



Potomac Interceptor Status Report (August)

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273-274

Maryland Department of the Environment

August 13, 2026

Executive Summary

This report will summarize recent updates regarding water quality monitoring results, the repair status of the interceptor, and ongoing engagement with DC Water.

MDE Water Quality Monitoring Results

In response to the Potomac Interceptor Sewer Overflow, MDE developed a monitoring plan to evaluate bacteria concentrations in the non-shellfish waters of the Potomac River. This monitoring examined *E. coli* and *Enterococcus*, the key bacterial indicators used under EPA's 2012 recreational water quality criteria. Under those criteria, *E. coli* concentrations above 410 MPN/100 mL and *Enterococcus* concentrations above 130 MPN/100 mL indicate potential impairment of recreational uses and possible public health risks.

Six sampling stations (and later eight) were selected within the non-shellfish waters of the Potomac River, extending from upstream of the Potomac Interceptor Overflow to the Potomac River mainstem near Nanjemoy Creek. These were designated as POT-1 to POT-8. Since May, MDE has continued testing weekly for *E. coli* at three locations: POT-6 (Old Angler's Inn), POT-5 (Little Falls Area), and POT-4 (Chain Bridge Crossing). The table below shows the results of sampling conducted in July.

Table 1. *E. coli* Water Sampling Results in July

	Precipitation	POT-6 (Old Angler's Inn - control site) <i>E. coli</i> MPN/100 mL	POT-5 (Little Falls Area) <i>E. coli</i> MPN/100 mL	POT-4 (Chain Bridge) <i>E. coli</i> MPN/100 mL
July 8, 2026	0.01" to 0.70" of rain	27	70	23
July 15, 2026	No rain on July 14-15	9	39	14
July 22, 2026	0.71" to 1.45" of rain	214	517	326
July 29, 2026	.34" of rain	345	>2420	1986

Sediment Sampling: MDE conducted sediment sampling at eleven locations, 3 above the spill and eight downstream of the spill on June 29, 2026. These results were finalized this month, are depicted below, and will be shared on our website. In response to this data, the Montgomery County Health Department has now lifted its final recreational contact advisory on the shoreline of Minnie’s Island and the area around Lock 10 (the spill site).

Table 1. MDE Sediment Sampling Results

Potomac River Sediment Results											
Date	POT-13	POT-6	POT-17	POT-1 2	POT-15	POT-16	POT-14	POT-11	POT-5	POT-10	POT-9
	Above Washington Aqueduct	Old Angler's Inn	Carderock Area	Lock #10	Minnie Is. Channel	Minnie Is. Canoe Landing	Pier, West Sycamore	Sycamore Island	Little Falls Area	Lock 6, Kayak Input	Lock 6, Kayak Takeout
<i>HF183 (DNA copies/g)</i>											
4/2/2026	BD	BD		BD				384	443	BD	BD
4/14/2026	BQL	BD	BD	BD	12,710	6,786	24	BD	BD	BD	BD
5/14/2026	BD	BD	BQL	BD	984	15	BD	BD	BD	BD	BD
6/29/2026	*	5	BQL	12	41	26	10	69	50	BD	BQL
<i>E. coli (DNA copies/g)</i>											
4/2/2026	BD	BQL		BD				96	193	BD	96
4/14/2026	BQL	11	24	BQL	2,019	1,643	27	BD	BQL	BQL	BQL
5/14/2026	BD	BD	BD	BD	764	68	BD	BD	BD	BD	BQL
6/29/2026	*	19	BD	20	59	5	BQL	12	10	BQL	26
<i>Enterococcus spp. (thousand DNA copies/g)</i>											
4/2/2026	0	52		0				123	1,501	0	115
4/14/2026	22	428	364	6	14,660	24,000	439	9	421	3	1
5/14/2026	62	30	BQL	607	5,466	31	2	23	12	28	6
6/29/2026	*	32	1	11	270	168	7	86	154	0	31
<i>Bacteroides spp. (thousand DNA copies/g)</i>											
4/2/2026	5	31,010		1				363	73,080	0	2,540
4/14/2026	693	2,314	9,703	133	260,400	141,500	5,239	158	712	57	112
5/14/2026	4,003	3,393	5	53,740	686,400	27,030	365	1,093	423	5,462	3,590
6/29/2026	*	706	0	1,285	11,900	4,083	875	1,980	5,331	0	1,977

BD = Below Detection; BQL = Below Quantification Limit. Extracted DNA concentrations from Pot-10, Pot-13, and Pot-17 were low and outside of the optimal range for dPCR analysis. *The extracted DNA concentration for the Pot-13 sample was so low that this sample was not run using dPCR.

Shellfish Harvesting and Drinking Water Assessment: There have been no documented impacts to shellfish waters, drinking water, or aquatic organisms in this area in July.

Regional Water Quality Monitoring Synthesis

This dashboard (<https://potomacinterceptor.dc.gov/>) compiles sampling data from the

Department of Energy & Environment (DOEE), DC Water, MDE, U.S. EPA, Virginia Department of Environmental Quality, and the Potomac Riverkeeper Network. During the month of July, DC Water has continued to conduct daily sampling and DOEE conducted weekly sampling of various sites near or downstream of the point of the interceptor collapse. As of the date this report was finalized, the dashboard includes all DC Water, DOEE, and MDE data between July 1, 2026 and July 26, 2026.

The *E. coli* sampling results from this dashboard are depicted in the charts below. The “Potential Risk” line falls at 410 MPN/100 mL, which is the EPA recommended threshold for assessing recreational activity. The “High” line is at 1532 MPN/100mL, which includes values that are high relative to baseline conditions on the Potomac. These values are two standard deviations above the 15-year historical mean based on DOEE monitoring data from January 2011 to February 2026.

July Sampling Results

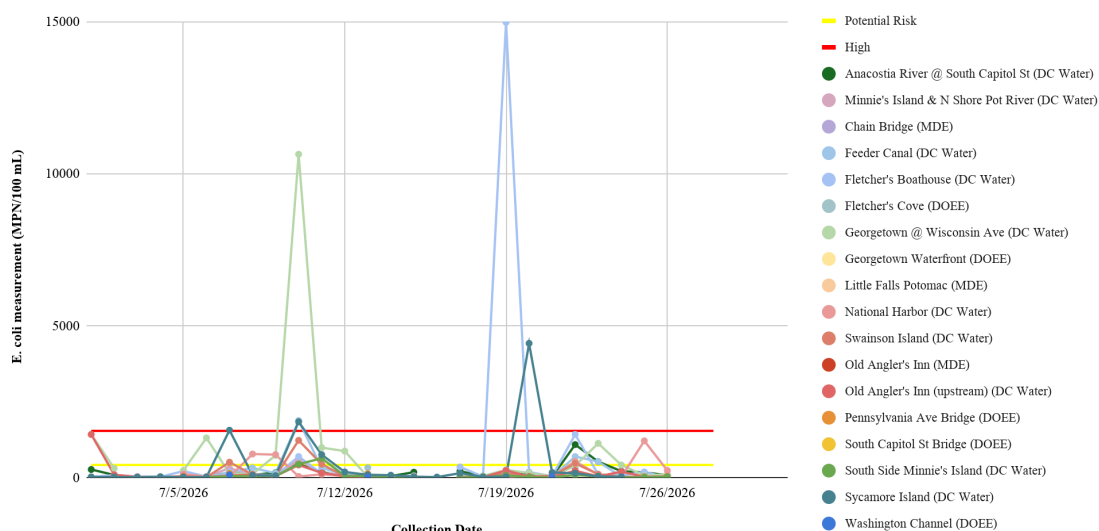
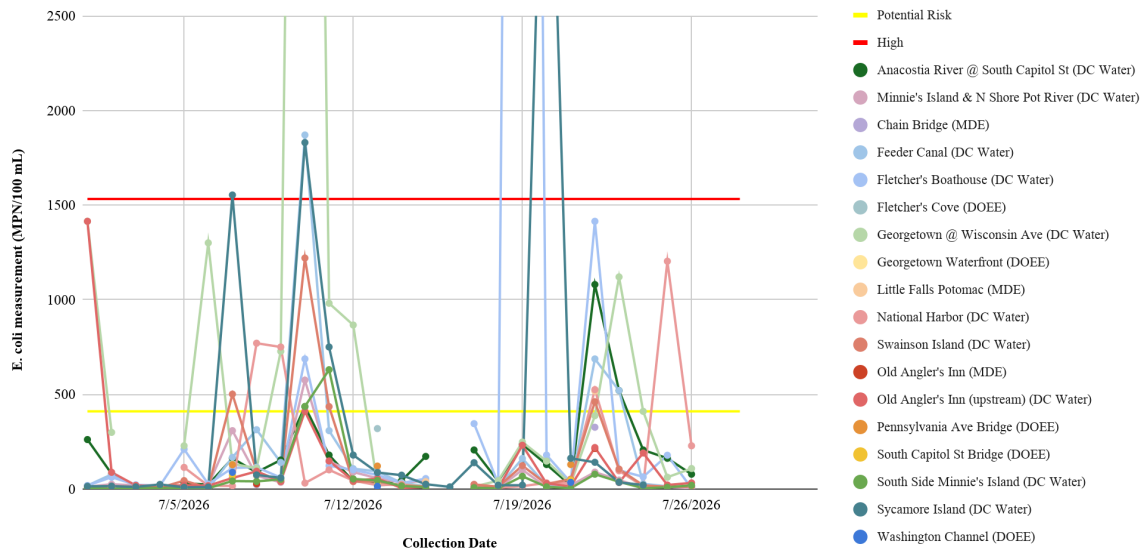


Figure 1. July Sampling Results (All Values)

July Sampling Results**Figure 2. July Sampling Results (Closer View)**

As seen in the charts above, the vast majority of *E. coli* measurements fall under the 410 MPN/100 mL limit. There were about six measurements that were considered “high” relative to baseline conditions on the Potomac. The highest value was recorded on July 19, 2026 at Fletcher’s Boathouse. According to the [National Weather Service](#), there were 0.61 inches of rain and thunderstorms on July 18, 2026 in Washington D.C, which likely caused increased runoff. There were also three “high” measurements recorded on July 10, 2026. The National Weather Service [reported](#) 0.65 inches of rain and thunderstorms on July 9, 2026. There were also rainfall events prior to the spikes on [July 7](#) and [July 22, 2026](#).

The Potomac Riverkeeper Network (PRKN) ended their supplemental weekly water quality sampling in partnership with the University of Maryland (UMD) in June 2026. On July 1st, PRKN with UMD and George Mason University, conducted a one-day sampling survey of *E. coli* levels within the water, near the bottom of the water column, and within the sediment of the Lower Potomac River to attempt to understand bacteria present in these areas.

Overall, combined data collection efforts illustrate similar trends. Bacterial concentrations have largely returned to historic norms and safe recreational limits with expected spikes related to precipitation events.

Potomac Interceptor Performance and Repair Status

There have been no additional overflows, spills or leakages of sewage at the site of the

collapse in June. The permanent sliplining repairs for the section where the collapse occurred are anticipated to be complete in October 2026 and the final repairs to close the pipe openings used for bypass are anticipated to be completed in January 2027.

DC Water identified four additional sections of the Potomac Interceptor that require emergency repairs, two in Maryland and two in Virginia. The locations in Maryland are the Muddy Creek/Pennyfield Lock area and the DC Line area. The sliplining repairs in these sections are anticipated to be completed in September 2026.

The Engineering and Capital Projects Program has issued a Sewerage Construction Permit on July 22, 2026 for the Potomac Interceptor Rock Run - MH20 to MH15 Rehabilitation project, which will be completed through Design-Build delivery method. Based on DC-Water, there are more projects in the CIP that may progress to the construction phase within the next two years.

Canal, National Park, and Ecological Restoration

MDE recently approved DC Water's request to proceed with soil restoration in the C&O Canal (Area 4) after testing (canal soil samples) found that *E. coli* levels met Class A Biosolids standards (<1,000 MPN/g). This work will include replacing the clay liner and backfilling with clean topsoil. The National Park Service will approve the final repairs and restoration of the Canal. Minnie's Island (Area 5) is designated as a distinct rehabilitation area to evaluate localized shoreline and sediment conditions. These repair and cleanup sites will continue to be routinely inspected by MDE's Water Compliance program.

Ongoing Monitoring and Requirements of DC Water

MDE will continue to conduct routine shellfish monitoring. At this time, we are also conducting weekly monitoring of *E. coli* at POT-4, 5, and 6, but we will transition this sampling effort to DC Water in the near future as both organizations are sampling in similar areas. Any results from MDE's sampling efforts will be posted on our [website](#). DOEE is also continuing their weekly sampling at 14th St Bridge, Fletcher's Cove, Georgetown Waterfront, Pennsylvania Ave Bridge, South Capitol St Bridge, and Washington Channel.

DC Water submitted a draft [Emergency Repair and Rehabilitation Plan](#) on April 29, 2026. On June 16, 2026, MDE released a [response](#) outlining certain limitations of the plan. MDE requested a response and revised plan or a specific timeline for creating this plan within 30 days. DC Water submitted a written response to MDE comments on July 16, 2026. MDE is currently reviewing DC Water's comments and DC Water will submit an

updated plan based on our response. More specific details about long-term monitoring will be provided once the plan is approved and finalized.

Environmental Remediation

This will also be determined by the finalized Emergency Repair and Rehabilitation Plan.

Conclusion

Any further updates will continue to be provided on our website and will be outlined in our September status report.