

Meeting Notes **Ohau Channel Anglers Meeting**

Venue BOPRC Office, Arawa Street, Rotorua

Date and Time 13 May 2015 6.00-8.00pm

Chair Andy Bruere

Present	Ohau Channel Anglers*			
	Chris Currie	Campbell Mills	Terry Wood	A J Bryant
	Peter Wood	David Bach	Scott Tamblin	Peter Stevenson
	Darcy Turner	Gary Coker	Jim Tamblin	Bruce Spooner
	Frank Thompson	Mark Gibb	Mark du	
	David Proud	Don Stolter	Chaueau	
	Bay of Plenty Regional Council			
	Andy Bruere	Lake Operations Manager		
	Andy Woolhouse	EMTS Ltd for BOPRC		
	Eastern Region Fish and Game			
	Lindsay Lyons			
	Andy Garrick			
	Matt Osborne			
	Barry Roderick			
	Other Organisations/Interests			
	Eddie Bowman	NIWA		
	David Rowe	NIWA		
	Ian Kusabs	IK & Associates		
	Brendan Hicks	University of Waikato		
	Arash Alaeinia	Marama Project		
	Jeff Tuavera	Kilwell Sports		
	Fred Whata	Ngati Pikiao		

The meeting was called at the request of the Ohau Channel Anglers to raise concerns that they believe the quality of the Ohau Channel fishery had declined since the construction of the diversion wall in 2008. It was agreed that the meeting would include presentations from scientists who had undertaken monitoring of the channel and representatives for the anglers. Four sets of PowerPoint slides were presented by Matt Osborne (ERFG), Dave Rowe (NIWA), Brendan Hicks (UoW) and Mark Gibb (OAK). Unfortunately Marks presentation couldn't be viewed due to computer issues, bur all presentations will be available on the BOPRC website ([Here](#)).

Summary form Presentations

- A large number of records over many years have been collected by the anglers. These have been passed to ERFG who have copied and graphed relevant details. These continuous records are a valuable tool in showing observed changes over time, particularly where there is a lack of pre wall scientific data.
- From ERFG most measurable parameters within the channel have dropped since the wall was constructed (catch size, fish condition, numbers of anglers, satisfaction rates etc)
- Rotoiti quality has improved but Rotorua has declined - possibly due to poor water quality, but this has markedly improved in more recent time
- From David Rowe. The weir may affect ability of smelt to pass into Rotorua in high flows which concentrates smelt in the channel just below the weir. Smelt runs have continued since the wall was constructed. We have good post wall construction data but limited data pre construction.
- From Brendan Hicks. Similar trends to David with larger numbers of smelt near the weir and fewer lower down. We don't have enough pre wall data to draw conclusions. Otolith studies (identify where fish originated) show that most wild fish in both lakes originate from Rotorua streams, but there are fish in both lakes from both sources (ie Rotorua fish in Rotoiti and vice versa).
- From Mark Gibb (OAK), Mark said their collective observations and experiences differ from some of the presented science. The channel was a renowned trout spawning ground in its own right with huge smelt runs. Post wall smelt run don't seem to convert to trout numbers. There has been large sediment build up at the top of the channel replacing gravel spawning grounds. They believe that the fish caught in channel are Rotorua fish not Rotoiti. He acknowledged the improvement to water quality in Rotoiti. The issue needs to be looked at in total, not just fish passage associated with the wall but include the quality of the channel (sediment build-up loss of spawning grounds etc). Should bag limit be reduced? Poaching was a serious issue but F&G now have it under control. Could there be a fish release in the channel?
- Fred Whata gave account of changes since WW11. Whitebait and koura were plentiful. The earthquake in 1962 caused water to back up to Hamurana and Engineers looked to deepen the channel as a solution. Increasing depth from 1 metre to 5-6 metres. The channel bed had previously been gravel spawning grounds. Channel now has thick sediment and spawning grounds lost.

Meeting Outcomes

- Andy Bruere thanked all for attending and for the presentations and provision of historic records.
- It has been acknowledge by all sides that there is very limited pre wall scientific data available which makes it difficult to accurately assess the effects of the wall. It is very difficult to link cause and effect in the natural environment.

- The meeting has raised lots of questions about how to improve the fishery. Andy Bruere suggested setting up a group from all interested parties to look at the issues and propose possible solutions.
- The group should combine the data and evidence from both sides to come up with possible solutions and report back to this larger group.
- We should also consider that the water quality in Lake Rotorua has improved significantly which may follow through to improvement in the Rotorua fishery. This has been achieved mainly by alum dosing, but if dosing stops, the lake is likely to revert.
- Andy Bruere and Chris Currie to form a representative group to investigate the issues.

Andy Woolhouse 14 May 2015

andy.woolhouse@xtra.co.nz