

Healthy Waters Department

Natural stream changes



Have you noticed a change in your local stream?

Here is some information to help you understand some natural changes that can occur over the summer months.

Stagnant and smelly streams

This is a common issue for many streams during periods of low rainfall and high temperatures; often when normal stream flow is less than normal.

Seaweed and organic material can accumulate at the stream mouth and begin to naturally rot. This bacterial degradation results in reduced oxygen in the water and may also produce sulphur compounds as a by-product. The sulphur (hydrogen sulphide) produces a bad odour and can make the water become more acidic and potentially produce black coloured water; often mistaken for a sewer overflow.



Photo: stagnant and smelly stream

Discoloured streams

Algae and plankton blooms are naturally occurring microscopic plant and animal life (algal and plankton). These blooms can cause discolouration of water and occurs extensively over summer periods. The blooms come in many different colours, and also often mistaken for sewer overflow.

Pollution

Auckland Council's pollution response team are equipped to test water for pollution of streams, and can respond in an emergency.

If pollution is suspected, call the Pollution Hotline:
(09) 377 3107

Solutions

In summer, there is less rain to keep the stream flowing, the stream mouth gets blocked up by sand and the water can't get out. Heavy rain will cause the stream to burst and flush out the stagnant water in the stream.

In some circumstances, a channel can be dug out at the opening of the stream mouth, releasing the stagnant water. Regular clearing of a sandbar using a digger is not always practical; there are health and safety risks to the public as popular beaches attract many visitors, and it is only a temporary solution.

Opening the sandbar will not resolve the issue as sand will form over the opening of the stream over time and the water may become stagnant again during hot dry weather.

Find out more: (09) 301 0101

Pollution Hotline: (09) 377 3107

