

## **Sycamore Pool Frequently Asked Questions:**

### **When is the pool first cleared of debris and sediment after winter?**

Sycamore Pool is cleared of accumulated debris and sediment beginning on or after June 15th each year which complies with California Department of Fish and Wildlife regulations to protect sensitive fish species and their habitat during spring migration.

### **How often is it cleared?**

After the initial clearing, maintenance is performed periodically throughout the summer, generally every other Thursday. The pool is closed during clearing events.

### **What does the City of Chico test for?**

The City of Chico contracts with a certified laboratory to test for general E. coli levels in Sycamore Pool. The City's testing is intended to help assess overall recreational water quality and provide information to the public about potential health risks associated with water contact.

Butte County Public Health (BCPH) conducted separate testing for E. coli 0157, a specific strain of E. coli in 2025 and spring of 2026. Testing for E. coli 0157 serves a different purpose than the City's routine water quality monitoring and is used by BCPH when investigating disease outbreaks to determine whether public health advisories are necessary.

For more information about E. coli 0157 and public health advisories, visit the Butte County Public Health website: <https://www.buttecounty.net/610/Public-Health>

Because the two programs have different goals, the results are not directly comparable and should be interpreted separately.

### **When does the City of Chico sample the creek water in the pool?**

Testing occurs every week during recreational season (May-September) and once a month during the off season (October-April). It takes about one week from the test date to receive the results. If a single sample shows E. coli levels above 320MPN/100ml, testing will begin daily until the levels decrease below that level. All test results are posted to the City of Chico website as soon as they are received. You can find the most up to date test results here: <https://chicoca.gov/Our-Community/Parks-Recreation-and-Experience-the-Outdoors/Bidwell-Park/Swimming/>

### **How do I interpret the test results?**

Most E. Coli are not harmful to humans. However, E. Coli is a useful indicator of possible fecal contamination which could contain other bacteria, viruses, or diseases that cause illness. Lower E. coli levels generally indicate lower risk of people getting sick, while higher levels indicate an increased risk.

The City uses a precautionary notification system informed by Butte County Public Health, the EPA and the State Water Board recreational water quality guidance. When E. coli levels exceed 100 MPN/100 mL, a Swim Advisory is posted. When E. coli levels exceed 320 MPN/100 mL, the City recommends avoiding water contact activities until conditions improve.

City staff will update signage around the pool to reflect current testing and the resulting guidance. There are six signs around Sycamore Pool that will display the current recommendations from most recent testing data.

Water quality can change quickly, and test results only reflect conditions at the time of sampling. Because the creek is a natural, untreated waterbody, some level of risk is always present.

Choosing to swim is an individual decision. The City provides this information to help inform the public, but individuals should consider current conditions, recent weather, and their own health when deciding whether to enter the water.

### **Are pathogens common in natural waterbodies like creeks and streams?**

Yes. Bacteria and other microorganisms are naturally present in creeks, rivers, and lakes. These can come from wildlife, domestic animals, soil, and natural environmental processes.

While most naturally occurring microorganisms are harmless, some—particularly those associated with fecal contamination—can pose health risks. Because of this, Sycamore Pool is routinely monitored.

The public is advised to avoid swallowing water, especially with small children, and to use caution, especially after storms when bacteria levels can be higher.

### **Is it safe to swim in the creek?**

Sycamore Pool and Big Chico Creek are natural waterbodies and are not treated or disinfected. While the City monitors water quality, conditions can change quickly and may not always be reflected in the most recent sample results.

Bacteria and other microorganisms are commonly present in creeks and streams due to

wildlife, environmental conditions, and upstream influences. At times, these can pose a risk of illness, particularly if water is swallowed or enters the body through cuts or abrasions.

For this reason, swimming always carries some level of risk. To reduce potential health risks:

- Do not swallow creek water
- Avoid swimming with open wounds
- Use extra caution for young children, older adults, and those with weakened immune systems
- Avoid entering the water after rainfall
- Follow all posted advisories and closures

Individuals should make their own decision about water contact based on current conditions and personal health considerations.

### **What test levels trigger swim advisories or water contact advisories?**

The City of Chico uses recreational water quality guidance from the State Water Board and U.S. Environmental Protection Agency (EPA) to help assess potential health risks associated with water contact. The test levels that trigger swim advisories or to avoid contact with water are:

<b>Level</b>	<b>Test Range (MPN/100mL)</b>	<b>Guidance</b>
Green	0-100	Generally Safe
Yellow	101-320	Swim Advisory
Red	>320	Avoid Water Contact

As with all natural bodies of water, bacteria will always be present. Individuals should consider their own health status, age and other factors before choosing to recreate in any body of water.

### **Does the City of Chico monitor other areas of the creek for E. Coli?**

The City of Chico does not test other areas of the creek in Bidwell Park. The City urges individuals to make their own decision about water contact based on current conditions and personal health considerations.