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| Tuesday, July 18, 2017

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Elevated E. coli levels found in Rock, Yahara rivers

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ASHLEY MCCALLUM
Thursday, July 13, 2017

The Rock County Public Health Department found high levels of E. coli bacteria in the Yahara and Rock Rivers from Indianford to Beloit on Thursday.

The Rock County Public Health Department advises against recreational activities on the water that might lead to accidental water ingestion, according to a press release.

Water samples gathered Wednesday indicated E. coli levels tested at 1,000 colony-forming units per 100 milliliters of water at the Yahara River at Stebbinsville, the Yahara River at Murwin Park in Fulton, the Rock River at Traxler Park in Janesville and the Rock River at Preservation Park in the town of Beloit.

As of Thursday, E. coli levels on the Rock River at Traxler Park and



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Preservation Park have decreased to a "moderate health risk." Levels were still high on the Yahara River at Fulton and the Badfish Creek in the town of Porter, indicating an ongoing health concern.

A high E. coli count is "something to be concerned about," said Rick Wietersen, environmental health director at the Rock County Public Health Department.

It is common to see high counts of bacteria after heavy rainfall, but the amount of E. coli observed this time was more than usual, Wietersen said.

Elevated levels of bacteria might be caused from agricultural runoff or sewer contamination, Wietersen said.

Ingestion of E. coli-contaminated water can lead to intestinal illness, diarrhea, stomachache and vomiting, Wietersen said. He advises people who might have ingested water with elevated E. coli levels to contact their physician.

Lowering levels of E. coli is a "natural process," Wietersen said. Additional tests were taken Thursday to track the issue. Results of those tests are expected Friday afternoon.

Lake Koshkonong and Clear Lake were tested and found to be below health advisory levels for bacteria, according to a press release.

For more information, contact the Rock County Public Health Department at its website www.co.rock.wi.us/health-water-beaches or call 608-757-5440 or 608-364-2010.

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