are useful as a water quality indicator due to their abundance in human sewage, correlation with many human pathogens and low abundance in sewage free environments. Our water quality scoring is based on EPA's Federal Recreational Water Quality Criteria for safe primary contact (swimming and immersion). Visit riverkeeper.org/water-quality for more information, including monthly testing data for each location described below.

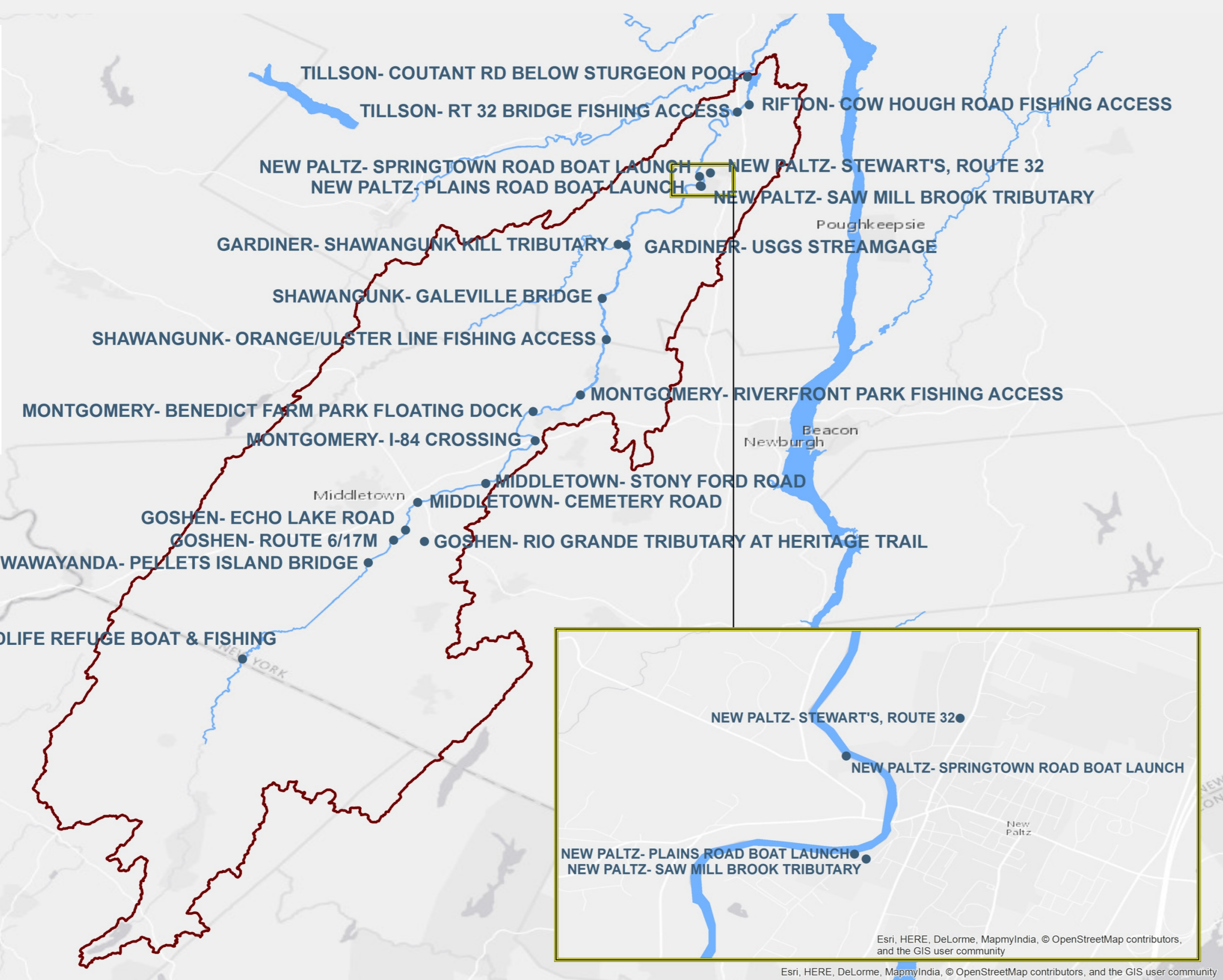
Riverkeeper's citizen science water quality monitoring program seeks to improve the water quality of the Hudson and its tributaries through increased water quality monitoring and public notification, consistent investment in wastewater and stormwater infrastructure, and better water quality policies. In partnership with citizen samplers, we test select tributaries of the Hudson for fecal-indicating bacteria and other water quality indicators. These samples are collected from the streambank by Riverkeeper-trained citizens, and processed in the lab aboard the Riverkeeper patrol boat. We encourage communities to use this data to restore and protect their local waterways.

Where Citizen Scientists Sample the Wallkill River

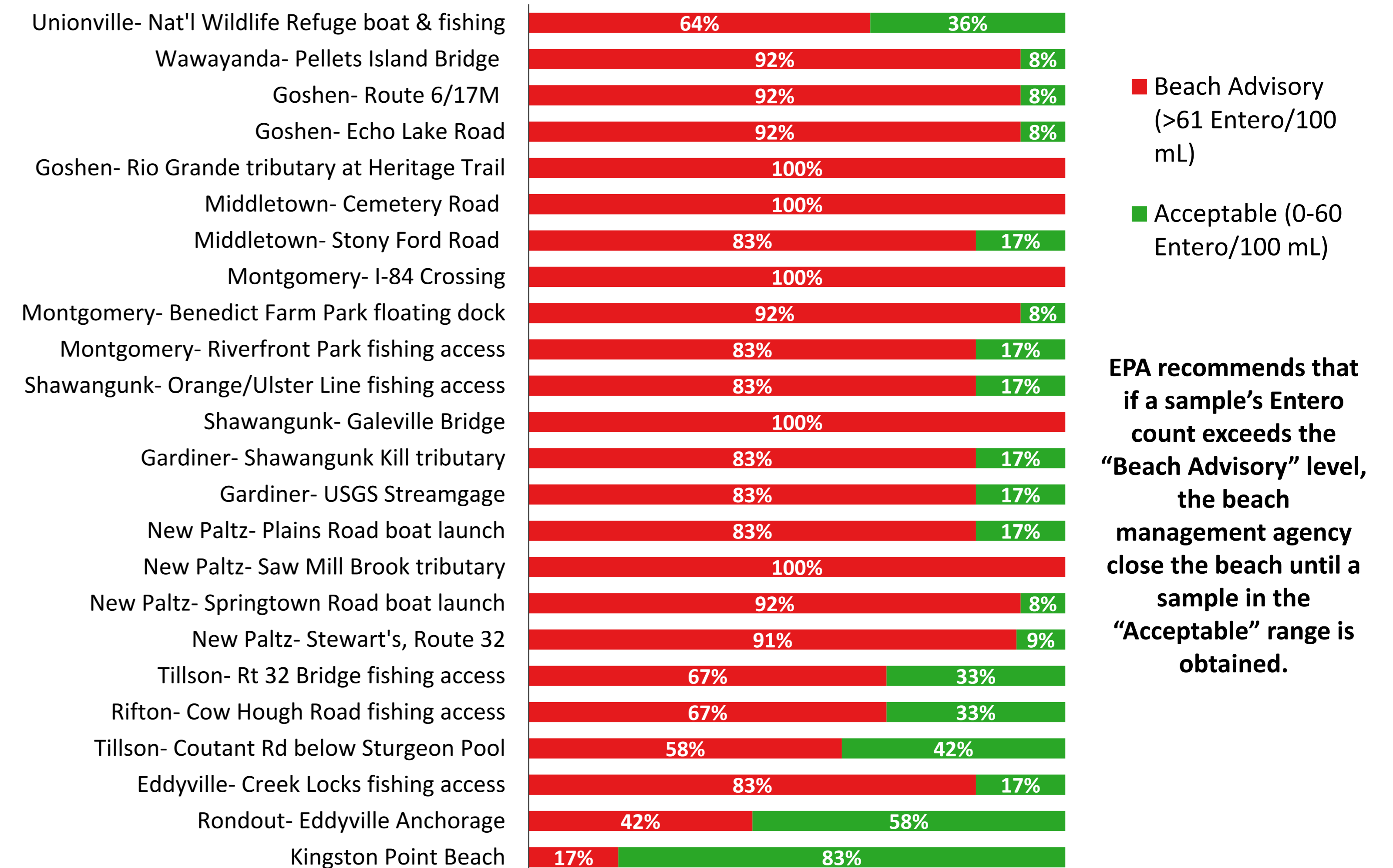
Citizen scientists test the Wallkill River from the NY-NJ state line to its confluence with the Rondout Creek.

In New Paltz we test at four sites:

- Springtown Road boat launch
- Plains Road boat launch
- Saw Mill Brook
- An unnamed stream that flows past the Stewart's on Route 32



Percentage of Samples Failing EPA Recreational Criteria, 2012-2013



Tips For Recreational Water Users

While Riverkeeper cannot replace a Health Department's role in advising the public, our study suggests several ways individuals can make informed decisions about when and where to enter the water. Keep in mind that the risk of exposure to waterborne pathogens comes not only with swimming but also bathing, surfing, water skiing, kayaking, tubing, skin diving, water play by children and other activities where ingestion of water is likely.

- Use beaches where testing occurs, and ask that county for the data before swimming.
- As a precaution, it is best to avoid the water for a period of 2-3 days after rain, because wet weather is a common trigger of fecal contamination.
- Make an informed choice about where and when to enter the water by checking historic water quality conditions at riverkeeper.org/water-quality.
- Contact your county Health Department to ask for testing and notification where you enter the water.

