WEST COAST REPORTING AREA

Includes Franklin, Rodney and Waitākere Ranges local boards

JULY 2014

STATE OF AUCKLAND

MARINE FACTSHEET

BC3794

WEST COAST

The characteristic black sand beaches of the west coast of Auckland extend from Karioitahi Beach in the south, to Rangitira Beach (north of Muriwai Beach) in the north and are interupted by the rocky shores of the Waitākere Ranges between Whātipu and Māori Bay. This section of rocky coast is home to a wide diversity of marine species with up to 290 species recorded on the west coast intertidal reefs alone. Species along this coast are well adapted to exposure to large swells, strong currents, cold temperatures and low light levels.

Coastal areas also provide habitat for many different bird species. These include important feeding and roosting areas for gannets in Māori Bay, or habitat for dotterels and fernbirds in the estuarine, dune and swamp areas of Whātipu Bay. There are also significant linkages to the Waitākere Ranges, which provides intact vegetation right down to the coast and to Te Henga Swamp.

Monitoring of beach profiles (sand volume and movement) on two of Auckland's west coast beaches (Piha and Muriwai) has been undertaken since the early 1990s. This long-term data is valuable and is able to illustrate the dynamic nature of these beaches. This data shows that shoreline erosion is occurring at certain areas along the beach while other areas are accumulating sand. More recently beach profile monitoring was established due to erosion issues and protection work at south Muriwai and north Piha beach.

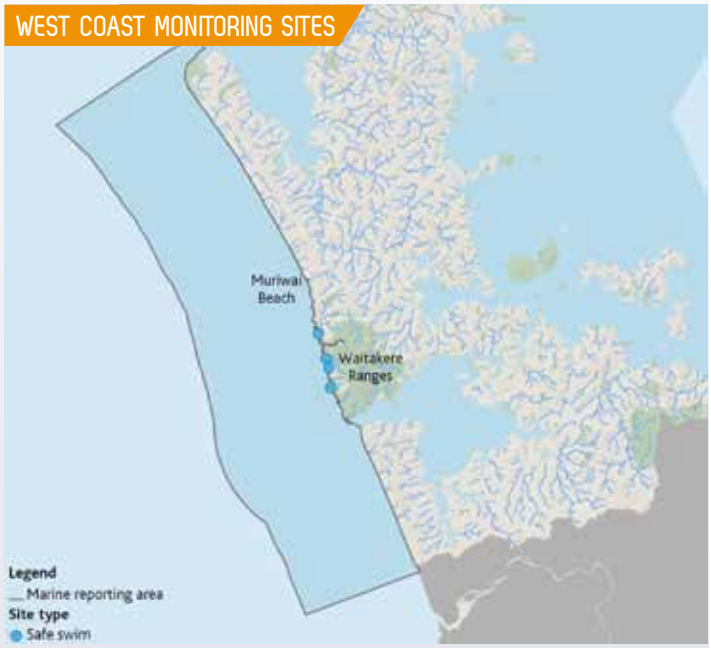
Bathing beach water quality was tested at four sites during the summer of 2013/14; note that west coast lagoons are reported separately on the Safeswim section of the Auckland Council website as the lagoons are tested using different faecal indicator bacteria. Across all four beaches, 82 tests were completed and more than 98 per cent of these passed the recreational bacteria guidelines.

Sand erosion due to the southward migration of the North Piha streams (Marawhara and the Wekatahi) and storm surges was investigated by a team of multiple council units combined with the local community to determine the stability of the sand dunes and roadway above.

New techniques were used to monitor beach profiles and sand volume changes. Earth works to redirect the stream and re-establish the sand dunes to prevent the potential collapse of the coastal road followed. As a result, sand volumes have remained above set trigger levels and the sand dunes are stable.

Environmental quality along the West Coast is high due to the exposed nature of the coast and the distance from land based activities.

WEST COAST MONITORING SITES



In the absence of comprehensive data for some areas, report cards are not available. In these areas fact sheets have been generated until more information is collected.

FIND OUT MORE

This report card is part of a series prepared by the Auckland Council's Research, Investigations and Monitoring Unit, which undertakes monitoring and research to provide information and evidence to inform the council's activities and reporting. Auckland's environment must be healthy and resilient in order to support life and lifestyle. More report cards can be found at aucklandcouncil.govt.nz/stateofauckland. The report card series includes reporting on freshwater, marine, soil, terrestrial, air, capacity for growth, demographics and quality of life.

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