



# Swimming in the Hudson

---

**Dan Shapley**  
**Riverkeeper**

**April 14, 2023**  
**Clean Water Act Symposium**

# What I'm Talking About

---

**People swim**

*but they should and could swim more*

**The water quality is much better**

*but not consistently “swimmable”*

**Watershed & infrastructure investments work**

*but weak standards & climate change present risks to progress*

# Is the Hudson Swimmable?

---

- ❑ Public beaches & pools available
- ❑ Meets “swimmable” water quality standards



# Who Swam in the Hudson?

---

“In the 19th and early 20th Centuries, **millions of people** swam in the Hudson River every summer, from public beaches along the river’s length or in floating pools located along Manhattan’s shoreline.”

## Swimming in the Hudson River Estuary Feasibility Report on Potential Sites



Prepared for

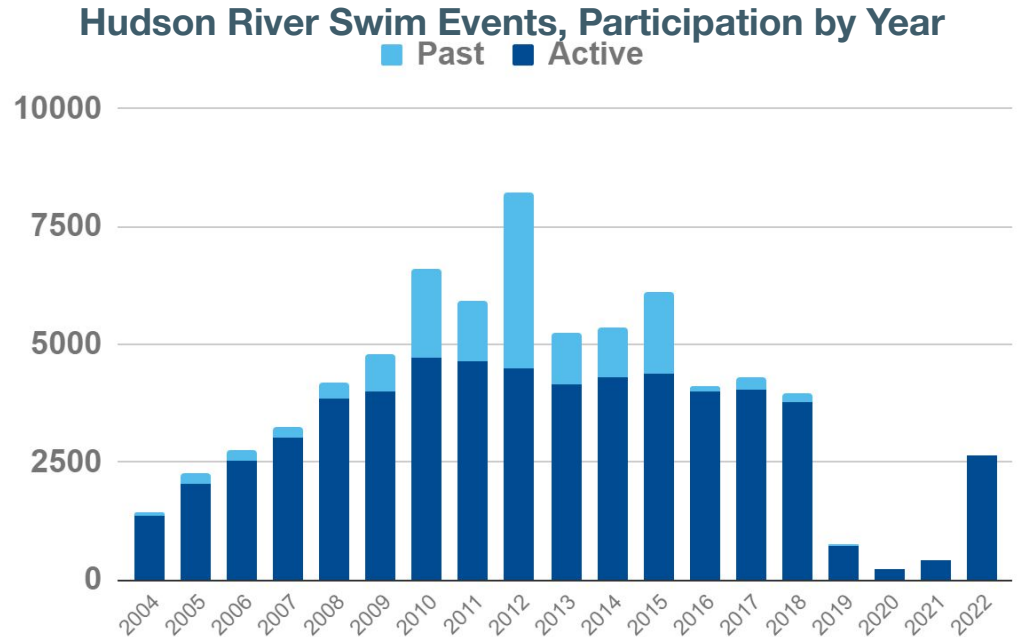
The Hudson River Estuary Program  
New York State Department of Environmental Conservation  
Denise M. Sheehan, Acting Commissioner

New York State Office of Parks, Recreation and Historic Preservation  
Bernadette Castro, Commissioner

George E. Pataki, Governor  
2005

# Who Swims in the Hudson?

- **4 beaches** (3 public), 1 pool
- **38+ other sites** where recreation takes place
- **20 active open water swim events** on 57 different days
- **5,000+ event swimmers**, on average (pre-pandemic)



# Who Would Swim in the Hudson?

---

- **One in four** residents swims or visits a beach & **one in five** kayaks, boats, paddleboards, jet-skiis, etc.
- **+Pool, Ossining, Little Stony Point** could expand access
- **15 other sites** ID'd as potential new beaches

## The New York Times

Opinion

### A Beach for Manhattan

It's not as far-fetched as you think.

By The Editorial Board

The editorial board represents the opinions of the board, its editor and the publisher. It is separate from the newsroom and the Op-Ed section.

Aug. 5, 2018



# Who Can Swim in the Hudson?

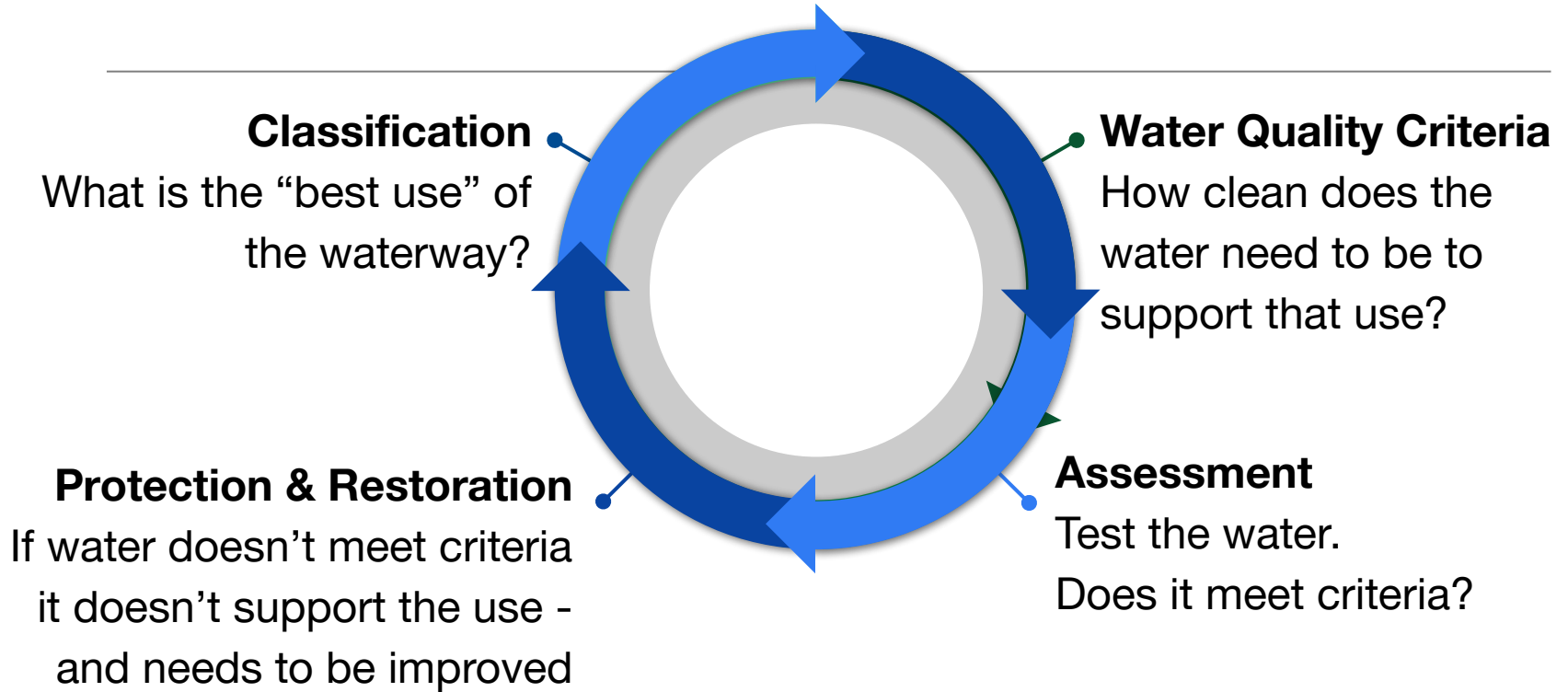
---

- Many EJ communities do not have access to safe swimming
- Public beaches and other access points are at risk from sea-level rise





# Water Quality Standards







# Hudson River Estuary Water Quality Standards

## Water Quality Criteria

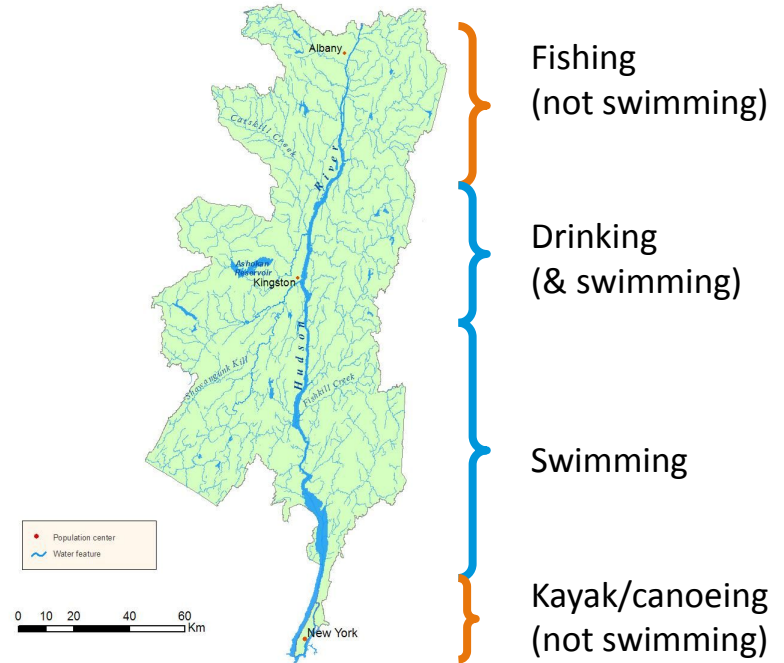
Outdated freshwater standards for north of Bear Mtn Bridge

## Designated uses

Swimming is not a designated use in the Capital District or NYC

## Assessment

Effectively no data collection





# South of Bear Mtn Bridge & NYC Water Quality Standards

---



NOW!

**Criteria** - How clean is clean enough for swimming, kayaking and fishing? You have a voice!

## Designated uses



2024!

Should the Hudson, East River, Harlem River be managed to support swimming? You have a voice!

# Is the Hudson Safe for Swimming?

---

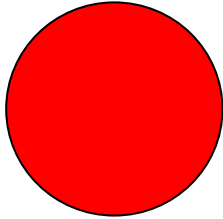
Most of the river,  
most of the time...

but not everywhere...  
and especially not after rain



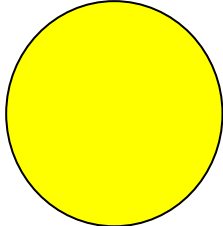
# Is the Hudson Swimmable?

---



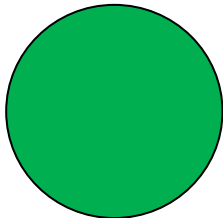
**STOP!**

Often unsafe for swimming



**CAUTION!**

Risky after rain

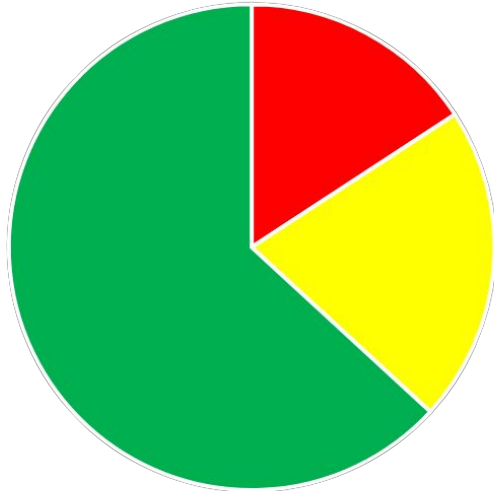


**GO!**

Generally safe for swimming

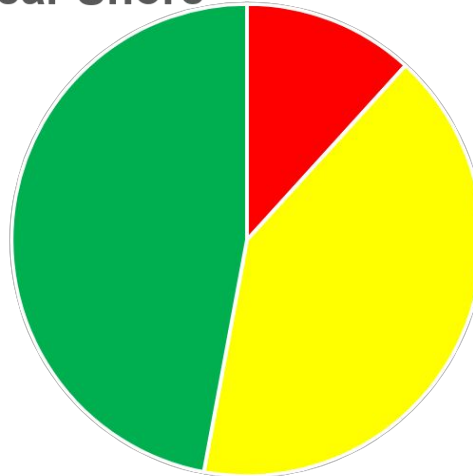
# Is the Hudson Swimmable?

Mid Channel



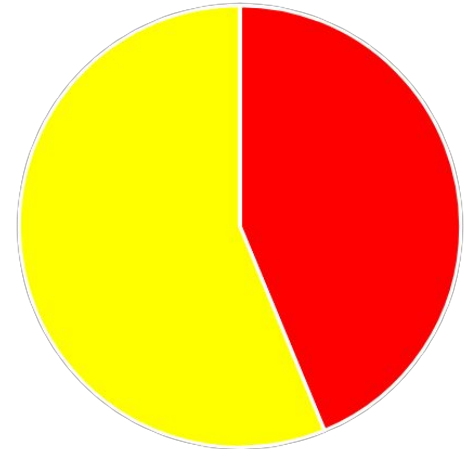
■ Fails Both Criteria ■ Fails 1 Criterion ■ Passes

Near Shore



■ Fails Both Criteria ■ Fails 1 Criterion ■ Passes

Tidal Tributaries

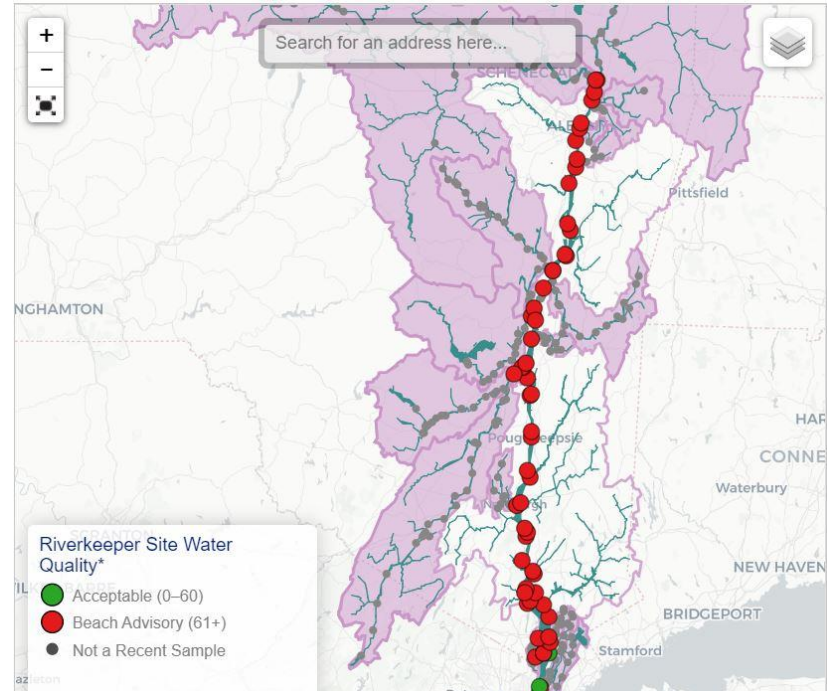


■ Fails Both Criteria ■ Fails 1 Criterion ■ Passes

# Climate Extremes and Water Quality

Extreme storms have at times made the entire river unsafe for swimming

Some Hudson River beaches have been closed multiple times in recent years



# Toward a *more* swimmable Hudson

---

160+ sewer treatment plants  
many old or at risk

1000s of miles of sewer pipe,  
~half 65+ years old

~250 CSOs in 29 Hudson  
River Watershed cities





# Toward a *more* swimmable Hudson

---

You are here



A \$32 million project to  
reduce sewer overflows is  
here



The heroes responsible are  
here





# Riverkeeper Priorities

---

## **Stop CSOs, Fix Our Pipes & Manage Our Watersheds!**

Support state/federal investments to meet \$2.2 billion+ need

## **Make our River Swimmable!**

Upgrade Water Quality Standards

## **Make River Swimming Accessible!**

Build new pools and beaches

## **Focus on Water Quality & Access in Adaptation Planning**

Plan for extreme storms & sea-level rise



# What You Can Do

---

[riverkeeper.org/takeaction](https://riverkeeper.org/takeaction)

