

News Release

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H2NOW, the groundbreaking Chicago River water monitoring tool, is back and improved for Summer 2022

H2NOW reports on water quality from three locations every 15 minutes

July 12, 2022 (CHICAGO) — H2NOW, the first real-time monitoring tool for the Chicago River, is back for Summer 2022, with improvements that make it more powerful and useful.

The platform is providing a guide to water quality by estimating fecal coliform levels every 15 minutes from three spots along the river, through an array of novel technologies. The resource is available at [H2NOWChicago](https://H2NOWChicago.com).

In addition to upgraded technology, new this year is a QR code that allows residents and river users to get to the platform immediately to check water quality. The code will



be displayed on promotional materials and on signage along the river.

H2NOW, first launched in September 2021, reports on the river like a meteorologist reports on the weather, providing real-time information for kayakers, walkers, diners and other residents and visitors who want to know about the health of the Chicago River. Current, the Chicago-based catalyst for better, cleaner water, is leading H2NOW operations with the support of more than 20

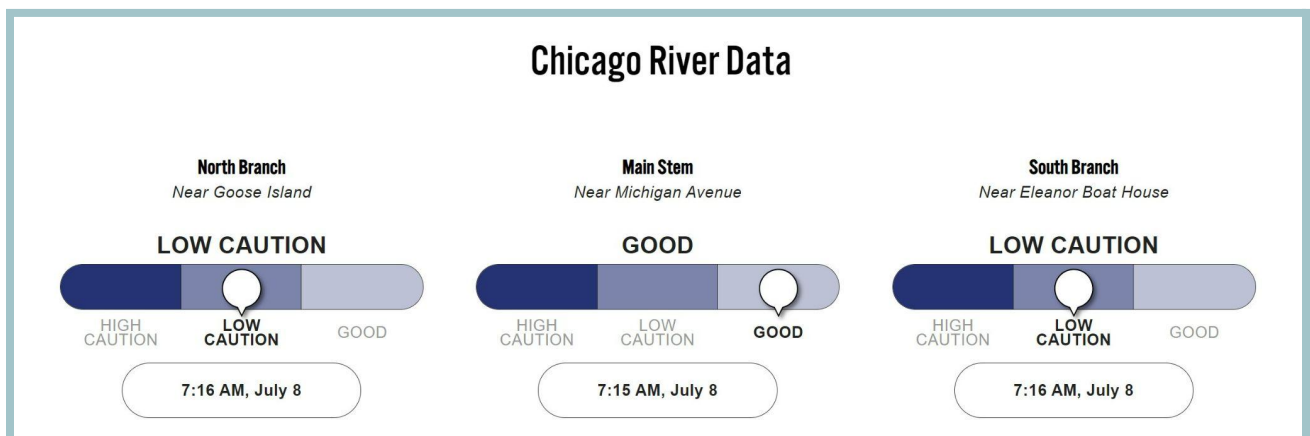
partners.

The system relies on innovative technologies that have not been previously deployed in an urban river, and helps connect residents to their environment.

Sensitive probes have been installed in three locations and collect a series of measurements to estimate fecal coliform levels. Data are transmitted and displayed on the H2NOW portal.

“Everyone who lives near or uses the Chicago River has a stake in its health and safety,” said Alaina Harkness, executive director of Current. “The more information we have about water quality, the more we can each do our part to keep this tremendous resource healthy.”

Since last fall, Current has upgraded its approach to translating sensor data into real-time water quality assessments using the best available science, and has redesigned the online gauges to deliver information to visitors and residents in a more usable and readable way.



Sensor equipment was removed last winter and reinstalled in May with additional features that enable H2NOW to provide an even better prediction of bacterial levels.

Upgraded probes are now collecting data on colored dissolved organic matter, or CDOM, as well as specific conductivity. Those readings are combined with measures of tryptophan-like fluorescence [TLF], temperature, and turbidity to provide an overall quality estimate. On the newly designed display gauges, water quality is considered “Good” or safe for contact if estimated fecal coliform levels are below 200 CFU/100 mL. If fecal coliform estimates range between 200 and 1000 CFU/100 mL, gauges display a “Low Caution” reading. Above 1000 CFU/100 mL, a “High Caution” warning is displayed. The “Good” threshold is based on the Illinois Environmental Protection

Agency's Primary Contact Use standard value, indicating that one is unlikely to get sick if river water is ingested.

Building and launching H2NOW was the result of collaboration among more than 20 partners, including the Metropolitan Water Reclamation District of Greater Chicago, which protects and monitors waterways and oversees wastewater treatment and stormwater management for Chicago and 128 suburbs, and the City of Chicago's Department of Water Management, which is responsible for delivering drinking water to the city and 125 suburbs and collecting wastewater and stormwater through local sewers for transport to MWRD's treatment facilities

"The Chicago River connects our communities," said MWRD Board of Commissioners President Kari K. Steele. "H2NOW helps us make informed decisions about how we interact with the river."

"The Chicago Department of Water Management was proud to be a founding member of Current to help identify and implement innovative technologies, which are improving every year," said Dr. Andrea Cheng, Commissioner of the Department of Water Management. "H2NOW is a terrific example of how technology can connect residents to their environment."

Fecal matter pollutes the Chicago River in two main ways. First, rainwater that falls over 1,834 square miles from Wisconsin to Indiana drains into the Chicago River, carrying, among other things, droppings from birds and other animals.

Second, heavy rains can occasionally overwhelm local sewer systems. These events can cause harmful combined sewer overflow [CSOs] into the Chicago River. These events are reported by the MWRD and other advocacy groups. H2NOW augments the CSO alert system by providing more detailed information about river water quality.

ABOUT CURRENT

Current is a catalyst for better, cleaner water. Founded in Chicago in 2016, our mission is to grow an inclusive Blue Economy, accelerate innovation, and solve pressing water challenges. We bring together corporations, nonprofits and governments to develop water management policies and test new technologies — projects that would be too

risky or even impossible for any one group to undertake. Our innovation hub is growing because water is no longer an issue; it's a crisis. Our health and environment hang in the balance.

The information provided by H2NOW is not meant to evaluate biological safety of the river, and neither Current nor its partners are responsible and/or legally liable for illnesses contracted/injuries incurred by persons who engage with the river based on H2NOW data.

Images and videos of H2NOW equipment can be found at:

<https://www.h2nowchicago.org/media>