**Fecal *coliform* up in Bushkill Creek \*\*Levels of bacteria in some stretches are double what they were three months ago.**

[*Andrew McGill*](javascript:void(0);). [**Morning Call**](http://0-proquest.umi.com.libcat.lafayette.edu/pqdweb?RQT=318&pmid=7480&TS=1319225573&clientId=29109&VInst=PROD&VName=PQD&VType=PQD). Allentown, Pa.: [Oct 8, 2010](http://0-proquest.umi.com.libcat.lafayette.edu/pqdweb?RQT=572&VType=PQD&VName=PQD&VInst=PROD&pmid=7480&pcid=54784701&SrchMode=3). pg. A.10

**Abstract (Summary)**

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| **Full Text**   (474  words) |

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For the Bushkill Creek, the situation has gone from bad to worse.

Recent water tests show that fecal contaminants have nearly doubled in stretches of the stream since the summer, when they were already well over acceptable maximums. According to state Department of Environmental Protection guidelines, much of the creek isn't safe to swim in.

In Easton, levels of fecal coliform -- rod-shaped bacteria that flourish in waste and can indicate the presence of more dangerous pathogens -- are 10 times the legal limit for swimming.

"My goodness, none of us visualized these kinds of problems," said Jim Moser, a volunteer working with the Bushkill Stream Conservancy and DEP to test the water. "If you look at the stream, it looks generally clean -- I don't think any of us suspected it."

Fecal coliforms in the stretch of the Bushkill near Easton's Third Street have ballooned to nearly 2,300 parts per 100 milliliters, double the summer's rate of 1,170. Levels are even higher in a tributary near Rasleytown Road in Plainfield Township, up to almost 2,400 from 1,360 just three months before.

Stretches between Easton and Plainfield Township clocked in at 882, 728, 412 and 307 parts per 100 milliliters.

Between May 1 and Sept. 30, DEP regulations consider coliform counts above 200 parts per 100 milliliters to be unsafe for recreational use. That requirement jumps to 2,000 during the rest of the year.

That means that at least two portions of the Bushkill and its tributaries have more than 10 times the safe level of fecal contaminants for summer months -- and are still well above limits for the winter.

"If it was drinking water, it would be way unacceptable," DEP spokesman Mark Carmon said. "As a naturally occurring stream, it's elevated and a cause for concern."

State biologists will evaluate causes and determine whether the creek should be added to the statewide impaired streams list. Currently, the state classifies much of the Bushkill as a high-quality cold-water fishery.

Tracking down the source of the contamination could be a needle-in-a-haystack undertaking, with possible causes as big as a malfunctioning sewage treatment plant or as small as a failed septic system. Carmon said regulators haven't noticed anything out of the ordinary at local plants, but they'll be checking along the length of the creek.

Plainfield Township Supervisor Mike Engler said he hasn't yet been contacted by DEP and will let them decide whether to post warning signs at the creek.

Plainfield previously investigated claims of a failed septic system above the Rasleytown Bridge. Sewage enforcement officer Chris Noll could not be reached for comment Thursday.

This is the first year volunteers have tested the stretches near Easton, clued in by complaints of odors that there might be a sewage issue.

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