

Minutes of the Rotorua Te Arawa Lakes Operational Liaison Group Meeting meeting held in Bay of Plenty Regional Council, 1125 Arawa Street, Rotorua, on Wednesday, 2 October 2013 commencing at 10:00 am

Chair: Andy Bruere

Present: Warren Webber (Lake Rotoiti Community Association)
Hilary Prior (Chairperson Lake Rotoiti Community Association)
Jim Stanton (Lake Rotoiti Community Association)
Phill Thomass (Tamatea Street Ratepayers Association)
Geoff Palmer (Lakes Community Board and Lake Okeraka Community Association)
Matt Osborne (Fish and Game)
Raina Meha (Bay of Plenty Regional Council)
Margaret Metcalfe (Department of Conservation)
Helen Neale (Department of Conservation)
Peter Dine (Rotorua District Council)
Graeme O'Rourke (Bay of Plenty Regional Council)

Apologies: Rob Pikethley (Fish and Game)
Brentleigh Bond (Rotorua Lakes Community Board)

Apologies for lateness:

Hera Smith (Te Arawa Lakes Trust)
Mary Stanton

1 Karakia

Raina Meha opened the meeting.

2 Introductions and welcome

- Andy welcomed attendees to the meeting.
- Introductions around the room and apologies were given.
- Attendance sheet completed.

3 Matters arising from previous minutes

- Minutes from the previous meeting had not been circulated. The minutes will be emailed to attendees and feedback was asked for.
- Corrections of attendees' names were given – Brentleigh Bond, Hilary Prior, Matt Osborne, Phill Thomass and Raftabout River Rats.

- Annual Report - "Consent Holder Annual Report on Okere Gates (Consent 65979) and Ohau Weir (Consent 65980) 1 June", was circulated.

4 **Terms of Reference – Confirmation of draft document**

- Document was not previously circulated. Hard copies were distributed at this meeting.
- Graeme explained we have had one administration officer move on and another one currently moving on. He apologised if processes weren't followed correctly.
- Andy ran through the Terms of Reference document:

Frequency and location of meeting

- Meetings will be held annually at Rotorua in September/October so that the results of the Ōhau Channel annual flush will be available.
- Check that we have a comprehensive email list. People are not receiving documents.

Membership

- The Chairperson can invite others along if he/she thinks they have an interest in these two consents.
- A Chairperson must be appointed annually.
- Hera queried the Draft Terms of Reference part sentence "Meetings to be held in Rotorua every six months for the first year..." when the year has already passed. Warren suggested we amend the document and delete those words. Andy agreed.

The Terms of Reference were made final and moved to the Group.

Moved: Warren Webber

Seconded: Phill Thomass

Carried

Election of Chairperson

- Andy called for nominations to elect a Chairperson.
- Andy Bruere was nominated as Chairperson by Warren Webber.

Moved: Warren Webber

Seconded: Hilary Prior

Carried

- Warren Webber moved that nominations be closed.

Moved: Warren Webber

Seconded: Peter Dine

Carried

5 **Consent Holder Annual Report on Okere Gates (Consent 65979) and Ohau Weir (Consent 65980) 1 June 2013 – presentation by Graeme O'Rourke, Bay of Plenty Regional Council**

- Andy apologised for the Annual Report not being circulated. Graeme to ensure it is circulated electronically. Hard copies were distributed at this meeting.
- The report refers to the 12 month period from 1 April 2012 to 31 March 2013 and is specific to Ohau structure and the Okere control gates.
- Further annual reports will be posted out on 1 June annually, in preparation for the next meeting.
- Graeme explained the report with performance results for the first year. Have had a great year. The consent is performing. There have been a couple of climatic extremes in August last year with very high lake levels across the region. During that period we inherited a lot of big water problems both across the lakes and rivers – an exceptional year. In terms of the Okere Gates, we performed very well to manage these extremes, unfortunately Lake Rotorua suffered as the outlet control at the Ohau Weir is quite minimal. Graeme explained the structures, including how the shutters and stop logs work.
- Graeme talked through the Executive Summary and Background.
- The consent gave more consensus to Rotoiti – a more volatile lake with a narrow operating range. Rotorua (Ohau) consent has remained relatively unchanged from the old consent conditions. The Ohau consent conditions basically talk about maintaining an operating range in the lake – two levels – maximum and minimum and when to put the stop logs in and when to take them out. Graeme explained a staff gauge (see page 6 of report) for Lake Rotorua.
- Graeme explained the staff gauge – maximum to minimum (refer to Lake Rotorua graph on page 6 of the report).
- Hera asked if lakefront operators are informed before letting flow out. Answer is yes. Graeme lets people know and also calls NIWA who calculate the flow through the gates which is part of the consent conditions.
- Access problems are noticed by lake users when, for example, one boat user's boat hits the bottom. Dredging has been discussed.
- Tectonics – the lake is tilting being lower at the Ohau Bay end of the lake and the other end is rising. This is happening all the way to Hinehopu which is quite exasperated there. We are trying to balance the wet end of the lake with the dry end. There will be future issues around this.
- The question was asked, if there is any special provision required for commercial canoeing/kayaking and the world rafting championships which are coming up in November. Graeme explained that a concession will be made on the consent by providing them daytime rafting flows by gate management. River engineering suggests you don't fluctuate flows in rivers too much – it will create erosion issues downstream. It may mean evening openings or closures if the lakes are full. The water would be released at night and give them six hours the next day. For the lakes alone, we would close the gates at night to recharge the lake. Permission to do this is from Ken Tarboton.

Levels of Lake Rotorua

- Lake Rotorua was above its maximum last year between mid-July and mid-September. Lake Rotorua is currently 60 or 70 mls short of maximum level. We may have problems if a big rain event occurs in the near future. Maximum lake levels cause big flows down the Ōhau Channel.
- Mary apologised for being late and then explained that her people came to her to talk about water level issues as they are huge for residents in Mourea. The gap where the marae is, is the narrowest gap between Okawa Bay and the Ōhau Channel. Because the marae is situated in the centre they are asking if the flushing is causing the narrowness as the water was at such a high level. Why is sand piling up there? Is there going to be an effect on the Ōhau Channel as well?

Graeme acknowledges that Mourea gets very wet during extreme events when the Ōhau Channel is flowing above its capacity.

Mary explained it's also narrowing the gap going through the Ōhau Channel because of the silting of the sand. Pete explained that this marks the boundary of the excavation work done in the 1960's as they didn't go further, so it's a little bit wider upstream of that than downstream.

Warren explained to Mary that the levels regime for Lake Rotoiti is not the cause of her people's problem - it is the level of Lake Rotorua. The flush will not be influencing that process. Graeme explained high water levels in the Ōhau Channel happens when Lake Rotorua's level is high.

- Mary mentioned that the children have said there are differences in the channel – it's a lot narrower swimming from one side of the channel to the other and there is a bed of sand on the other side, opposite the marae. Graeme explained the rock work taking place there. Andy explained that Graeme would talk about cross-section monitoring further into the meeting which may help with Mary's question.
- Graeme referred to page 7 in the Annual report showing photos of stop logs.
- Graeme explained the levels between Lakes Rotoiti and Rotorua. There is a strong belief that people think Rotoiti is the cause of a lot of problems but actually it isn't and it is a benefit having the gates there.
- Graeme explained the Lake Rotoiti Operational Envelope graph on page 3 of the report. Warren asked about flushing – does it do good or not? How difficult is it to manage the consent? Graeme confirmed we had a good year because of very little rain. We stayed at minimum lake level for over a month which let people be able to explore around the lake.
- Phil commented that the flushing not only pleases Ngāti Pikiao but also pleases residents at Hinehopu. The lower level gives them a chance to dry out.
- Rotoiti – well short of maximum range in the last twelve months with no issues. Dipped below the operating minimum by about 14 mls. Complied with operating range 98.4% of the time. Sometimes operational error occurs or server crash. The rafters are proactive in letting Graeme know if settings on the gate aren't correct as he's notified them.

- Mary asks does the altering of the lake levels have any effect on whitebait numbers which are low at the moment. Graeme commented the range is only about 100 mls so shouldn't have an effect. Andy commented that we've had work done by NIWA – trapping on the Ōhau Channel annually, which is part of the consent for the diversion wall. They tried to correlate it with flows but there wasn't any.
- Hera asked if we could raise the smelt issue at the next annual meeting. Andy suggested we could bring some reports on the subject.
- Hilary raised a point regarding community awareness of what is happening with the lakes. She recently sent 1000 newsletters out to the community, but wasn't notified of the a six hour regime operation occurring for two weeks which she could have added to the newsletter. She then wouldn't have to field calls from the community about reflux. Andy suggested to make this a point for the next meeting – an opportunity to work through the Rotoiti community group.
- **ACTION:** - Notify Rotorua community groups of what is happening with the lakes.
- Hera suggested we maybe use the Te Arawa Lakes website as a mechanism to add information to for the public. Andy suggested he could help Graeme with adding information on the website.
- Geoff Palmer commented that there hasn't been coordination with lake closures, events over summer from Rotorua District Council. This is a problem area – both parties need to work together.
- **ACTION:** Andy suggested because this is a communication group, maybe we should communicate every three months by way of half a dozen bullet points of what's happening.
- Warren talked about rafters' problems last year and a meeting held by the group regarding this. For the community, a communication to be notified and also to reassure them that the consents are being complied with would be very helpful.
- Flow Distributions - very close to 100% on performance (see page 11 of report and graph on page 10). We need to make sure we have greater outflow through the Okere Gates than inflows, i.e. what's coming down the Ōhau Channel so we don't get reflux. The Ōhau Channel and Okere Gates flows are recorded every morning at 8.00 am. Levels are polled every 15 minutes.
- Operational Difficulties (page 13 of report) – sometimes hardware/technical faults.
- Consultation with Stakeholders (page 15 of report) – establishment of liaison and Kaitiaki groups – done.
- Aiming for a meeting for 31 August 2014. Report will be available.
- Mary asked if the stop logs at the weir were a permanent structure – concerned about narrowness of the navigation pass with boats going through. The consent has authorised this as a permanent structure. Andy explained there is a limit to what can get through there. Vessel needs to be matched with the environment. Andy said this is probably a harbours and navigation/safety issue.

- Community communication – can make improvements by way of Bay of Plenty Regional Council's communications team, media releases, public notices, bulletins and web pages. Hera asked if we can share our information with other groups – Graeme confirmed yes.
- Complaints Summary (page 17 of the report) – complaints are things that have been put through our consents section that must be followed up on. Concerns are still listed.
- Flood monitoring – (page 18 of the report) – Graeme reads the staff gauges monthly, also looks at beaches and takes photos to build up a robust record in case there is a review of consent conditions.
- Velocities – (page 19 and 20 of the report) – when we draw down, there is a consent requirement to monitor the velocities for three years (Fish and Game) to see if increase in velocity would affect fish migration and habitat.
- Mary commented that whitebait is now going around Okawa Bay and heading to Hinehopu instead of coming up the channel. Also the whitebait aren't showing up in August like before. Is it climate change? Andy may get David from NIWA to talk to Mary.
- Water Table Monitoring – Hinehopu - have pulled out hobo data in last few weeks. Twelve months monitoring just concluded. The study was to ask if there is any correlation between lake level and groundwater levels at Hinehopu. Conclusion is yes. Now need to look at mitigation measures.
- Mary asked if the land is tilted – difference at Hinehopu and Ōhau Channel. Graeme answered yes and explained Hinehopu has sunk 101 mm since 1953. Report out soon to be circulated to the group. Andy read mitigation steps in the consent – liaise with Rotorua District Council and Consents. Liaise with Department of Conservation, Ngāti Pīkiao and landowners re cleaning drains.
 - November 2013 - Monitoring report to be submitted.
 - January 2014 – a meeting with residents in Tamatea Street and the Department of Conservation regarding monitoring and progressing investigations.
 - May 2014 - a mitigation report to be submitted.

There may be some works done in the meantime depending on discussions.

Phil would like to be involved in any site visits.

- Cross Sections (Ōhau Channel) – (page 19 of the report) – surveyed twice a year, pre flush and post flush which is to monitor any change in the system as a result of the flush. We have a healthy record now - fairly stable. Will continue this for a three year period.

Discussion regarding the Delta – with the diversion wall we have cross sections downstream of the delta and because of the changes at the delta and upstream, we have established more cross sections there. Survey completed there earlier this year which allows us to monitor the development of the delta and the navigation channel. Generally for navigation, it is quite reasonable, just shallow at the high point.

Hera asked about proposed dredging. Fishermen said early this year that the channel was deep again. Mary commented on the after effects of previous dredging. Channel has cleared naturally now – continue monitoring.

No change to cross sections on State Highway 33.

- Reflux monitoring – (page 21 of the report) - trialled a potential reflux situation last year although weather conditions weren't good on the day of monitoring. The difference in flow was about one cumec. Sampling was done out of the boat – velocities were measured – inconclusive during these conditions. No reflux, discolouration or backflow observed. David Hamilton has completed three events of monitoring and has concluded there is no major reflux through there (less than two percent).

6 Other Matters (round the table)

- Warren – there are three liaison groups – suggestion to meet on one day to facilitate some engagement between the groups and to have some interaction between them all. Andy suggested we have minutes from other groups circulated to this group. We will circulate the minutes from the group (above Ohau) to this group.

Mary commented on the division within groups because of differences in views – cultural, spiritual etc. Raina suggested people have different priorities but a good idea to bring up with their marae committees to participate in the different community associations. Andy suggested tapping key people on the shoulder to attend our meeting.

- Phil thanked Graeme for the report. Geoff Palmer thanked Graeme also for his presentation. He asked Andy to have Graeme allocated to the outlet for Lake Ōkāreka.
- Mary would like us to concentrate more on the lakeweed. Andy has good news for Mary – we may have a machine to do that in the near future.
- Hera thanked Graeme for the presentation also.

Raina closed the meeting with a karakia.

Meeting ended: The meeting closed at 12:31 pm

Next meeting: 31 August 2014