

Rotorua Te Arawa Lakes Strategy Group

Ngā Meneti Open Minutes

Commencing: Friday 20 September 2024, 10:45am following the conclusion of the RTALSG Workshop

Venue: Bay of Plenty Regional Council (BOPRC) Rotorua Office, Waiariki Room, Corner Fenton & Pukaki Street, Rotorua and via Zoom (Audio Visual Meeting)

**Heamana
Chairperson:** Pou Tākiwaiora Arapeta Tahana

**Heamana Tuarua
Deputy Chairperson:** Deputy Chair Kevin Winters (BOPRC)

**Ngā Kopounga
Members:**

Te Arawa Lakes Trust (TALT)
Mariana Te Rangī (via Zoom) and Rangitihī Pene (Alternate)

Rotorua Lakes Council (RLC)
Mayor Tania Tapsell, Cr Gregg Brown (via Zoom)

BOPRC
Cr Te Taru White (Alternate)

Ministry for the Environment (MfE) (Observer)
Lorena Stephen, Director, Investments, Policy (via Zoom)

**Te Hunga i Tae Ake
In Attendance:**

TALT: Dr Daryn Bean - Tumu Whakarae (Chief Executive); Soweeta Fort-D'Ath - Lakes Programme Coordinator; William Anaru - Biosecurity Manager

RLC: Cr Conan O'Brien; Stavros Michael - General Manager, Infrastructure and Environment

BOPRC: Cr Lyall Thurston; Helen Creagh - Rotorua Catchments Manager; Andy Bruere - Lakes Operations Manager; Melissa Williams - Communications Partner; Emma Tombleson - Communications Advisor; Gemma Moleta - Senior Planner (Water Policy); Paul Scholes - Senior Environmental Scientist, Water Quantity (via Zoom); Ashleigh Grant - Kaikarere (Communications Partner); Margaret Courtney - Senior Advisor Te Amorangi; Nikita Fraser - Communications Advisor (via Zoom); Merinda Pansegrouw - Committee Advisor

External Presenters: Associate Professor Deniz Özkundakci, BOPRC Chair in Lakes and Freshwater Science at the University of Waikato (UoW)

External: Chris Sutton - Rerewhakaaitu Incorporated Society

Ngā Hōnea

Apologies:

Nuki Nicolson (TALT); Chairman Doug Leeder (BOPRC); Phill Thomass - Lakes Community Board Chair (RLC Alternate); and Mayor Tania Tapsell (RLC) for early departure

Declaration of Public Recording

The meeting was being live-streamed and available on the Bay of Plenty Regional Council website following the meeting and archived for a period of three years: [Rotorua Te Arawa Lakes Strategy Group - 20 September 2024 \(youtube.com\)](https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=...)

1. Karakia Whakatuwhera Opening Karakia

Karakia whakatuwhera provided by Arapeta Tahana as part of the workshop preceding the meeting.

2. Ngā Hōnea Apologies

Resolved

That the Rotorua Te Arawa Lakes Strategy Group:

- 1 Accepts the apologies from Nuki Nicolson, Chairman Doug Leeder, Phill Thomass and Mayor Tania Tapsell (for early departure), as tendered at the meeting.

White/Winters
CARRIED

3. Raupapa o Ngā Take Order of Business

- Item 6.1 - *Toihuarewa Waimāori - Bay of Plenty Regional Council Chair in Lake and Freshwater Science - Annual Report for the period 1 July 2023 to the 30 June 2024* was considered as the first item on the agenda.
- Item 8.4, *Rotorua Lakes Council Update Report - September 2024* was considered before Item 8.3, *Te Arawa Lakes Trust Update Report - September 2024*.

4. Whakapuakanga o Ngā Take Whai Taha-Rua Declaration of Conflicts of Interest

None declared.

5. Ngā Meneti Minutes

Kia Whakaūngia Ngā Meneti Minutes to be Confirmed

5.1 Rotorua Te Arawa Lakes Strategy Group Minutes - 14 June 2024

Resolved

That the Rotorua Te Arawa Lakes Strategy Group:

- 1 Confirms the Rotorua Te Arawa Lakes Strategy Group Minutes - 14 June 2024 as a true and correct record.

White/Tapsell
CARRIED

6. Ngā Pūrongo Reports

6.1 Toiuharewa Waimāori - Bay of Plenty Regional Council Chair in Lake and Freshwater Science - Annual Report for the period 1 July 2023 to the 30 June 2024

*Presentation 1 Prof Deniz Özkundakci Chair in Lake and Freshwater Science UoW
Annual Report 2024 PDF: Objective ID A4778301*

Introduced by Andy Bruere - BOPRC Lakes Operations Manager and presented by Associate Professor Deniz Özkundakci, BOPRC Chair in Lakes and Freshwater Science at the University of Waikato (UoW).

Minute note: Due to a technical challenge with the screen in the room, attendees were unable to view the slides of the PowerPoint Presentation. A copy of the slides has been included in the Minutes Attachment Document and is available to view via this link: [Rotorua Te Arawa Lakes Strategy Group - 20 September 2024 \(youtube.com\)](#)

Key Points - Professor Özkundakci:

- Presented the Toiuharewa Waimāori - BOPRC Chair in Lake and Freshwater Science Annual Report for the period 1 July 2023 to the 30 June 2024 for information
- By means of a PowerPoint Presentation, summarised activities/research projects and outcomes
- Acknowledged all members of the lake and freshwater science team
- Elaborated on freshwater research themes, with particular focus on projects that included modelling developed to support the ongoing management of the lakes/climate change impacts
- Overview of the work supporting the ongoing management of the Te Arawa Lakes
- Emphasised two particular projects: Lake Rotorua Science Review Summary and the Ōhau Channel Diversion Wall: 7-year review water quality review and modelling
- Summarised outcomes of a comprehensive study conducted to assess the Ōhau Wall's impact on Lake Rotoiti's water quality using sophisticated three dimensional lake system modelling/data analysis/evaluation of wall leakage: have found conclusively that the wall had contributed substantially

to the improvement of the water quality in the lake/improvement in the Trophic Level Index (TLI). Confirmed that the wall was crucial for maintaining Lake Rotoiti's water quality

- Also found that Lake Rotoiti was still responding to changes and would do so for quite a few years to come
- Ongoing monitoring as part of the review cycle was absolutely crucial to enable an understanding of how Lake Rotoiti would respond to the wall over time
- With regard to nutrient loads in the Kaituna River, as part of the review cycle, had looked at the data more closely and did not find any evidence that the Ōhau Wall had impacted water quality dynamics in the Kaituna River; there were other drivers overriding any effect that the Ōhau Wall might have on the water quality of the Kaituna River
- Drivers of the interannual variability in Lake Rotoehu's TLI - importance of water level on TLI; increased under extreme high's and low's
- Climate Change impacts (research on Lakes Rotomā and Rotoehu) - aim was to construct a comprehensive hydrological balance for systems, enabling simulations of the impacts of climate change on future flood hazards
- Restoring freshwater habitats for future resilience - trialling artificial reefs in the Rotorua Te Arawa Lakes (Lake Ōkaro)
- Climate impacts on species - habitat quantity and quality for taonga species
- Proposed forecasting tools for Lakes Rotorua: confirmed the approval of funding received from Ministry of Business, Innovation and Employment (MBIE) for a project relating to the development of sophisticated forecasting tools for water quality in Lake Rotorua, effective 1 October 2024.

In response to Questions:

- In comparing the Lakes Restoration Programme with other overseas lakes restoration management programmes, the work undertaken around Lake Rotorua was textbook material, with a world class lake management approach: it included a long-term perspective with a solid monitoring plan/clear targets and expectations (all the ingredients required for success); emphasised that it remained a long-term journey
- For the other lakes, it was important to keep perspective on where the water quality sat in some of the lakes: a lot of the TLI's were at or close to target.

Key Points - Members:

- Was important to share the information with the wider public so as to clarify/convey the information confirming findings relating to the Ōhau Wall not having any adverse effects on the water quality of the Kaituna River
- The impact of sediment buildup to be incorporated into future reviews/reporting.

Item for Staff Follow Up:

- To provide Strategy Group members with information relating to the Freshwater Sciences Society Annual Conference scheduled for 19-22 November 2024 to be held at the Rotorua Energy Events Centre:
 - Conference theme: **Haere i mua whakakotahi** - Moving forward as one, underscoring the pivotal role of working together in addressing the complex issues affecting our freshwater ecosystems.

- o More information regarding the Programme/Keynote Speakers/Field Trips and Registration available via this link: [NZFSS Annual Conference 2024 • New Zealand Freshwater Sciences Society](#)

6.2 Rotorua Te Arawa Lakes Programme Funding Deed Compliance - Purongo ā-tau 2023-2024, Te Mahere ā-toru tau 2024-2025 to 2026-2027

*Presentation 2 - Helen Creagh Strategy Group Presentation - 20 September 2024:
Objective ID A4780954*

Presented by: BOPRC Rotorua Catchments Manager, Helen Creagh.

Key Points:

- Submitted Purongo ā-tau 2023-2024 and Te Mahere ā-toru tau 2024-2025 to 2026-2027 for approval as compliance requirements of the Funding Deed
- In relation to the forward-looking document, Te Mahere ā-toru tau 2024-2025 to 2026-2027, once changes to the Funding Deed were finalised, the Three-Year Plan could be reviewed for consistency and updated as necessary
- Brief overview of highlights for Purongo ā-tau 2023-2024
- Confirmed that no weed harvesting/alum dosing were continuing on Lake Rotoehu due to high lake levels
- Incentives Scheme continued with clear messaging about need for voluntary action - reporting showed 2027 Managed Reduction Target met; this information would be presented back to Strategy Group at its next hui, with the release of a new dashboard reporting tool.

Key Points - Members:

- Integrated Framework: referring to both “a reduction of 320 tonne” (page 47 of the agenda) and “nitrogen load to land in Lake Rotorua has reduced from 982 tonnes to 761 tonnes” (page 49 of the agenda) could potentially be ambiguous. Suggested future reporting be reviewed to clearly indicate progress made with at lake reductions
- Highlighted the importance of lakes statistics to show high-level trends over a longer period (beyond 10 years)
- Acknowledged the intergenerational change/ongoing commitment required to address the health of the lakes.

In Response to Questions:

- Confirmed the differentiation between the reduction in loss of Nitrogen to land reported in the Plan Change 10 Science review and its translation to losses to the lake (as per the Regional Policy Statement target)
- Could recirculate Plan Change 10 Science Review report to interested parties
- A dashboard report scheduled for December 2024 hui would clearly set out progress towards Regional Policy Statement sustainable nitrogen load to Lake Rotorua in a simplified way and address any confusion in the difference between the losses of nitrogen to land vs the lake.

11:34am - Cr Tapsell **withdrew** from the meeting.

Items for Staff Follow Up:

- Lake Rotorua sustainable nitrogen load dashboard to be presented to the Strategy Group at the December 2024 hui
- Consider including in future reporting to the Strategy Group water quality trends in the lakes over a period of 30 years (including Trophic Level Index (TLI)).

Resolved

That the Rotorua Te Arawa Lakes Strategy Group:

- 1 Receives the report, Rotorua Te Arawa Lakes Programme Funding Deed Compliance - Purongo ā-tau 2023-2024, Te Mahere ā-toru tau 2024-2025 to 2026-2027;**
- 2 Approves the Purongo ā-tau 2023-2024 and Te Mahere ā-toru tau 2024-2025 to 2026-2027 for submission to the Ministry for the Environment, in accordance with the requirements of the Funding Deed for the Programme.**

**White/Winters
CARRIED**

6.3 Rotorua Lakes Council Update Report

Presented by: Stavros Michael - RLC General Manager, Infrastructure and Environment.

In Response to Questions:

- Timeframes for final connections of Rotomā/Rotoiti Sewerage Scheme: expected to be over the next six to 12 months
- 13 properties in Rotoiti had opted out of the scheme: RLC and BOPRC were currently exploring enforcement options under Section 459 of the Local Government Act
- Tarawera Sewerage Scheme: objection by Lake Rotokākahi Board of Control was ongoing. Work on the sewerage pipeline under Tarawera Road had been halted to allow direct discussions with iwi/mana whenua amid concerns about sacred sites at Lake Rotokākahi.

Resolved

That the Rotorua Te Arawa Lakes Strategy Group:

- 1 Receives the report, Rotorua Lakes Council Update Report.**

**Pene/White
CARRIED**

6.4 Te Arawa Lakes Trust Update Report - September 2024

Presented by: Soweeta Fort-D'Ath - TALT Lakes Programme Coordinator.

Key Points:

- Outlined activities of Te Arawa Lakes Trust in the Rotorua/Te Arawa Lakes Programme

- Te Arawa Lakes Trust Centennial Ball: TALT Board and staff recognised the achievements/growth of The Trust over the last 100 years
- TALT finalist in the Tompkins Wake Rotorua Business Chamber awards: earning recognition for the innovation and technology category as well as the Kaitiakitanga Environmental Sustainability & Climate Change Category
- Third Annual Te Tūkōhu Ngāwhā Te Arawa Science and Mātauranga Fair 2024 held in July 2024: event had doubled since last year with 147 exhibits and over 2800 attendees over the three-day event
- Te Ora o Tarawera (Tarawera Impact Collective) Project - next iwi and hapū wānanga scheduled for September 2024, to be followed with a series of workshops with community, council and other stakeholders
- Seven certified Skippers Restricted Licensed staff on the maritime team
- Research and Innovation - TALT had secured numerous contracts with National Institute of Water and Atmospheric Research (NIWA), Cawthron Institute, University of Waikato and Te Wai Māori to support a five-year programme that would promote research across the lakes in relation to the impact of climate change on freshwater taonga.

Resolved

That the Rotorua Te Arawa Lakes Strategy Group:

- 1 **Receives the report, Te Arawa Lakes Trust Update Report - September 2024.**

**White/Pene
CARRIED**

6.5 Ministry for the Environment - Verbal Update

Presented by: Lorena Stephen, Director - Investments, Policy, Implementation and Delivery Ministry for the Environment (MfE) (via Zoom):

Key Points - Verbal Update:

- **Incentive Scheme:**
 - Minister had approved in principle to reprioritise \$10 million funding from the Incentive Scheme to the Lake Rotoiti Sewerage Reticulation project
 - One of the conditions for in-principle approval was a potential independent assessment of the cost variance for the Rotoiti scheme.
 - To date, have been working alongside staff to provide detailed information/draft terms of reference
 - Awaiting ministerial advice on whether an independent review would be necessary - outcome expected before the end of the month
 - An updated Draft Deed had been circulate to all parties: aiming to finalise the Deed early October, pending the Minister's decision on the independent assessment
 - Pointed out that current changes were based on existing arrangements and did not account for potential outcomes from the Strategy Review. This might require a separate process once the Strategy Review had been completed
- **MfE Staffing Changes**
 - Ministry reset: reduction in staffing levels by about 40%, moving from 1,200 to around 700 by the end of 2025
 - 156 people have taken up voluntary redundancy
 - Expression of interest process: ongoing for staff to reapply for roles, with new processes starting from 1 November 2024

- Would impact on the way MfE had worked to date – would continue to provide update on progress
- **Policy/Regulatory Work**
 - Freshwater Farm Plans: engagement with Regional Councils, sector groups, iwi, and non-government organisations (NGOs) ongoing
 - Rollout pause: Minister announced a pause in early September to consider more practical and cost-effective support
 - No expectation for farmers to submit freshwater farm plans while changes were underway
 - Legislative Changes: Minor changes to the Resource Management Act (RMA) expected, with the pause to be finalised by the end of the year
- **Resource Management Reforms**
 - Phase 1: Repeal of the Natural and Built Environment Act in December 2023
 - Phase 2: Introduction of Fast Track Approval Bills
 - Currently under review by the Environment Select Committee
 - Final Bill Readings expected in November 2024
 - Report on the bill expected later this year
 - Phase 3: Replacement of the current RMA and related legislation
- **Biodiversity Credits**
 - Importance of research and data for storytelling and attracting investment
 - Exploration biodiversity credits to attract further investment for environmental outcomes
 - Pilots underway across agencies, including Department of Conservation and MfE
 - Potential for international investment support
 - Early stages of development, with ongoing discussions.

Key Points - Members:

- Looking at funding opportunities, it would be timely for the Strategy Group to reshape/reform itself around current opportunities for collective action/impact to maximize resources. Scalability would be important.

Resolved

That the Rotorua Te Arawa Lakes Strategy Group:

- 1 Receives the verbal update provided by the Ministry for the Environment.**

**White/Brown
CARRIED**

6.6 Confirmation of updated Standing Orders: Virtual Attendance at Meetings

Resolved

That the Rotorua Te Arawa Lakes Strategy Group:

- 1 Receives the report, Confirmation of updated Standing Orders: Virtual Attendance at Meetings;**
- 2 Confirms the amended Standing Orders to be used for the conduct of its meetings, as adopted by the administrating authority (Bay of Plenty Regional**

Council Toi Moana) at its meeting held on 12 September 2024, to allow for virtual attendance at meetings (Refer Attachment 1).

**Winters/Brown
CARRIED**

6.7 Outcome of Te Mahere Tūroa - Long Term Plan 2024 - 2034

Presented by: Ashleigh Grant, BOPRC Kaikarere (Communications Partner).

12:15pm - Cr Winters **withdrew** from the meeting.

In Response to Questions:

- Requested more detail regarding the Regional Māori Initiatives Fund (RMIF) and Regional Co-Governance Secretariat Fund. Noted that submissions were currently being reviewed and the outcome of allocation would be communicated once finalised
- Staff were currently drafting a policy for the Regional Treaty Co-Governance Fund. Further information to be shared once confirmed.

Resolved

That the Rotorua Te Arawa Lakes Strategy Group:

- 1 Receives the report, Outcome of Te Mahere Tūroa - Long Term Plan 2024 - 2034.**

**Te Rangi/Brown
CARRIED**

6.8 Essential Freshwater Policy Programme - Draft Freshwater Plan Change

Presentation 3 - RTALSG presentation - The Freshwater Plan Change: Objective ID A4781023

Presented by BOPRC Staff: Gemma Moleta – Senior Planner (Water Policy); Paul Scholes - Senior Environmental Scientist, Water Quantity (via Zoom) and Margaret Courtney - Senior Advisor Te Amorangi.

Key Points:

- Timeframe for notifying the proposed freshwater plan had been changed to September 2025 (no longer December 2024), with the possibility of a draft freshwater plan change released for informal feedback later in 2024
- Aim of this presentation was to provide an opportunity to Strategy Group members to comment on the draft freshwater plan change before being released in draft for targeted engagement
- Central government intended to change the National Policy Statement for Freshwater Management (NPS-FM); BOPRC was keeping an eye on how this progressed; was responding accordingly and preparing to provide feedback on the draft freshwater changes once released
- Emphasised that timeframes were subject to change based on central government and BOPRC’s direction
- In the context of the current Strategy Review process undertaken by the Rotorua Te Arawa Lakes Strategy Group and taking into consideration the

NPS-FM, this would be the perfect opportunity to align/provide direction/feedback to the draft freshwater plan

- Reminded that the Rotorua Te Arawa Lakes Freshwater Management Unit (FMU) vision had been updated following consultation: *“The lakes and their catchments are **restored** and protected for the use and enjoyment of present and future generations, while recognising and providing for the traditional relationship of Te Arawa with their ancestral lakes.”*
- Overview of water quality and attributes of interest to RTALSG
- Different measures used in the NPS-FM to monitor ecosystem health, water quality and bathing water quality (Information on each monitoring site was available online [WET - Bay of Plenty Regional Council \(shinyapps.io\)](https://www.shinyapps.io/WET-Bay-of-Plenty-Regional-Council/))
- Confirmed that Iwi, hapu and whanau would be involved in the draft freshwater plan change consultations once released.

Key Points - Members:

- Expressed the view that the wording in the Rotorua Te Arawa Lakes FMU vision *“are **restored**”* could potentially be changed to *“be **improved**”*
- Suggested that conversation focus primarily on inconsistencies between the Lakes Programme and the draft freshwater plan
- Was important for the Strategy Group to pivot/be flexible and apply forward thinking, to be prepared as a collective, in the interest of the lakes, to stay on the front foot; to influence direction and achieve goals
- Supported that the December 2024 Strategy Group hui be used as an opportunity for the Group to provide input into the draft freshwater plan.

In Response to Questions:

- Confirmed that the intention of the presentation was to provide an overview of the draft freshwater plan change prior to the release scheduled for November/December 2024. Feedback would only be required once the draft plan had been released
- Extended an invitation to members to connect on the freshwater kaupapa in the interim
- From a Rotorua Te Arawa Lakes Strategy Group perspective, options available to consider in the draft freshwater plan would be: input on the vision/identifying specific goals/achievements/future determinations.

Resolved

That the Rotorua Te Arawa Lakes Strategy Group:

- 1 Receives the report, Essential Freshwater Policy Programme - Draft Freshwater Plan Change.**

**White/Brown
CARRIED**

6.9 Correspondence Received - Golden Clam

Presented by: Helen Creagh – BOPRC Rotorua Catchments Manager.

Key Points - Partners:

- Noted that weekly hui were being held to provide feedback on progress
- Confirmed that work relating to the installation of automated gate access to Lake Ōkataina was progressing well

- Noted that the possibility of deploying dog detection to assist with eradicating the freshwater gold clam was currently being investigated by Dr Ian Kusabs
- Supported dog detection as a useful tool in the toolkit; this aligned with the advocacy work undertaken by Biosecurity Officers at boat ramps having the power to use biosecurity dogs on site
- The Lake Weed Business Case to be submitted to the Strategy Group would also include a pathway management/prevention of all new incursions; this, however, would be dependent on funding being available
- Confirmed that over 400 environmental DNA (eDNA) tests had been undertaken testing in key locations to flag the presence of the freshwater gold clam. However, eDNA was not a perfect surveillance program; more detection would be required (i.e. visual surveillance). Pointed out that there were no commitments to ongoing surveillance and monitoring at the moment
- Noted that the National Institute of Water and Atmospheric Research (NIWA) had been awarded \$10.2m by the Ministry of Business, Innovation and Employment (MBIE) to eradicate the freshwater gold clam.

Item for Staff Follow Up:

- Requested that further information outlining the details of the funding that MPI had allocated to NIWA to eradicate the invasive freshwater gold clam *Corbicula fluminea* be provided to Strategy Group members.

Resolved

That the Rotorua Te Arawa Lakes Strategy Group:

- 1 Receives the report, Correspondence Received - Golden Clam;**
- 2 Receives the correspondence from Hon Andrew Hoggard, Minister of Biosecurity (MIN24-0547) regarding the Freshwater Gold Clam (*Corbicula fluminea*) threat to the Rotorua Te Arawa Lakes.**

**Brown/Pene
CARRIED**

**7. Karakia Kati
Closing Karakia**

Karakia kati provided by Rangitihi Pene.

12:53pm - the meeting closed.

CONFIRMED

Pou Tākiwaiora Arapeta Tahana
Chairperson, Rotorua Te Arawa Lakes Strategy
Group