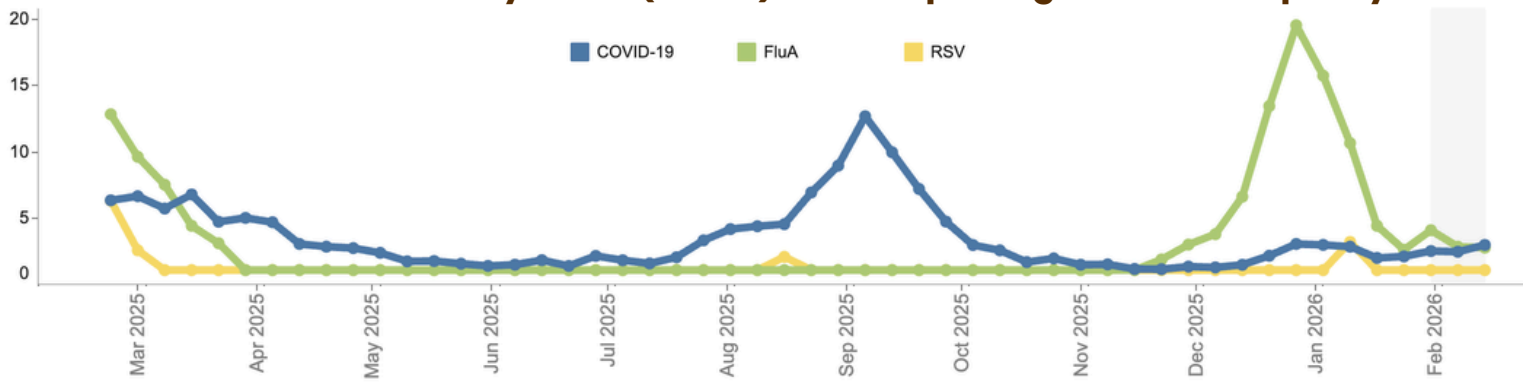
NCWMN QUARTERLY NEWSLETTER FEBRUARY 2026

STATEWIDE WASTEWATER SURVEILLANCE

Wastewater Viral Activity Level (WVAL) for core pathogens over the past year



The wastewater viral activity level indicates whether the amount of virus is Very Low, Low, Moderate, High or Very High. Levels vary by pathogen.

Trends in core pathogens over the last quarter

- **COVID-19** levels remain low after a wave that peaked in early fall.
- **Flu A** levels are currently low after reaching a peak in late December.
- There have been multiple **Flu B** and **RSV** detections since late fall, with overall levels low.

There have been **4 measles detections:** One from Cary 1 collected 12/11/25 likely connected to a confirmed case that travelled through Raleigh-Durham airport on 12/10/25, one from Charlotte 2 collected 1/5/26 and two from MSD Buncombe collected 1/6/26 and 1/9/26.

ANNOUNCEMENTS FROM THE NCWMN TEAM

WASTEWATER PROFESSIONALS APPRECIATION DAY: FEBRUARY 25, 2026

NCWMN asked for a proclamation from Governor Josh Stein to designate Wednesday, February 25, 2026 as "Wastewater Professionals Appreciation Day" in North Carolina. All are encouraged to raise awareness about this recognition among their communities!

TAKE OUR FEEDBACK SURVEY!

The survey is designed to help us learn how people are using the wastewater dashboard data and provide a space for feedback on how to improve the website.

NEW PLOT ON RESPIRATORY DASHBOARD

We've revamped our wastewater monitoring plot on the Respiratory Virus Summary dashboard. It now displays COVID-19, Flu A, and RSV WVALs on one plot.

NEW PUBLICATION ABOUT HEPATITIS A IN WASTEWATER

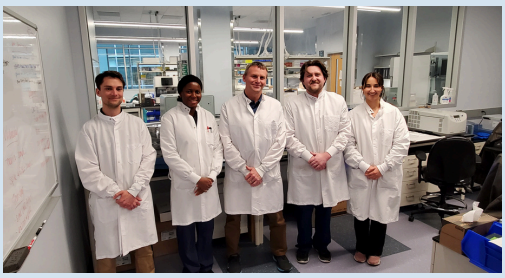
NCWMN and the Communicable Disease Branch published a brief report about the public health response to Hepatitis A detections in spring 2024, including the public health decision tree that we use to guide the response.

VOICES FROM THE COMMUNITY

I have family members with complex health issues and this kind of information is vital for us. We know to take extra precautions when levels start to rise."
- Anonymous dashboard user

NCWMN PARTNER SPOTLIGHT

THE STATE LABORATORY OF PUBLIC HEALTH



The State Laboratory of Public Health team includes (left to right): Karl Widney (Public Health Scientist), Burabari Bornu (Lab Specialist), Chris Goforth (Environmental Science Lab Manager), Christopher von Dohlen (Lab Specialist) and Monica Poole (Lab Specialist).

How are you involved in wastewater-based epidemiology efforts within NC?
We coordinate with 28 Wastewater Treatment Plants to send out collection kits for twice weekly sampling. The WWTPs then send us samples once a week for us to test in a timely manner. We currently test for concentrations of influenza A&B, SARS-CoV-2, and respiratory syncytial virus (RSV). We're also performing whole genome sequencing to determine the presence and abundance of SARS-CoV-2 lineages with expanded targets on the horizon.

What are you most excited about for the future wastewater-based epidemiology?
Over the past three years, we have expanded from quantifying SARS-CoV-2 to multiple respiratory viruses and brought on sequencing in a new laboratory using new next generation technology. We have expanded our team of dedicated wastewater surveillance laboratory staff, increased automation, and decreased turnaround time. With the limitations of clinical surveillance, wastewater surveillance provides essential community-level data while protecting privacy concerns. We look forward to further expanding our routine targets and increasing adaptability to quickly respond for emerging pathogens.

How do you like to spend your time when you're not in the lab?
Monica enjoys reading and traveling, Karl enjoys milling flour and baking bread, Christopher's favorite thing to do is follow the New York Mets and spending time with his wife, Burabari (BB) enjoys spending quality time at home alone, and Chris enjoys surfing and spending time at the beach with his family.

SCIENCE UPDATE

On campus dormitories as viral transmission sinks: Phylodynamic insights into student housing networks during the COVID-10 pandemic
This paper from collaborators at UNC-Charlotte found that, contrary to common belief, transmission from off-campus housing consistently seeded on-campus outbreaks, while movement from on to off campus was minimal. These findings have important implications for future outbreak and pandemic response in university environments.

Wastewater Monitoring: Improving Public Awareness and Understanding in the United States, May 2024
Authors surveyed diverse samples from Colorado, Maryland, Missouri, Nebraska and Texas to assess awareness, knowledge, and support of wastewater monitoring. They found that 52% of White, 31% of Black, and 27% of Hispanic participants were aware that public health agencies tested wastewater. After participants were provided a brief description of the wastewater monitoring process, 80% "supported" or "strongly supported" wastewater monitoring to detect viruses and bacteria in a community. These findings underscore the importance of public education for increasing understanding of and building support for wastewater monitoring.

2025 NCWMN "WRAPPED"

The Year in 5

3,061
samples collected

17,713
samples analyzed by the SLPH and Verily

6
pathogens monitored

44, 670
views of the wastewater monitoring dashboard

20, 193
users of the wastewater monitoring dashboard

Representing...

2,840,736
people

34
participating sites

29
counties

42
emergency departments

797
public schools