

Fecal bacteria in Story County, IA lakes and streams

E. coli is a bacteria found in the guts and feces of humans, other mammals, and birds. Because it is abundant in feces and easy to culture, we test it as an indicator of fecal contamination and a stand-in for a variety of other pathogens that could make people sick if they ingest contaminated water while recreating. *E. coli* counts may be measured and recorded as Colony Forming Units (CFU) or Most Probable Number (MPN) per 100 mL but they are equivalent.

2025 Recreational Season

Primary contact recreation includes swimming and water skiing, where swallowing water is likely. The state standard for primary contact recreation or children's recreation has two components, which apply only during the recreational season (March 15-November 15).

- Individual *E. coli* samples collected during the season should not exceed 235 MPN/100mL.
- The geometric mean of all samples collected during the season should not exceed 126 MPN/100mL. At least seven samples are needed to apply the standard.

Only two of three lakes and none of the streams we tested met this standard.

Site	Geometric mean (MPN/100ml)	Samples Exceeding 235	Samples Exceeding 2,880
Peterson Park Beach	20	0 of 15	0 of 15
McFarland Lake	25	0 of 11	0 of 11
Exceeds primary contact standard (126 MPN/100 mL)			
"The Nest" (Pond access) at Tedesco Environmental Learning Corridor	149	5 of 7	0 of 7
Grant Creek @ 280th St	270	4 of 8	1 of 8
Clear Creek @ Lee Park (Ames)	304	5 of 8	0 of 8
South Skunk River @ 280th St	315	4 of 8	0 of 8
S Worrell Creek @ S 530 th Ave (South inflow to Tedesco Environmental Learning Corridor)	381	4 of 7	1 of 7
Hickory Grove Lake Beach	410	9 of 15	4 of 15
S Skunk River @ N River Valley Park (Ames)	410	6 of 8	1 of 8
S Skunk River @ Broad St (Story City)	442	5 of 8	1 of 8
S Skunk River @ W Riverside Rd (Ames)	481	5 of 8	1 of 8
Bear Creek @ Pleasant Valley Rd	531	6 of 8	1 of 8

Secondary contact recreation includes fishing and shoreline activities, where swallowing water is less likely. For secondary contact recreation, the standards are 630 MPN/100mL (geomean) and 2,880 MPN/100mL (for a single sample). Seven streams exceeded the standard for the season, and many of the others exceeded the single sample threshold.

Site	Geometric mean (MPN/100ml)	Samples Exceeding 235	Samples Exceeding 2,880
Exceeds secondary contact standard (630 MPN/100mL)			
W Indian Creek @ Lincoln Hwy (Nevada)	736	5 of 7	2 of 7
Ioway Creek @ 6th St (Ames)	737	7 of 8	1 of 8
Keigley Branch @ 170th St	826	6 of 8	1 of 8
E Indian Creek @ 650th Ave	842	6 of 8	2 of 8
Long Dick Creek @ 567th Ave	1093	8 of 8	2 of 8
Ballard Creek @ 4th St (Cambridge)	2846	6 of 7	3 of 7
W Indian Creek @ 280th St	3347	8 of 8	5 of 8
Not enough samples to evaluate seasonal geometric mean			
S Worrell Creek @ S Riverside Dr (Outflow to Tedesco Environmental Learning Corridor)		5 of 6	1 of 6
College Creek near Sheldon Ave (Ames)		6 of 6	1 of 7
Worrell Creek @ S 16th St (Ames)		3 of 4	1 of 7

For more information about the Story County water monitoring program:

www.prrcd.org/story-county-water-monitoring



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