

# Swimming at Cloverdale Beach and in the NSR – Riverkeeper continues water tests

September 8, 2017 –

EDMONTON -- North Saskatchewan Riverkeeper, in partnership with Swim Drink Fish Canada, conducts weekly recreational water quality monitoring at recreation hotspots on the North Saskatchewan River within the City of Edmonton. The most recent results have now been released for samples collected on Tuesday, September 5th and can be viewed at <http://saskriverkeeper.ca/?p=1276>.

Tests conducted by the Riverkeeper at four locations this summer confirm what was expected based on available data from previous seasons:

Water quality in the North Saskatchewan River fluctuates from day to day and depending on the location and conditions, it is not uncommon that recreational water quality standards are exceeded.

Since August 1st, North Saskatchewan Riverkeeper has published 18 test results at four locations including three for the popular Cloverdale Beach. Nine out of 18 results met the Health Canada standard for recreational water quality of 200 colony forming units of *E. coli* per 100ml of water (CFU/100ml). The other nine results exceeded the standard.

At Cloverdale Beach, test results to date are as follows:

August 22:	123 CFU/100ml (Met water quality standards)
August 29:	238 CFU/100ml (Failed to meet water quality standards)
September 5:	746 CFU/100ml (Failed to meet water quality standards)

Test results **only** reflect water quality at the time of sampling, and because water quality often changes quickly in moving water, it is difficult to predict *E. coli* levels on the days that follow or even later on the same day. For this reason, it is important to interpret individual test results within the context of water quality trends over time. A full report outlining the findings of the monitoring program will be published later this fall.

Additional *E. coli* data based on daily samples taken from the Rossdale Water Treatment Plant intake show that *E. coli* levels just upstream of Cloverdale Beach were recorded at 460 CFU/100ml on September 5. This was the highest result in that period of time – between September 1 and September 6 the average (geometric mean) level of *E. coli* at the intake was 142 CFU/100ml, which is within federal guidelines. In the preceding period for which data is available (August 24 - August 30), the results exceeded federal guidelines, with a geometric mean of 254

CFU/100ml. Water quality is generally better at the intake than at any location downstream of the plant and the numbers confirm that depending on the day, Cloverdale Beach may or may not be suitable for swimming.

Health Canada guidelines are designed to limit the contraction of waterborne illnesses to 1-2%, or 10-20 illnesses for every 1,000 swimmers. When a beach fails to meet these guidelines, the risk of waterborne illness increases.

Members of the public who are looking for the cleanest place to swim in the river might consider choosing a location that is further upriver. River water usually meets federal recreational water quality guidelines as it enters the City of Edmonton and is often suitable for swimming at the sandbar near the Fort Edmonton Footbridge. All three tests conducted by the North Saskatchewan Riverkeeper at this location were within federal guidelines.

Recreational water users are reminded that water quality often deteriorates during and after a moderate or heavy rainfall and swimming activities are best postponed for 48 hours. Precipitation events lead to higher stormwater discharges as well as combined sewer discharges, which release untreated sewage directly into the river at certain locations near the downtown and via the Goldbar Wastewater Treatment Plant bypass. In the absence of rain, water quality is sometimes poorer when river levels are low partly due to stormwater discharges that become more concentrated.

In addition to water quality considerations, there are physical risks inherent to swimming in a moving body of water and all recreational users are advised to wear a lifejacket.

## Quotes

“Before Cloverdale Beach, most people didn’t realize that our city’s stormwater and combined sewer discharges sometimes make it unsafe to swim. What we’re seeing now is that the more people fall in love with the river, the more we are willing to make the necessary improvements to our infrastructure that will ensure clean water not only at Cloverdale Beach, but also for communities downstream.”

“Water quality in the North Saskatchewan River has improved drastically in recent decades, but there is still work to be done. It is not uncommon that water quality fails to meet Health Canada guidelines along the more downstream stretches of the river, and users should exercise discretion and know the risks before entering the water. But when conditions are right and with the appropriate precautions, the river can offer excellent opportunities for swimming as well as a variety of recreation activities.”

– *Hans Asfeldt, Manager of Water Literacy*

## Quick Facts

- Results are posted weekly to [www.saskriverkeeper.ca](http://www.saskriverkeeper.ca) as well as on the Swim Guide website and app, which can be downloaded to any smartphone.
- Swim Guide is a project developed by our partner, Swim Drink Fish Canada, and promotes access to recreational waters and provides up to date water quality information. North Saskatchewan Riverkeeper operates Swim Guide throughout the prairie provinces.
- Without access to water quality information, recreational water users are susceptible to a number of waterborne illness with symptoms ranging from diarrhea and vomiting to skin rashes, eye and ear infections, or respiratory illnesses.
- Beaches included in the Edmonton monitoring program are: Fort Edmonton Footbridge Sandbar, Laurier Park Boat Launch, Cloverdale Beach, and Capilano Park Boat Launch
- In Alberta, official water quality advisories are issued by Alberta Health Services
- North Saskatchewan Riverkeeper was founded in 2009 and is a registered Canadian charity.

## Links

- Overview of the monitoring program: <http://saskriverkeeper.ca/?portfolio=recreational-water-quality-monitoring>
- Full results for beaches tested this week: <http://saskriverkeeper.ca/?p=1276>
- North Saskatchewan Riverkeeper website: [www.saskriverkeeper.ca](http://www.saskriverkeeper.ca)
- Swim Guide website: [www.theswimguide.org](http://www.theswimguide.org)

## About North Saskatchewan Riverkeeper

North Saskatchewan Riverkeeper is a registered Canadian charity and works in partnership with Swim Drink Fish Canada to protect a swimmable, drinkable, fishable future. North Saskatchewan Riverkeeper uses law, science, culture, and digital media to build and lead effective education and advocacy campaigns throughout the North Saskatchewan Watershed.

## Contact

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