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Slocum Creek fails first Swim Guide test

From Sound Rivers

NEW BERN [May 22, 2026] — Slocum Creek in Havelock failed to meet recreational water-quality standards in this first week of Swim Guide testing.

Pierce Creek in Oriental was not tested this week.

“The good news is, the rest of the sites on the lower Neuse passed the Swim Guide test,” said Clay Barber, Sound Rivers’ program director. “Most of the time, a ‘Swim Guide fail’ can be attributed to stormwater runoff washing lots of bacteria into the waterways, but Slocum Creek is a unique situation. For the past several years, it’s had some ongoing issues with failing septic systems, but we’ve worked with the county to get those resolved. We do year-round sampling there, and Slocum Creek has been pretty clean for the last several months, so we’ll be looking into the resurgence of bacteria there.”

A “Swim Guide fail” means elevated levels of fecal bacteria, which can come with increased risk of gastrointestinal illness and skin infections for pets and humans alike.

Swim Guide is an international water-quality program conducted locally by Sound Rivers, an environmental nonprofit whose mission to keep North Carolina’s waterways fishable, swimmable and drinkable. This summer marks the ninth year of Swim Guide in the Neuse and Tar-Pamlico watersheds.

The program runs from Memorial Day weekend to Labor Day weekend.

The 17 sites tested weekly on the lower Neuse include Old Waynesborough State Park in Goldsboro; N.C. Highway 11 and Oak Bluff Road boating access sites in Kinston; Maple Cypress boat ramp in Grifton; Cow Pen Landing boat ramp in Vanceboro; Glenburnie, Bridgeton Park, Lawson Creek, Spring Garden boat ramp and Blackbeard Sailing Club in the New Bern area; the River Bend kayak launch; Trent Woods on the Trent River; Brice’s Creek in James City; Slocum Creek in Havelock; Pollocksville boating access; and Pierce Creek and Midyette Street boat access in Oriental.

Cow Pen Landing, Spring Garden and Pierce Creek were not sampled this week.

Results are released to the public on Friday afternoons throughout the summer at soundrivers.org/swim-guide, through local media and text. To get results delivered weekly via text, text “Rivers” to 50155.

Based in Raleigh, New Bern and Washington, Sound Rivers has worked for more than 40 years to protect the health of the Neuse and Tar-Pamlico rivers and the communities that rely on them. The two watersheds cover nearly a quarter of North Carolina.

Sound Rivers' Swim Guide program is sponsored by the Water-Quality Fund in memory of Gene Pate, Grady-White Boats, Public Radio East, 99.5 The Wave, Cummins, Eno River Association, UNC Lenoir Health Care, Z. Smith Reynolds Foundation, UNC Pavel Molchanov Scholars, ECU SECU Public Fellows Internship Foundation, City of Greenville, Blackbeard Sailing Club, Melinda Vann and David Silberstein.

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