



## Look after yourself

The coastline provides many opportunities for enjoyment – but make sure that your visit is a safe one.

- Be sun smart - New Zealand has the highest skin cancer rate in the world and sunburn can occur all year round. Make sure you slip, slop, slap and wrap, and remember to reapply sunscreen throughout the day.
- Many coastal cliffs are quite unstable and can collapse without warning. Avoid standing close to the edges of sea cliffs or overhangs. Never try to climb a cliff.
- Be water safe – be careful of waves, especially when fishing and exploring rock platforms. Watch for the tide coming in.
- Not all Northland beaches are patrolled by Surf Lifeguards. Always watch for rips and never swim alone. If you are at a patrolled beach, swim between the flags.
- Be aware of boating rules and regulations. Always observe the rules of the harbour and coast and remember the 5 knot rule. Travel 5 knots (walking pace) within 200m of shore or a structure, within 50m of another boat, raft or person in the water and within 200m of a boat flying a dive flag.

For tips on water safety go to:  
[www.watersafety.org.nz/goodadvice](http://www.watersafety.org.nz/goodadvice)

*We can all continue to enjoy the best our coastal environment has to offer if we all do our part and Care for our Coast.*

*CoastCare is working with the community to help solve many of the issues mentioned in this brochure.*

*To find out more about CoastCare Northland visit [www.nrc.govt.nz](http://www.nrc.govt.nz) or phone 0800 002 004.*

### Northland Regional Council Offices

#### Opua Office

Unit 10, Opua Marine Park, Opua 0200.  
Telephone: 09 402 7516 Facsimile: 09 402 7510

#### Kaitaia Office

192 Commerce Street, Kaitaia 0410.  
Telephone: 09 408 6600 Facsimile: 09 408 6601

#### Dargaville Office

61B Victoria Street, Dargaville 0310.  
Telephone: 09 439 3300 Facsimile: 09 439 3301

#### Main Office

36 Water St, Whangarei.  
Private Bag 9021, Whangarei 0140.  
Telephone: 09 438 4639 Facsimile: 09 438 0012

Email: [mailroom@nrc.govt.nz](mailto:mailroom@nrc.govt.nz)

Freephone: 0800 002 004

24/7 Environmental Hotline: 0800 504 639

Website: [www.nrc.govt.nz](http://www.nrc.govt.nz)



Caring for Northland and its environment

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# Act now – protect Northland's Coast

*Clean beaches... clear water... a rich variety of marine life... as Northlanders we have long enjoyed - and come to expect - these things from our coast.*

But unless we all start to take more responsibility for our environment, some of what we take for granted may not last. Pressures on our coastline are enormous and environmental impacts are increasing every year due to our expanding population.

The way we use the coast today will determine what is left for future generations.

This guide shows how we can minimise and reduce our impact on the coastal environment while still enjoying what it has to offer.

**If you want to help make a difference, join a CoastCare or conservation group. Phone the Northland Regional Council on 0800 002 004 or email [mailroom@nrc.govt.nz](mailto:mailroom@nrc.govt.nz).**



## A habitat = a home

A habitat provides the right combination of food and protection for living things to survive. By conserving coastal habitats we help protect many animals and plants. A number of coastal habitats, such as sand dunes, salt marshes and rockpools, are especially sensitive to disturbance by humans. Take special care in these areas.

### Sand dunes

Coastal sand dunes are important as they act as buffer zones or shock absorbers between waves and the land, protecting people and their houses and property from storm surges, cyclones and even tsunamis.

Sand dunes are held together by the plants that grow on them and are extremely sensitive to both vehicle and foot traffic. Once vegetation is destroyed there is little to prevent the sand from blowing away or being washed away by waves.

- Use designated tracks when going to or from the beach to avoid damaging fragile plants and birds that live in and on dunes.
- Respect beach regeneration areas. Dunes need grasses and plants to hold them in place.
- Don't drive on sand dunes. Make sure all vehicles and motorbikes use designated access-ways to get to the beach.
- Use designated tracks to get horses to and from the beach. Ride below the high tide mark.
- Boogie boards damage vegetation; ride the waves, not the dunes.
- Don't remove sand, shells, pebbles or boulders from beaches as this can worsen erosion and other problems. A resource consent from the Northland Regional Council is required to remove any sediments or materials from a beach and anyone caught illegally removing these materials faces fines or prosecution.



- Dogs can disturb or even kill beach wildlife. Know local rules about dogs on beaches; keep your dog under control and off the sand dunes.
- Come to a CoastCare planting day and help restore the sand dunes.

### Salt marshes and rockpools

- Leave rockpool animals and plants in the water where you found them. They will die if left exposed to the sun.
- Keep away from saltmarshes and mangrove forests as they are important habitats for wading birds, fish and other animals. They are sensitive to trampling and take a long time to recover.

**Report stranded or dead marine animals to the Department of Conservation 0800 DOCHOTline (0800 362 468)**



# Caring for Northland's Coast

## Fishing

Some fish habitats and breeding grounds are being over-fished, destroyed by pollution and affected by recreational and commercial boating.

- Take only what you need and know the regulations that apply to collecting seafood including fish, crayfish, paua, pipi and other shellfish. Some areas are totally closed and no collecting/fishing is allowed
- Return undersized or unwanted fish to the water as soon as possible to avoid unnecessary deaths. Handle fish with wet hands to avoid rubbing protective slime off their scales.
- Drive with care on the beach, as many shellfish beds are close to the surface and easily damaged by vehicles.
- Unwanted or tangled fishing lines, nets and bait packages can be lethal to fish, marine mammals and birds. Wrap them up securely and dispose of them as you would any other rubbish.
- Dispose of unwanted fish remains responsibly so they do not end up on the beach. Decomposing remains are not nice and sharp bones can hurt!

**For further information on seafood and fishing regulations, visit the Ministry of Fisheries website: [www.fish.govt.nz](http://www.fish.govt.nz) or phone 0800 4 RULES (0800 478 537).**



## Pollute or protect

Rubbish on beaches is unattractive and can be dangerous and unhealthy. Some rubbish can take a long time to break down and can kill wildlife.

- Take all your rubbish out with you. If you have carried it in ... carry it out. Why not go one step further and remove rubbish left by others - if you don't, who will?
- Don't bury rubbish - it can quickly be uncovered by the tide, animals or people's feet.
- Ensure that all rubbish is disposed of properly on land.
- Minimise the amount of rubbish generated by re-using bags and recycling containers.

**Report pollution on land or water to the Northland Regional Council's 24/7 environmental hotline 0800 504 639.**



## Boating

Boating is a great way to explore the coastal environment. However, boating can be an environmental hazard if certain basic practices are not followed.

- Rubbish on boats should be stored in a strong reusable bag or a covered bin for safe disposal on land. Remove all plastic packaging before materials are stored or taken on board as plastic can be swallowed by marine life, causing illness, suffering and often death.
- Take cans rather than bottles on board. Empty cans are easily crushed and stored and use less space than empty bottles.
- Regularly clean out bilges and sumps - on land if possible. These areas collect oil which may leak into the water. Use appropriate absorbent material to soak up any spilt oil.
- Launch and retrieve your boat at designated launching ramps to avoid destroying vegetation and marine life.
- Use a sewage holding tank to avoid polluting water. Dispose of wastes properly. Use pump-out facilities where they are available.
- Avoid injuries to dolphins, whales and seals by slowing down and giving them plenty of space when you see them. Never approach closer than 100 metres and leave them alone if they show signs of agitation (such as diving or rapid changes in direction). Avoid sudden turns to prevent injuries to dolphins riding bow waves.
- Make yourself aware of introduced marine pests and take steps to prevent spreading them. Empty any seawater from your boat where the water was collected. If you have visited an area infested with unwanted marine pests, wash your boat, and fishing and diving gear thoroughly with high pressure fresh water. For more information on aquatic pests go to [www.biosecurity.govt.nz](http://www.biosecurity.govt.nz).

**Northland Regional Council produces a number of safe boating and marine pollution publications. Pick up a copy from your nearest Regional Council office or download a copy from the website: [www.nrc.govt.nz](http://www.nrc.govt.nz)**



## Coastal birds

Many seabirds and waders make their home on sand dunes, rocky outcrops, offshore islands and beaches. Some nest on the ground, while others use burrows.

- Seabird colonies should be avoided during the nesting season as birds will often abandon their nests if disturbed. Many sea birds like terns, gulls, dotterels, oystercatchers, shearwaters and petrels nest directly on the ground. Look out for, and avoid walking on, eggs that have been laid on the ground.
- Leave pets at home or ensure they are under total control if they must come with you. Birds are vulnerable to attack by domestic animals, particularly dogs and cats.



## Care for our coast... things you can do at home

Most coastal pollution originates on land. Rubbish thrown onto streets or oil spilt on the road is washed into stormwater drains and eventually into the sea. Materials put down household sinks and toilets may also end up in the sea.

- Save the drain for rain! Only water should go down a stormwater drain. Stormwater is usually not treated; it simply flows into the nearest stream and straight out to sea.
- Don't let rubbish wash down the gutter into a stormwater drain. Make sure all rubbish, including cigarette butts, goes into bins for correct disposal or recycling.
- Fix vehicle oil leaks as runoff from roads end up in stormwater drains too. Engine oils should be recycled, - never poured into drains or onto the ground.
- Use a commercial car wash, or wash your car on the grass, not on your driveway or roadside as this water goes straight into the stormwater drain.
- Dispose of unwanted chemicals responsibly. Petrol, paints, thinners, medicines, and garden sprays must not go into sewers or drains. Your local Council can give advice on their safe disposal.
- Use cleaning products that have minimum impact on the environment and break down quickly. Check packets to see if a product is biologically 'soft' and has little or no phosphate content. However, even products that are 'biodegradable' or 'environmentally friendly' should not be allowed to reach the stormwater system as they use up oxygen as they break down and can kill fish and aquatic life.
- Avoid overuse of chemical fertilisers. Nutrient runoff into water from urban and agricultural land is a major cause of excessive algal growth.
- In the kitchen, do not pour waste fats or oils down drains as these can block them and lead to sewage overflows. Put waste cooking oils into a container or cool them and wrap them in newspaper before throwing them out with other household rubbish.
- Compost garden waste and lawn clippings or take them to a transfer station - dumping of garden waste is a direct cause of new weed invasions.

**For more information on taking action at home, check out the Northland Regional Council website: [www.nrc.govt.nz](http://www.nrc.govt.nz)**

