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Nevada County Issues South Yuba River No Swim Advisory, Prelim Results Show High levels of E. coli

By California Water News Daily on September 25, 2019



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Nevada County Environmental Health issued a No Swim Advisory for the South Yuba River below Washington to Englebright Lake on Friday officially due to high level of sediments of unknown origin suspended in the water creating potentially unsafe river conditions for all people and animals. However, preliminary results showed E. coli levels that were double the level deemed safe by the Environmental Protection Agency (EPA); full test results will take three to four days.

Nevada County officials indicated that the current levels of E. coli are toxic to humans and animals. The No Swim Advisory includes all swimming, ingesting, bathing and recreational activities. Aerial photos of the area showed the Yuba River as a dirty yellow color instead of its normal bluish green tones.



According to the Mayo Clinic Escherichia coli (E. coli) bacteria normally live in the intestines of healthy people and animals. Most varieties of E. coli are harmless or cause relatively brief diarrhea. E. coli infections can occur from contaminated water or food — especially raw vegetables and undercooked ground beef. However, E. coli O157:H7 can cause severe abdominal cramps, bloody diarrhea and vomiting. Whereas most healthy adults usually recover from this specific strain of E. coli within a week, young children and older adults have a greater risk of developing a life-threatening form of kidney failure called hemolytic uremic syndrome.

Unlike many other disease-causing bacteria, *E. coli* can cause an infection even if you ingest only small amounts. Because of this, you can be sickened by *E. coli* from eating a slightly undercooked hamburger or from swallowing a mouthful of contaminated pool water. *E. coli* bacteria can also easily travel from person to person, especially when infected adults and children don't wash their hands properly. Family members of young children with *E. coli* infection are especially likely to acquire it. Although researchers are investigating potential vaccines, no current vaccine or medication can protect you from *E. coli*-based infection.

On Saturday, the South Yuba River Citizen's League (SYRCL) and numerous local, state and federal resources fanned out in the region to identify the source and extent of the contamination. Partnering agencies included the California State Parks, California Highway Patrol, the State Water Board, EPA, and Nevada County Consolidated Fire District.

Additional water samples for testing were collected in various locations from Humbug Creek on the South Yuba River to Englebright Lake. Volunteers from Saturday's Yuba River Cleanup helped to post No Swim Advisory signs near common river recreation locations and the Army Corp of Engineers and Skippers Cover Marina also assisted Nevada County staff in notifying boaters of the No Swim Advisory on Englebright Lake.