

Houston

IS THE BAYOU CITY,

with thousands of miles of watercourses that create beautiful landscapes, support diverse habitat for urban wildlife, and give its residents many recreational opportunities.

These waterways are a valuable natural resource. Elevated bacteria levels in some of the bayous indicate a possible health risk to people who swim or wade in them. Swimming and wading is called contact recreation in the state's standards for water quality, referring to all recreation in which people come in direct contact with the water.



Buffalo Bayou Partnership



Why do anything about bacteria?

Keeping our water clean keeps us healthy, provides safe recreation opportunities, and contributes to Houston's quality of life, tourism appeal, and long-term economic stability.

What is being done about bacteria?

The Texas Commission on Environmental Quality and the Houston-Galveston Area Council are conducting studies to determine the magnitude of the bacteria problem in Buffalo and White Oak Bayous and to identify its specific sources.



Courtesy of PBS&J

Based on these studies, a watershed action plan will be developed to reduce the amount of bacteria entering these bayous. Solutions developed for this plan could be applied to other Houston bayous with bacteria problems. In addition, this research has prompted other work that deals with identifying sources of bacteria in the watersheds of smaller tributaries that flow to the larger bayous. It has also led to the use of new management practices to reduce bacterial pollution in those watersheds and major bayous.

For more information on these studies, visit <http://www.hgac.cog.tx.us/intro/introtmdl.html> or http://www.tnrcc.state.tx.us/water/quality/tmdl/white_oak_group.html

What can YOU do about bacteria?

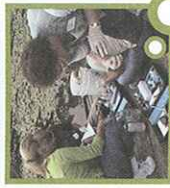
There's a lot YOU can do to prevent bacteria from entering our waterways!

- If you see a leaking sewer line or sewer overflow, report it to the Houston Service Center Hotline, just dial 311! Other questions regarding water quality can be directed to 1-866-77WATER



- If you have pets, pick up their waste and dispose of it properly both at home and in community parks

- If you have a septic system, keep it maintained to avoid leaks and costly repairs
- If you keep horses, cows or other livestock on your property, contact your county extension agent to learn how to best manage animal waste



- If you're interested in monitoring a nearby bayou, creek or lake, join the H-GAC Texas Watch Volunteer team, call 713-627-3200 or visit: www.hgac.cog.tx.us/intro/twx.html
- If you would like to find out more about the water quality in your area, check out H-GAC's Data Clearinghouse for local water quality information, interactive maps, online databases, and more at: www.hgac.cog.tx.us/waterdata
- Request a copy of H-GAC's "Can I Swim Here?" a fun and educational video for kids (also available on CD)
- Visit the Earth 911 Web site at www.earth911.org/ to find out about other things you can do to promote a cleaner environment

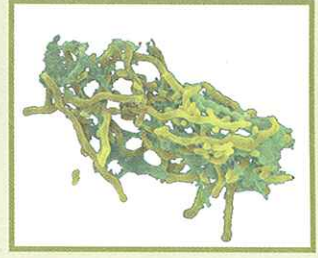


What is bacteria and where does it come from?

Bacteria are found almost everywhere in our environment and are part of complex cycles that make up the balance of nature. Some types of bacteria present in our waterways can cause illness and disease in humans. Fecal coliform and E. coli, though not disease-causing, are two forms of bacteria found in waste from humans and animals. These bacteria are relatively easy to measure and are good indicators of

the presence of harmful bacteria in water-bodies. These bacteria can come from humans, dogs, cats, cows, horses, birds and other wildlife and can be introduced to waterways in many ways, such as:

- Broken sewer lines
- Sewage treatment overflows
- Improperly maintained septic systems
- Stormwater runoff from yards, parks, parking lots, streets, farms, and ranches



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