



SUFFIELD • EAST GRANBY • WINDSOR LOCKS

FACT SHEET | THE CONNECTICUT RIVER

Sewage overflows in the river: the facts

What a combined sewer overflow is, how much reaches us, how dangerous it is, and who is fixing it.

783M

gallons into the river above us,
2025, on 12 days

797M

gallons from Hartford alone,
below us, 2024

9 in 10

dry-weather samples at the state
line safe to swim

4 in 10

samples fail the swim standard
after rain

WHAT IT IS

Old cities built one pipe for sewage and rainwater. On a dry day everything goes to the treatment plant. In a heavy rain the pipe cannot keep up, so it is built to overflow to the river rather than back up into basements. That is a combined sewer overflow, or CSO. Springfield, Chicopee and Holyoke have them. So does Hartford. Suffield, East Granby and Windsor Locks do not.

HOW MUCH

- **Above us (Massachusetts):** 783 million gallons in 2025, 543 million in 2024, nearly 1 billion in 2023. The swing is rainfall, not pipes. Springfield is more than half of it.
- **Below us (Hartford):** 797 million gallons in 2024, more than the three Massachusetts cities combined. It enters the river 15 to 20 miles downstream of Windsor Locks.
- **What it is made of:** mostly rain. Engineers estimate roughly 99 percent stormwater in a typical event, and the river dilutes it more than a hundred times over before it reaches us.

HOW DANGEROUS

- **The only regular testing** is by volunteers every summer week at the state line, just below Springfield. Since 2012: in dry weather, 9 in 10 samples pass the swimming standard. After rain, 4 in 10 fail it, and 1 in 3 is unsafe for any contact.
- **The small storm after a dry spell is the risky one.** Big storms flush the river; the flood year 2023 had no failed samples. Light rain after dry weeks spikes the bacteria.
- **Stay out of the river for 48 hours after rain.** Bacteria die off in days. There is no lasting contamination, and no documented fish kill or illness on our stretch.
- **Nobody tests the water at Suffield or Windsor Locks.** The nearest regular sample is across the river at Thompsonville, and it has not been collected in the past year.

WHAT HAS BEEN DONE, AND WHAT IS LEFT

	Under federal order since	Spent so far	Overflow cut	Work left	Done by
Springfield	1997 (EPA)	~\$300M	~50%	~\$150M, no funding identified	2035-37
Chicopee	2006 (court decree)	\$200-250M, nearly all local	80-85%	~\$100M	2050
Holyoke	1995 (EPA); 2023 decree	\$22.5M current project	Over 60%	To 84M gal/yr	2037
Hartford (MDC)	2006 (court decree)	\$1.2B	~50%	~\$1.3B; 4-mile tunnel starting late 2026	2058

The plans are written and the orders are signed. What is missing is money. Connecticut cannot order Massachusetts; the EPA can, and does. The cities pay through water bills, with state and federal grants when they can get them. Massachusetts law requires two-hour public alerts for every overflow, but not to Connecticut towns.

Sources: MassDEP Sewage Notification Annual Reports 2023-2025; CT DEEP and CT Mirror (Hartford 2024); Connecticut River Conservancy sampling at Pioneer Valley Yacht Club, 2012-2026; EPA Region 1 letters of Sept. 18, 2025 and Jan. 8, 2026; Springfield Water and Sewer Commission; U.S. v. Chicopee (2006), U.S. v. Holyoke (2023), U.S. v. MDC (2006, modified 2025). Full detail: jamesmol.com/river

jamesmol.com

james@jamesmol.com • (860) 292-0062 • Facebook / Instagram: @JamesMolCT

Paid for by James Mol Committee, Kevin J. Keane, Treasurer. Approved by James Mol.