

# THE SWIM GUIDE

MONITORING THE WATER QUALITY OF  
FLATHEAD LAKE'S SWIMMING BEACHES

Kate Sheridan & Amber Stanfield  
Flathead Lakers





01. THE FLATHEAD LAKERS  
Founded in 1958

02. THE SWIM GUIDE  
Citizen Science

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Process + Results

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Goals for the Swim Guide



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# HELLO!

Kate Sheridan- Executive Director  
Amber Stanfield - Development Associate



# The Flathead Lakers

SINCE 1958, OUR MISSION HAS BEEN TO PROTECT CLEAN WATER, HEALTHY ECOSYSTEMS, AND A LASTING QUALITY OF LIFE IN THE FLATHEAD WATERSHED.



**FLATHEAD  
LAKERS**  
DEFENDERS OF THE WATERSHED



## THE FLATHEAD LAKERS' APPROACH

- To encourage land and water stewardship,
- Broaden the constituency for responsible and thoughtful land use planning and resource management
- Build partnerships to effectively address conservation priorities so that our communities can absorb growth and provide economic opportunities while maintaining our special natural heritage and quality of life for future generations.



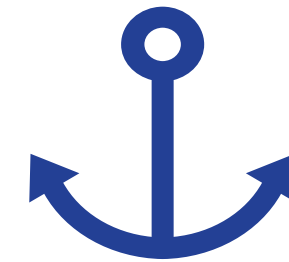


# Key Priorities

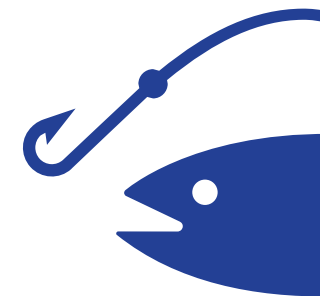
## WATER QUALITY



Aquatic Invasive Species



Septic Leachate



Planning & Development Issues



Resource Management





# Key Areas

## ADVOCACY

We inform our members when their voices are needed to help protect clean water.

## CONSERVATION

Our Conservation and Restoration Program works collaboratively to protect important existing wetlands and riparian areas, and the clean waters they provide our watershed.

## EDUCATION

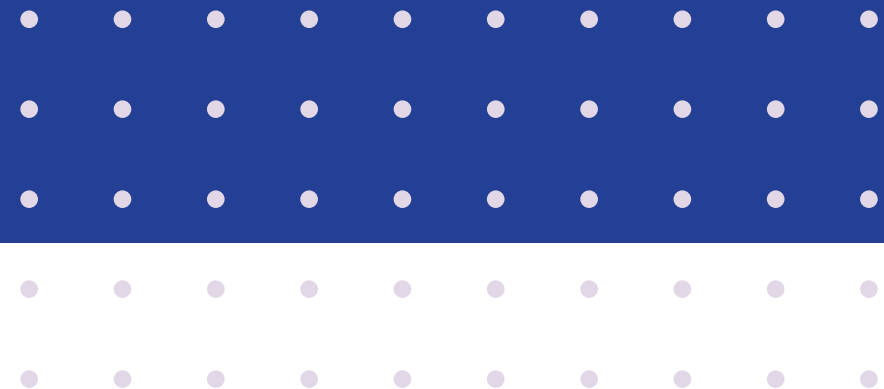
Our adult and student education programs focus on appreciating and learning about our watershed, and understanding that our actions make a difference to clean water.





# THE SWIM GUIDE

Monitoring Flathead Lake







# SOLUTION

Mark Johnston,  
FLOW Swimmers

## PROBLEM

Flathead Lake is sought after for fishing, boating, swimming, and other forms of recreation.

No testing was being done at Flathead Lakes swimming beaches to prevent swimmers from contracting water-borne diseases, primarily e.coli.

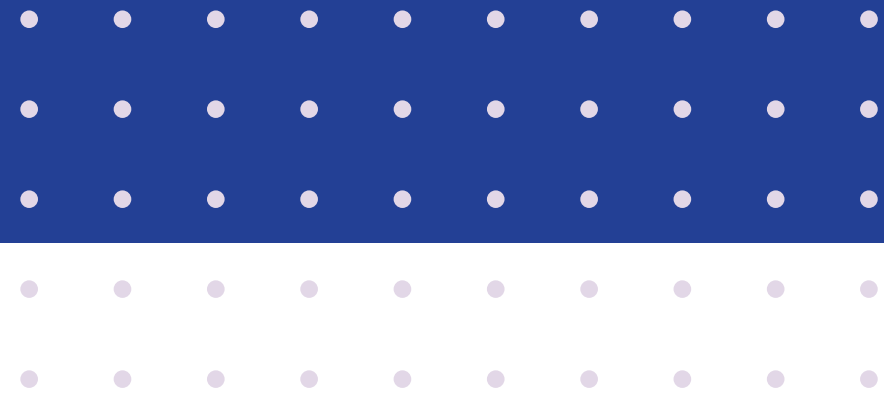




02.

# PROCESS

Citizen Science



# Collaborative Effort

The Flathead Swim Guide Project is a collaborative project between the Flathead Lakers, Flathead Lake Biological Station (FLBS), and the Confederated Salish and Kootenai Tribes







## Gather Sample

Our team of volunteers gathered a sample at each of the 16 beaches every Tuesday from July 10-September 12, 2023.



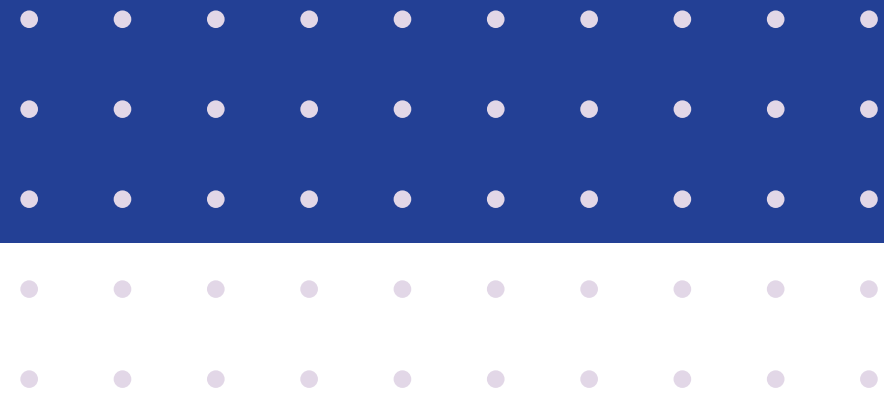
## Deliver to Biostation

Montana follows federal guidelines for the monitoring of its recreational waters. The guidelines for freshwater levels of *E. coli* are a geometric mean of 100 cfu per 100 mL and an STV of 320 cfu per 100 mL, measured using EPA Method 1603, or any other equivalent method that measures culturable *E. coli*.

03.

# RESULTS

2023 Season





# 2023 SWIM PASS/FAIL

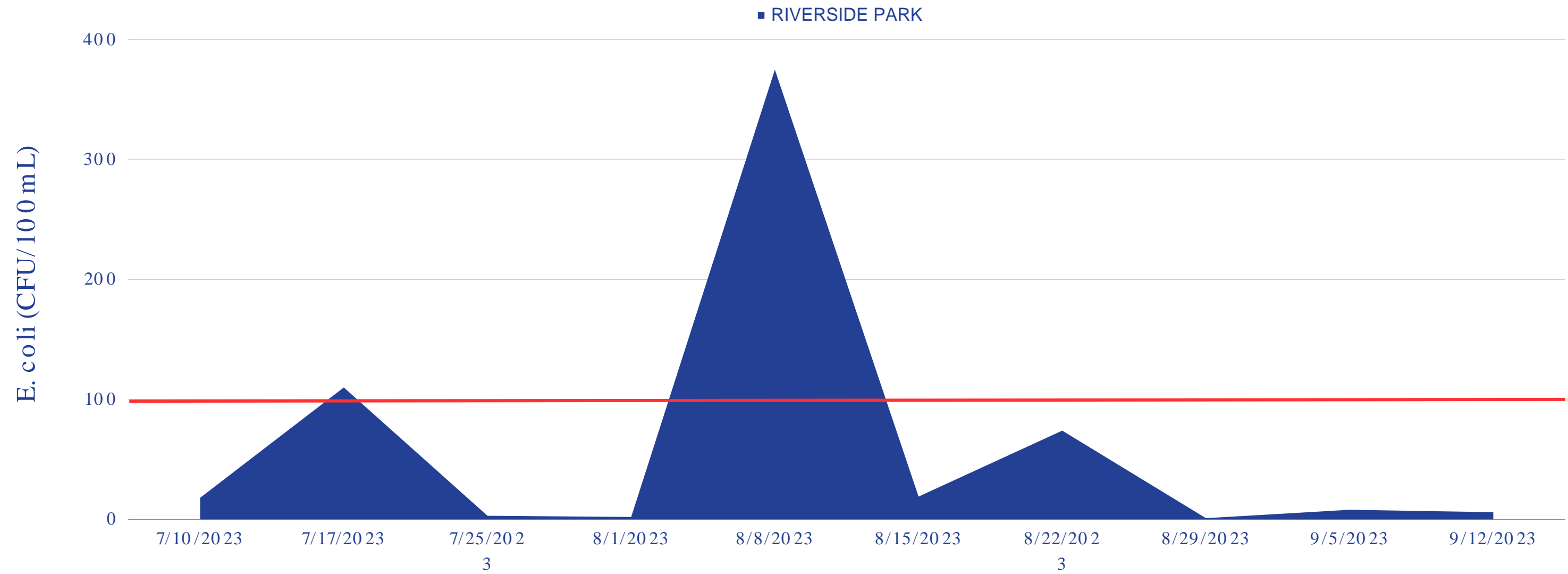
■ Pass ■ Fail



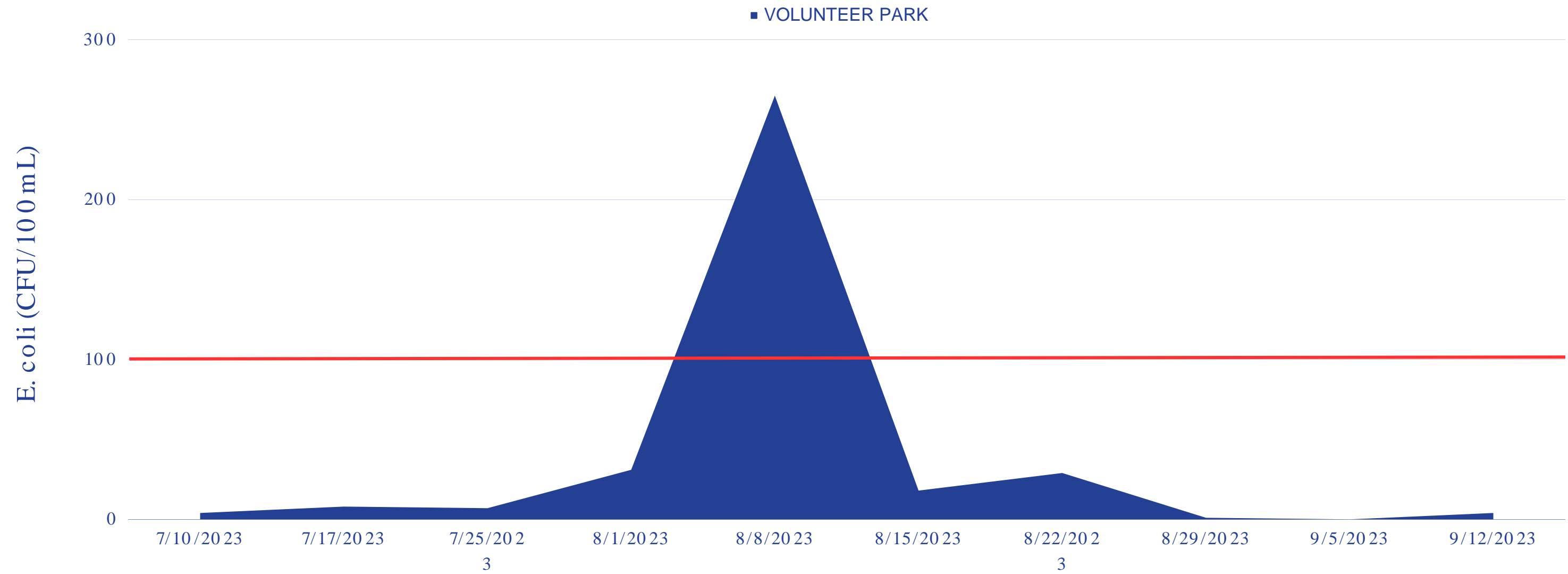
0 2.5 5 7.5 10

5

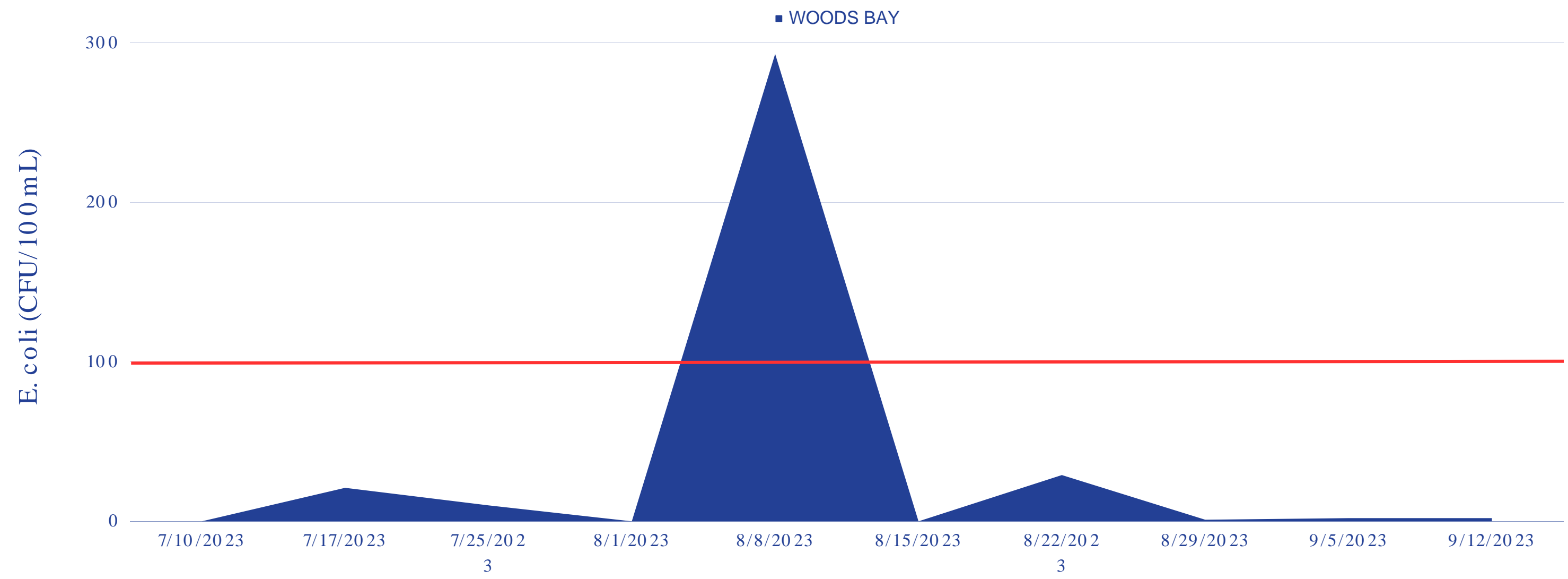
# RIVERSIDE PARK



# VOLUNTEER PARK

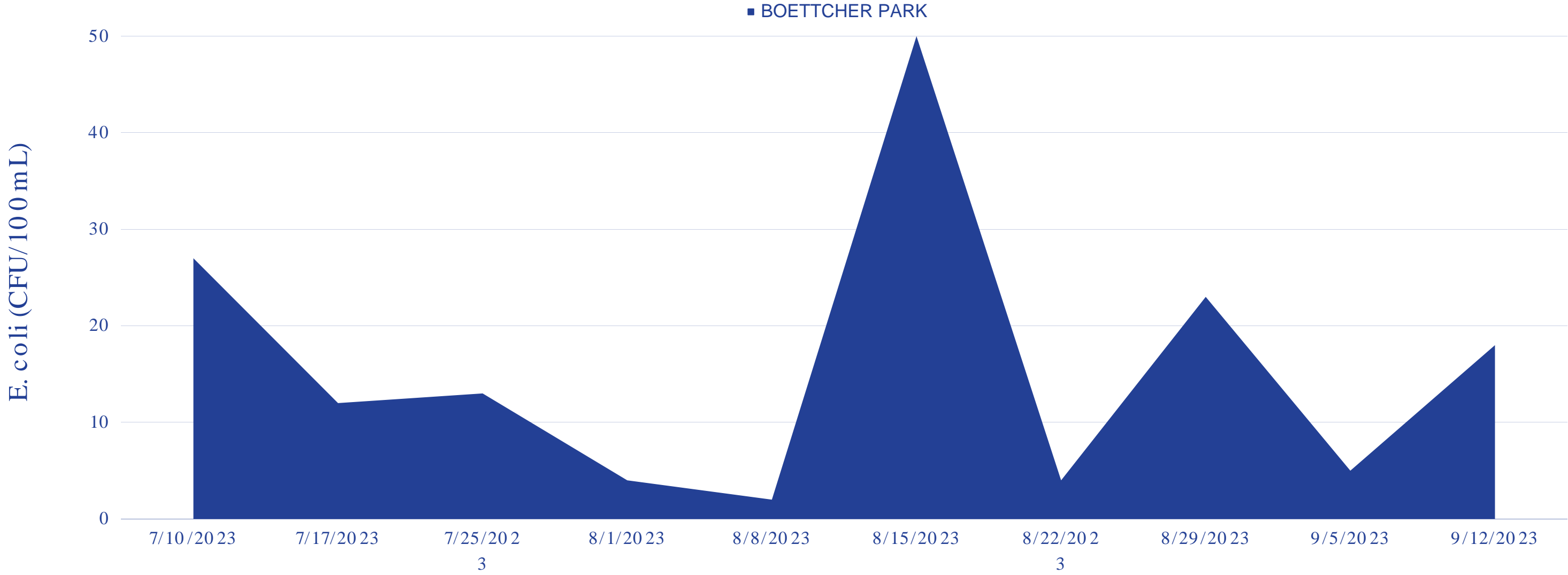


# WOODS BAY

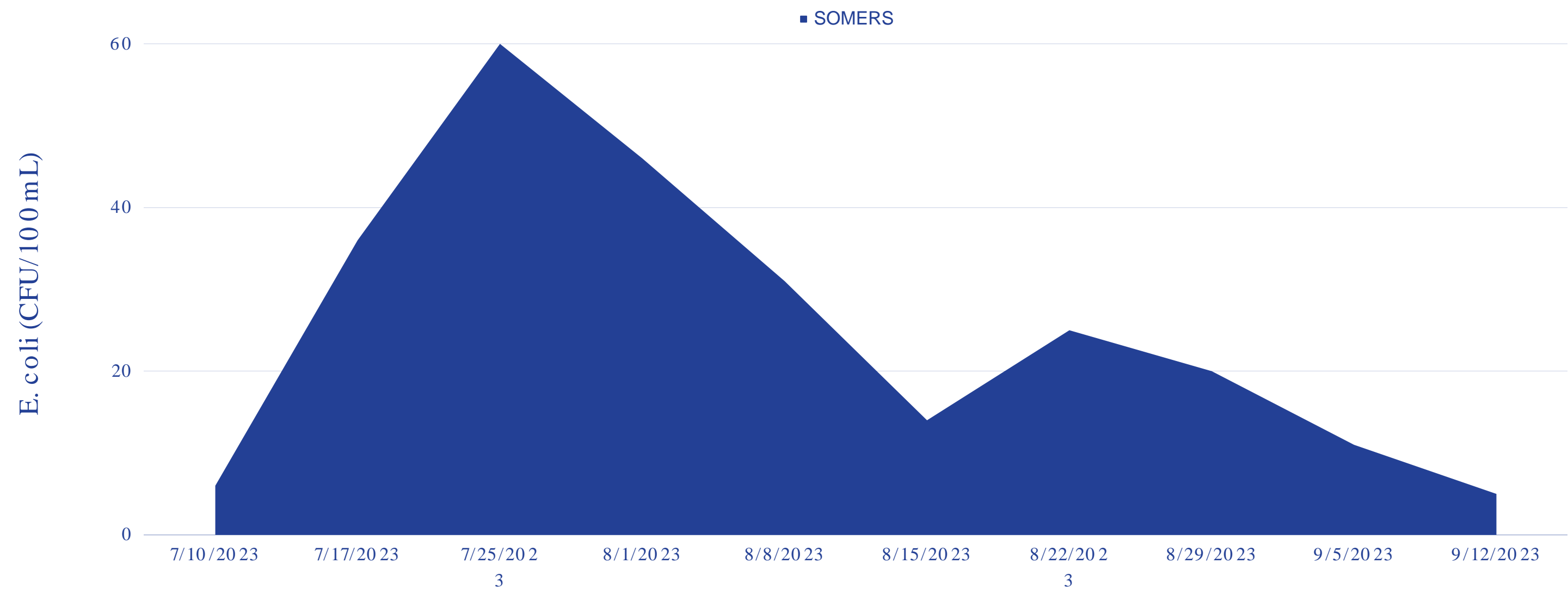




# BOETTCHER PARK



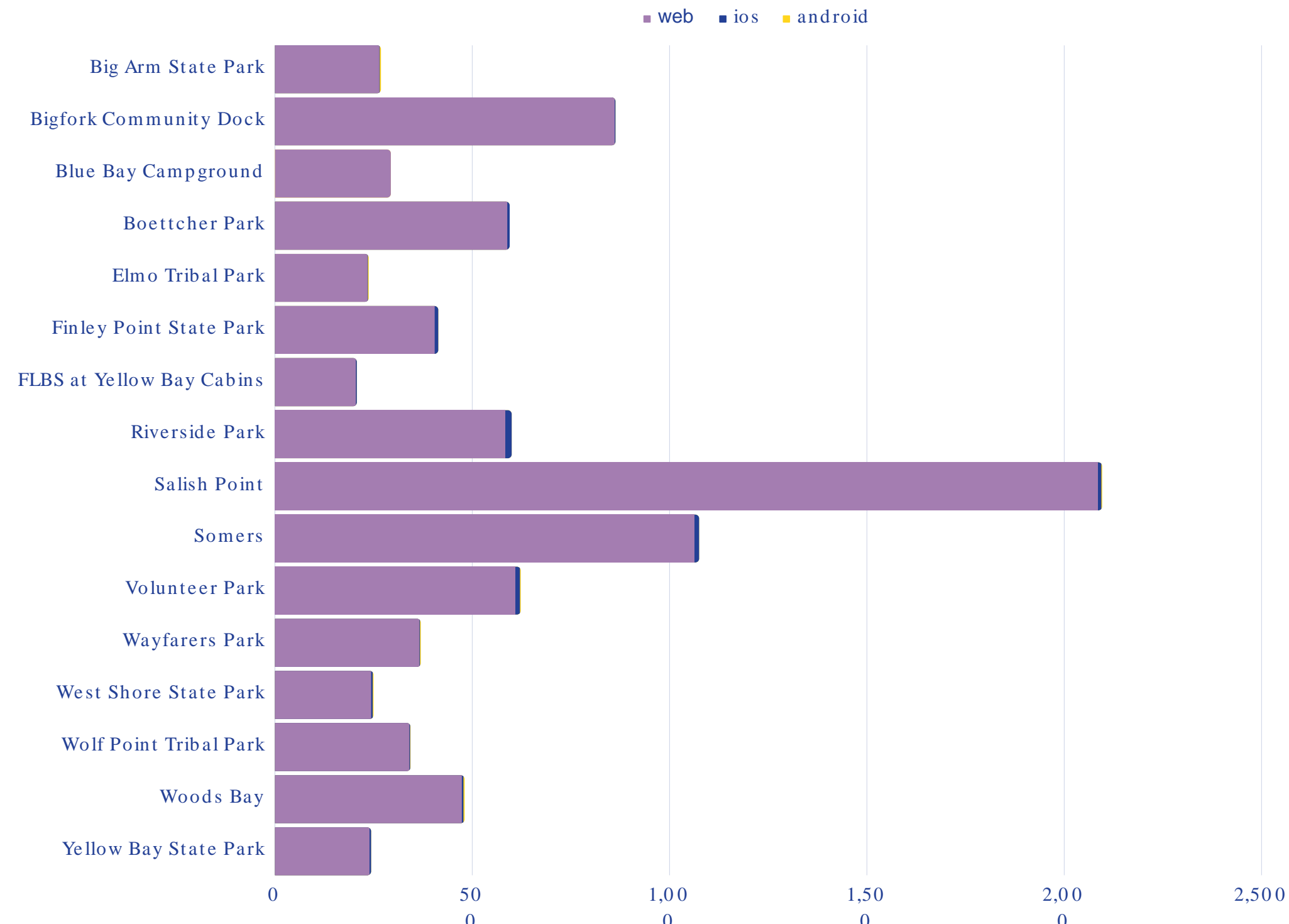
# SOMERS



# 2023 FULL RESULTS

Site ID	E. coli (CFU/100mL)									
	7/ 10/ 2023	7/ 17/ 2023	7/ 25/ 2023	8/ 1/ 2023	8/ 8/ 2023	8/ 15/ 2023	8/ 22/ 2023	8/ 29/ 2023	9/ 5/ 2023	9/ 12/ 2023
BIG ARM STATE PARK	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	1	0
BIGFORK COMMUNITY DOCK	5	14	8	1	13	2	18	12	3	34
BLUE BAY CAMPGROUND	0	6	12	0	14	1	4	15	2	2
BOETICHER PARK	27	12	13	4	2	50	4	23	5	18
ELMO TRIBAL PARK	19	8	1	1	15	1	31	0	0	0
FINLEY PT STATE PARK	2	0	5	0	0	3	3	1	3	2
FLBS AT YELLOW BAY CABINS	22	1	4	0	5	0	1	0	0	0
RIVERSIDE PARK	18	110	3	2	375	19	74	1	8	6
SALISH POINT	5	32	62	2	3	5	4	1	8	1
SOMERS	6	36	60	46	31	14	25	20	11	5
VOLUNTEER PARK	4	8	7	31	265	18	29	1	0	4
WAYFARERS PARK	> 200*	31	5	1	0	0	49	4	2	0
WEST SHORE STATE PARK	3	0	0	0	0	0	0	1	1	0
WOLF POINT TRIBAL PARK	0	0	2	2	0	3	1	0	0	2
WOOD'S BAY	0	21	10	0	293	0	29	1	2	2
YELLOW BAY STATE PARK	3	1	2	1	11	0	8	0	0	0

# SWIM GUIDE WEB TRAFFIC



8,948  
Total visits to  
the Swim Guide

85  
Downloaded  
app on iOS

17  
Downloaded  
app on Android





# Finley Point State Park - Flathead Lake

Finley Point, Montana

Managed By: [Flathead Lakers](#)

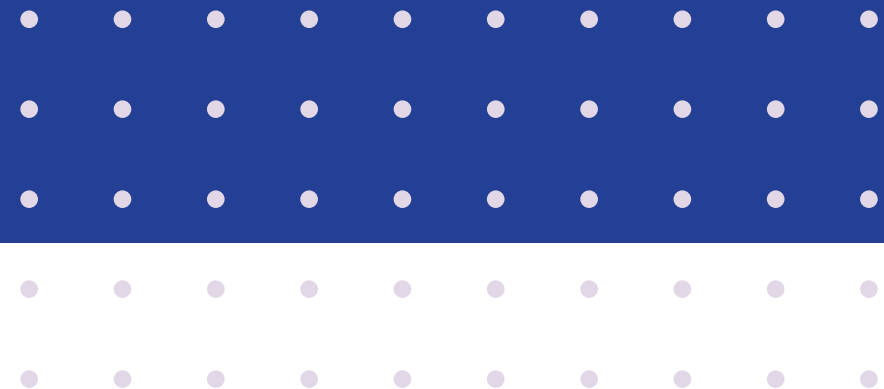
Share:  



03.

# LOOKING FORWARD

How can we improve?



# GOALS

## More user friendly

some sites do not have sufficient cell service to view the Swim Guide app

### Signage

Get the word out about this resource

### Updating

Work with park officials or volunteers to update signs

## Additional Testing

to determine the source of e.coli

### Source

humans, geese, dogs, etc.?

### Dye testing

In septic systems on lakeshore properties



**SWIM  
GUIDE**

A Swim Drink Fish Initiative

# THANK YOU

Have any question?

(406) 883-1346

[www.flatheadlakers.org](http://www.flatheadlakers.org)

[www.theswimguide.org](http://www.theswimguide.org)

