



75% of sewer blockages involve wet wipes

## To flush or not to flush?

**When toilet paper is in short supply, it's tempting to use wet wipes. But did you know: 75% of sewer blockages involve flushed wet wipes?\***

A blocked sewer can mean an expensive plumbing bill. It can also cause sewage overflows into homes, gardens, parks and creeks.

Research shows 1 in 4 people are flushing wet wipes and 72% of those think it's safe. But it's not safe and it's not good for the environment.

**Only toilet paper breaks down** sufficiently for our sewerage system. While other products such as wipes, tissues and paper towels may initially flush away, they cause problems further down the system.

During monitoring, we often discover sewage overflows into our creeks and that's bad news for our waterways.

To help keep our creeks free of sewage, only flush human waste and toilet paper down your toilet.

**Report sewage leaks to Sydney Water on 13 20 90.**

\*Source: [www.sydneywatertalk.com.au/wet-wipes](http://www.sydneywatertalk.com.au/wet-wipes)



## More ways to help

### Report pollution

NSW Environment Line 131 555

### Dispose of chemicals safely

Household Chemical Cleanout:  
[www.bmcc.nsw.gov.au/cleanout](http://www.bmcc.nsw.gov.au/cleanout)

### Become a volunteer

[www.bmcc.nsw.gov.au/envirovolunteers](http://www.bmcc.nsw.gov.au/envirovolunteers)

### What would you like to know?

We'd love to hear your ideas for our next Waterways Snapshot.

Email Council's Healthy Waterways Team:  
[council@bmcc.nsw.gov.au](mailto:council@bmcc.nsw.gov.au)



[www.bmcc.nsw.gov.au](http://www.bmcc.nsw.gov.au)

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# waterways health snapshot 2020

## Inside...

- Recovery after fire
- Water for wildlife – How you can help
- Why is groundwater essential?
- To flush or not to flush?



# How healthy are our waterways?

Council regularly monitors our local waterways to check ecological health and recreational water quality. Here's a snapshot of our results. For more details visit: [www.bmcc.nsw.gov.au/waterquality](http://www.bmcc.nsw.gov.au/waterquality)

## Ecological health results



We rate the ecological health of each waterway as either excellent, good, fair, or poor, using waterbugs as indicators of creek health.

**51%** Waterways in good to excellent health

**49%** Waterways in fair to poor health



## Recreational water quality

In summer, we test bacterial contamination weekly.



### Wentworth Falls Lake, Jellybean Pool

Suitable for swimming most of the time. Generally good microbial water quality.



### Glenbrook Lagoon, Megalong Creek, Minnehaha Falls

Not always suitable for swimming. Susceptible to fecal pollution.



At all sites, avoid swimming during and up to three days after rain, or if there are signs of pollution in the water. Also consider other risks such as water depth, temperature and submerged hazards.

# Recovery after fires and floods

Since the summer fires, we've been closely monitoring all fire-affected waterways because bushfires can seriously impact water quality. Ash and soil can be washed into waterways, causing dramatic increases in nutrients and reductions in oxygen levels.

**The good news? So far, Blue Mountains' creeks appear to be quite resilient. In fact, the impacts found aren't as bad as seen elsewhere in NSW.**

Unfortunately, the February floods hit some of our waterways hard—particularly those receiving urban stormwater flows. Further monitoring will continue to provide vital data to track the recovery and condition of our creeks while pinpointing any problem areas.

**You can help recovery by keeping pollutants out of stormwater drains and installing a rainwater tank.**



*This sediment trap at Katoomba Falls caught over 120 tonnes of sediment from urban runoff after the February floods.*



*Fresh water helps local wildlife and also attracts delightful visitors to your garden!*

## Water for wildlife – how you can help

While we received some good rains after the fires, last summer was one of the hottest and driest on record.

As climate change brings more extreme heat, severe droughts and catastrophic bushfires, many people want to know how to help our wildlife.

One of the best things you can do is provide clean, fresh water.

- **Change the water daily and clean the container regularly to prevent disease.**
- **Use shallow bowls to prevent drowning (a real risk for animals, frogs and reptiles). Insert a stable, clean rock to create a safe exit.**
- **Keep water out of reach of dogs, cats and children.**
- **WIRES has more tips: [wires.org.au](http://wires.org.au)**

Our creeks are a vital natural water source for our precious wildlife. To help keep our waterways clean and clear, never allow detergents, pesticides, sediment, chemicals, paint or fertilisers to enter stormwater drains.



## Ecological waterway health in the City of Blue Mountains



- Excellent health
- Good health
- Fair health
- Poor health

These ratings are based on the types of waterbugs found at each site. Waterbugs are widely used indicators of ecological creek health. A rich variety of sensitive waterbugs (such as mayflies and crayfish) indicates a healthy waterway.



### Colo Catchment

- 1 Waterfall Creek

### Cocks Catchment

- 2 Fairy Dell Creek
- 3 Centennial Glen Creek
- 4 Megalong Creek
- 5 Megalong Creek tributary
- 6 Pulpit Hill Creek
- 7 Pulpit Hill Creek tributary
- 8 Back Creek

### Erskine Catchment

- 9 Bedford Creek
- 10 Terrace Falls Creek
- 11 Lawson Creek
- 12 Cataract Creek
- 13 Red Gum Park
- 14 Bedford Creek tributary
- 15 Wilsons Glen Creek
- 16 Erskine Creek

### Glenbrook Catchment

- 17 Magdala Creek
- 18 Glenbrook Creek
- 19 Glenbrook Creek
- 20 Glenbrook Creek tributary
- 21 Florabella Pass Creek

### Grose Catchment

- 22 Grose River tributary
- 23 Hat Hill Creek
- 24 Popes Glen Creek
- 25 Bridal Veil Creek/ Govetts Leap Brook
- 26 Yosemite Creek
- 27 Katoomba Creek
- 28 Govetts Creek
- 29 Wentworth Creek
- 30 Water Nymphs Dell
- 31 Dantes Glen
- 32 Hazelbrook Creek
- 33 Woodford Creek
- 34 Linden Creek tributary
- 35 Springwood Creek
- 36 Bulls Creek
- 37 Adams Creek

### Kedumba Catchment

- 38 Kedumba Creek
- 39 Leura Falls Creek
- 40 Gordon Creek
- 41 Lillians Glen
- 42 Jamison Creek
- 43 Kedumba River
- 44 Wentworth Falls Lake

### Nepean Catchment

- 45 Fitzgerald Creek
- 46 Long Angle Creek
- 47 Blue Gum Swamp Creek
- 48 Frasers Creek
- 49 Frasers Creek tributary
- 50 Cripple Creek
- 51 Strathdon Creek
- 52 Lapstone Creek
- 53 Knapsack Creek
- 54 Glenbrook Lagoon

## Hidden depths: the value of groundwater

Even during severe drought, most of our creeks still have water. That's thanks to one of our most precious resources—groundwater.

Groundwater is underground water found in cracks and spaces in soil, sand and rock. It's stored in geological formations called aquifers.

Groundwater provides constant water flows for many of our streams and waterfalls, such as Ingar falls (right). Our unique local ecosystems, such as Blue Mountains Swamps, depend on groundwater. So do rare and endangered species like the Blue Mountains Water Skink and the Dwarf Mountain Pine. These species are only found here in the Blue Mountains.



IMAGE: Gillian Fitzgerald

Groundwater is finite. It replenishes at a snail's pace and extraction can have serious consequences. Even a single bore in the wrong location can destroy a creek or dry out a swamp.

### How you can help...

Install a rainwater tank to water your garden and choose water-savvy native plants.

Choose tap water over bottled "spring" water (which is extracted groundwater).