Recreational Water Quality

The recreational water quality monitoring programme follows the national guidelines for marine and freshwater recreational areas, assessing the microbiological quality of water bodies and associated health risks to water users. Monitoring is conducted in the summer seasons at popular river and lake bathing sites throughout Canterbury.

Targets

From 2015:

At least 80% of river bathing sites graded as suitable for contact recreation.

By 2020:

Of the lake and river sites used for contact recreation, an increase in the percentage that meet recreational water quality guidelines.

Progress to 2020

Not started | Started | Progress | Good progress | Achieving

- The Recreational Water Quality monitoring programmes assesses the general condition of a site at any given time in relation to recreational water quality. Sites graded 'very good', 'good' and 'fair' are considered suitable for contact recreation; sites graded 'poor' and 'very poor' are considered unsuitable.
- The report has reviewed data available since 2009 across consistent recreation sites. Results show a decrease in recreational water quality, with 58% of river bathing sites graded as suitable for contact recreation in the 2015/16 monitoring period compared to 70% in 2009/10.
- The CWMS Regional Committee has commissioned work to identify local fresh water swimming sites across Canterbury to improve understanding on the availability, characteristics and quality of recreational opportunities.
- The general condition of lake sites for contact recreation is higher, with 88% of lake sites considered generally suitable for contact recreation in the 2015/16 monitoring period.

Fig 14: Recreational Water Quality Monitoring Programme (2015/16)

Suitability for Contact Recreation

The recreational water quality monitoring programme follows the national guidance provided by the Microbiological Water Quality Guidelines for Marine and Freshwater Recreational Areas (MfE & MoH, 2003). These guidelines address the microbiological quality of water bodies and associated health risks to water users. A grade is based on the risk of faecal contamination to a site, supported by water testing for faecal indicator bacteria. Grades calculated, based on the monitoring data for the 2016-17 summer monitoring season, were not available for targets reporting.

Cyanobacteria

Swimming water quality grades do not cover toxic algal blooms including cyanobacteria that are widespread in many lakes and rivers. Cyanobacteria are found in a wide range of water quality conditions, including relatively 'clean' waters. Over the 2016-17 summer there were 17 recreational sites that reached action mode, requiring warnings to be issued. Because affected sites can change, visit maps.ecan.govt.nz/waterquality/ for the latest sites warnings.