

Recreational Swimming Water Quality Programme

Q. What is the Recreational Swimming Water Quality Programme (RSWQP)?

A. A programme managed by the Northland Regional Council, in conjunction with three district councils (Far North, Kaipara and Whangarei) and the Northland District Health Board, to survey the bacterial water quality at a selection of the region's most popular freshwater and coastal swimming sites during the summer months.

Q. What is monitored at each site?

A. A water sample is collected at each site and analysed at the laboratory to measure the concentration of faecal indicator bacteria. Indicator bacteria signify the potential presence of disease-causing pathogens. Water temperature is also recorded whilst on site, along with any other observations, such as the presence of animals in the water or any smell or scum on the water.

Q. How do I know which sites are suitable or unsuitable for swimming?

A. Sites are graded according to the concentration of faecal indicator bacteria present in the water – green 'suitable for swimming', orange 'potentially unsuitable for swimming' or red 'unsuitable for swimming'. The results are available on the LAWA website <http://www.lawa.org.nz/explore-data/northland-region/>. A paper copy of the weekly results is also available on request from the NRC reception at Water Street, Whangarei.

If a site is graded as 'unsuitable for swimming', the relevant district council will erect a warning sign next to the site that will remain in place until the water is found to be 'suitable for swimming'.

As a rule of thumb:

- DON'T swim if there are warning signs indicating that the water is unsuitable for swimming.
- AVOID swimming for two to three days after heavy rainfall.
- DON'T swim if the water appears dirty or murky, smells or has scum on the surface.
- BE AWARE of potential contamination nearby or upstream.

Q. Who do I speak to about warning signs?

A. Warning signs are the responsibility of the relevant district council:

Far North	Environmental Monitoring Officer – 09 401 5200
Kaipara	Environmental Monitoring Officer – 09 439 3123
Whangarei	Bathing Water Environmental Health Officer – 09 430 4200

Q. How long do warning signs stay up for?

A. If a site is known to have generally good water quality but the occasional 'unsuitable for swimming' result, the warning sign will only be in place until the next 'suitable for swimming' result is recorded. This may be the following week.

If a site is known to have generally poor water quality, the warning sign may remain in place until up to five consecutive 'suitable for swimming' results

have been recorded. This may mean that at these sites, a sign remains in place indefinitely.

Q. Who should I contact about health risks at swimming sites?

A. Contact the Northland District Health Board on 09 430 4100 and ask to speak with the on-call Health Protection Officer.

Q. Who should I contact if I become ill after swimming at a site in Northland?

A. See a doctor if the symptoms are severe or if you are worried. You should also contact the on-call Health Protection Officer at Northland District Health Board on 09 430 4100 if you think that your illness was caused by swimming.

Q. Who should I contact if I become ill after eating shellfish from a site in Northland?

A. See a doctor if the symptoms are severe or if you are worried. You should also contact the on-call Health Protection Officer at Northland District Health Board on 09 430 4100.

Q. Who should I contact if I notice something unusual at a site?

A. If you suspect an environmental incident has occurred at a site, contact the Northland Regional Council 24/7 Environmental Hotline on 0800 504 639.

Q. How many sites will be monitored during 2016/17?

A. 46 coastal sites and 13 freshwater sites.

Q. How do I know which sites are included in the programme in 2016/17?

A. A map displaying the site locations is available on the Northland Regional Council website www.nrc.govt.nz/swimming, or a list can be collected from reception at NRC's office on Water Street, Whangarei.

Q. When does the 2016/17 sampling season start and finish?

A. The sampling season will start on Monday 21 November 2016 with the first results available on Friday 25 November 2016.

The last samples will be collected week beginning 20 February 2017, with results available Friday 24 February 2017.

Q. How often are sites monitored?

A. Sites are monitored once a week from Monday 21 November 2016 to Tuesday 21 February 2017.

Q. Where do I get this week's water quality results?

A. Results are updated weekly during the sampling season on the Land, Air, Water Aotearoa (LAWA) website <http://www.lawa.org.nz/explore-data/northland-region/>. A paper copy of the weekly results is also available on request from reception at NRC's offices on Water Street, Whangarei.

Q. How do I get more information on the Recreational Swimming Water Quality Programme?

A. You can find more information on the Recreational Swimming Water Quality Programme at the following sites:

- www.nrc.govt.nz/swimming
- <http://www.lawa.org.nz/explore-data/northland-region/>

If you wish to speak to someone about the programme, contact the NRC State of the Environment team on 0800 002 004.

Q. How can I help?

A. Report suspected incidents of water pollution to the NRC 24/7 Environmental Hotline 0800 504 639.

If you have a health concern relating to swimming water quality, contact the on-call health protection officer at Northland District Health Board on 09 430 4100.

If you have concerns about warning signs, contact your local district council:

Far North: 0800 920 029

Kaipara: 0800 100 388

Whāngārei: 0800 932 463