



Randy E. Hayman, Water Commissioner

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Philadelphia Water Department (PWD) Position on Maintaining Secondary Contact

Zone 3 and River Miles 95.0 to 81.8 of Zone 4 of the Delaware Estuary

The Delaware River Basin Commission (DRBC) has established [water quality regulations](#) for recreational use along the shared waters of the Delaware Basin, including the tidal areas of the Delaware and Schuylkill Rivers in Philadelphia.

The majority of the Delaware River in Philadelphia is designated as acceptable for *secondary contact* recreation, which restricts activities to boating and fishing because significant contact or water ingestion during those activities is unlikely.

PWD supports **maintaining the secondary contact water quality designated use**. It is not safe to swim in these sections of the Delaware and Schuylkill Rivers due to public health and safety concerns. These concerns include commercial shipping traffic, strong currents, deep water, point and nonpoint source (runoff) pollution, combined sewer overflows, and treated wastewater discharge.

The area of the tidal Delaware River north of the Pennypack Creek in Northeast Philadelphia has a *primary contact* recreation designation, which does not restrict any water activities, even swimming. Regardless of the recreational use designation in the rivers, Philadelphia Parks and Recreation has stated that swimming is only authorized in pools when a lifeguard is present and that swimming in creeks, rivers, and streams is prohibited.

PWD and the Philadelphia Department of Public Health advise NO swimming in Philadelphia rivers and streams because it is dangerous, contact with water containing elevated bacteria can cause illness, it can result in potentially fatal injuries and drowning, and it is against the law.