

FRANKLIN COUNTY/NORTH QUABBIN

# Green River Swimming Area still shut – bacteria

Area lakes, Unity Park splash pad are open, providing alternatives

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Through both a heat wave that brought scorching temperatures to the region and the Independence Day weekend, the Green River Swimming and Recreation Area remained closed because of high bacteria levels.

Swimming has been prohibited since June 24. The concession stand,

bathrooms, playground and walking trails, however, are still available for public use.

Greenfield Recreation Director Christy Moore explained the water is tested weekly for bacteria in line with state requirements.

“We get through the pandemic as much as possible,” Moore said, “and Mother Nature slams us with a heat wave.”

The one-two punch of blistering

heat and heavy rain last week complicates testing, too. Moore said these weather conditions can cause the water to be too cloudy to get an accurate test result.

“With the heat and the storm, it’s not helpful for water testing,” Moore said. “The warmer it is, the higher the potential for bacteria. We have to be within a certain range the state

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**Bacteria tests have yet to clear the swimming and recreation area in Greenfield, which has been closed to swimming since June 24.**

# Swimming alternatives available in region

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has set, and if we exceed that, we can't open."

Moore said she understands why the public is upset they didn't have a place to cool off this week or over the holiday weekend.

"We are equally disappointed," she said.

When interviewed late last week, Moore said she was grateful to have the splash pad at Hillside Park as an alternative. As of Tuesday afternoon, however, the splash pad was temporarily closed for maintenance, according to a post on the Recreation Department's Facebook page.

Montague Parks and Recreation Director Jon Dobosz confirmed Tuesday that the splash pad in Unity Park in Turners Falls remains open.

## Regional swimming areas

Other regional lakes and swimming areas have been more fortunate in avoiding bacteria outbreaks. The Tri-Town Beach in Whately, however, is closed not because of bacteria, but for renovations.

Ashfield Parks Commission Chair Judy Haupt said the town has avoided bacteria outbreaks in Ashfield Lake.

Haupt said the heavy rains could "absolutely" raise the bacteria levels in the water and officials will be monitoring it. She added the lake regulates itself pretty well and is "pretty clean water."

"It's interesting — Ashfield Lake is fed by a number of underground springs and self-cleans," Haupt said. "I've been on the Parks Commission for a dozen years and can only remember two times we closed the lake."

A similar situation was detailed by Athol Town Manager Shaun Suhoski regarding Silver Lake and Lake Ellis in Athol. Though overnight storms could impact bacteria levels, as of Tuesday, no bacteria findings have required closure of the lakes for swimming, he said. Laboratory results are collected weekly and are reviewed by both the town Board of Health and the beach director.

Colin Killay, Orange's superintendent of highways, cemeteries and parks, said the town hired Housatonic Basin Sampling in Lee to test Lake Mattawa's water weekly from the week before Memorial Day until Labor Day weekend.

"If test results came back that the water quality was unsafe for swimming, we would close the beach until the conditions had changed and we could ensure a safe environment," he said. "Since 2018, we



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**Lifeguard Ryder Choquette was ready for swimmers at Silver Lake in Athol Tuesday morning.**



**Laurel Lake in Erving State Forest was open for swimming Tuesday, with a lifeguard on duty.**

have not had a negative test result that forced us to close the beach. All test results have been within the amount allowed by the state."

While questions arose from residents on the social networking platform Nextdoor regarding whether Laurel Lake in the Erving State Forest was closed to swimmers, multiple attempts to reach a spokesperson for the state Department of Conservation and Recre-

ation were unsuccessful. However, a visit to the lake on Tuesday showed swimmers were being allowed in the water, with a lifeguard on duty. The same is true of Lake Wyola in Shutesbury.

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