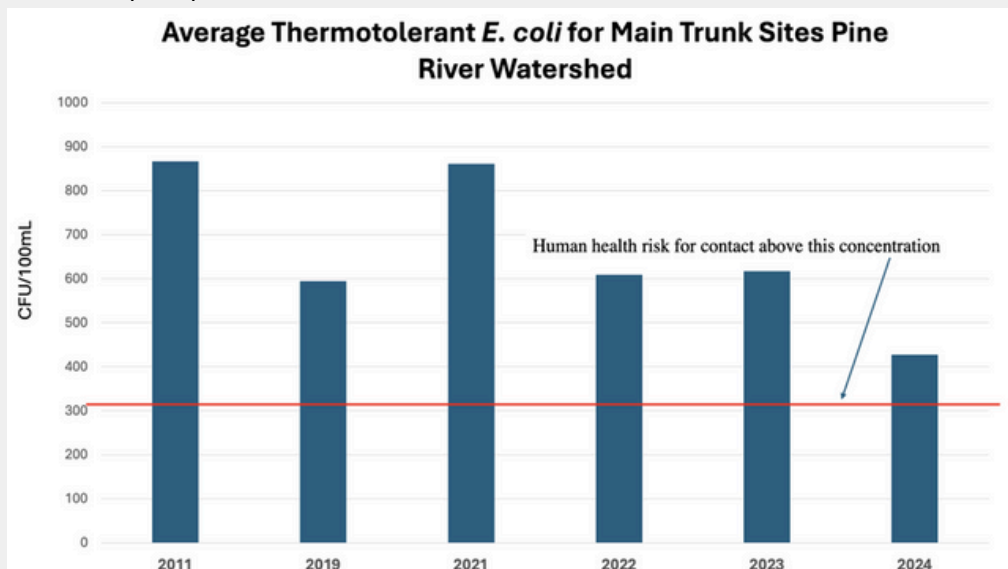




FALL / WINTER 2025

## TRACKING TWO DECADES OF CONTAMINATION IN THE PINE RIVER

Funded and supported by Healthy Pine River, Professor Murray Borrello and the Great Lakes Watershed Institute have now studied nutrient and bacteria levels in the Pine River for two decades. Unfortunately, the news is not good. Between 2004 and 2024, levels have risen rapidly throughout the watershed. Indeed, the average level of E. coli from 2019-2023 was three times the safe limit for human contact, and levels after manure application are often 15 times the safe limit. While there are multiple sources of this contamination, it is notable that a study found that the dairies and other animal operations in Gratiot county produce waste equivalent to 1.3 million people.



### JOIN US FOR OUR NEXT MEMBERSHIP MEETING JANUARY 8, 7 PM, ALMA PUBLIC LIBRARY

We will discuss the on-going dam risk reduction study and you will have an opportunity to share your thoughts on the future of the State St. Dam

### ST. LOUIS SITUATION

During our October meeting we had an exceptional presentation on the state of the Pine River near St. Louis.

After this presentation, we are particularly concerned about run-off from Sugar Creek, which has contributed to dramatically higher levels of nutrients and E. coli. You can learn more about this emerging crisis or watch a video of the October meeting at our website: [healthypineriver.org](http://healthypineriver.org)



## **THANK YOU TO OUR FARM ENGAGEMENT PANEL**

During the November membership meeting, HPR hosted a panel of 5 individuals who work in the agricultural sector. Thank you to Laura Campbell, Farm Bureau Lead Ecologist; Steve Sopocy, Gratiot County Commissioner and 4th generation family farmer; Dan Bollinger of Corteva; Ladean Anderson of Gratiot Conservation District; and Landen Cary of Cary Pioneer Farm! We greatly appreciated their discussion of the realities, successes, and challenges of agricultural sustainability. These conversations are what we need to be able to support sustainability and the success of these essential businesses in our community.

## **SUCCESS AT LUMBERJACK PARK**

While the crisis on the Pine River continues, Healthy Pine River's work supporting homeowners in improving failing septic systems has significantly decreased contamination around Lumberjack Park. Our septic support efforts have already served over 300 homes. In 2026, we will expand this work to other communities. Over time, we hope to eliminate septic systems and human waste as a meaningful source of contamination in the Pine River.

## **LOOKING FORWARD TO 2026**

While the situation on the Pine River remains troubling, Healthy Pine River has developed new capacities to spread awareness and build support. In 2026, we will be launching a social media campaign to educate people about the crisis, developing a curriculum for high schools, and collaborating with local artists to explore the beauty and contamination of the Pine River. We will also continue to research the Pine River to better understand, and ultimately address, contamination.

You can help us spread the word about these critical issues by sharing posts from our Facebook ([healthypineriver](https://www.facebook.com/healthypineriver)) or our Instagram ([mihealthypineriver](https://www.instagram.com/mihealthypineriver)), or using the #healthypineriver when you post. We run primarily on volunteers and would love to have you work with us. You can sign up to volunteer on our website ([www.healthypineriver.org/volunteer/](https://www.healthypineriver.org/volunteer/)). If you would like to donate or renew your membership, you can do so on our website ([www.healthypineriver.org/dues/](https://www.healthypineriver.org/dues/)).