

## SWIMMABLE RIVERS FOR THE SUMMER OF '16

With summer coming we'll be racing to the river or beach to cool off in the water. Nelson has some wonderful swimming spots – the Maitai River swimming holes and Tahunanui Beach are the places where our summertime memories are made.

Council monitors water quality at our bathing sites regularly, to make sure we can swim safely. Water can be unsafe for human contact for several reasons including dog poo and toxic chemicals which wash off our vehicles and roads.

Naturally occurring toxic algae can also stop us swimming on a hot day.

River and sea water can become

contaminated during or shortly after rainfall from surface water runoff. It is best not to swim for the first 24 hours at least after any rainfall that leads to discolouration of the water.

We can reduce the risk of pollution at our bathing sites by making sure that only rain goes down the drain.



## HERE'S HOW YOU CAN KEEP OUR RIVERS SWIMMABLE:

### 1 DO YOU SCOOP THE POOP?

Facts:

There are 5500 dogs registered in Nelson this year and an average dog will produce about 125 kg of waste a year.

- A single gram of pet waste, the size of a pea, contains 23 million faecal coliform bacteria
- Bacteria from dog faeces are washed into the river during rain or flood events
- Research has shown that dog faeces are one of the major contributors to *Escherichia coli* found in the Maitai River.

Solution:

Always take a disposable bag with you, pick up your dog's poop and dispose of it in a rubbish bin. Thank you!



### 2 WHERE DO YOU WASH YOUR CAR?

Facts:

Washing your car on your driveway or street can pollute your nearest stream, especially if you wash your car near a drain.

Car wash run-off contains:

- Petrol and oil residues
- Heavy metals
- Nutrients such as phosphorus and nitrogen
- Detergents and dirt.

Solution:

Wash your car at a commercial car wash with a water filtering and recycling system, or hand wash

your vehicle on a grassy area. Grass and soil can filter out the pollutants before they get into the groundwater.



### 3 ARE YOUR DRAINS ONLY FOR RAIN?

Facts:

Chemicals that get into city streams like York Stream and Saltwater Creek and end up in the Maitai River and the sea.

Common pollutants include:

- Washings from paint brushes, rollers and trays
- Garden chemicals (fertilisers, weed killer and plant sprays, concrete washing chemicals)
- Motor oil, grease, soap and detergents.

Solution:

Wash painting equipment at an indoor sink. Avoid spraying chemicals on to concrete surfaces and dispose of oil, grease, old paint and out of date garden chemicals at the waste transfer station.



## WHAT DO YOU KNOW ABOUT CYANOBACTERIA?

Toxic algae (also known as Cyanobacteria and blue-green algae because of the cyan colour of cells) are true bacteria that live like algae and are naturally present in many New Zealand waterways.

If dogs or humans eat the algae they can be affected by toxic algae poisoning, which is severe and has caused the deaths of several dogs around the country.

The growth of toxic algae is more likely when river flows are low and stable, temperatures are consistently warm and the right nutrients are present. It starts as a

thin dark brown film on river rocks, then thickens until it forms mats which lift off the rocks and float to the river side.

If you spot toxic algae in the river its best not to touch the rocks and to keep dogs away. Council will issue an alert and put warning signs up if the levels become high, but its best if you know what to look out for too.

