

EDUCATION & OUTREACH

RiverCast

Philly RiverCast is an online tool created in response to the growing role of the Schuylkill River as a recreational resource. Currently there are over 32 rowing regattas and two triathlons scheduled per year with over 1,250 swimmers per event in the Schuylkill. The Schuylkill River hosted the X-Games wakeboarding competitions in 2000. Movies and television shows filmed in Philadelphia are using the Schuylkill River more and more as a scenic backdrop. With increased public activity and access comes increased human contact with the waterway, as well as greater public concerns about river water quality. In response to these concerns, RiverCast provides a daily forecast of bacteria in the river along boathouse row and offers guidelines about appropriate recreational activities based on its forecast. In short, Rivercast allows river users to make better decisions about when — and when not — to recreate in the Schuylkill River based on water quality conditions. Since its launch in 2005, RiverCast has been visited by over 100,000 people.

PHILLY RIVERCAST A Daily Forecast of Schuylkill River Water Quality in Philadelphia

Friday, June 27
Current RiverCast: GREEN
[click for details](#)

Water Temp: 81°F | 27°C
River Flow: 730 cfs

Welcome to Philly RiverCast

RiverCast Water Quality Designations:

- GREEN:** Water quality is suitable for all recreational activities.
- YELLOW:** Water quality may not be suitable for activities involving direct contact with the river.
- RED:** Water quality is not suitable for activities involving direct contact with the river.

Limitations of Philly RiverCast

Inherent uncertainty and potential for error is associated with any forecast of water quality. Therefore, the RiverCast should be considered a guideline and general estimate of water quality at a given period of time and not a direct measurement of water quality. Other information, policies, regulations, public health statements, data, or observations should be considered in addition to any RiverCast before any individual or organizational river recreation occurs. The Rivercast does not endorse or permit activities that are in violation of any City, State, and Federal policies, regulations and laws.

What is RiverCast?

The Philly RiverCast is a forecast of water quality that predicts potential levels of pathogens in the Schuylkill River between Flat Rock Dam and Fairmount Dam (i.e., between Manayunk and Boathouse Row)([Show Map](#)).

The Schuylkill River, like all working rivers, is not a pristine body of water and is subject to contamination from many sources and activities that either discharge directly, or enter the river during rain events. Because rivers are vulnerable to such contamination, recreation in or upon any body of water has with it an inherent risk of illness and infection for the individual involved.

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Summary of RiverCast Water Quality Designations

GREEN - Predicted bacteria levels are low, water quality is suitable for all activities		
Contact	Activity	RiverCast Recommendation
primary	jet skiing	Suitable
	wakeboarding	
	water skiing	
	kayaking	
	swimming events	
secondary	wading	Suitable
	canoeing	
	scullaging/rowing	
	power boating	
YELLOW - Predicted bacteria levels are elevated, water quality may not be suitable for some activities	jet skiing	May not be suitable
	wakeboarding	
	water skiing	
	kayaking	
	swimming events	
secondary	wading	Suitable
	canoeing	
	scullaging/rowing	
	power boating	
RED - Predicted bacteria levels are high, water quality may not be suitable for most activities	jet skiing	Not suitable
	wakeboarding	
	water skiing	
	kayaking	
	swimming events	
secondary	wading	May not be suitable*
	canoeing	
	scullaging/rowing	
	power boating	
secondary	fishing	May not be suitable*

Bacteria cannot be measured in real time, so RiverCast must predict bacteria based on flow, rainfall and turbidity levels. Once a prediction is made, RiverCast produces a color rating based on the prediction. Each RiverCast color is associated with recommended recreational activities. Activities involving direct contact with the river, or primary activities, are recommended when RiverCast is green and the risk of illness is low. Activities involving less direct contact with the river, referred to as secondary contact activities, are recommended when RiverCast is yellow and the risk of illness is higher. Any contact with the river — whether through primary or secondary activities — is discouraged when the rating is red.



By providing easily accessible water quality information to the general public, RiverCast serves as an educational tool that reconnects people to the River. Water quality in the Schuylkill River has improved greatly over the past three decades, and RiverCast is available to showcase the progress being made. It also creates momentum to continue these efforts by encouraging the community to discover and enjoy this vital natural resource.

Philly RiverCast is available at www.phillyrivercast.org.

The Schuylkill Watershed Initiative Grant is a targeted watershed grant awarded by the U.S. Environmental Protection Agency for the completion of a suite of water quality improvement demonstration projects in the Schuylkill River Watershed. The RiverCast project is one of more than 40 projects that received funding from this source, in addition to other funds and/or support. The grant is administered by the Partnership for the Delaware Estuary and the Philadelphia Water Department.

