



THE WEST COAST REGIONAL COUNCIL

9 June 2018

Community driving forward water quality improvements

Marrs Beach and Shingle Beach, located on the Buller River, are the focus of a community group representing the wider community's desire to see water quality improved in the area.

Long term monitoring by the West Coast Regional Council at popular swimming locations has highlighted intermittent elevated *E. coli* levels at both Marrs Beach and Shingle Beach. *E. coli* bacteria come from the gut of warm blooded animals and its presence can indicate potential risk from other pathogens such as *Campylobacter*.

The Council, along with local Runanga representatives, requested a community group be established to assist with understanding the areas values, potential *E.coli* sources, and possible solutions for the future. Over summer 2018 Marrs Beach and Shingle Beach were below the Ministry for the Environment's very low risk threshold for swimming on 75% and 95% of monitoring occasions respectively.

The Marrs and Shingle Beach Community Working Group was established in 2017 and has members representing a wide range of sectors and interests.

Funding from Envirolink assisted the group with their first two all day sessions, run by an independent facilitator. These sessions explored a broad range of factors that have potential to affect *E. coli* contamination.

Regional Councillor, Neal Clementson said that the commitment of the working group was outstanding.

"This is a group that is completely voluntary, who are giving up their time to see real improvements made for the wider community."

With monthly meetings scheduled for the community group there is more work to do.

"Issues such as these are never straightforward," said Mr Clementson. "I am looking forward to seeing how the Group continues to work with the wider community to address the potential pollution and contamination causes."

The group may undertake work to help gather more information on the catchment such as water sampling and catchment surveys.

Members of the Marrs and Shingle Beach Community Group include Neal Clementson (Councillor - West Coast Regional Council), Jamie Cleine (Councillor – Buller District Council), Chris Coll (Buller Surf Rescue), Richard Nichol (Ecologist and Marrs Beach Triathlon organiser), Alice Gilsean (local resident), Joan Hamilton (catchment farmer), Robert Higgins (catchment farmer) and Erica Jar (teacher).

The West Coast Regional Council carries out fortnightly, and in some cases weekly, water quality sampling at 18 popular swimming locations each year over the summer months. The new "Can I swim here?" online tool means West Coast residents and visitors can access this information quickly and with confidence. The online tool shows the most up to date water quality information for these locations. It is freely available at LAWA.org.nz/swim

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Image – Marris Beach, Westport

