

Memphis to clean up water act

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Memphis officials are considering treating wastewater with small amounts of bleach to protect Mississippi River recreational users from E. coli infection.

Until now, Tennessee state regulators have not required the city to disinfect its wastewater because it empties into the vast Mississippi River in a stretch where previously there was little recreation, The Memphis Commercial Appeal reported Sunday.

But growing recreational activity on the river south of the Stiles Wastewater Treatment Facility -- including swimming and kayaking -- has led the Tennessee Department of Environment and Conservation to reconsider.

A Memphis city study found nearly all E. coli could be eliminated from its wastewater by adding a small amount of bleach.

The solution is not without hazards, however, the newspaper said. Chlorine-based disinfectants can cause trihalomethanes -- cancer-causing compounds -- to form, which could affect downstream drinking water.

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