

For immediate release

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RIVER TESTING BEGINS 12th YEAR

The Souhegan Watershed Association and Lower Merrimack River Local Advisory Committee have begun water quality testing on the Souhegan and Merrimack Rivers again this week. An all volunteer force collects water samples on a biweekly basis all summer long that are tested at the Milford, Merrimack, and Nashua Wastewater Treatment Facilities for E. coli bacteria dissolved oxygen, phosphorus, and temperature.

The first test for E. coli this year looks remarkably similar to the results seen last year at this time. Warm weather has brought the river temperatures almost up to air temperatures, about 74°. This means that swimming and other river activities have begun. The Merrimack River is relatively clean as far as E. coli is concerned; several sites along the Souhegan have E. coli counts higher than acceptable. The highest reading showed up near the Souhegan Valley Boys & Girls Club in Milford. This same site was the worst last year at this time also. The area is close to downtown and a popular spot for pedestrians walking and bathing their dogs. A couple of headwater sites also had readings higher than expected; River Road at Water Loom Pond in New Ipswich and above the mill pond in Greenville both tested slightly above 100. A reading below 88 is required for safe swimming at public areas in NH.

Monitors noted how low the water level was on the Merrimack as far up as Thorntons Ferry boat ramp in Merrimack. The Pawtucket Dam in Lowell usually ponds the water all the way back to here and again this year the owners have opened the dam to do maintenance. They originally said that the water level would be down for only a week but they've now said that they don't expect it to come back up until the end of the month. This happened again last year and the level stayed down through July 4th and limited boating on this popular holiday.

Low water was also noted on the Souhegan, but that's entirely due to natural causes. Water flow on local rivers is about 60% of historical averages for this time of year. This also was true last year at this time.

The monitor at the Greeley Park boat ramp noted an oily sheen on the river there. The Beazer Company site is just upstream and has been leaking creosote into the river ever since the site was used by Koppers to treat telephone poles in open lagoons. Big globs of tarry-looking creosote can be seen in the water all along their property.

On a more pleasant note, one monitor spotted an unusually large 5" crayfish in the Souhegan and the Mountain Laurel is in full bloom in Greenville. A number of monitors noted lots of wildlife at sites along both rivers.

SWA and LMRLAC monitor the Merrimack River from Manchester to Tyngsborough and the Souhegan along its entire length. Volunteers are always wanted and can contact Karen Mattor at karenmattor@gmail.com if they would like to help.

E-COLI MONITORING RESULTS FOR TESTS TAKEN ON JUNE 10, 2008

These are the E. coli bacteria counts for each of the sites along both rivers. They are valid for about three days but give an indication of the water quality in general. NA means not available or not tested. The next test will be done on June 24.

SOUHEGAN RIVER SITES:

1. Billy Ward Pond, Ashburnham 24
2. River Road above Water Loom Pond, New Ipswich 115
3. Highbridge, New Ipswich 32
4. Above Greenville Mill Pond, Greenville 104
5. Downtown Greenville upstream of WWTP 33
6. Green Bridge off Rte 31 below Greenville WWTP 50
7. Below the Horseshoe, Wilton NA
8. Downtown Wilton NA
9. Pine Valley Mill, West Milford 37
10. Behind Hayward Field, West Milford NA
11. Souhegan Valley Boys and Girls Club, Milford 172
12. Swing Bridge, Milford NA
13. Riverside Cemetery, Milford 77
14. Lorden Plaza, Milford 108
15. Amherst Country Club 76
16. Amherst Conservation land Fairway Road, Amherst NA
17. Boston Post Road Canoeport, Amherst 91
18. Indian Ledges, Merrimack 31
19. Turkey Hill Bridge, Merrimack 47
20. West Chamberlain Rd, Merrimack NA

MERRIMACK RIVER SITES:

1. Above Amoskeag Dam, Manchester NA
2. Arms Park, Manchester NA
3. Goffs Falls, Litchfield 36
4. Depot Street boat ramp, Merrimack NA
5. Upstream of Souhegan River, Merrimack 26
6. Thorntons Ferry boat ramp, Merrimack 35
7. Greeley Park boat ramp, Nashua 24
8. Taylors Falls Bridge, Nashua 64
9. Sagamore Bridge, Hudson 30
10. Pheasant Lane Mall, Hudson NA
11. Upstream of Tyngsboro Bridge NA