

Water Care Code

- <http://www.doc.govt.nz/Explore/NZ-Water-Care-Code.asp>

New Zealand's lakes, rivers, wetlands, and coast are places of enjoyment for most of us. However, growing use of these areas has led to an increase in unsightly and dangerous rubbish, erosion, and the spread of plant and animal pests and disease. As our use of these places has increased, the life within them has often diminished. These problems severely threaten water quality and with it our health and safety, the survival of plants and animals, and our enjoyment of this heritage.

Please help us protect lakes, rivers, wetlands, beaches and the ocean by following these guidelines on your visit.

Find Out First

Find out about, and follow the regulations governing recreational use of waterways. They are designed to minimise conflicts between users and protect everyone's health and safety.

Find out from the local authority or Department of Conservation office if vehicle access across beaches is permitted.

If you have to cross private land, ask the landowner's permission and respect their rights.

If you're going to take fish, shellfish or bait, observe size, season and number restrictions. If you are unsure about fishing restrictions, contact the [Ministry of Fisheries](#) or Department of Conservation office.

Stay on Established Access Tracks

Vehicles, horses and even careless walking on sand dunes, estuary boundaries and riverbanks disturb wildlife and can cause permanent damage.

- Stay on established roads and tracks and use designated carparks.
- Driving on wet sand damages shellfish beds. Don't drive on beaches unless it is permitted and only if you have to.
- Sand dunes keep beaches sandy and stable. Be careful not to disturb the plants growing on them.

Use Existing Boat Ramps, Launching Sites, and Mooring Sites

Taking boats in and out of the water and anchoring them can disturb and damage the animals and plants which live and grow on the bottom and edges of waterways.

- Use existing boat ramps or established launching sites.
- Use established moorings where available, or sites where plants and animals will not be damaged.

Take Care of Your Gear

Careless use of equipment puts wildlife and other users at risk.

- All static gear (e.g., crayfish pots) is required by law to be marked (e.g., with surface buoys, flags, or lights) to make their position clear and reduce the risk of accidents.
- Make sure your fishing gear is in good condition and used only in suitable conditions so that it is not accidentally lost. It is best not to use set nets as they are non-selective, killing all marine life that becomes trapped.
- For the safe passage of vessels, keep anchorages clear of all fishing gear.

Remove Rubbish

Rubbish left on beaches or dropped in the sea, lakes or rivers, pollutes water and can kill animals if they swallow it or get entangled in it.

- Cut down on rubbish by repacking food into recyclable containers before you leave home.
- Use rubbish disposal facilities where they are provided or carry out what you carry in.
- Old worn fishing line is likely to break. Check it before leaving home, and dispose of waste line safely (e.g., broken paddles) and, if it is safe to do so, retrieve lost or broken gear.
- Clean fish and shellfish where the waste will not pollute the water.
- If you find other people's rubbish, think of the environment and remove it.
- Report any pollution to the local council as soon as possible.

Dispose of Toilet Waste Properly

Disposal of toilet waste in the wrong place can contaminate water, damage the environment and is culturally offensive.

- Use land-based toilets where available. Otherwise, bury human waste in a shallow hole at least 50 metres away from waterways.
- Empty sewage holding tanks into approved shore facilities or, if there are none, in the open sea well beyond sheltered waters.
- Try and keep dogs from fouling beaches, lake shores and river banks. Take a plastic bag so you can dispose of your pet's waste in a toilet, or bury waste at least 50 metres away from waterways.

Be Careful With Chemicals

Careless use of soaps, detergents, fuels, oils, paints and anti-foulants can harm plants and animals and affect the health, safety and enjoyment of other water users.

- Use public refuelling facilities where possible - they have many safety features to prevent fuel or oil entering waterways.
- Make sure your fuel tanks, lines and spare tanks are leak-proof.
- Soap and detergents are pollutants. Drain cooking and washing water in the soil well away from waterways.

Take Only the Food You Need

Sustain life in our waterways. When taking food from the sea or freshwater don't overdo it!

Take only what you need and stay within the legal limits.

Release your catch unharmed if you don't need it for food.

If gathering your own bait, take only what you need and turn back all the rocks you have moved.

Report any instances of poaching, such as the taking of undersized crayfish or puaa, to Ministry of Fisheries.

Consider Plants and Animals

We are only visitors to water environments. Other animals and plants live there all the time.

- Avoid disturbing wildlife. Keep your distance from marine mammals and birds (especially if they are nesting). Use binoculars.
- Make sure your pets keep well clear of birds and other wildlife. Keep dogs on a leash if necessary, and don't take pets where they're not allowed.
- Teach children to care for nature. Don't take wildlife home. Observe sea creatures in buckets then release them back where you found them.
- Avoid operating power boats or jet skis too near riverbanks and estuary shorelines. Go slow; the wake of a speeding vessel causes erosion and disturbs wildlife.

- Exotic weeds and fish are big problem in some waterways so clean your gear and boats before you leave to prevent their spread to new waterways.

Respect Our Cultural Heritage

To Maori all waters have value. Many waterways and surrounding lands also have special cultural, spiritual or historical significance for the wider community.

- To appreciate the cultural values of the place you are going to visit, take some time to learn about its history and significance.
- If you find Maori treasures or artefacts, report them to local iwi and the Department of Conservation.

Consider Other People

People visit lakes, rivers, wetlands, beaches and the ocean for different reasons. Respect the rights of other visitors.

- Excessive noise will disturb other visitors as well as the wildlife. Keep noise levels to a minimum.
- Keep to a speed that is safe and doesn't disturb other users. In many places a speed limit of 5 knots within 200 metres of the shore applies to all water craft.