



Frequently asked questions

Kei hea tōu wai? Where's your wai?

FAQs

This document covers some of the questions people may have about this project, 'Where's your wai'.

What is 'Where's Your Wai'?

We're keen to find out about the freshwater spots people use around Northland, and what the water's like there, so we can work out the best ways to look after Northland's wai.

Just go to the [online tool](#), mark your spot on the map, and tell us a bit about it. Easy as!

The more people that participate, the better picture we'll have about the freshwater places people use – and the better we can prioritise where and how to focus our freshwater efforts.

What will you do with the information people give you?

Having a better picture of the freshwater places people use and what they use them for will help us:

- Ensure we're monitoring water quality in the right places and monitoring the right things. Find out more about [water monitoring](#)
- See if there are any new water quality issues arising that we need to focus on.
- Identify local and region-wide issues with water quality and whether we can do more to address these.
- Finalise swimming water quality targets (which all regional councils are required to do). Find out more about our [implementation of government policy for freshwater management](#)
- Inform how we implement the government's current and future freshwater policy directives (there are a few in the pipeline).

Will the information be publicly available?

Yes. The pins people drop on the map will all be visible during the feedback period. Once the feedback period has finished, we'll analyse and report on all the information and comments we've received. That report will be published on our website at www.nrc.govt.nz/wheresyourwai

What if there's an urgent problem like a pollutant or oil spill?

Our 24/7 Environmental Hotline is the place to report urgent environmental incidents like pollution going into a waterway – 0800 504 639.

Will you fix every issue reported?

That depends on the issue!

‘Where’s your wai’ is about getting better information about the freshwater places people use, so we can better prioritise where and how to focus our efforts.

(If it’s an urgent environmental incident like pollution going into waterways, contact our 24/7 Environment Hotline on 0800 504 639.)

The key is knowing what the water quality issues are of concern and where these occur. We can then look at what the solutions could be, but bear in mind we need to prioritise use of our (and ratepayers) resources and can’t fix every issue.

Water quality can be complex and improvement measures take time to have effect. It also needs cooperation from a range of people and organisations, such as landowners, district and regional councils, tangata whenua and the public – we’ve all got a part to play.

There may also be issues that aren’t regional council responsibilities, like legal access or providing toilets, parking or rubbish facilities. We’ll pass any of these issues on to the right place.

Why would I want to share my favourite freshwater spots?

Fair question – we know some people feel really protective of their favourite places.

The more we know about the places people are using and any water quality issues people are experiencing, the better we can prioritise our efforts for the good of all Northland. Ultimately, it’s up to you!

Is it safe to swim here?

We monitor a selection of the region’s most popular freshwater and coastal swimming sites over the summer months, and the results are posted on the LAWA website. This year’s monitoring will kick off in early December.

As a rule of thumb:

- Don’t swim if there are warning signs indicating that the water is unsuitable for swimming.
- Avoid swimming for two to three days after heavy rainfall.
- Don’t swim if the water appears dirty or murky, smells or has scum on the surface.
- Be aware of potential contamination nearby or upstream.

Find out more about [swimming water quality](#)

Why aren't you doing more, going faster?

Good question! The short answer is that there's simply no quick fix for water quality (frustrating but true). And much of the good work happening today won't be reflected in our water quality results for a number of years – it's a long-term investment.

The good news is that lots of people and organisations – including us – care deeply about improving Northland's water, and are working hard to make that happen. Our council recently increased its budget for improving water management by an extra \$5.7 million over the next three years.

And things are getting better. In Northland, we have more improving water quality trends than declining trends. More and more landowners are investing in water quality initiatives such as excluding livestock from rivers and lakes and planting riparian areas. Whole communities are getting behind local water quality plans and initiatives. Huge investments are being made in district council sewage systems, and farm wastewater systems are being improved as a result of industry and council initiatives. Rules on activities that can impact water quality are also getting tighter.

We've certainly got a long way to go, but the journey's well underway. We've all got a part to play, so keep up the good mahi Northland!

Find out more about our role in caring for Northland's water: www.nrc.govt.nz/water