

Looking after West Coast water

Message from your Chairman

The West Coast is blessed with an abundance of beautiful waterways, the majority of which are in good shape. While our waterways are healthy compared to other regions, there is still work to be done on improving our water quality in some areas.

The Council monitors the health and quality of approximately 85 groundwater, lake and river sites across the region. We are continuously increasing our monitoring effort to gain a better understanding of our waterways and trends in water quality. Better data allows us to make more informed decisions when setting appropriate rules and limits.



Andrew Robb

Water use is guided by law and Council policy. Any policy changes go through a submissions process where public feedback is received and considered. While this can be a lengthy process, it is important that we work closely with our communities, iwi, business and other interested parties to get the best outcome for all involved, including the environment.

We need to maintain and, where possible, improve the current state of our fresh water resources. The West Coast Regional Council is committed to leading this work. With your help we can improve our water quality together.



Our water quality programme

Indigenous vegetation makes up 87 percent of the region's total cover. As a result, the majority of West Coast waterways are of high quality.

The Council focuses monitoring effort predominantly on waterways that have human activity within their catchments such as farming, mining, and urban settlement. Therefore, our monitoring is representative of these types of waterways, rather than the whole region.

Hard rock mining that generates acidic, metaliferous leachate, has led to reduced ecological health in a small number of waterways. Activities associated with land disturbance and run-off also reduce stream health through sedimentation and nutrient enrichment. Ecological impacts from these activities, as indicated by the aquatic life in the waterways we monitor, are predominantly minor, with 17 percent moderately impacted, and 6 percent having poor quality. A nice cool, wet climate, in combination with a low population density, contributes to better stream health in developed catchments.



The 'Toe biter' is a common resident predator in streams.



The adult 'Toe biter' is winged.



Water Boatman.

Marrs and Shingle Beach project

Marrs and Shingle beaches, near the Buller River mouth at Westport, are popular for recreational use and have had regular exceedances of a bacteria called E. coli for a number of years. Source/s of the raised contaminant levels have been difficult to identify. A working group of community and organisation representatives is being formed to investigate the issues and options for managing water quality at these swimming beaches.



Marrs Beach



Did you know

- ▶ It is 200 metres to the bottom of Lake Kaniere.



Lake Kaniere

- ▶ Lake Brunner has landlocked populations of adult whitebait, like the Giant Kokopu, normally only found nearer to the coast.
- ▶ Leachate from lowland forests produces a natural source of dissolved carbon that stains the water brown like 'tea', or 'whisky', according to the names of several local creeks. This carbon often generates foam, forming an interesting feature when conditions are right. Foam often collects in eddies at the bottom of rapids in our browner waterways.

- ▶ A new online tool has been launched to keep you up to date on the water quality of the most commonly used swimming locations across our region. Check it out at www.lawa.org.nz



- ▶ Te Mana o Te Wai is defined as the integrated wellbeing of a waterway. It encompasses the connection between water, the broader environment and community values.

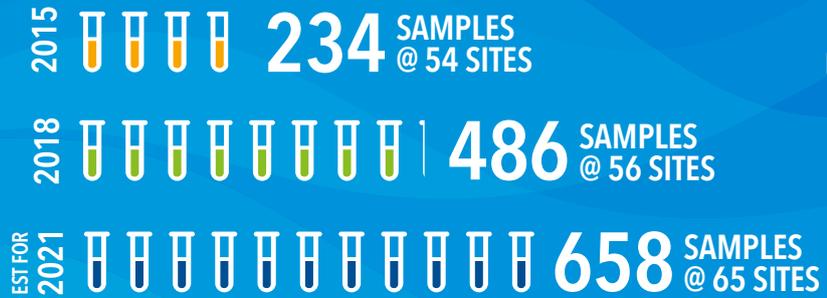
When assessing the values attached to our waterways on the West Coast we will consult the community and iwi/hapu. This will help determine what Mana o Te Wai means specifically to the people of our region. Te Mana o Te Wai will feed into a larger framework and help set objectives and limits for freshwater management.

Water quality programme monitoring sites

Data is the key

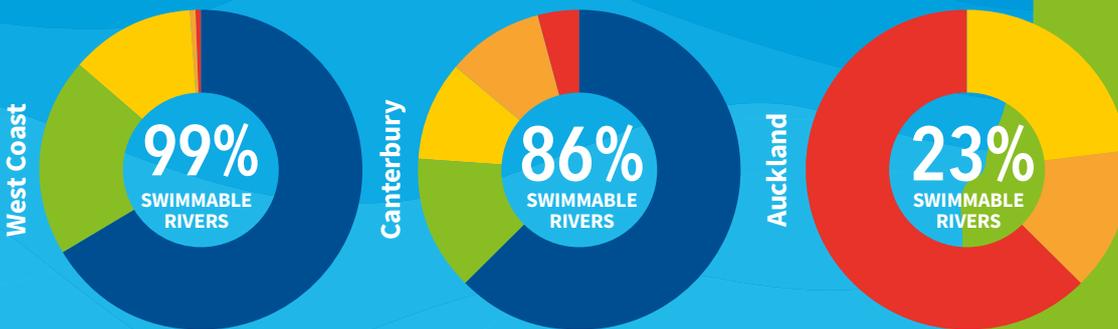
Good data is a key tool for managing our water quality. Improving our monitoring programmes helps us to better understand the health of our waterways. Good quality, long term datasets allow us to understand the state of our waterbodies and whether they are improving or declining. We then use this knowledge to inform good decisions, policy and rules.

Our monitoring effort has been increasing to gain better data trends:



Current Swimmability (Rivers)

Comparison between West Coast, Auckland and Canterbury



Legend for Swimmability

■ Poor
 ■ Intermittent
 ■ Fair
 ■ Good
 ■ Excellent

How is swimmability calculated?

NIWA has estimated, via computer modelling, that 99% of waterways on the West Coast meet national swimmability criteria – the highest in New Zealand! Council monitors swimming spots during the warmer months and of these, 76 percent have fair to good swimming suitability.

While high rainfall is great for freshening up streams, it does lead to surface run-off. High rainfall, combined with runoff from urban and pastoral land, can reduce swimmability, particularly in rivers. Abundant birdlife may also reduce swimmability if they are in or around swimming areas.

West Coast water quality monitoring sites

Site on Haast River

FRANZ JOSEF

HARIHARI

ROSS

HOKITIKA

GREYMOUTH

OTIRA

REEFTON

WESTPORT

KARAMEA

PAYING RATES



Pay it Online

Want to pay your rates online? You can pay any West Coast Regional Rates invoice using our online service if you have a Visa or Mastercard.



For full details – as well as application charges, check out our website www.wcrc.govt.nz and click on the 'pay it' tab.



Direct Debit Rate Payments

Council also offers the Direct Debit option for the payment of rates. This option means that your rates are paid on time ensuring that late payment is a thing of the past.

Alternatively, check out our website www.wcrc.govt.nz and click on the 'pay it' tab.

Twitter Flood Alert Service



The Council offers flood alerts via Twitter. The rivers linked to provide this information include the Karamea, Mokihinui, Buller, Grey, Hokitika and Waiho rivers. The flood alerts are another tool that will share updates with the public when a river goes through its alarm levels. This information does not replace the data currently provided on the Council's website, or other flood warning procedures already in place.

To register to receive a Twitter flood alert visit www.wcrc.govt.nz/floodalerts

DOING YOUR BIT

Why we should care

Managing our freshwater resources is of critical importance so everyone has the water they need for their well-being and recreational purposes, as well as allowing the environment to flourish and our economy to prosper. As a community, we have an important responsibility to maintain the life supporting capacities of our environment, including freshwater, for our children and future generations. The Council also has a statutory requirement to do this under the Resource Management Act 1991.

We all have a part to play in looking after the waterways and ground water we all rely on, whether using less, using it more efficiently, or ensuring it remains pollution free.



REPORT POLLUTANTS

Report storm water pollution, including pollutants being discharged into creeks and streams, such as:

- ▶ concrete wash-out water
- ▶ oils and fuel
- ▶ paint and chemicals

Report other pollutants that could affect water quality such as:

- ▶ waste on a beach or in the riverbed
- ▶ illegal dumping of rubbish

You can contact Council any time on 0508 800 118.

HOW YOU CAN HELP

Disposing of oil, paint, chemicals, batteries and LPG cylinders

Never dispose of engine oil, paint, chemicals, or other such substances down a drain, into a waterway, or onto land. Dispose of oil and chemicals in the appropriate way. The Buller, Grey and Westland District Councils all accept domestic, i.e. small quantities of used oil, paint, lead-acid batteries and past-use-by-date LPG cylinders being dropped off at their landfill sites or transfer stations. The items are then either recycled or rendered harmless for sending to landfill.



Washing your car

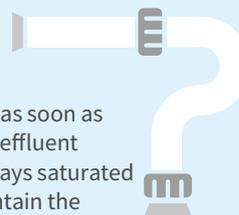
Wash your vehicle on unsealed ground such as a grass berm to prevent runoff directly into the storm water system.

If each vehicle on the West Coast was washed once a month, using a 10L bucket of water with runoff going directly into the storm water system, approximately 260,000 litres of soapy wash water would be discharged into the environment each year.



Septic tanks

Don't let your septic tank get overfull. De-sludge as soon as it is needed. If your effluent disposal field is always saturated and/or smelly, maintain the system and increase the tank capacity if necessary.



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