

# Minutes of the Rotorua Te Arawa Lakes Operational Liaison Group annual meeting held at Bay of Plenty Regional Council, corner Fenton and Pukaki streets, Rotorua on Thursday 5 August commencing at 1pm

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**Chair:** Jim Stanton (Lake Rotoiti Community Association)

**Present:** Mary Stanton (Ngāti Pikiao and Ōkawa Bay Resident), Joe Tahana (Ngāti Pikiao), Andy Bruere (BOPRC), Graeme O'Rourke (BOPRC), Michael Gill ((former Ōkawa Bay Resident), Hilary Prior (Lake Rotoiti Community Association), Grant Wallace (LRCWBA), Richard Amery (LRCWBA), Don Atkinson (LWQS), Alesha Roulston (RLC), Justin Hutton (River Rats Rafting), Roland Kingi (Ngāti Pikiao)

**Apologies:** Matt McKnight (Canoe Slalom Bay of Plenty)

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## 1 Karakia

Joe Tahana (JT) opened the meeting with a karakia at 1.04pm.

## 2 Introductions and welcome

Jim Stanton (JS) welcomed everyone to the meeting and those present introduced themselves.

## 3 Apologies

Late apology noted by email after the meeting had occurred, as above.

## 4 Minutes from previous meeting and matters arising

Michael Gill (MG) requested that the minutes be corrected to include details of his complaint made to Pete McLaren (PM; BOPRC compliance) in January 2020. Graeme O'Rourke (GO) explained the process that was followed at the time, and that the issue was not considered to be of sufficient severity to warrant further action. MG forwarded data was sent to PM at the time. In summary, the complaint related to reflux occurring around the Ōhau Channel wall on 3 days during late January 2020. In reply to the initial response from PM and GO, MG noted that such 'hiccups' which sometimes occur were seemingly not recorded whereas they should be given the significant volume of Lake Rotorua backflow resulting from these events. This was subsequently acknowledged to MG's satisfaction.

It was moved to amend what MG has put forward and to resolve that the minutes of the previous meeting held 22 September 2020 be accepted.

Hutton/Tahana  
**CARRIED**

## 5 Election of a Chairperson and Deputy Chair

It was moved that Jim Stanton continue as Chair for the next year.

Prior/Gill  
**CARRIED**

It was moved that Joe Tahana continue as Deputy Chair for the next year.

Stanton/Prior  
**CARRIED**

## **6 Consent Holder Annual Report on Okere Gates (RC 65979) and Ohau Weir (RC65980) – August 2021**

Graeme O'Rourke delivered a presentation on the Consent Holder Annual Report on Okere Gates and Ohau Weir for 2020-2021 which covers the period 1 April 2020 to 31 March 2021 (refer Appendix 1 for presentation slides).

Justin Hutton (JH) commented on the BOPRC online portal and change of how data is presented, he requests that a change be made to the lake graphs and can this be looked into. He has to address customer concerns regarding potential trip cancellations and requests more user friend presentation of information.

*Action 1: GO to follow up with BOPRC data services on how data is presented in the environmental data portal and if changes can be made to the lake graphs to make it more user-friendly.*

Roland Kingi from Ngāti Pīkiao joined the meeting at 1.37 pm

GO discussed the operating envelope and Mary Stanton raised the issue of the flushing of the Ōhau Channel and water levels. MS said that when they are not achieved there is a problem, it affects the toilets at Mourea marae & at Taheke, it affects the water quality closer to channel, it impacts on people's lives, water levels need to be correct at all times. JS commented high rain and drought events impacts water levels and that the levels cannot be controlled in such events.

MS asked why there an island at the end of the Ōhau channel, Andy Bruere (AB) gave an explanation on the Ōhau diversion wall and that the island is due to the presence of the Ōhau wall and not the flush; the island and delta will be present until the end of the consent period for the wall. AB asked that any issues observed to please be reported when such issues arise and occur.

JH asked GO about the Lake Rotorua stoplogs, and do they have minimal impact on flow? GO agreed, the Ohau weir is only affected during low flow, the weir holds Lake Rotorua at a higher level, without the weir then Lake Rotorua levels are lower. JS commented that flows have been affected since the dredging of the mid-1970s.

The lake levels in the reporting period were low, it has been a very dry 12 months, low flow.

MG stated that since September 2020 he has checked the telemetry gauge checks some 3 to 4 times a day and there has been no issue with reflux, GO said the process has not changed since 2012. MG said that GO's communications are excellent, and that the new gauge on the Lake Rotorua weir is terrific. . GO reiterated that the new regime is good for rafting, low lakes – more capacity. The minimum operating levels equal the Ōhau channel flows. The old/previous consent compromised the ability of lake to 'breathe'. GO commented that the stoplogs have been in since Oct 2018 which is a tangible acknowledgement of the lower lake levels.

The minimum consented flow rate conditions are 7.9 cumecs. The Ōhau channel flow dictates the Okere gates outflow, the water quality of Rotoiti overrides lake water levels. The rafting companies had 100% opportunity to raft the Kaituna, 41 days were lost due to Covid-19 lockdown.

MG asked why the process of opening of the gates cannot be automated. GO explained that in summary the risk to life on river is greater than machine intelligence, automation has been attempted in the past, and JH gave examples of past glitches experiences eg: kids playing with wires on gate resulted in false alarm. Regarding lake inflows/outflows, JS asked about the report graph spikes, gates fully open when lake level is rising: rain event, proactive vs reactive management.

Regarding consultation, this has predominantly been through the annual meetings and by email updates. AB has made attempts with Tapuika but has had no response, and by having JT being part of these meetings covers off any concerns of the Rotoiti kaitiaki. RLC happy with BOPRC consultation.

MG asked if lakes water quality could be made part of the discussion, and could some data be given to meeting. JS suggested this be addressed under the cultural management plan discussion.

A question was asked about the weir and the depth of water over it, minimum depth at any given time. It is GO's understanding that this is 0.9m, it is a navigation safety protocol, this has not changed.

Regarding gate operations, the gates were completely refurbished last year; gates resurfaced, fittings upgraded, lifting ropes replaced, sensors updated, new lighting & cameras. 7 month process. MS passed on her congratulations on this work, it was done well, as she observed the refurbishment in process.

Regarding investigations and monitoring, GO undertakes a monthly observational survey of the lakes, staff gauges, telemetry sites and cross sections.

MG asked is the land moving up & down either end of Rotoiti, GO commented that there were no recent surveys to comment on; first order surveys undertaken in 2000 using LINZ first order benchmark network showed tilting, Hinehopu is sinking: wetland behind Tamatea St, water could not discharge as channel has lost gravity feed to lake.

No formal complaints noted in the past 12 months. There is an obligation under regulations to report and address formal complaints.

Maintaining water quality of Rotoiti is the priority, out-flows of Okere Gates are greater than the in-flows down the Ōhau channel. Lake Rotorua remained within consent limits in the last 12 months. Grant Wallace raised issue of problems caused to boat owners on the lake by drops in water levels over short periods of time, caused by major opening of the control gates without any warning to lake users. Grant Wallace and Richard Amery raised the subject of the way in which drops in lake levels were causing great inconvenience to boat owners whose boats became marooned in consequence, and that notice of falls in lake levels need to be notified to affected parties.

Grant Wallace said he appreciated the presentation, said he will make sure all Wooden Boat Association members understand the process around lake management, the information is good to know so it will be shared to improve understanding.

It was moved the Consent Holder Annual Report on Okere Gates and Ohau Weir 2020-2021 be received.

Tahana/Stanton  
**CARRIED**

## **7 Rotoiti Cultural Management Plan update and lake level trial update**

Andy spoke to the Cultural Management Plan, things are progressing to a conclusion after two years, there are two broad aspects around the consent change that BOPRC has been looking at; the first being administrative changes including the change in annual reporting date, Ōhau Channel bank survey issue, options regarding weed control, removal of aspirational lake level control bands; and the second being the desire of Ngāti Pīkiao to see the lake, at least for a trial at a lower level. There has been discussion & mediation around this, the intention was to address this in the CMP, to do a trial so people can see what the lower level looks like in practice. The consent application process: consultants are assessing the application for the BOPRC consents team, this has been referred now to a Commissioner (independent qualified planner) so it is an independent process from council. There has been discussion around the significance of lowering the lake, the consultants have put a recommendation regarding notification to the Commissioner, who has noted there are two issues: the administrative changes, and the lake level trial and therefore there should be split into two consent applications; and has advised limited notification to those identified as being impacted (jetty owners, Wooden Boat Association and Yacht Squadron, for the lake level trial and a non-notified consent for the requested administrative changes. The annual drawdown has not had the effect on scour & Ōhau channel velocities as was intended so the request is to have this condition removed. Regarding the proposed one-off trial to lower lake level, the opportunity to attain this level is over a four and a half year period; so that is a one-off drawdown attempt, with the trial attempt to occur at some time between 6 Feb to 30 June so as to exclude Waitangi weekend.

JH asked if water quality of Rotoiti and Rotorua no longer becomes relevant has this been considered as part of consent process so it doesn't need addressing in future, AB said that is the intention long term that the lakes will be reconnected (the wall removed) and university hydrodynamic modelling has been done on a number of reflux scenarios. AB has provided a link for distribution with the meeting minutes.

The Ohau wall will cease to exist in time, it is there for the purpose water quality protection. The life span is 50 years and it has a 35 year consent. BOPRC has a management plan in place regarding wall maintenance. It has king piles (into lake bedrock up to 70m) and sheet piles (into lake sediment) and AB explained the wall structure. AB to forward some information on the wall's construction to MG. After discussion MG was satisfied that he was suitably informed as to the construction of the wall.

*Action 2: AB to forward information on the Ohau wall construction and the structural management plan to MG.*

The aim is to do the trial similar to the winter normal drawdown, for a period of a week, we want a minimum period of a week so that people can get out on the water & see the lake level, and do the testing and analysis they want to do. Don highlighted that the proposed period coincides with the dabchick nesting. There will be an opportunity to comment on this in consent process.

Regarding the consent condition of the use of steam vs herbicide for grass maintenance on beaches, GO advised he has been researching options with a contractor so this is possible if required in due course.

AB gave an update on the lake water quality report, and he can share last year's lake health report for reference. Certain parameters reported annually, one of which is the TLI: Trophic Level Index. The reporting period is on data from 1 July – 30 June, the laboratory analysis of samples needs to be completed before the TLI's can be calculated. As a result the updated Lake Health Report will be available by the end of September. This is later than desired due to the scientists' commitment to providing NPS-FM material. Andy distributed and spoke to information on the last year Lake Health Report. This information is available on the two websites: BOPRC & Rotorua lakes information site. The comment from several of those present is that this information needs to be easier to find on both the BOPRC environmental

data portal and <https://www.rotorualakes.co.nz/> - Rotorua Te Arawa Lakes Programme: Love Our Lakes. It needs to be more user-friendly to find.

MS commented on the current pollen issues, there is pollen everywhere. AB acknowledged that while pollen is an issue pine plantations are a more desirable land use than agriculture for environmental reasons. So there is net benefit to lake water quality albeit the pollen is a nuisance.

*Action 3: AB to forward last year's lake health report for reference, and distribution with the minutes.*

*Action 4: AB to liaise with BOPRC data services and Comms Team to ask if data can be more easily obtained, suggestion of a link to or from the environmental data portal, and a better search tool on the Lakes Programme site.*

## **8 General business**

JT commented that GO's earlier comment around the allowing the lake to 'breathe' resonated with him, it is good to see this observation.

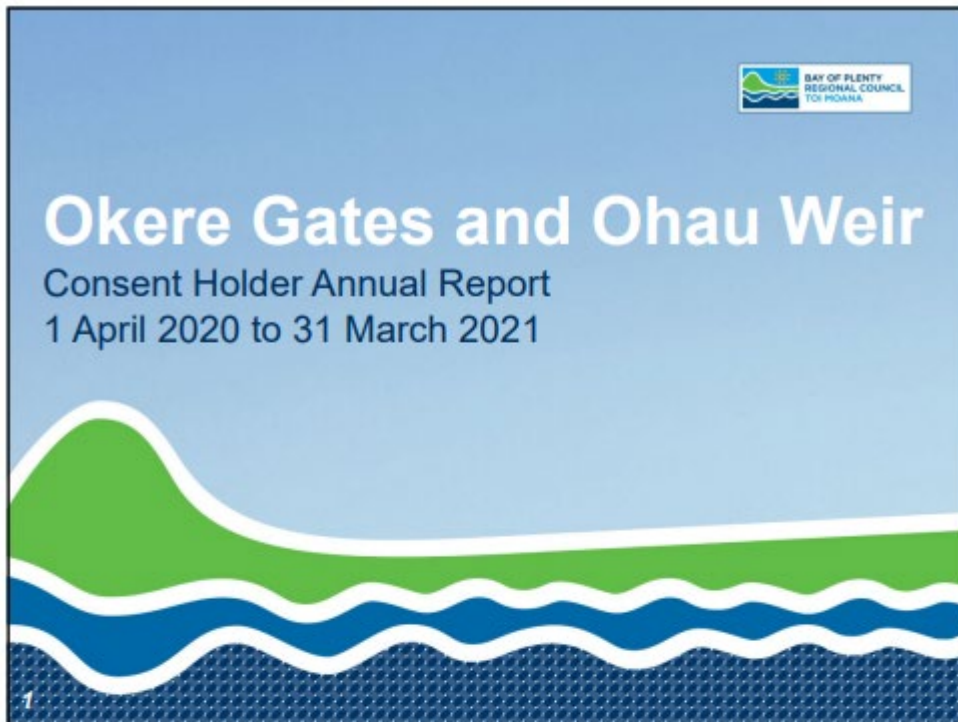
GO brought up the dashboard graph as referred to in a discussion earlier in meeting, and agreed (as noted earlier) with JH to follow up on improving the perspective of the reported range.

## **9 Closure/Poroporoaki**

Roland Kingi closed the meeting with a karakia.

The meeting closed at 3:05pm.

## Appendix 1 - Presentation on the Consent Holder Annual Report on Okere Gates and Ohau Weir (Graeme O'Rourke)



### Introduction (P.9-11 of report)

Consent/s requirement to report annually to the Consent Authority, Liaison and Kaitiaki Groups.

- Consent 65979 – Okere Gates (Condition 15.1)
- Consent 65980 – Ohau Weir (Condition 12.1)
  - Lake level distributions
  - Flow rates – Ōhau Channel and Kaituna River
  - Operational difficulties
  - Stakeholder consultation – General and CMP's
  - Complaints



## The Lay of the Land (P.10 of report)

**Purpose of consents:**

**Ohau Weir**

1. Lake level

**Okere Gates (Rotoiti)**

1. Water quality – Maintain outflow
2. Lake level control
3. Flood Management – Kaituna River

**Some numbers:**

- 113km<sup>2</sup> of lake above Okere Gates
- ~1.0m differential between lakes
- Okere Gates max flow = 40cumecs
  - normal flow = 20 cumecs
  - 10 year flood flow at Te Matai = 200 cumecs /

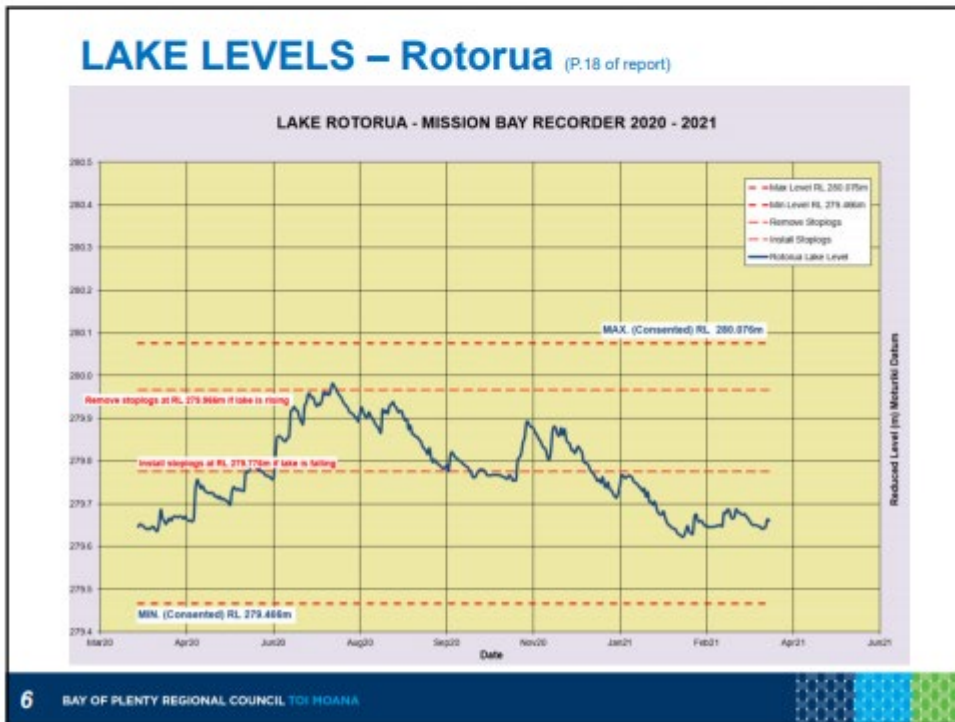
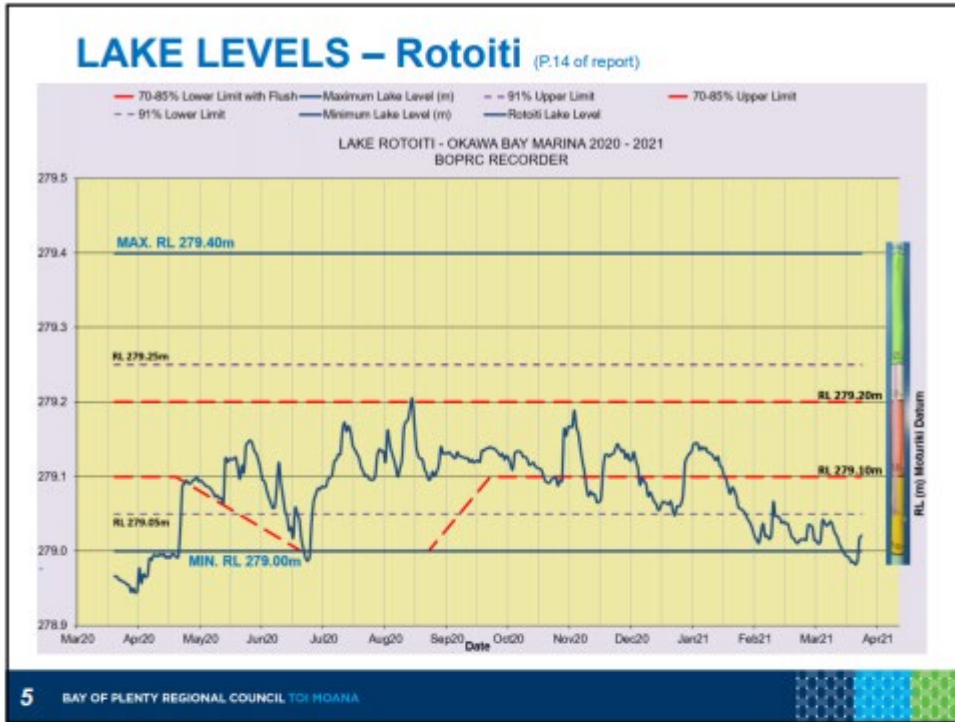
**3** BAY OF PLENTY REGIONAL COUNCIL TOI HOANA

## Lake Rotoiti – Operating envelope (P.13 of report)

Figure: Schematic of Lake Rotoiti operating envelope

**4** BAY OF PLENTY REGIONAL COUNCIL TOI HOANA







## Flow rate conditions (7.4.f-k) (P.24 of report)

- **Okere Gates Outflow > Ōhau Channel Inflow (7.4.i)**
- Minimum 'consented' river flow 7.9 cumecs (7.4.f.1)
  - ~ 11.9 cumecs – 12 April 2020
- Seven day 'consented' minimum flow of 9.84 cumecs (7.4.f.2)
  - ~ 12.0 cumecs – 12 April 2020
- Okere Gates ramping rates - See P.24 of report for results
  - +10 cumecs/hr when opening
  - -5 cumecs/hr when closing
    - eg) (40 cumecs – 35 – 30 – 26 cumecs = 2 hrs of transitional closures = 7 am - 9 am

Then once all other consent conditions met:

- Provide recreational river flows (7.4.l)
  - 2020-2021 = 100% (except for 41 days or 11.2%/year lost to Covid restrictions)
  - 2019-2020 = 100%
  - 2018-2019 = 81.6%
  - 2017-2018 = 49.3%
  - 2016-2017 = 95.6%
  - 2015-2016 = 98.9%
  - 2014-2015 = 97.8%

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## Inflows vs Outflows (P.21 of report)



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## Consultation (P.29 of report)

Maintain discussion and the free flow of information between  
Consent Holder and community – Groups include:

- Rotorua Te Arawa Lakes Operational Liaison Group (AGM - 26 Nov 2019)
- Ohau ki Rotoiti Kaitiaki Group – *no meeting but invited to RTALOLG AGM*
- Okere ki Kaituna Kaitiaki Group – *no meeting but invited to RTALOLG AGM*
  
- *Other groups listed in Consent 65979 – 11.3 (p.48)*
  
- *Note – Cultural Management Plans from both Kaitiaki Groups have been received. Item for discussion later today.*

## Operations (P.27 of report)

- Structures and control systems
  - No issues
  - Ohau stoplogs
    - Last installed 17 October 2018 (*Note - exit to play movie*)
  
- Environmental challenges
  - Wet summer conditions
  - High rainfall = high inflows = high lake levels = high outflows (Ohau Channel /Okere Gates – Kaituna River)
  - Maintaining > outflows will lower Rotoiti levels during dry months
  
- System improvements
  - Complete refurbishment of the Okere Gates (March to August 2020)



## Investigations and monitoring (P.32-36)

- Monthly inspection of lake and structures
- Staff gauges – photos – any flood issues – settlement (tectonics / geothermal)
- Ōhau Channel Cross sections (17)
- Ōhau Channel velocities
- Ōhau Channel Delta survey
- Tamatea Street wetland levels



## Concerns and Formal Complaints (P.31)

### General Concerns:

- Low lake levels over summer months
- Rafting restrictions on the Kaituna River - (when lake levels are high)

### Other:

- H&S of Kaituna River users
- Investigated audible warning system – not feasible
- Provisional measure is to only fully open Okere Gates after dark
- BoPRC web page updated – Live monitoring

### Complaints:

- None - any non-compliance issues are addressed by Councils Regulatory Arm
- 5 day notification period of any non-compliance occurring

## Summary

1. Priority remains maintaining water quality of Lake Rotoiti – but may compromise levels during dry months as occurred in April 2020 and March 2021
2. Lake Rotorua levels remained within consented limits.
3. Flow rates (Outflows > inflows) maintained within consent conditions
4. Annual Report posted to Liaison and Kaitiaki Groups with 1 meeting held.
5. Cultural Management Plans received and remains under consideration.
6. Refurbishment of Okere Gates commenced March 2020 – concluded Aug 2020
7. No operational issues.
8. At this time, no recommendations in place until CMPs reviewed.

