



Media Release

High *E. coli* Levels at Lower American River the Focus of Central Valley Water Board Testing *Additional Monitoring to be Conducted in High Risk Areas*

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Sacramento, Calif.—In an effort to help protect public health, the Central Valley Regional Water Quality Control Board (Central Valley Water Board) is conducting weekly water sampling for *E. coli* bacteria at nine sites on the American River.

Recent water quality monitoring shows that the lower American River continues to have elevated levels of the bacteria at some sites posing an increased risk to recreational users of the river. So far, Sacramento County officials have not received any reports of illnesses.

Information gathered by the additional testing will help county health officials and park managers better determine the level of risk to people who use the river for boating, swimming, kayaking, fishing and other recreational activities. Elevated levels could lead to public warnings or restricted access to the waterway.

The regional water board's expanded testing will continue through the summer, when recreational use of the river is highest, to inform the public about *E. coli* levels and the potential risk of illness. The sampling results are available [here](#).

E. coli is an indicator bacteria used to identify fecal pollution from human, pet, livestock or wildlife waste. Most strains of *E. coli* are harmless, but elevated levels indicate that pathogens could be present that can sicken swimmers and others who use the river. Practicing healthy water habits can help reduce the risk.

Sampling for *E. coli* bacteria provides a way to monitor the overall well-being of recreational waters. Last year, the lower American River was placed on California's [list](#) of impaired waters because of elevated *E. coli* levels. Water bodies are added to the list when monitoring data does not meet [water quality](#) standards.

In addition to the weekly monitoring, a separate study is getting under way to identify the specific sources of fecal pollution in the river to determine whether the bacteria is from human, pet, wildlife or livestock sources.

The Sacramento Area Sewer District and Sacramento County have partnered with the Central Valley Water Board to fund the study. The results will help officials determine the appropriate



next steps to reduce the exposure for recreational users of the river. The study design is being finalized with monitoring implementation to follow.

The Central Valley Water Board is providing the *E. coli* data to Sacramento County health officials and parks managers, who are the lead in reviewing the data and posting warnings or restricting access to the waterway, if needed to ensure protection of public health. Questions regarding the county's review of the data and postings should be directed to Brenda Bongiorno, Sacramento County Communication and Media Officer, at 916-874-7798.

When recreating in the American River, or any river or lake, healthy water habits are encouraged:

- Pay attention and follow any warning signs and postings. Do not access waterbody if posted warnings indicate it is not safe to do so.
- Do not drink water from the river or use river water for cooking.
- Wash your hands or shower after swimming.
- Do not enter the water if you have cuts or open sores. These are pathways for bacteria to enter your body.
- Avoid algae blooms (brightly colored water) and trash in the water.
- If you have concerns regarding your family's health, contact your healthcare provider immediately.

You can make a difference to keep the Lower American River safe and clean! Please use bathrooms and properly dispose of human and dog waste.

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