

Minutes of the Annual General Meeting of The Lake Rotoiti Community Association

Held on January 2nd 2020, 10 am, at Pikiaro Rugby League Club, Mourea.

Present

Jim Stanton, Mary Stanton, Nick Miller, Elizabeth Miller, Phill Thomass (Life Members)
Steve Chadwick (Mayor of Rotorua)
Dave Donaldson (RDC Councillor)
Doug Leeder (Chair, BOP Regional Council)
Phill Thomass (Rotorua Lakes Community Board)
Hilary Prior (Chair), Sherilyn Coney, Jim Stanton, David Wilson, Fraser Wilson, Claire Miller (LRCA Committee).
Andy Bruere, Lucas Macdonald, Sherryn Owen (BOP Regional Council)

Approximately 70 people in total were present at the meeting.

Apologies

Ian McLean, Nick Chater, Sue & John Laroche, Don & Judy Stotter, John Bowen, Lyall Thurston, Robin & Anne Sinclair, Jennifer Rothwell, Roy & Robin Duffy, Faye Stamp, Sandra Goodwin, Trevor Crawford.

Welcome

Hilary Prior opened the meeting and welcomed all official visitors and others present. Thanks to everyone for giving up their time on this public holiday.

Minutes of the 2019 Annual General Meeting

Motion: Mary Stanton proposed that the Minutes be accepted, seconded by Phill Thomass. Accepted by the meeting.

Matters arising

Nil.

Chair's Report

The Chair's report is included in the last Newsletter issue.

There is now a camera in place at the Okere Falls refuse transfer station so we hope that we can track down commercial operators who dump items there. A defibrillator is being installed at Mourea. The Te Arawa Lakes Trust Lake Rotoiti cultural mapping report is not yet completed and so is not available for discussion at this meeting.

Hilary is standing down as Chair after 11 years. The LRCA has a strong voice and has managed to achieve a huge amount in the last 40 years – we hope that this voice and advocacy continues and that we can continue to work constructively with other local bodies.

Financial Report

Jim Stanton presented the accounts of the association, as treasurer Don Stotter was unable to attend today.

Graham Prior, honorary auditor, was thanked for his services on our behalf over the last few years. Graham may not be available this year so we are looking for another auditor if there are any volunteers.

Motion: It was moved by Jim Stanton that the financial report be accepted, seconded by Bob Armstrong. Accepted by the meeting.

Election of Officers

Hilary has noted that she will not be standing for Chair this year. Three other members are also standing down:

Don Stotter (Treasurer), Nick Chater, Dave Wilson.

Chair: the appointment for Chair has been left vacant for discussion among the new Committee.

Committee:

The following committee members are re-standing: John Bowen, Sherilyn Coney, Claire Miller, Jim Stanton, Fraser Wilson. John Bowen is willing to remain on the committee for the moment but has indicated that he would prefer to stand down at some point during the year if possible.

Roy Duffy and Mike Gowan have been nominated for the committee – nominated by Sherilyn Coney and seconded by Hilary Prior.

Annamarie Jensen volunteered to stand for the committee – seconded by Phill Thomass.

The meeting voted in favour of the new committee members, and also in favour of those members re-standing.

Bob Armstrong noted that Hilary has served on this committee for many years. He expressed his gratitude to her and the other retiring committee members, and put the following motion to the meeting:

"This meeting acknowledges with much gratitude the untiring efforts on behalf of the Association by the retiring President and the retiring members of the committee" – moved by Bob Armstrong. The motion was seconded by Jim Stanton.

Jim also noted Hilary's work on the committee and her dedication and preparedness to travel if needed to attend meetings on short notice.

Jim also proposed that Hilary Prior be nominated as Life Member of this Association. Seconded by Bob Armstrong. This was accepted by acclamation from the meeting.

Steve Chadwick thanked Hilary on behalf of the community. The LRCA has been the impetus for the investment by the local and national government in the lakes, and it still has a unique voice in the area. It is critical to keep the community voice alive here. If there is anyone here willing to participate in the association it is very important to keep the voice of the lakes area heard at local level and speaking to local government.

Presentations

Lucas Macdonald BOPRC – Biosecurity

Lucas gave a presentation on biosecurity in the lakes – including lakeweed spraying and catfish control. Results from the Endothall trial were not as positive as BOPRC were hoping – working with NIWA and University of Waikato to refine results. Further trials will be rolled out this year. The budget for lakeweed spraying has doubled over last year's amount, and there will be more activity in this sphere this year.

Catfish are still contained in Lakes Rotoiti and Rotorua. Catch rates are down on previous years, and are still higher in Lake Rotoiti than Lake Rotorua. BOPRC are looking into biocontrol options. There will be more compliance inspections and boat washdown, and higher BOPRC staff presence on the lakes.

Questions:

Don Atkinson: in Okawa Bay several mature catfish have washed up dead, and there are also reports of this happening in other areas of Lake Rotoiti.

Nick Miller: what kind of organism is BOPRC looking at using for biocontrol? Lucas: there is nothing specifically identified to look at yet, BOPRC are just starting investigations.

Sherilyn Coney: how can people volunteer to help with the catfish trapping? Lucas can pass on details to William Anaru of Te Arawa Lakes Trust, who is organising it.

Nick Miller: re the Endothall trials, we understand that Endothall can be active for up to a month in a water body. Some households in Te Akau Bay draw domestic water from the lake – is this taken into account?

Lucas: The resource consent states that BOPRC must supply affected householders with water if needed; this is why the trials have not been in occupied areas so far. Residents will be notified if a trial takes place that will affect their properties.

Monty Henry: How serious is the problem with catfish? Lucas: Very serious. It is the largest BOPRC biosecurity project, and is funded heavily. The goal is to contain them in the lakes here and prevent them from expanding.

What happens if the population explodes if all conditions are right? Lucas: Then we try to be responsive and react quickly with netting etc.

What is the impact on the local fish/trout? Lucas: BOPRC funded research on the effect on koura – there is an impact. Don't know specifically about fish species.

Linda Park: What about dabchicks – there seem to be lower numbers this year. Lucas: Have fixed the catfish nets in the last year so there are no more dabchicks being caught, and are also talking to Predator Free Okere Falls to help prevent bycatch.

Mary Stanton: congratulations on getting funding for the catfish project and the progress that has been made.

Andy Bruere BOPRC and Warren Webber LRCA – Lake Levels

Warren is here on behalf of LRCA to assist with the presentation. Thanks for coming up from the South Island to help, as he has put in a lot of work and has a lot of knowledge on the lake level situation.

Andy Bruere put forward the joint proposal from BOPRC and Ngāti Pikiao regarding a short-term trial to take place in the next 3 years to move down to the lower permitted lake level and monitor the results. The proposal is to dispense with management according to aspirational lake levels and instead once the lake gets to the target level then manage it according to input/output flow depending on the amount of water coming in from Lake Rotorua.

BOPRC are trying to alleviate any apprehension about the trial by endeavouring to do it during a time when not many people will be trying to access the lake or lake structures. The range of time during when this one-week trial will happen – 6th February to 30th June 2020. After that there will be a 2-year period where the results are evaluated.

Questions:

What is the current lake level today? 275.150 m.

Why do Ngāti Pikiao want it lowered? What is the point? Number of concerns – cultural access to wahi tapu, beach access. It's fine to do modelling of historical data, but some people don't trust the models and want to see what it actually looks like.

Graham Prior: what is the cost? Surely there must be a budget. We want to know what the budget is. Andy: I don't know. Warren: we don't expect that this will be any more expensive than the current operating plan for the lakes. Will not incur extra cost as far as I know. Will ask management to confirm that. Andy: can respond in more detail – it is just an operational matter. Graham: But BOPRC will have people monitoring, taking pictures, doing things that they aren't doing now. This will surely incur extra costs.

Fraser Wilson: what if people are stuck at jetties and need to be pulled out? There needs to be a budget for that. Andy: that is why BOPRC are trying to do the trial during a quiet time of year.

Andrea Macfarlane: if the trial is for 3 years, then there will be data and analysis made. Who makes the decisions after that and what is the decision-making process? Andy: two key decisions – to keep the flush or dispense with it, and to dispense with management by the aspirational level or go with input/out model?

Motivation to change range of lake level? Need to wait till finish trial until make decisions.

Graham Prior: who will make the actual decision? Andy: That is why the trial is for a 3-year process, and can't change without going through a Resource Management process. It goes through the BOPRC regulatory arm and would go to the Environment Court if challenged.

Warren: under the current consent there are a couple of liaison groups set up, including the Rotorua Te Arawa Liaison Operation Group. The Group meets annually and more often if required, and monitors the lake situation. The BOPRC lakes level operational team determines day-to-day running – Graham O'Rourke is primarily responsible there. Warren: it is obvious to me that if we eliminate the flush then on average the lake levels will be higher than they have been on average during the last few years, as shown in the graphs in the presentation.

Ron Heydon: What consideration is given to people to hold the level at the boat-ramps?

Question: What is the process? Ask for a show of hands? How can we prevent this from happening? Andy: can see that some people are very opposed to it but feel that it may not have the detrimental effect that people are fearing.

Graham Prior: I feel that there is a lack of trust in the future management decisions rather than the immediate effect.

Don Atkinson: Please explain about the herbicide – the consent requires maintaining beaches using herbicide. Now it will not be mentioned in resource consent. Warren: The herbicide used was only covering the border between grass and beaches.

Don Atkinson: why would you support a change like that? Andy: There is no reason to have a condition that requires maintenance of beaches by herbicides.

Monty Henry: In Mourea we can't catch any more trout since the wall is up. When the BOPRC does the flush, are they planning to flush the treatment plant into the lake at the same time? Andy: this is outside the proposed trial, and there is no connection between the lake levels and the treatment plant.

Monty Henry: Higher lake levels are eroding our banks on Lake Rotorua. Andy: I will talk to you individually later and see how we can get further information.

Marcus Wilkins: I would like to give people the history here. I have been boating on this lake for 75 years. Lake levels on Rotoiti have always been affected by Lake Rotorua – when Lake Rotorua flooded then Lake Rotoiti was flooded. The Okere Falls control gates were originally put in to safeguard the Lower Kaituna Catchment to protect against flooding down-river. The weir on the Ohau Channel was put in to manage the droughts and flooding in Lake Rotorua. When we're dealing with this new situation, we're not dealing with the old historic situation – it's never been like this with the weir in at Ohau Channel and Lake Rotoiti uncontrolled.

Graham Prior: 100% agree with the recommendations. My concerns are that at the end of the 3-year trial there is no guarantee that this would go ahead as detailed now. Warren: We would have to go through a resource consent process in that case.

Nick Miller: We are dealing with a natural system here. Lake Rotoiti has a mind of its own. The lakebed is tilting, with the eastern end going down and the western end rising. People could end up with their property wetter anyway – a mistake to think that we can control everything.

Bob Armstrong: if this process goes ahead, I am asking that LRCA URGENTLY advise its members when the trial takes place so that they can come and view the results on their properties personally. The meeting concurred with this statement.

Hilary: It is up to people to be in touch with Andy at BOPRC for further info. Has been a long process over the lake levels over time – we have gone through two Environment Commission hearings in the past over these. Have worked with BOPRC, the community and others over time. There have been a few mistakes over time – we agree that the flush hasn't worked. But we were asked to put the flush in by a certain part of the community. LRCA is here to represent the whole of our community not just our own interests.

Question: The trial is for one week – which week is it, and what happens if you lower the lake level and then it doesn't rain for 6 months. Hilary: in the past BOPRC have tried with the flush to find a time when the long-term forecast shows rain coming in and then it brings the level back up.

Don Atkinson: if the trial is run, how will BOPRC respond to the issue if in LRCA eyes it is considered to be negative but Ngāti Pikiao view it as beneficial? Andy: Even if BOPRC put the change forward to move to that level permanently, the decision would have to go before the Environment Court as it is outside the natural operating conditions of the lake, and that would be very unlikely to get permission.

Hilary: During the last resource consent, there was an application to bring the levels to this level. LRCA produced a visual aid to show what effect this would have, and the application was withdrawn at that point.

Question: What effect will this have on the Ohau Channel? Warren: there used to be a belief that the level of the Channel was determined by the level of Lake Rotoiti. This is incorrect – the Channel is primarily determined by the level of Lake Rotorua. I can show graphs to people if needed.

Question: Will the trial affect the fishing or silt up any further by the Delta ramp? Warren: the flush was put in at my suggestion to help prevent silting and clear out the Channel. However, this has never worked – there was no change to the dynamics of Channel.

Mary Stanton: We are asking for this opportunity to go ahead with the trial to try for the sake of the iwi and Te Arawa Lakes Trust. We have had a lot of flooding – losing whenua. The banks along the Ohau Channel including by Te Takinga marae disappear during flooding, and it also affects the local water supply – there are contaminated bores in Mourea. The flush also pushes the sand on the Channel bed to the sandbars at the Delta end of the Channel.

Hilary: Warren has all the graphs – contact him or Andy Bruere if you want further information.

General Business:

Doug Leeder: Want to give an accolade to Hilary and her committee. The LRCA community newsletter is comprehensive and informative. Please help populate these community committees – localism is about putting the power of decision-making or giving advice to local decision-makers. There are concerning trends:

a Local Government NZ survey shows that community perception about how local government operates only gives 25% satisfaction returns. We need to increase people's skill level by committees such as this so that they can then increase the quality of local governance – currently assessed as very poor across the country.

Steve Chadwick: Thanks to Doug for your work on Local Government NZ. There are huge issues with the Three Waters systems (drinking, waste and storm-water) – this will require infrastructure spending either by rates or tax increases.

I stress the value of having a website – listening to community discussion has shown that some people are not aware of the history of these discussions and the work around lake levels. RLC listen to the Lakes Community Board so I am making people aware of the Board and Phill Thomass as the current Chair of this Board. The newly elected board are planning to do the best we can do for you. The Lakes Community Board is the very epitome of localism – in our communities. They work closely with LRCA and other associations. People can either contact the Board directly or through the Community Associations. I will also point out that the LRCA Committee can second people onto it if required – please think about stepping up. Sometimes all you need to do is go to political meetings – showing that the community is involved and interested in the topic. Thanks again to Hilary – we have worked together for a long time.

The Eastern Rotoiti Rotoma Sewerage Scheme is having an open day for people to tour it on the 9th Jan – email Phill Thomass to put your names forward to attend. The tender is out now for submission – tendering on criteria. There is a public meeting on Thursday at Eastern Rotoiti Sports Club to discuss progress.

Hilary: In the latest newsletter there was an error – Lisa Crowe's advertisement was put out as being with Bayleys Real Estate, but she is actually with Ray White. Many apologies about the mistake.

If anyone wants to talk to Sherryn Owen please come and see her – she is unable to make a presentation on lake structures or the cultural mapping report today but willing to talk to individuals about their situations.

Question: Please put some bullet points out to show what we have achieved over the year in the newsletter – that way people can see the benefits to being part of the Association.

Andrea Macfarlane: I wish to raise some concerns on lake behaviours – there are increases in jetskis and erratic out-of-town behaviour. Some people only come very irregularly and don't know the local conditions or ski-lanes. The signs at ski-lanes can be hard to read and need to be refurbished.

Don Atkinson: LWQS has AGM here on the 27th January – would love to have people come along to support the Society.

Hilary Prior gave thanks to Jan and Kaye for their work putting together food for the meeting attendees to enjoy today.

The meeting closed at 12.05 pm.