Friends of the Bay recently received our water quality monitoring report for the 2020 and 2021 seasons. These reports analyze the data from our program to identify trends, problem areas and potential sources of pollution. They also help us to determine where to focus our efforts and demonstrate improvements when those efforts pay off.

Our latest report shows a number of trends that make us optimistic about the future.

* + **The long term trend shows bacteria levels improving.** Throughout the Oyster Bay-Cold Spring Harbor Estuary overall, the mean fecal coliform measurements have been gradually decreasing since our program began in 2000
  + **Friends of the Bay’s efforts to connect The Birches housing development in Locust Valley to the Glen Cove sewage treatment plant are paying off**. While still high, the overall bacteria levels (fecal coliform and enterococci) in Mill Neck Creek are down ***significantly*** since the Birches housing development was connected to the Glen Cove sewer treatment plant. Between 2011 and 2018 these numbers dropped 78% and 65% respectively. The Birches development was a known problem due to failing septic systems.
  + **We may soon be able to swim in Mill Neck Creek again.** While these numbers are still above the shellfishing standard, the bacteria standard for swimming in Mill Neck Creek was exceeded just three times in the period covered in this report (‘20-’21). All three instances followed rainstorms in excess of a quarter of an inch. Mill Neck Creek has been closed to swimming for nearly 50 years.

While these trends are very encouraging, there is still a long way to go.

* + Stormwater flowing into the bay continues to be a major problem and brings with it bacteria, nutrients, silt and more.
  + Outdated septic systems also continue to contribute nutrients and bacteria.
  + Like many areas in western Long Island Sound, hypoxia (low oxygen levels) continues to be a problem during warm weather and often results in fish kills.

Still, Friends of the Bay is optimistic that, with everyone’s help, we can keep these trends heading in the right direction.