

PRESS RELEASE
EMBARGOED UNTIL 22ND SEPTEMBER

Environmental charity, The Rivers Trust, release new data to help wild swimmers identify possible sources of pollution before taking the plunge for World Rivers Day.

This World Rivers Day (22nd September 2019), The Rivers Trust have released a new interactive map to help wild swimmers identify pollution hotspots to help them weigh up the risk and choose an appropriate time and location for swimming.

Recent reports have claimed that despite the recent rise in wild swimming, there were a number of pollution risks putting wild swimmers at risk. At present, no rivers have been designated as bathing waters, unlike many of the UK's beaches. The Rivers Trust believe that currently very few rivers would meet the biological standards required for swimming.

Mark Lloyd, Chief Executive at The Rivers Trust, said:

“Outdoor swimming, like all outdoor sports, carries an element of risk, but we’re certainly not trying to discourage wild swimming. By providing this interactive map, we can help swimmers weigh up the risks before taking the plunge and highlight some of the challenges facing our rivers. We hope that this information will encourage greater investment and collaboration to achieve a higher standard of water quality that is good for both people and wildlife.”

Swimmers have been made ill by pathogens, a bacteria or virus in rivers that causes illness. These come from wild animals, human sources such as sewage discharges and agricultural sources such as run-off containing animal excrement. It only takes a small number of pathogens to affect the water quality and while it is not possible to eliminate all sources, scientists believe it is possible to try and identify the locations and times when some of these sources might pose greater risk.

The map, which will be available on The Rivers Trust website, will provide swimmers with information on the locations of discharges from the sewerage network which are entering rivers.

Mark continued: “There is certainly a lot to do to get our rivers up to scratch for swimming and many factors are still unknown to us. These include timings and locations of agricultural pollutions, discharges from badly connected pipes and hidden septic tanks which are not in our datasets. This is why we can never be sure that a location is 100% safe for swimming.

“There are a number of ways people can help improve river health at home too – avoid causing blockages by only flushing the three Ps (pee, poo and paper), checking waste pipes are only going into the foul sewerage network and using water butts and soak aways to avoid rainfall overloading the sewerage network.”

The UK's Rivers Trusts are working with the farming industry, water companies and general public to improve knowledge and build capacity to monitor water quality effectively and

reduce the sources of pathogens in our rivers. To find out more and to see the map in action, visit, www.theriverstrust.org.

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Notes to Editor:

THE RIVERS TRUST is the umbrella body for the Rivers Trust movement working to protect, promote and enhance our freshwater ecosystems for both people and wildlife. With the support of 60 member Trusts across the UK and Ireland, we work on the ground, in the heart of the community, to promote a sustainable future for our river environments.

For more information about the rivers Trust, please contact jayne.mann@theriverstrust.org or visit www.theriverstrust.org