

## Suitability for Swimming at Recreational Beaches

During the 2012-2013 bathing season, Bay of Plenty had the highest number of recreational marine and freshwater beaches being graded as "very good" (suitable for swimming for almost all of the time) while Wellington had the highest number of "good" (suitable for swimming for most of the time), followed by Canterbury (figure 1). Although Canterbury had the highest number "very poor" (often be unsuitable for swimming), the majority of beaches in Canterbury were graded as "very good" and "good". In contrast, the majority of beaches in Manawatu-Wanganui were graded as "poor" (not always suitable for swimming) or under.

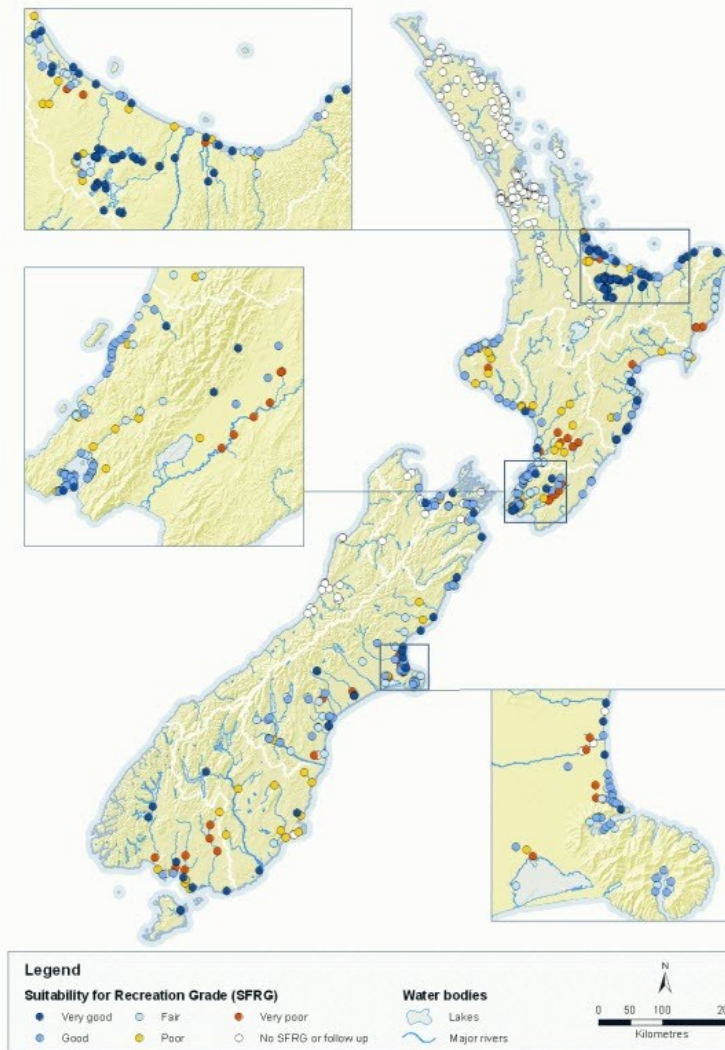
The general grades of marine beaches are better than the freshwater ones (figure 1). This is because the faecal pollutants are more rapidly diluted and dispersed at the coast due to currents and large volumes of water. Therefore coastal beaches are less likely than freshwater beaches to have higher background levels of bacteria and longer-lasting contamination events (Ministry for the Environment 2007).

The white spots on figure 1 indicate follow up or no 'suitability for recreation grade' (SFRG). A follow up reassessment will be conducted when the Microbial Assessment Category (MAC) and the Sanitary Inspection Category (SIC) appear to be contradicting each other (Ministry for the Environment, 2013b). No SFRG exists because the monitoring programmes in some regions are not compatible with reporting SFRG while others have not sampled some of their beaches long enough to be able to calculate SFRGs or have yet to undertake catchment sanitary inspections. Some regions have not provided any data (Ministry for the Environment, 2013a).

### REFERENCES

- Ministry for the Environment. (2007). Environment New Zealand 2007. Wellington: Ministry for the Environment.
- Ministry for the Environment. (2013a). Questions and answers. Retrieved from <http://www.mfe.govt.nz/environmental-reporting/fresh-water/suitability-for-swimming-indicator/questions-and-answers.html>. (accessed on 18 October 2013a)
- Ministry for the Environment. (2013b). Suitability for swimming. Retrieved from <http://www.mfe.govt.nz/environmental-reporting/fresh-water/suitability-for-swimming-indicator/suitability-swimming-indicator.html>. (accessed on 21 October 2013b)

Figure 1: SFRG from samples taken at monitored recreational beaches, 2012-2013



Source: Ministry for the Environment (2013b)

### HIGHLIGHTS:

- During the 2012-2013 bathing season, Bay of Plenty had the highest number of beaches being grades as "very good" while Wellington had the highest number of "good". Although Canterbury had the highest number of "very poor", the majority of beaches in Canterbury were "very good" and "good". In contrast, the majority of beaches in Manawatu-Whanganui were graded as "poor" or under.
- The general grades of marine beaches are better than the freshwater ones. This is due to currents and large volumes of water at the coast, the faecal pollutants are more rapidly diluted and dispersed there.
- Some recreational beaches show "no data" on the map. This indicates either a reassessment is needed or there is no SFRG.

### CONTACT:

Fei Xu  
f.xu@massey.ac.nz