Welcome to *How's My Waterway* Help. Some directions and information may vary for mobile phones vs. desktop computers. Please go to the topic where you need assistance:

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Getting Started (mobile devices)

LOCAL SEARCH: Tap "Use My Location." Tap "OK" if asked whether to allow your location to be used, and you will receive a list of the waterways and their condition within a 10 by 10 mile search area around your current location. Mobile devices can also search waterways by zip code or city, state by using "Choose a Location" (see **Search** below).

HOW TO USE AS A SMART PHONE APP: No app downloading is necessary – but you may want to save the *How's My Waterway* icon on your home screen with your other apps for quick access. *How's My Waterway* is a mobile-friendly website that retrieves all information from online, reformats it for your mobile device, and doesn't

take up space on your device. You may want to add **How's My Waterway** to your home screen as an icon with our QR code

or by following the bookmarking steps below:

For iPhone and iPad: open the Safari browser and type in watersgeo.epa.gov/mywaterway. Tap on the "Add Bookmark" icon in the middle of the bottom bar (usually appears as a rectangular box with an arrow or a plus sign), select "Add to Home Screen," and touch "Add" in the upper right corner. The same steps will work in the iPad, except the "Add Bookmark" icon usually appears in the upper left corner.

For Android: Open internet browser and type in watersgeo.epa.gov/mywaterway. Press the settings/options button at bottom of phone, tap on "Add bookmark" (for some models you may have to tap on "more" first), then select "ok." Now tap on the bookmark button within the browser (usually appears in the upper right corner) and touch and hold for 2 seconds the bookmark of **How's My Waterway**. Tap on the "Add shortcut to home" option in the menu that pops up. The **How's My Waterway** icon will now appear on your home screen.

Getting Started (desktop)

<u>**SEARCH ANYWHERE IN U.S.**</u>: Click on "Choose a Location" and follow the instructions under Search, below.

<u>**LOCAL SEARCH**</u>: Use My Location" is mainly for mobile devices and uses the GPS feature of your phone to locate waterways near you. This search option may work on

some desktop computers by using the computer's IP address if the browser supports it. Beware that the IP address may not be where the computer is at the time.

How To Search

Selecting "Choose a Location" on the home page opens the search page. Enter any location in the U.S., including both states and territories, in the window and hit return or click the button at right to retrieve a list of the waterways within a 10 by 10 mile search box based on the center point of the location you chose. You can use a zip code, place name and state (even for very small places), or a road name, but not a waterway name because waterway names are often poorly documented. If there are multiple locations by the same name, you will get a list of options so you can select the one you meant. Note: Alaskan waterway information is not yet available in How's My Waterway but can be viewed in [ATTAINS](#) on a desktop computer.

Results: List Format

The same types of list results are retrieved for either the "Use My Location" or the "Choose a Location" starting point, as well as for mobile or desktop devices. Note that there are two tabs with results at the top of the screen: "Search Results" which lists the waterways within the search box, and "Other Water Info" which lists other water-related details about the same area (see below).

<u>**SEARCH RESULTS TAB**</u>: Search results come back as a list of waterway names from within the search box, with each waterway's assessment and pollution status (color coded as green = unpolluted, red = polluted, and blue = unassessed) and date. Waterways closest to the search area center appear first. Some large waterways are only partially within the search area, so their listed results represent only the part within the search box. It is possible for the same waterway name to appear several times within the list of results. This situation happens when multiple segments of the same water body are located within the search area. Some waterways are called unnamed. Even though they may have a local name their names have not yet been placed on maps. Unnamed waters with the same assessment and condition status are combined in the list. Select "Show Map" for a map view of the same waters in the list results, or select any waterway name for more waterway-specific details (see **Waterway Detailed Results Page** below).

OTHER WATER INFO TAB: This tab provides information on local drinking water supplies, watershed names, coastal beaches, fish advisories and fish habitat partnerships from the search area, as below:

DRINKING WATER SUPPLIES: These are shown when part or all of a search area is near the public water supplies listed. The surrounding lands may have special restrictions to avoid polluting the water supply. Public water supplies include water from lakes, rivers or streams that communities depend on for their tap water. Groundwater wells, which also supply public water, are not currently listed. Exact locations of water intakes and wells are not disclosed on the map or list for security reasons.

WATERSHED NAMES: Everywhere is part of a watershed - the land area surrounding and draining into a specific waterway. Activities in a watershed determine whether or how badly its waterway is polluted. How's My Waterway provides the name (or names) of the medium-scale watershed within which a search took place.

COASTAL BEACHES: Inland/freshwater beach information is not available here, but EPA tracks conditions at coastal beaches. EPA and the states, tribes and territories (all called states here) track information on coastal or Great Lakes beach water quality and public health-related advisories and closures. **Set the slider button on "Past" or "Recent"** to obtain information about the beaches listed in your search results. **Past advisories and closures information** comes from EPA's BEACON2 website and was reported by states to EPA, generally on a yearly basis. Selecting "Past" and then selecting a beach name from the list will link you to information about that beach, but this is generally past information (e.g., last year's reporting) only. **Recent advisories and closures information** may be available from the state in which your How's My Waterway search occurred. Selecting "Recent" and then selecting a beach name from the list leads you to the state's Beach website, in which you may find more recent information. The timing of updates may vary from state to state so a standard definition of "recent" is not possible.

FISH ADVISORIES: Government agencies protect people from eating contaminated fish by issuing advisories to limit or avoid eating certain species of fish when pollutant levels in fish flesh are unsafe. A variety of pollutants may lead to warnings about eating fish. All warnings are meant to help people avoid risks to their health. Some or all species of fish from a waterbody may be considered unsafe in an advisory. Advisories

can be issued for single waterbodies, groups of waterbodies, or a large area (such as "statewide"). **Set the slider button on "Past" or "Recent"** to obtain information about the fish advisories that affect part or all of the waters in your search results. **Past fish advisory information** comes from EPA's [National Listing of Fish Advisories](#) (NLFA) website and was reported by states to EPA. The last update of the NLFA was in 2013 and included 2011 fish advisory information. With the slider button on "Past", selecting a specific fish advisory will provide information from past years only. Unless marked "rescinded", advisories may still be in effect. **Recent fish advisory information** may be available from the state(s) in which your How's My Waterway search occurred. Selecting "Recent" on the slider button and then selecting an advisory will take you to the state's fish consumption guidelines website, where you may search for more recent information about specific advisories or waters. The timing of updates may vary from state to state so a standard definition of "recent" is not possible.

FISH HABITAT PARTNERSHIPS: The National Fish Habitat Partnership (NFHP) is a coalition of government and nongovernment groups working to reverse declines in fish habitat across the US. NFHP has developed Fish Habitat Partnerships across the country; the ones listed here are active in the search area.

NEW SEARCH: This button will return you to the home page where you can search again by selecting the "Choose a Location" button or the "Use My Location" button.

Results Map

VISIBLE AREA: Selecting "Show Map" brings up a map view of the same waters in the list results. The waterways are shown on a map with roads and other features. On mobile phones' small screens, just a portion of the search box (black rectangle) area is visible but the user can move around within and beyond the search box. On desktop computers the whole search box and some area beyond it is visible. Plus and minus buttons change the size of the area in view. Zooming out too far may make the waters disappear and leave only the view of the background map; select the plus button to zoom in and see the waters again. The icon below the minus button expands the view to full-screen.

COLOR-CODED WATERS: The "Map Options" screen explains color coding of the mapped waterways and offers options for changing the types of waters being displayed.

In the default setting, the polluted waters are red, unpolluted are green, and unassessed waters are blue.

SHOWING SPECIAL FEATURES: See the list of additional map features you can turn on and off: includes the location of discharge permits, TMDL cleanup plans, runoff control projects, and other features.

BASE MAP DISPLAY OPTIONS: Also under "Map Options" you will have the opportunity to choose among different free, commercially available map backgrounds. Options include three types of street maps, an aerial image background, and a hybrid of aerial image and streets.

BROWSING THE MAP: You can drag your view across the map beyond the black search box and explore as far as you want, allowing some time for the waters in the new area to reload.

SELECTING A WATERWAY: User may select a mapped waterway within the search box by clicking (tapping on mobile devices) once on it. If you select a waterway, you will leave the map and go to the detailed results page about that waterway (see Waterway Detailed Results Page below).

SELECTING A NEW SEARCH AREA: If you have browsed outside the search box and want to see results for a new area you have found, you may click (or tap on mobile devices) anywhere on the map to redefine search area. After clicking on a new area, answer "OK" when asked if you want a refined search on that location. You will leave the map and go to a new list of search results for that area. The waterway nearest to where you clicked will appear at the top of the list.

SWITCHING BETWEEN LIST VIEW AND MAP VIEW: Both the map results and the list results have buttons to get you back to the other results format whenever you want.

Waterway Detailed Results Page

This page is reached by selecting one waterway from the Results List or Results Map. The page offers three types of information: reported condition, pollution categories, and what's being done.

REPORTED CONDITION: This section repeats the status and dates of assessment and pollution reporting for the single waterway selected. Clicking on the section title or the status statement provides an explanation of all the possible reported condition categories and what they mean. The "Technical reports" button connects to a technical EPA website (not formatted for mobile devices) that contains a scientific waterbody report summary.

POLLUTION CATEGORIES: This section lists the pollution category types for waterways where these have been reported. There are 34 types. Clicking on the section title provides an explanation of what the categories generally mean, as well as offering a downloadable document that describes all 34 categories in non-technical language. Clicking on one pollutant category name in this section brings up a brief plain language description, which says what it is, where it comes from and what harm it can do to people or the environment, and how people can help. The "Technical reports' button connects to a technical EPA website (not formatted for mobile devices) that contains a scientific waterway report summary.

WHAT'S BEING DONE: This section describes types of cleanup activities that occur under the Clean Water Act in response to pollution reported to EPA: TMDL cleanup plans, discharges regulated by permits, and polluted runoff control projects. TMDL cleanup plans are listed by the pollutant category they address. Select "technical reports" under the discharges to see individual names and technical information about each permit. Do likewise under runoff control projects to view details about each project. Clicking on technical reports in all these cases will lead to a technical EPA website (not formatted for mobile devices) that includes more scientific details and documents. The state water quality program contact (a website) for the search area is also provided here in case users wish to ask questions or report new information.

Waterway Detailed Results Map

Selecting "Show map" from a waterway's detailed results page will display the map of the search area as described above, with the only difference being that the specific waterway from the detailed results list is shown highlighted in gray.

Related Links

These are website links to many other types of popular water-related information. They were provided separately from the waterway information retrieved from the search because the information source is differently organized and can't yet be combined with other *How's My Waterway* information. Note that these links are to websites that may not be formatted to display well on mobile devices' small screens, and are best viewed on desktop computers.

About How's My Waterway Button

This button contains a general description of *How's My Waterway*, the information it provides, and the Clean Water Act reporting process that generates this information, as well as links to relevant websites and downloadable documents.

Downloads

Technical users may want to obtain the national or statewide mapped data, upon which *How's My Waterway* is based, at the following website:

[Water Program Geospatial Data Downloads](#).

How's My Waterway was developed mainly as a quick-reference non-technical service. The following downloadable documents may also be educational and informative:

[How's My Waterway Fact Sheet (PDF)](#) (1 pp, 550K, [About PDF](#)).

[Pollution Categories Summary Document (PDF)](#) (20 pp, 557K, [About PDF](#)).

[How's My Waterway Questions and Answers (PDF)](#) (2 pp, 274K, [About PDF](#)).

[How's My Waterway User Help (PDF)](#) (4 pp, 453K, [About PDF](#)).