Trinity River Monitoring Program

The Tarrant Regional Water District is continually working to enhance the quality of our rivers and lakes, both of which are sources of drinking water and popular water recreation destinations. As part of that effort, the district periodically monitors and publishes water quality information at ten locations along the Trinity River in Fort Worth.

The purpose of this monitoring is to assess the general condition of the river. It does not provide real-time water quality information. Water levels, velocity, and quality can change quickly, particularly during and after a rainfall so all persons are asked to use good judgment and discretion and be aware of changing conditions.

The Texas Commission on Environmental Quality (TCEQ) has established criteria to assist water enthusiasts in determining whether "primary contact recreation activities", such as swimming, are recommended or not. This standard applies to every river and lake in the state. Every river or water body experiences water quality changes, particularly after rainfall events.

TCEQ considers a body of water acceptable for swimming, tubing, or boating when the long-term average bacteria concentration is below 126 bacteria per 100 milliliters of water and when a single sample is below 399 bacteria per 100 milliliters of water. Just like every other river in the state, levels may sometimes exceed these standards especially during and after a rainfall. This site is provided as information for the public to assist you in making responsible decisions. The district recommends that you review these results and swim, wade, tube or boat at your own discretion. To assist you in making responsible decisions, the District's summer monitoring schedule of the most popular recreational sites along the Trinity River meets or exceeds the highest frequency of testing in the state.

In addition, for your safety please drink responsibly, consider floatation devices, never enter the water head first and stay out of or near the river's edge if you are not an experienced swimmer.

A Dynamic System

The Trinity River in Fort Worth is host to many recreational activities throughout the year. This major river as well as smaller creeks and tributaries can be great places for fishing, boating and swimming; however, these waterbodies also have special safety concerns due to the dynamic characteristics associated with rivers and streams.

High Flows

Rivers and streams are not steady state systems. The flows associated with each one can vary greatly depending on weather and upstream reservoir operations. The speed and strength of a moving water body is easily underestimated. If there has been a recent increase in the flow and velocity of a waterbody, exercise caution and wait for the water to return to normal levels before entering the water. To check current flows of major streams, please visit the USGS realtime streamflow webpage for current conditions.

E. coli Monitoring

Another hazard that is often overlooked in riverine systems is pollutant loads associated with bacteria levels. Often times, increased flow in rivers and creeks is caused by runoff from storm rainfall events. As the rain washes over the surface of the land, the water picks up pollutant loads from the surface of the ground and carries it to the river. During rain events and in recent days following a storm, pollutant loads can be higher than normal, which can cause a higher than normal risk to human health. The health risk is monitored through measuring the levels of Escherichia coli (E. coli) in the water. This bacteria itself is not harmful, however it is specific to warm blooded animals and is used as an indicator species. Therefore, if there are elevated levels of E. coli, the potential risk of something that could be harmful to human health is perceived to be greater. E. coli concentrations are measured monthly at nine locations year round and weekly at the five locations in the vicinity of the greatest recreational activities from April to August. The results of the E. coli sampling program can be viewed on the Resources page.