

# HAWKESBURY-NEPEAN RIVER COASTAL MANAGEMENT PROGRAM

## Factsheet 5: PUBLIC HEALTH & SAFETY

Prepared October 2022

### KEEPING PEOPLE SAFE AND ENVIRONMENTS HEALTHY WITH GOOD WATER QUALITY

Clean water supports the health and vitality of the whole Hawkesbury-Nepean River system, and underpins the social, economic and environmental values and use of our water.

The water quality of our rivers, creeks and coasts is usually very good, so we rely on using it safely for drinking and food production, recreational and cultural activities.

### Population growth and climate change amplify health and safety risks

As population increases in our catchment – likely another million people will join us in the next 15 years – and climate change impacts intensify, we need to plan to meet the challenge of keeping our water clean and healthy.

The good news is that we know about the kinds of health and safety risks to plan for in the future. Some examples of how councils, in collaboration with other agencies and community stakeholders, could approach these are over the page.



Erosion at Bradleys Beach as a result of the East Coast lows in 2015.



Aquaculture in the Hawkesbury includes farming of edible and pearl oysters, and harvesting of school prawns, squid, lobsters and fish.



Prolonged low flows due to river regulation, combined with nutrients washed in from agricultural and industrial areas, can cause harmful algal blooms like the one in Berowra Creek, pictured above.

Don't just go with the flow, be part of the conversation.

Visit [hawkesburynepeancmp.org](http://hawkesburynepeancmp.org)



Recreational and commercial fishing and aquaculture in the catchment is very important for our communities' social wellbeing, our businesses and economy. It is worth more than \$92 million a year across the area covered by the CMP.

### WE WILL PLAN TO PROTECT AND IMPROVE OUR CATCHMENT'S WATER QUALITY

We will plan to maintain and improve our catchment's water quality for public health and safety through the sampling network for the Hawkesbury-Nepean River Coastal Management Program (CMP). We aim to target issues and address sources of pollution independently of jurisdictions.



Developing the CMP is a way to consider these issues for the most effective long-term solutions for each sub-catchment, our upper catchments and coasts. The actions that we plan for in the CMP are not just for councils – communities, state government and other agencies have roles and responsibilities of their own.



Water quality monitoring sites across the HNRS. The responsibility for testing the quality of our water rests with various organisations: local councils, state government agencies and private companies. They undertake plans, programs, sampling and monitoring activities.



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## Examples of a risk to health & safety

## Example of Coastal Management Program action to mitigate part of that risk

### NATURAL RISKS

A storm surge that damages essential infrastructure and some homes



Create more detailed maps of vulnerable coastal areas to pinpoint highest risk places  
Develop storm surge-specific engineering solutions for high-risk areas

A flood that inundates many homes, devastating the community



Make sure latest flood information and mapping are on council websites for buyers and residents

Natural disaster like fires, floods or storms that impacts recreational public areas (e.g. coastal walking trails eroding, beaches washing away, parks burning)



Ensure that appropriate management response plans and procedures are available for public and private spaces

Droughts that impact the flow of our waterways, changing the chemical balance of the estuaries and reducing availability of water for various uses



Put in place measures that consider the social, cultural, economic/commercial and environmental needs of the community  
Ensure public health monitoring and response plans are in place and up to date

Interactions with wildlife (e.g. jellyfish, sharks, etc.)



Find and develop new designated places for people to swim  
Create better signage and education about how to avoid/treat stings

### HUMAN-RELATED RISKS

Discharges from sewage treatment plants and/or septic runoff from river settlements affecting water and seafood quality



Work with water authorities to encourage effluent re-use  
Identify priority areas for plant upgrades  
Audit sewer systems throughout the catchment  
Encourage residents to properly maintain their systems

Population growth and land-use intensification causing increased water pollution, drinking and irrigation water contamination, sediment contamination, seafood contamination, toxic algal blooms and fish kills



Combination of potential solutions (e.g. best practice stormwater management through planning controls, compliance monitoring, education, etc.)

Overcrowding at boat ramps, beaches or waterways that can lead to user conflict and accidents



Create new regulations for appropriate vessel use in popular locations  
Increase the number of compliance officers in busy areas  
Run education programs to highlight unsafe practices

Jetskiing in an area that makes swimmers feel unsafe



Enlarge the no-wash zone near the swimming area  
Engage with agencies (e.g. Transport NSW) and vessel users to moderate behaviour

Incorrect disposal of ballast, sewage and rubbish by water vessels  
Leaks and spills from marinas and boat-service areas



Develop a program to spot-check more boats/marinas/service areas  
Put up signs for boat owners about where the nearest pump-out stations are

Boat wash that erodes riverbanks and could make coastal walking tracks unstable



Establish 'no wash zones' along eroded sections of the river  
Rehabilitate disturbed areas and increase their maintenance schedule

