

A WATER HORROR STORY: ILLINOIS' CRINGE-WORTHY WATER FACTS OF 2015



Forget haunted houses, creepy costumes, tricks and treats—these Top 12 Scary Water Facts are sure to rattle your bones well beyond this Halloween season. Illinois' waterways are subject to pollution of all sorts, ranging from contaminated stormwater runoff to toxic coal ash disposal. Environment Illinois presents this annual spooky report of the Top 12 Scary Water Facts within Illinois.

1. During heavy rains, stormwater can overwhelm the sewer system, thus resulting in public health risks, beach closings, and property damage. This can result in combined sewage overflows (CSO) containing microbial pathogens, oxygen-depleting substances, total suspended solids, toxics, nutrients, floatables and trash.ⁱ
2. Since 2014 overflows have sent 20 billion gallons of contaminated water into Lake Michigan. This untreated sewage can contain over 120 viruses.ⁱⁱ
3. Several of our local beaches had bacteria exceeding standards for safe swimming in 2013 by the following percentages: Montrose Beach in Cook County (31%), South Shore Beach in Cook County (31%), North Point Marina Beach in Lake County (23%), Winnetka Elder Park Beach in Cook County (22%), and Rainbow Beach in Cook County (21%).ⁱⁱⁱ
4. Illnesses associated with polluted beach water in the Great Lakes area include stomach flu, skin rashes, pinkeye, respiratory infections, meningitis, and hepatitis.^{iv}

5. State documents show at least 80 serious instances of factory farms polluting Illinois waterways since 2002, such as dumping solid manure waste directly into waterways.^v
6. More than 672 miles of Illinois streams and more than 25,000 acres of lakes have been polluted by animal feeding operations.^{vi}
7. 13 of Illinois' 18 coal fired power plants which discharge coal ash and scrubber wastewater into waterways have no limits on any of the 6 most common toxic pollutants found in coal ash: arsenic, boron, cadmium, lead, mercury, and selenium.^{vii} These and other toxicants in coal ash can cause cancer and neurological damage in humans. They can also harm and kill wildlife, especially fish and other water-dwelling species.
8. 14 of Illinois' coal power plants discharge into impaired waterways, including the Illinois River, the Chicago River, and Des Plaines River.^{viii}
9. 91 waterways throughout Illinois currently have advisories on them, limiting the type and amount of fish you can eat from them.^{ix}
10. In 2012 Illinois came in 13th in the nation for the highest number of toxic chemicals dumped into our waterways - 6,117,685 lbs.^x
11. Over half of the toxic chemicals dumped into Illinois waterways in 2012, 4,196,449 lbs of toxics, came from just two companies – Tyson and Cargill.^{xi}
12. On October 9th, 2015 a federal court temporarily stayed the Clean Water Rule nationwide, leaving 48,782 miles of waterways in Illinois unprotected by the Clean Water Act, and putting the drinking water sources of 1,680,948 Illinoisans in jeopardy.^{xii xiii xiv xv}



ⁱ United States of America. City of Chicago. Mayor Rahm Emanuel. *City of Chicago Green Stormwater Infrastructure Strategy*. p.7-10. Apr. 2014.

ⁱⁱ "Pump Station Diversions." *Metropolitan Water Reclamation District of Greater Chicago*. Metropolitan Water Reclamation District of Greater Chicago, n.d. Web. <file:///C:/Users/Brittany/Downloads/PS_Activity.pdf>.

-
- ⁱⁱ Hobbs, Karen, and Josh Mogerman. "Testing the Waters: Great Lakes Supplement." 24 (2014): 2-6. *Natural Resources Defense Council*. June 2014.
- ⁱⁱⁱ "Testing the Waters: Executive Summary." *NRDC: Testing the Waters 2014: Executive Summary*. National Resource Defense Council, 2014.
- ^{iv} "Testing the Waters: Executive Summary." *NRDC: Testing the Waters 2014: Executive Summary*. National Resource Defense Council, 2014.
- ^v Schneider, Jordan, Lisa Nikodem, and John Rumpler. *Factory Farms, Fouled Waters: How Industrial Livestock Operations Pollute Illinois Rivers, Lakes, and Streams*. p.4. Rep. Environment Illinois Research & Education Center, Feb. 2014.
- ^{vi} Schneider, Jordan, Lisa Nikodem, and John Rumpler. *Factory Farms, Fouled Waters: How Industrial Livestock Operations Pollute Illinois Rivers, Lakes, and Streams*. p.4. Rep. Environment Illinois Research & Education Center, Feb. 2014.
- ^{vii} Duggan, Jennifer, and Craig Segall, eds. *Closing the Floodgates: How the Coal Industry Is Poisoning Our Water and How We Can Stop It*. p.8. Rep. Earth Justice, 2013.
- ^{viii} Duggan, Jennifer, and Craig Segall, eds. *Closing the Floodgates: How the Coal Industry Is Poisoning Our Water and How We Can Stop It*. p.8. Rep. Earth Justice, 2013.
- ^{ix} "Illinois Fish Advisory." *Illinois Fish Advisory*. Illinois Department of Public Health, n.d. Web. 2015.
- ^x Inglis, Jeff, Tony Dutzik, and John Rumpler. *Wasting Our Waterways: Toxic Industrial Pollution and Restoring the Promise of the Clean Water Act*. Rep. Environment America Research & Policy Center, June 2014.
- ^{xi} Inglis, Jeff, Tony Dutzik, and John Rumpler. *Wasting Our Waterways: Toxic Industrial Pollution and Restoring the Promise of the Clean Water Act*. Rep. Environment America Research & Policy Center, June 2014.
- ^{xii} Kendall, Brent, and Amy Harder. "U.S. Appeals Court Blocks EPA Water Rule Nationwide." *WSJ*. Wall Street Journal, 9 Oct. 2015. Web.
- ^{xiii} *Table 1: State-by-State NHD Analyses of Stream Categories and Drinking Water Data* (n.d.): n. pag. Association of State Wetland Managers. Web. <http://www.aswm.org/pdf_lib/state_data_request.pdf>.
- ^{xiv} *Percentage of Surface Drinking Water from Intermittent, Ephemeral, and Headwater Streams in Illinois*. US EPA, n.d. Web. <http://water.epa.gov/lawsregs/guidance/wetlands/upload/2009_12_30_wetlands_science_surface_drinking_water_surface_drinking_water_il.pdf#_ga=1.241629378.1394146053.1443459047>.

^{xv} U. *Appendix A-1. Total Miles of Rivers and Streams in the Nation* (n.d.): n. pag. US EPA. Web. <http://water.epa.gov/lawsregs/guidance/cwa/305b/upload/2000_06_28_305b_98report_appenda.pdf>.