

# Environmental Water Pollution in Auckland

## Problem:

**Low Water Quality in Auckland.** While drinking water standards are high, many of our urban rivers, beaches and harbours have become filled with sediment and covered in rubbish – they are visually and ecologically polluted, and at times swimming is unsafe because of pollution. Water quality in our rivers, beaches and harbours does not meet Aucklanders’ expectations or needs.

## Immediate Requests to Auckland Council:

- Address ecological degradation and human health risks on the isthmus, in the “Auckland Plan refresh”, including:
  - A **funding stream in the Long Term Plan**, committed to the ‘renewal’ of stormwater systems (ie the combined sewers and soakage areas) on the isthmus over no more than 20 years
  - A Chapter on **Water in the Auckland Plan at the highest level**, capturing the connectedness of people and water in all its forms and giving a strong base for action on infrastructure
- Incorporate **community input and develop an alliance** with interested community groups now, before options are fixed in the Healthy Waters CANOPY/ Western Isthmus Water Quality Improvement Plans, to increase community support of options in the LTP process.

## How do we know there is a problem?<sup>1</sup>:

- Rubbish on beaches in rivers and creeks
- Sediment in the Gulf, in Manukau Harbour and in creeks
- Treated water volumes from Mangere plant threaten saline harbour environment
- Unacceptably high pathogen measures and low water quality
- Unacceptable stormwater/ flood damage from stormwater run-off and raw sewage overflows
- Unacceptable “No Swimming Signs” throughout Auckland
- Decline in shellfish and fin fish stocks

## Root causes:

- Old, non-existent and ineffective stormwater infrastructure
  - Stormwater in “combined sewers” - sewage in stormwater pipes and vice versa
  - inadequate soakage systems- heavy metals and pathogens threaten aquifer
  - Stormwater and wastewater pipes already too small for current flows during rain events, let alone for increased population
  - Piece meal reactive maintenance spending with no stormwater planning framework
- Limited water quality monitoring and modelling (or non-transparent)
- Water responsibilities divided between Auckland Council and Watercare
- Lack of Auckland Council spending on stormwater

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<sup>1</sup><http://www.aucklandcouncil.govt.nz/EN/environmentwaste/coastalmarine/Documents/stateofourgulf2014.pdf>  
<http://www.knowledgeauckland.org.nz/assets/report-cards/SOA-card-2014-Marine-06-Manukau.pdf>  
<http://stateofauckland.aucklandcouncil.govt.nz/freshwater-report-card/albert-eden-roskill-reporting-area-2/>  
<http://stateofauckland.aucklandcouncil.govt.nz/marine-report-card/central-waitemata-harbour-reporting-area-2/>  
<http://stateofauckland.aucklandcouncil.govt.nz/freshwater-report-card/waitemata-reporting-area-2014/>

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## Context:

1. Unitary Plan is driving new development in established areas and impervious surfaces in the urban area will increase from 42 % to 62 % according to the 2015-35 long term plan. Example: In Meola and Oakley catchments this means significant additional stormwater from a 30-40% increase in impervious area.
2. Climate change will produce more frequent extreme events causing more flood damage

## Solution Facets:

- Comprehensive **Water Strategy** covering sewage and stormwater
- Approved and prioritised **stormwater infrastructure projects** in 10 year plan
- Collection and local treatment of stormwater including wetlands
- Reuse of treated sewage and stormwater
- Protection of fresh water ecology and environments
- **Budget and funding** mechanism for Stormwater
- Strong leadership/ champions

## Our Requests of the Mayor and Politicians

1. A stormwater system to be built for the isthmus which reduces rainwater overflows into the wastewater system and harbours, protects the underlying aquifer, and enables safe intensification.
2. Upgrades to the wastewater system on the isthmus to significantly reduce overflows into streams and harbours and provide for intensification.
3. Measurable improvements to water quality in both Waitemata and Manukau harbours and isthmus creeks – requires more monitoring and more transparency
4. Effective inclusion of community ideas and knowledge in stormwater planning, including visible prioritisation process and local community input into designs, solutions and funding.
5. Ring-fencing sufficient stormwater funding in the short term to make measurable improvements to harbour water quality and swimming beaches.
6. Restructuring of Auckland Council/ CCO Watercare to promote better integration (planning and implementation) of the “3 Water” responsibilities

## Stakeholders:

- Auckland Mayor and Councillors
- Auckland Council “Healthy Waters”
- Tangata Whenua/ Mana Whenua
- Environmental Groups and Stormwater Coalition throughout Auckland
- Ratepayers
- Local Boards
- Watercare
- Auckland MPs (and Government)

## Summary:

In much of the central Auckland isthmus, storm and wastewater systems are combined and lack capacity to handle large volumes of storm-water. When it rains storm-water, heavy metals and sewage overflow into our neighbourhoods and open spaces and raw sewage is discharged into creeks and beaches. Proposed intensification will exacerbate the problems. This situation is not acceptable to Aucklanders. Auckland Council must ensure that Storm-water infrastructure throughout Auckland meets similar standards as in “greenfield” development.