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News Release

*For Immediate Release*

### **Health Department, Watershed Committee Begin Stream Testing**

During the summer months, Ozarks residents spend more time in local recreational waters such as streams and rivers. However, water in these swimming areas can contain harmful bacteria and parasites from human or animal waste and wastewater runoff. When a person swallows contaminated water they may become sick.

In order to provide swimmers with information on the quality of water in local swimming holes, the Springfield-Greene County Health Department partners with the Watershed Committee of the Ozarks to monitor select stream and river locations in Greene County for the presence of E. coli and coliform bacteria. The total coliform count is an indication of fecal water contamination.

Samples are collected from five area swimming locations weekly by the Watershed Committee, and tested by the health department lab staff. Sites are selected based on their accessibility and the likelihood that people might come in contact with the water. They are located on the James River, Galloway Creek, Lake Springfield, Little Sac River and Wilson's Creek. The health department does not regulate these sites in any way – the information is provided as a community service.

Testing typically runs from Memorial Day through Labor Day, but has begun earlier this year due to warmer spring weather this season. The current results can be found on the health department's website at: [health.springfieldmo.gov/streams](http://health.springfieldmo.gov/streams).

The most common recreational water illness is diarrhea, which is caused by swallowing water contaminated by E. coli, Shigella, Giardia or Cryptosporidium. To help protect your family from recreational water illnesses, follow these healthy swimming tips:

- Do not swim after heavy rains, or if the water is murky. Wastewater runoff is highest following a rain.
- Do not swim when you have diarrhea. You may spread bacteria and make other people sick.
- Do not swallow swimming water; and if possible avoid getting it in your mouth altogether.
- Practice good hygiene. Bacteria from your hands could end up on your food.
- When water is contaminated or conditions are uncertain, avoid full-body contact water activities such as swimming and diving.

For more information, contact: Mike Brothers, Public Information Administrator, Springfield-Greene County Health Department; or Mike Kromrey, Executive Director, Watershed Committee of the Ozarks, (417) 866-1127.