

US EPA ARCHIVE DOCUMENT

# National Rivers and Streams Assessment 2013-2014



## A Fact Sheet for Communities



The U.S. Environmental Protection Agency (EPA), states, and tribes are conducting the second nationwide survey of the condition of the nation's rivers and streams. The survey will help citizens and water quality managers measure the health of our waters, evaluate the effectiveness of protection and restoration efforts, and take actions to prevent pollution. This *National Rivers and Streams Assessment 2013-2014* is one in a series of surveys of the condition of the nation's waters and the second survey of the nation's rivers and streams (see [www.epa.gov/aquaticsurveys](http://www.epa.gov/aquaticsurveys)).

Designed to estimate the percentage of rivers and streams that are in good, fair, or poor condition, the survey will serve as a scientific report card on America's flowing waters. It will examine ecological, water quality, and recreational indicators, and assess how widespread key stressors (such as nutrients, fish tissue contaminants, and bacteria) are across the country.

The survey is a collaborative effort that involves a large number of state environmental and natural resource agencies, federal agencies, universities and other organizations. In many states, state water quality staff will conduct the water quality sampling and habitat assessments. In others, field work will be conducted by staff under contract to EPA.

### How were sites selected?

A total of 1,800 sample sites were selected to represent the condition of rivers and streams across the lower 48 states. Of these, half are rivers and half are small streams. Sites were selected randomly using a statistical survey design to represent the population of rivers and streams in their ecological region – the geographic area in which climate, ecological features, and plant and animal communities are similar.



*Sampling sites for the National Rivers and Streams Assessment*

U.S. Environmental Protection Agency  
1200 Pennsylvania Ave.  
NW (4503T)  
Washington, DC 20460  
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### What about my local river or stream?

If your local waterbody is being sampled for this survey, it was selected randomly from the population of rivers and streams in your part of the country, not because it exhibited any particular problem or water quality condition. When the final report for this second *National Rivers and Streams Assessment* is written, data from your

local waterbody will contribute to the regional and national picture of the condition of the nation's flowing waters.

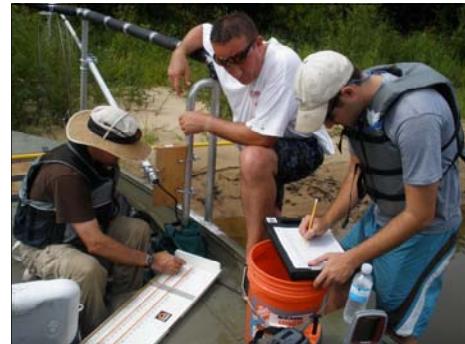
*If your local river or stream is not being sampled for this survey, it was not omitted for any particular reason except that it was not randomly selected or did not fit into the target population of flowing waters.*

Many volunteer water monitoring groups have years of sampling data for rivers and streams, data vital to local water quality management activities. This survey will provide a regional and national – and in some cases, statewide – assessment. It will also allow those with sampling data for their local waters to compare the condition of their waterbody to the range of rivers and streams in their region.

### What will researchers measure?

Field crews will take many measurements at each selected site. They use consistent procedures at all sites so that results can be compared across the country. They measure such things as:

- Temperature, dissolved oxygen, nutrients, pH, and more;
- Condition of the habitat along the river or stream banks;
- Algae and free floating plants;
- Benthic macroinvertebrates – small aquatic animals such as insects, snails, and crayfish that are a source of food for fish;
- Bacteria -- indicators of possible fecal contamination;
- Type and abundance of fish; and
- Contaminants in fish tissue.

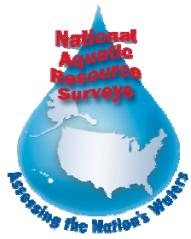


Field crew members record data for the National Rivers and Streams Assessment

Data for individual waters will be made available to the public using a national database as part of the final report on the condition of our rivers and streams.

### What happens next?

Sampling will be conducted during the summers of 2013 and 2014. EPA intends to issue a report on the findings in 2016. Between the time sites are sampled and the national report is published, samples will be analyzed in the lab, the data will be entered into a database and analyzed, and a draft report will be written and reviewed. The public will have the opportunity to review and comment on the draft report.



For more information on the National Rivers and Streams Assessment, visit [www.epa.gov/aquaticsurveys](http://www.epa.gov/aquaticsurveys). The National Rivers and Streams Assessment 2008-2009 report will be posted on the Web for public comment in February 2013.