

Recreational activities on earthquake-affected beaches in Marlborough

Summary results from an online survey of public perceptions



RECOVER Reef Ecology and Coastal Values Earthquake Recovery Project

Marine Ecology Research Group

University of Canterbury

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KEY FINDINGS

At least 20 diverse recreational activities are valued by the public on beaches in the earthquake-affected area. Some are incompatible with others leading to potential conflicts between interest groups. Many survey respondents reported a lengthy association with the area indicative of a depth of local knowledge and involvement with recreational activities and the wider environment of the coast. Although important locations are scattered throughout the study area, there is some evidence for heightened interest around commonly-used access points for activities such as physical exercise and fishing.

Positive aspects of recreational activities in the area include benefits associated with being in a wild and natural environment, wildlife encounters, other mental or physical health benefits, fishing & food harvesting benefits, and valued family time. A diverse set of negative aspects were identified several of which are contradictory to others and involve topics such as vehicle use, fishing pressure, and aversion to particular activities. This highlights a need for conflict resolution in finding workable solutions.

Although a wide range of suggested interventions were identified in survey responses, several of these are largely incompatible with others in keeping with the wide divergence of views on positive and negative aspects. Despite this, several classes of ideas may be identified which either seek, or make suggestions for arrangements that could address diverse values and preferences in compatible ways. They include improving the knowledge of human impacts on the coast, and two different though complementary spatial planning approaches involving the establishment of designated routes and / or exclusion zones to reduce impacts by design. Considerations along these lines could also potentially encompass more specific suggestions involving preferential access modes, or the need for improvement of recreational access arrangements at specific sites.



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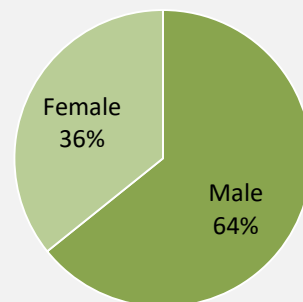
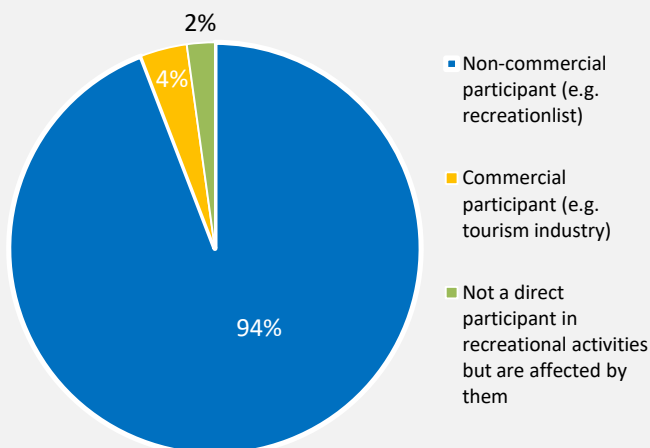
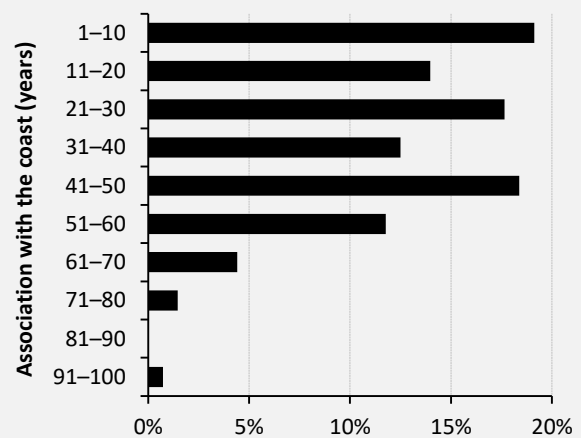
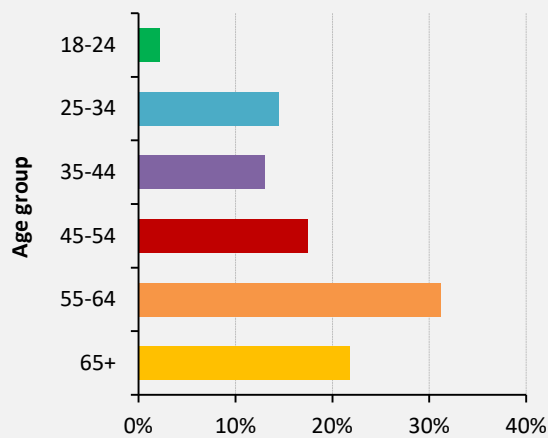
Summary of results

SURVEY DESIGN

This survey was established by the University of Canterbury (UC) to assist the Marlborough community in recording and understanding the level and types of recreational beach uses that are occurring at present on the earthquake-affected coast. The questions were designed to capture a comprehensive view of recreational activities and interests and allowed for any activity, view or perspective to be recorded. All responses were anonymous and no identifying information was collected. The survey used an online format open to all interested people 18+ years of age (for informed consent reasons) over a two month period (October – November 2020). The geographic focus of the survey was the coastline between Marfells Beach and the Waima / Ure River which is the area under currently under consideration by Marlborough District Council for development of a new bylaw. However, the design of the survey questions also allowed respondents to record information pertaining to any other area.

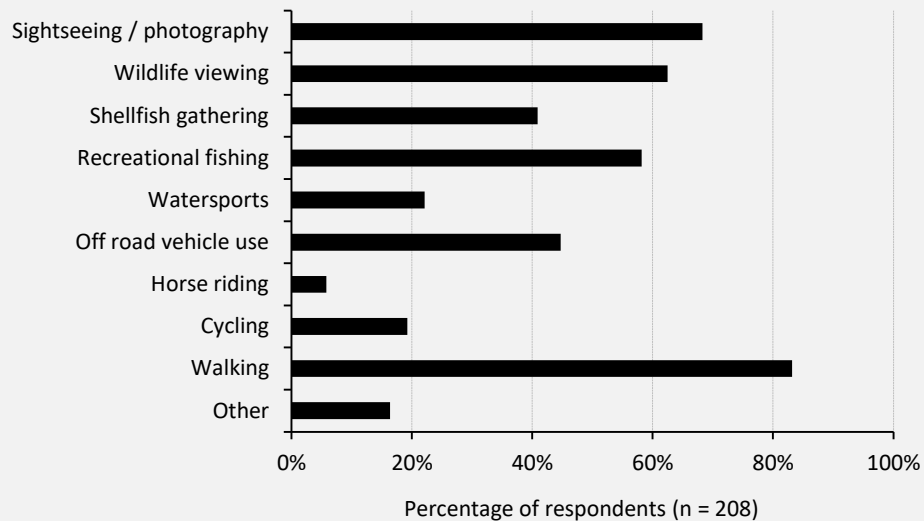
WHO REPLIED?

There were a total of 208 unique responses representing a broad range of age groups. The majority of respondents identified themselves as 'non-commercial participants' in recreational activities and the gender split was 64% male and 36% female. Approximately half of respondents have had a 30+ year association with this part of the coast indicating a depth of local knowledge and involvement.



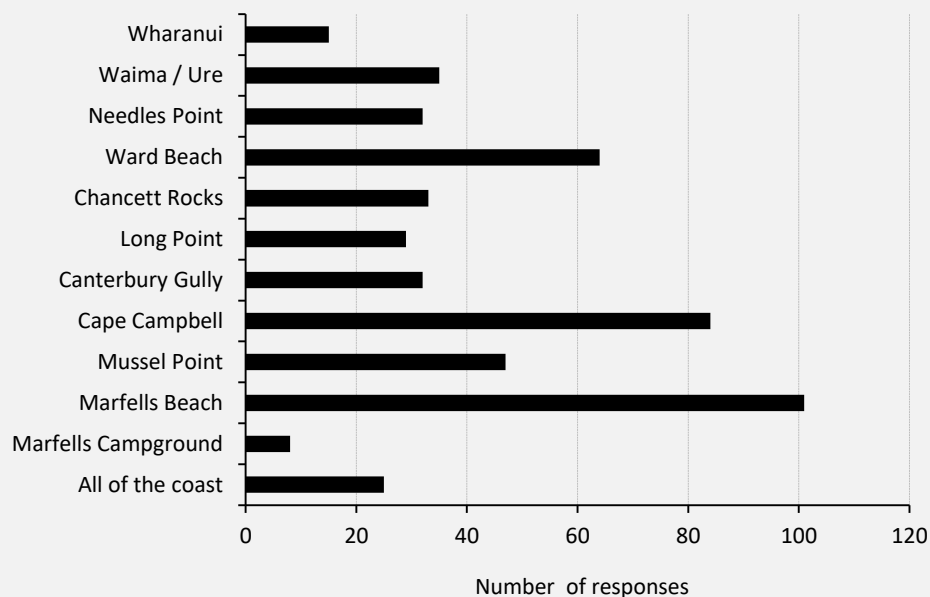
WHO IS DOING WHAT?

The beaches in this area are used for a surprisingly wide range of recreational activities. The most popular activities in terms of participant numbers were walking followed by sightseeing and photography, wildlife viewing and recreational fishing. In addition to the nine categories shown below other activities recorded by respondents in the 'other' category included landsailing, paragliding, shell collecting, rock collecting, outdoor painting, botanising, karengo harvesting, customary fishing activities, commercial fishing activities, voluntary habitat restoration work and mahinga kai. Other activities noted that generally fall within the nine major categories include boating, surfing, motorbike riding, quad bike riding and coastal bird surveys.



IMPORTANT LOCATIONS

In general, the survey results indicated that the entire coastal area is important for some activities at various times. However, a set of survey questions asked participants for information on the locations most important to them, and this provides an indication of the intensity of interest and/or use of various sections of coast. Results for 11 prominent areas that were specifically mentioned along with 'all of the coast' are shown below.

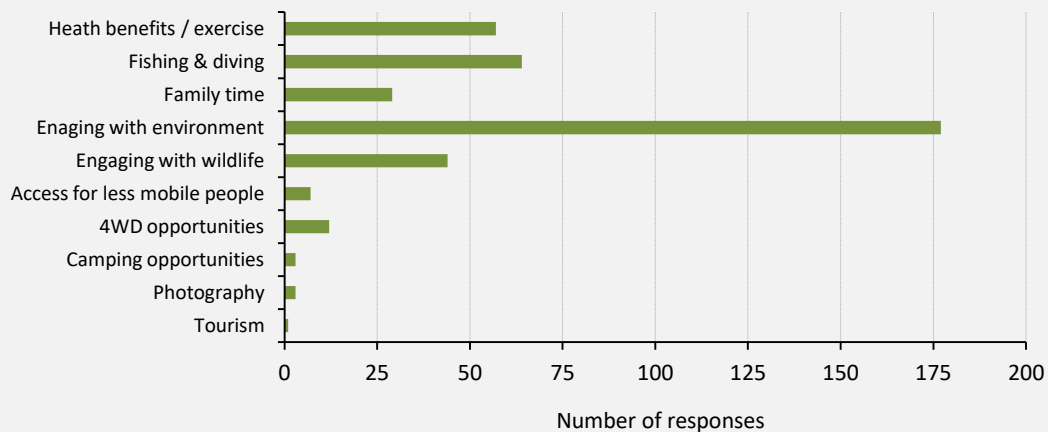


POSITIVE AND NEGATIVE ASPECTS

Recreational activities can have both positive and negative aspects. Knowledge of each can be useful for the design of solutions that help retain the positive benefits and eliminate or reduce the negative. There were 397 responses on positive aspects, and 403 on negative aspects.

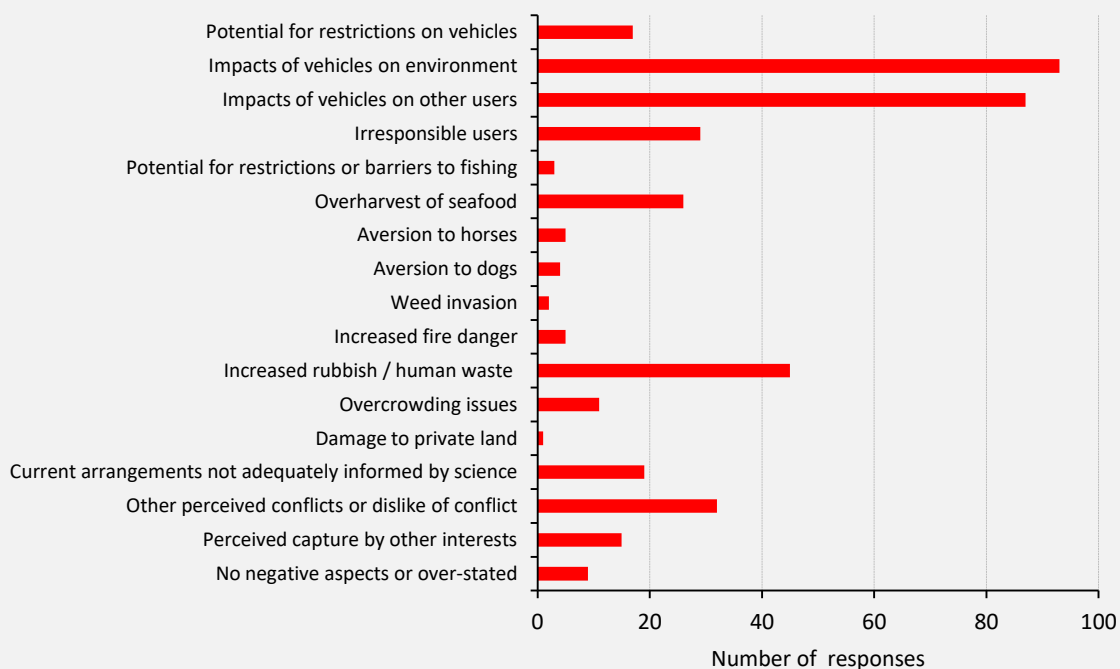
Positive aspects

The graph below shows the positive aspects classified according to 10 distinct themes that emerged from the data. Opportunities for wildlife encounters were separated from other benefits associated with being in a wild and natural environment, which was the theme most often identified as a benefit of recreation activities in the study area. Mental or physical health benefits, fishing / harvesting benefits and family time were also prominent positive aspects associated with recreation in the area.



Negative aspects

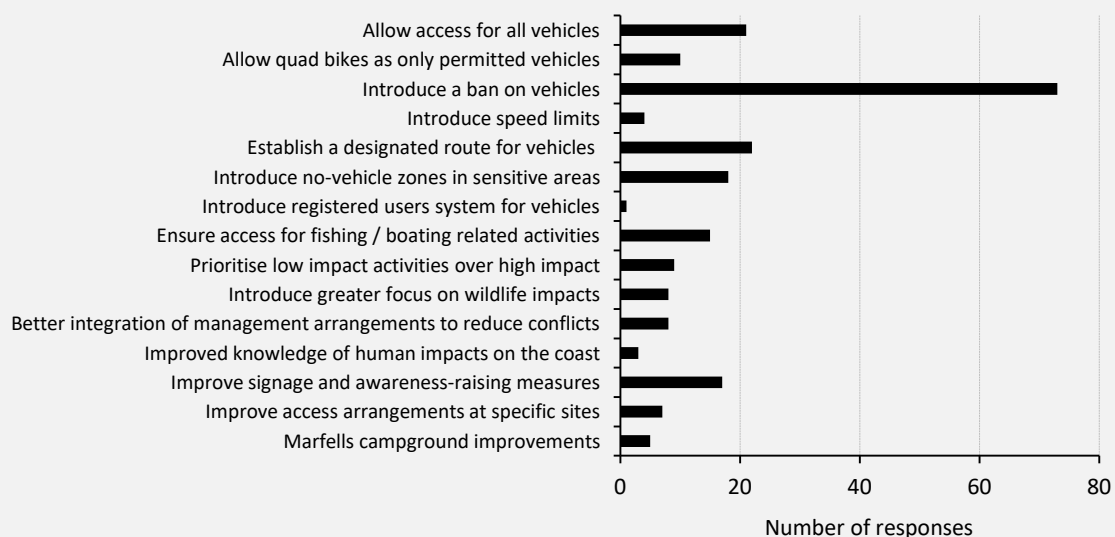
There were a wide range of views on negative aspects which are summarised below according to 16 themes and an additional 'no negative aspects' category. Several themes can be identified as being largely contradictory to others, indicating that negative aspects for one user group are seen as positives for others. Examples include the potential for restrictions on vehicles versus their perceived negative impacts, fears around reduced access for fishing versus concerns for overharvest, and direct aversion to some user groups or activities. This highlights a need for conflict resolution in finding workable solutions for managing recreational use. A lack of adequate information on the nature of impacts was identified as a negative aspect of the current situation despite its potential usefulness in the design of solutions.



COASTAL MANAGEMENT SOLUTIONS

Across all locations around 60% of people wanted to see a change in beach management arrangements while 40% of people were in favour of retaining the status quo.

A total of 221 suggested interventions were identified in survey responses. The graph below shows a classification according to 15 management themes. In keeping with the information on positive and negative aspects, several classes of management interventions are largely incompatible with others, particularly those involving access for motorised vehicles. However, several classes of ideas may be identified which either seek, or make suggestions for arrangements that could address diverse values and preferences in compatible ways. They include improving the knowledge of human impacts on the coast, and two different though complementary spatial planning approaches that involve the establishment of designated routes and / or exclusion zones to reduce impacts by design. Considerations along these lines could also potentially encompass some of the other suggested interventions, such as those involving prioritising preferred access modes, or the need for maintenance or improvement of access for valued recreational activities at specific sites.



ACKNOWLEDGEMENTS

A huge thank you to all survey participants for volunteering your time and sharing your knowledge and perspectives on these important issues for management of the Marlborough coast.



FOR FURTHER INFORMATION CONTACT THE *RECOVER* TEAM AT THE MARINE ECOLOGY RESEARCH GROUP

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