

How human recreation alters river chemistry

Slide by Neil Goalby. Available from rsc.li/3RDI0Ij

Researchers have examined samples from a creek in Colorado and found that activities like swimming impact river chemistry. They compared samples from a busy weekend, when there can be 500 people every hour swimming, and compared this to a standard weekday.

The team separated and identified compounds using liquid chromatography–mass spectrometry and detected illegal drugs, medications, plasticisers and sunscreens. These compounds probably washed off people’s skin or were released in their sweat or urine. The impact of these chemicals on aquatic life is unknown.



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What effect does human leisure have on aquatic life?

Questions

1. Why did the researchers test the water at different times?
2. What are the advantages of using instrumental methods in this research?
3. What environmental problems does the research highlight?