

WATER QUALITY STANDARDS

According to EPA guidelines adopted by the Arizona Department of Environmental Quality (ADEQ) and listed in Arizona Administrative Code, Title 18, Chapter 11, 109-C, **one bacteria sample result of 410 or greater is considered unsafe for swimming and wading.** The geometric mean, a mathematical formula that provides the average of the most recent results, is also monitored. If this number exceeds 125, it is also considered unsafe for swimming and wading. Slide Rock State Park collects **five creek water samples once per week** during the swim season* to monitor bacteria levels. Arizona State Parks and Trails has been monitoring bacteria levels in the Slide Rock swim area for more than 30 years. During this period, few cases of waterborne illness have been confirmed.

MICROSCOPIC BACTERIA ARE FOUND IN ALL NATURAL WATERWAYS

Surface quality conditions are fleeting in nature due to the water's downstream movement, as well as Oak Creek Canyon's various weather conditions, like monsoons and floods. Naturally occurring bacteria can pose serious health risks to visitors. Water samples have an 18 hour incubation period prior to reading results. The water quality issue encompasses all of Oak Creek, not just the Slide Rock swim area. Some microorganisms occur naturally. Others come from human and animal waste. Microorganisms can also enter the water from sewage overflows/malfunctions, as well as storm water runoff after it rains.

RECREATING IN A NATURAL WATERWAY IS NEVER RISK FREE

Bacteria can enter the body through the mouth, nose, and ears, as well as through cuts and wounds. The incubation period is three to 10 days. Waterborne illness symptoms include sore throat, stomach cramps, vomiting, and diarrhea. Additionally, infections of the skin, eyes, ears, and respiratory system can occur. Children, the elderly, or people with weakened immune systems have a greater risk of illness.

WAYS TO PREVENT ILLNESS WHEN RECREATING IN NATURAL WATERWAYS

- Avoid getting water in your mouth.
- Do not swallow the water.
- Hold your nose or wear nose clips.
- Avoid digging in or stirring up the sediment.
- Do not swim or wade in the water if you have open wounds or sores.
- Avoid swimming or wading after heavy rains.
- Minimize immersing your head when swimming.
- Take a shower after swimming.

HELP PREVENT THE SPREAD OF BACTERIA AND ILLNESS TO OTHERS

- Do not swim if you are sick, especially if you are experiencing diarrhea.
- Change children's diapers frequently or use little swimmers.
- Use restroom facilities.
- Do not leave your trash or picnic scraps near the creek. Pack-It-Out!
- Keep pets out of the swim area.

SURFACE WATER QUALITY RESULTS:

FOR SWIMMING AND WADING

*The "swim season" begins Memorial Day weekend and ends with Labor Day weekend. Testing is performed starting a week before and continues a week after this window.