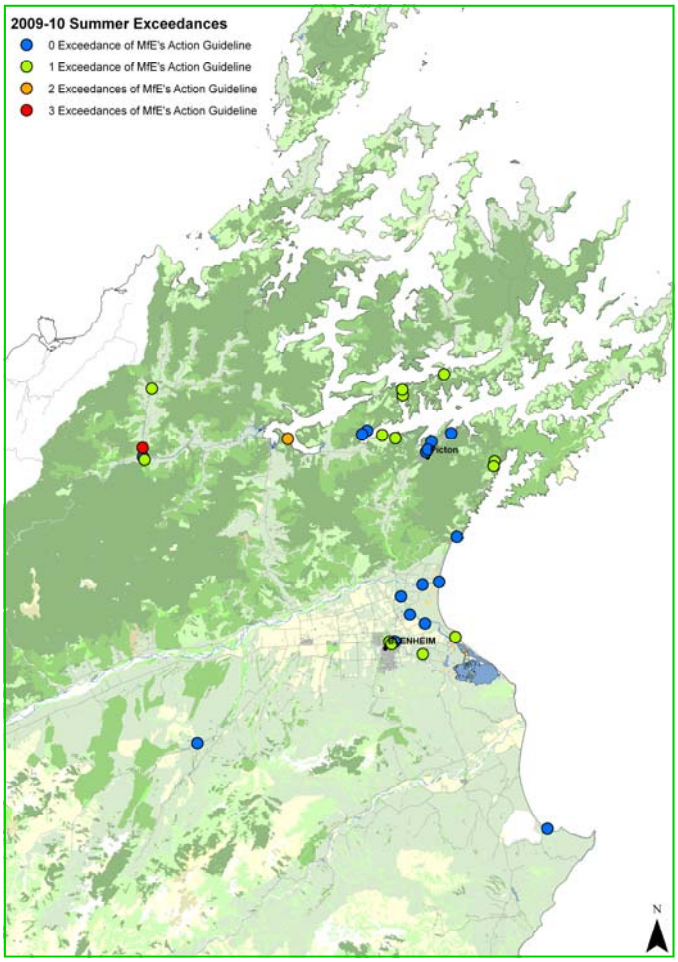
Recreational Water Quality

Monitoring Summary 2009-10

Key points

- 31 popular swimming sites are regularly monitored every summer
- Wet weather often leads to exceedances of MfE's guidelines for swimming beaches and rivers
- Swimming should be avoided during and after wet weather, particularly in urban and intensively farmed areas
- 80% of coastal swimming sites were deemed safe for more than 95% of the time during the 2009-10 summer
- Only 50% of river swimming sites were deemed safe for more than 95% of the time during the 2009-10 summer
- Approximately 50% of coastal beach sites have a Grade (SFRG) 'Very Good' or 'Good'
- River sites are graded at best as Fair. Just over 60% of river sites are graded 'Poor' or 'Very Poor'
- Beach grades at the Pelorus Bridge and Wairau Bar improved from 'Poor' to 'Fair' from last year.



Why we monitor

One of Council's long term community objectives is to maintain and enhance recreational water quality in the region.

Each summer 13 river swimming spots and 18 coastal beaches are sampled for the presence of bacteria (*E. coli* in rivers and Enterococci in coastal waters).

The number of bacteria present in the sample gives an indication of the risk of contracting illness or infection from being in contact with the water.

The numbers are based on the Ministry for the Environment's (MfE's) bathing water guidelines. Sampling takes place once a week from November to March.

Results are published once a week on the Council's website. The purpose of the monitoring is to inform the public of the relative safety of our popular swimming spots.

Coastal water results 2009-10

Our coastal water quality is generally very good in terms of compliance with the recreational water quality standards. In 2009-10 80% of monitored beaches were safe to swim at for over 95% of the summer time. The best water quality was at Marfells Beach; Whites Bay; Waikawa; Picton Foreshore; Shelley Beach and Tirimoana. There were no exceedances at any of these sites in 2009-10. Moenui and Momorangi Bay had the poorest water quality. Rivers draining into the inner Pelorus Sound are likely to have an impact on water quality at Moenui. Water quality at Momorangi Bay is affected by the inflow from two streams into the Bay, faecal contamination from the streams is mainly from ducks and other wildlife.

Freshwater results 2009-10

Our rivers are highly prized for recreational activities, from swimming to kayaking, rowing and fishing. In 2009-10 just over half of monitored river spots were safe to swim at for over 95% of the summer time. The best water quality was from the two rowing club sites on the Wairau and at Ferry Road bridge on the Wairau. There were no exceedances at any of these sites in 2009-10. The poorest water quality was from the Rai Falls. Water quality is historically poor at this site, however in recent years a decrease in the median *E. coli* number has been recorded suggesting that improved land management practices in the Rai Valley are leading to improvements in water quality. Overall water quality in our river swimming sites has improved over previous years.

Beach Grades:

Our swimming sites are graded each year to reflect the general water quality that can be expected from them. Beaches and rivers are graded using the Ministry for the Environment's methodology. The grade incorporates data from 5 years of sampling in addition to incorporating a risk assessment for the site.

The quality of our river sites are typical of that seen throughout New Zealand. Two swimming spots (Wairau Bar and Pelorus Bridge) saw an improvement from last year from 'Poor' to 'Fair'.

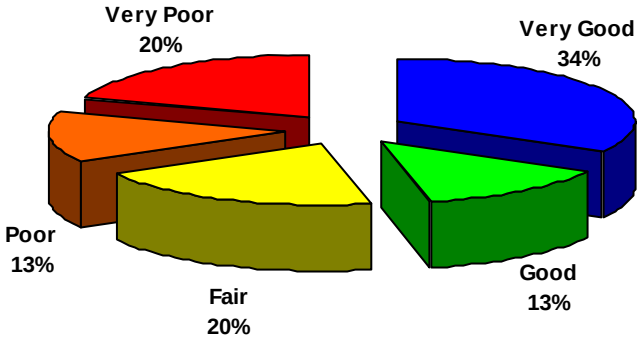
Rowers on the Lower Wairau. Swimming spots on the Wairau River are all graded as 'Fair'.

What do MfE's guidelines mean?

Each week during the summer water samples are assessed against MfE's guidelines for recreational waters. The results are posted on the Council website each week. The guidelines denote the *level of risk* of contracting illness/infection from being in contact with the waters. This level of risk is described below:

Acceptable *'Green Mode'* <140 /100mL Highly likely to be uncontaminated Safe	**Acceptable** *'Green Mode'* <260 /100mL Highly likely to be uncontaminated Safe
Alert *'Amber Mode'* >140 /100mL <280 / 100mL Potentially contaminated OK	**Alert** *'Amber Mode'* >260 /100mL <550 / 100mL Potentially contaminated OK
Action *'Red Mode'* >280 / 100mL Highly likely to be contaminated Unsafe	**Action** *'Red Mode'* >550 / 100mL Highly likely to be contaminated Unsafe

2009-10 River Grades



2009-10 Coastal Water Grades

What can you do to help protect our waterways?

- Keep stock out of waterways to prevent faecal contamination.
- Ensure sewage from boats and campervans is correctly disposed of.
- Ensure septic tanks are properly maintained and can cope with increased volumes, particularly important during the summer months.

What is the Council doing to protect our waterways?

- Regular monitoring helps to identify problem areas, it also shows if an area is experiencing an improvement or a deterioration in water quality
- The Council has a 'Stormwater Strategy' in place to help minimize pollution from urban runoff.
- The Council with the help of the farming community are working towards minimising the effects of stock, particularly dairy herds, on water quality through eliminating stock crossings and fencing and planting riparian margins to prevent stock access to waterways, thereby reducing the faecal load to waterways.
- It is illegal to dump sewage from boats within 500m of the shoreline.

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For more information on recreational water quality go to

www.marlborough.govt.nz

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