

Can I swim here?

State of the Environment Report Card 2017

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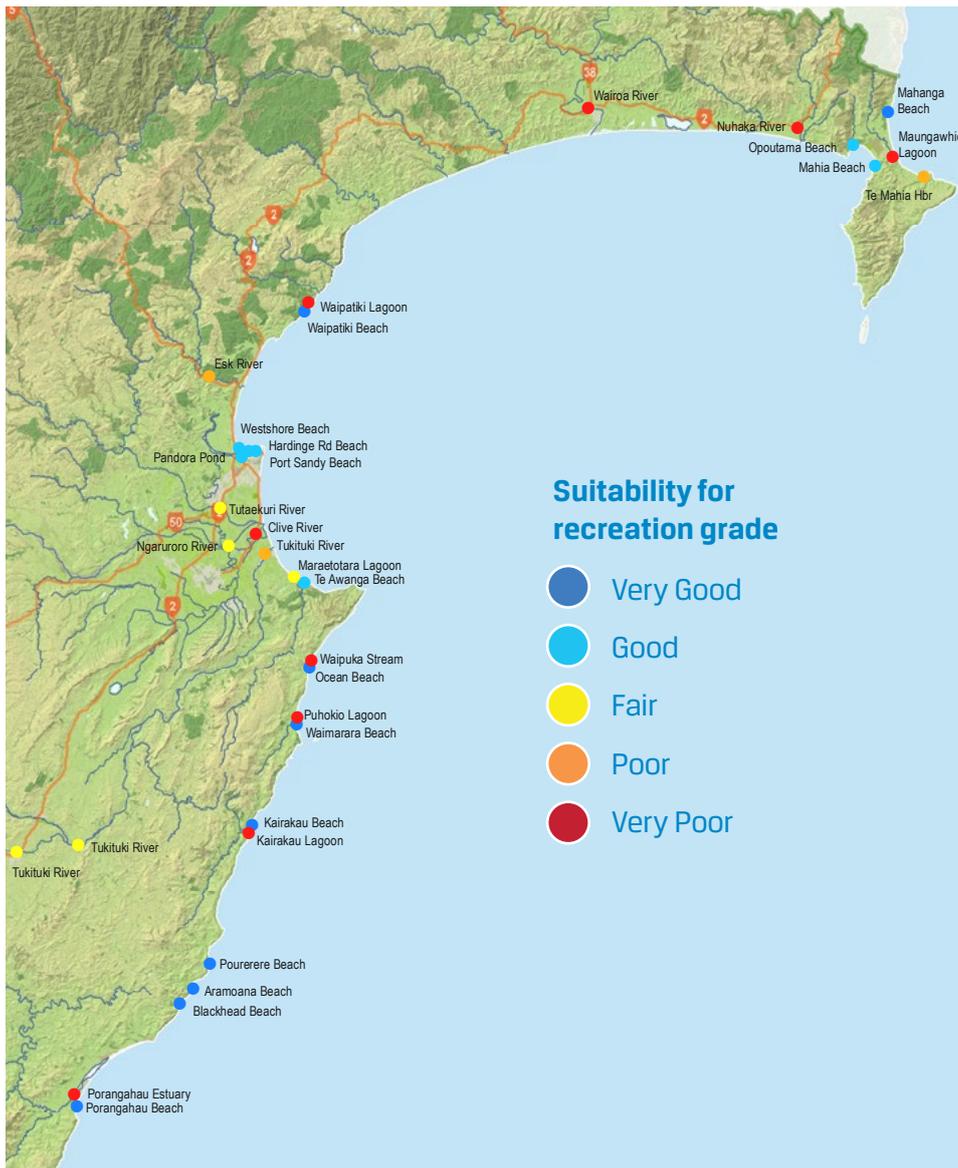
How we check it's safe to swim

Summer is a great time to hit the water in Hawke's Bay, but how do you know if your local beach or river is safe for swimming?

To help people make informed decisions about where they chose to swim, HBRC monitors popular recreational areas weekly throughout summer. These results are then published on the 'Can I Swim Here' page of LAWA (www.lawa.org.nz).

The water quality at Hawke's Bay beaches is excellent most of the time, with many of our southern and northern coastal beaches rating 'Very Good'. Our rivers and streams can be more affected by rain, which can flush animal waste into them. Lagoons and coastal streams can have poorer water quality as they are at the end of the catchment, and generally have warm, slower moving waters.

Monitoring sites



QUICK FACTS

33 sites are monitored weekly or fortnightly through summer

2 sites show improving recreational water quality

4 sites show deteriorating recreational water quality

What we measure for

Bacteria - Enterococci (for marine waters) and Esherichia coli (in freshwaters) are measured to provide information on whether other pathogens (viral and bacterial) are likely to be present. The levels are then compared to national guidelines to determine whether a site is 'suitable for swimming', 'caution advised' or 'unsuitable for swimming'.

Potentially toxic algae can form on the bottom of rivers (in black mats) or can be free-floating in lakes. These algae at times produce toxins which may cause illness to people and animals. The percent cover of these mats, or the number of cells in the water are measured to provide information on the relative health risk to people. Levels are compared to draft national guidelines.



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Monitoring toxic algae

In some areas, potentially toxic algae can grow to levels where it may pose a risk to people and animals.

HBRC undertakes weekly visual estimates of the growth on river beds to help provide information on the risk to people using these areas for recreation. The Tukituki River is one area where excessive potentially toxic algae can grow. HBRC monitors nine sites along the Tukituki River weekly when conditions for growth are favourable.

During the 2017/2018 summer no sites exceeded the action guideline level (see table below) and two sites exceeded the alert guideline level. In some cases, signage was erected due to the presence of detached and exposed algal mats, and the risks these can pose.

River	Site	No. of visits	<20%	20-50%	>50%
Tukituki	SH2	14	14	0	0
Tukituki	Walker Rd	14	14	0*	0
Waipawa	Walker Rd	14	14	0	0
Tukituki	Tamumu	14	14	0	0
Tukituki	Patangata	15	15	0	0
Tukituki	Horseshoe	2		*	
Tukituki	Red Bridge	16	15	1*	0
Tukituki	Black Bridge	14	8	6*	0
Tukituki	Tennant Rd	2	2	*	

RULE OF TOES!

If it's been raining heavily, we advise you to stay out of the water for three days. A handy guide is if you can't see your toes when standing knee-deep in water, then water quality is not good enough to swim.

Tukituki cyanobacteria monitoring results

Less than 20% equates to a green/surveillance level in the draft national cyanobacteria guidelines, 20-50% an amber/alert level, and >50% a red/action level.

Note: Sites can be upgraded to an alert or action level if detached or exposed mats are present as these can pose higher risks to people.

Faecal Source Tracking

If a site regularly exceeds water quality guidelines for safe swimming, HBRC undertakes faecal source tracking to help identify what type of animals (humans, cows, sheep, birds or dogs), may be causing the high levels of bacteria in the water.

Identifying the sources helps HBRC to manage the problem. In the 2017/18 season faecal source tracking was undertaken in the Clive and Wairoa Rivers, and in the Ahuriri Estuary. The Wairoa River had ruminant (e.g. cattle, sheep, deer) sources of faecal material. The overall faecal source for the Clive River was found to be avian (birds). In the Ahuriri Estuary, faecal inputs from birds were found, as was faecal input from cows in the lower estuary.

State of the Environment Case Study

Find out more

Hawke's Bay Regional Council monitors our land, water and air.

We use this data to inform our work with communities to improve and protect the environment.

Each year we develop a series of report cards to provide you with a snapshot of how our environment is tracking.

For more details including the full technical reports visit www.hbrc.govt.nz (search: report search)

For up to the minute monitoring results from Hawke's Bay and other parts of the country visit www.lawa.org.nz

