

Report on Water Sampling in 2025

A. E. coli

Bacteria Levels are indicators of water safety, especially for drinking water and recreational activities like swimming. E. coli is specifically monitored because it best indicates potential to harm humans.

Bacterial levels are usually higher after a heavy rain, which washes bacteria-containing sediment into the lakes and rivers.

After a couple of sunny days, the ultraviolet radiation destroys much of the E.coli, but there is always some present, although it may be at very low levels. An E coli count of less than 10 coliform units (cfu) per 100 ml is minimal; counts of over 200 cfu per 100 ml are considered unsafe for swimming.

When bacterial counts are high, it is important to avoid swallowing lake water when swimming, as well as getting water in your ears or opening your eyes underwater. Showering after a swim is highly recommended.

High E. coli counts are typically caused by the recent occupation of the area by a flock of birds or a very heavy rain. Consistently high levels without those two conditions are suggestive of a malfunctioning septic system nearby – perhaps one that needs pumping.

Water taken directly from a lake or river is not safe to drink at any time unless it is treated. Treated household water should be tested at least twice a year, whether it comes from a water body or a well.

Free testing is available through Public Health. Keeping the bacterial levels in the water low depends on maintaining well-functioning septic systems, by having regular inspections and pump outs (every few years depending on usage) and taking care not to damage the septic bed.

Promoting clean water in our lakes and rivers also involves maintaining a healthy vegetative growth of trees and native long-rooted plants between the lake and the septic system to capture the bacteria and other nutrients, such as phosphorus and nitrogen, before they enter the lake or river.

The following pages contain the most recent E coli levels in six lakes of McKellar Township from samples collected by MLCA volunteers. Analysis is completed by a provincially accredited lab paid for by McKellar Township.

Sampling is conducted three times in the summer - at the end of June, July and August.

Of the 21 samplers who are signed up for E. coli sampling, 17 were active and available this summer.

Of the samples taken in 2025, as measured in CFU*/100 ml), 86% were under 50, 32% were between 50 and 100, 7% were between 100 and 200, and 3% were over 200. (*Coliform Units)