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Ohio EPA Reports Results of Killbuck Creek Watershed Study

An Ohio EPA report finds Northeast Ohio's Killbuck Creek watershed provides a relatively healthy environment for fish and other aquatic life, but presents a challenge for humans hoping to recreate in it.

The report [*Biological and Water Quality Study of the Killbuck Creek Watershed*](#) provides results from an extensive 2009 examination of Killbuck Creek and its tributaries. Ohio EPA biologists assessed the chemical, physical and biological attributes of the 609 square-mile watershed and identified areas needing improvement. A total of 33 watershed streams were evaluated for aquatic life and recreational use potential.

More than 80 percent of the sites sampled for water chemistry, physical habitat, fish and macroinvertebrates were found to be in full attainment of designated or recommended aquatic life uses. The overall biological integrity of the basin was high as evidenced by the large number of cold water fish. Three state-listed fish species were found: the river redhorse, the bluebreast darter and the eastern sand darter. A state endangered caddisfly was found in several locations. Nine state listed freshwater mussels – including the state and federally endangered purple catspaw – were found in Killbuck Creek in studies by other parties.

The primary concern for humans is elevated levels of bacteria found throughout the watershed. All of the sites sampled for *E. coli* exceeded the primary contact standards associated with recreational activities such as swimming, boating, water skiing and canoeing. An elevated level of *E. coli* indicates the potential presence of pathogenic organisms that could cause disease or infection when recreating in or on the water. High bacteria levels may be attributed to cattle and horse access to streams, unsewered communities and poorly functioning wastewater treatment plants.

Ohio EPA has one of the most advanced water quality monitoring programs in the nation. The information gathered helps guide the Agency's issuance of discharge permits and implementation of local storm water programs. The Agency also shares the information with area governments, landowners and citizens so they can develop local plans to restore waterways impacted by pollution.

The Killbuck Creek watershed begins in Medina County and flows south more than 81 miles through Wayne, Holmes and Coshocton counties before draining to the Walhonding River. Major tributaries include Apple Creek, Salt Creek, Black Creek and Doughty Creek. The wetlands in the Killbuck Creek valley comprise the largest complex of wetlands remaining in Ohio, away from Lake Erie.

Ohio EPA's report and related Killbuck Creek watershed information is available [online](#).