

LakesWater Quality Society Incorporated
Minutes of the Annual General Meeting held at
Ngati Pikiao Rugby League Club Rooms, Mourea
at 10.00 a.m. on Monday 26th January 2009

Karakia: Tai Eru

Welcome:

The Chair welcomed dignitaries – Todd McClay (MP), Councillors Maureen Waaka, Karen Hunt, Dave Donaldson and Julie Calnan from Rotorua District Council, Councillors John Cronin (Chairman) Robin Ford, Neil Oppatt from Environment Bay of Plenty, Community Board Members Brentleigh Bond (Chair), Neil Callaghan and Geoff Palmer, Life Members John Keaney, Ian McLean, Nick and Elizabeth Miller, Eddie Grogan and Warwick Murray from Environment Bay of Plenty, Tai Eru, and Hilary Prior (LRCA). There were a further forty eight members.

Apologies:

Kevin Winters, Maggie Bentley, Bill Bayfield, Karen Summerhays, Andrew von Dadelszen, Raewyn Bennett, Grant and Helen Wallace, Terry Beckett, David Packman, Brian Stamp, Phill Thomass, Catherine Branson, Buzz Rathbone, Graeme Shirley, Ron Marsden, Maria McLean, Fred Whata, Jan Wilkins

Minutes of Previous Meeting: Circulated at the meeting.

It was moved that the minutes were a true and fair record of the meeting. *Carried - John Green/Marcus Wilkins*

Matters Arising from the Minutes: None

Chairman's Annual Report:

The Chairman summarised briefly the highlights of the past year which were detailed in his report. He congratulated the members of the Rotorua Lakes Strategy Group and Hon Steve Chadwick for the work they did in achieving \$72.1 million from Central Government for the Rotorua Lakes Restoration and Protection Programmes. Some of this would go to the lakeside sewerage schemes which are now well underway in their planning.

The Ohau diversion was completed and officially opened in August. While it was still too early to be confident that it would make a difference in Lake Rotoiti at this stage after a very good summer the lake water quality was excellent and no great sign of algal blooms.

LWQS held their 6th Symposium in August on "Nutrient Sensitive Zones – Lakes and Waterways" which had been very successful and useful for both policy makers, scientists and interested parties as a forum for debate. He thanked David Hamilton, Environment Bay of Plenty and Environment Waikato for their support and sponsorship.

LWQS hosted a cocktail function for EBOP and RDC Councillors to focus on regional and district policy initiatives.

LWQS had contributed \$3,000 towards a model of Rotorua and its lakes currently being exhibited in the Rotorua Museum.

The Chairman said that the ground-breaking decision by the Environment Court on the Lake Taupo catchment in respect of nutrient discharges from land based activities being a consented activity could have important implications in our district. At present we have Rule 11 but this decision took the regulatory process a step further and may be a tool for Environment Bay of Plenty to consider.

In August last year the Government presented a draft National Policy Statement on Freshwater Management. LWQS were of the opinion that it needed rethinking and spent \$5,000 commissioning five experts in the subject of freshwater management to redraft a National Policy Statement. This has now been done and submissions sent on both the National and Regional Policy Statement on Freshwater Management. The Chairman stressed the importance of a strong policy framework with high standards of water quality at central and regional levels, fed in to the district plan, would then make management of fresh water more sustainable.

It was moved that the Chairman's Report be accepted.

Carried - Leo Meharry/Jim Howland

Financial Report:

The Treasurer presented his report. He said that the Auditor, Barry Lane from Iles Casey in Rotorua had agreed to continue for another year and he strongly recommended them as accountants.

The Symposium had been a significant activity in the accounts and there was still one item outstanding and awaiting further information.

LWQS had contributed to legal costs in 2007 on behalf of Okareka and Rule 14. He expressed disappointment that this appeared to be in abeyance at present.

It was moved that the financial report for LakesWater Quality Society Inc., for the year ending 30 September 2008, be received and approved and that Iles Casey be appointed as Auditors for the 2008/09 year.

Carried – Brentleigh Bond/Bob Armstrong

Election of Officers:

The Chair stood down while the vote for this office was conducted by Ian McLean

Chairman	John Green		<i>Carried - Don Atkinson/Jim Koller</i>
Treasurer	Brentleigh Bond		<i>Carried- John Green/Liz Miller</i>
Secretary	Ann Green		<i>Carried -Ian McLean/Jim Howland</i>
Committee	Don Atkinson	(Rotoiti)	
	Marcel van Leeuwen	(Okareka, LORRA)	
	Ian McLean	(Rotorua)	
	Brian Stamp	(Rotoiti)	
	Warren Webber	(Rotoiti)	
	Phill Thomass	(Rotoiti)	
	Jim Howland	(Rotoiti)	
	Graeme Shirley	(Rotoma Action Group)	
	Jim Koller	(Rotoehu)	
	Tai Eru	(Rotorua)	
	Catherine Branson	(Rotoehu, Rate Payers)	
Leo Meharry	(Rotoma, Rate Payers)		

Two people were nominated from the floor

Mary Stanton	(Rotoiti)	<i>Carried - Mary Stanton/Leo Meharry</i>
Sandra Goodwin	(Okareka, LORRA)	<i>Carried - Neil Callaghan/Geoff Palmer</i>

It was moved that the above nominees be accepted as the committee.

Carried – John Green/Jim Howland

Jim Howland added that the power to co-opt is always a useful tool to have.

The Chairman thanked everyone and commented on the excellent committee with a wide variety of skills.

General Business:

- *Professor David Hamilton* thanked LWQS for its contribution towards the model of the Rotorua Lakes that is now being exhibited at the Rotorua Museum. He stated that the contribution by LWQS, EBOP and RDC enabled the commissioning of a model builder who has created a spectacular model of the lakes, land uses and mountain terrain around Rotorua. A Waikato University student using very modern technology also did a flythrough by satellite from the south of Rotorua over all the lakes and under the waters of Lake Rotorua, through the channel to Lake Rotoiti. He said it is well worth a visit by everyone.

The Chair asked how long it would be at the museum and Councillor Hunt thought it would be there until some time in April. It was asked by the floor what would happen to it then as it was such a valuable asset for the museum and she responded that she would look into this matter.

- *Liz Miller* asked if Professor Hamilton had anything to report of the new Gleon monitor that had been installed in Lake Rotoiti. This project, which monitors lakes all around the world, records changes in oxygen levels, blue and green algae, temperature and other factors. He said it was going very well and the information from the lakes around the world was available on the website.

- *Professor Hamilton* acknowledged Hon Steve Chadwick's strong contribution towards acquiring the funding from Central Government for Rotorua Lakes Restoration and Protection

It was moved that a formal letter be sent from LWQS to Hon Steve Chadwick to thank her for her considerable efforts and contribution in acquiring the funding for the Rotorua Lakes.

Approved - David Hamilton/Neil Callaghan

- *John Cronin*, Chair of Environment Bay of Plenty, also acknowledged the huge effort by Councillors Robin Ford and Neil Oppatt who both worked very hard to push LWQS and help get the funding. The Chair said that working with EBOP had been a pleasure and then asked for the EBOP view on the Environment Waikato decision and whether they were thinking about such a policy in EBOP.

Eddie Grogan, Group Manager, Water Management, EBOP, replied that he believed that EBOP had Rule 11 and it was a very powerful tool and at this stage he would be hesitant to change the regulatory framework when this one was working very positively and farmers were now responding. However, they would be watching closely the Environment Waikato decision and could consider it in the future.

- *Warwick Murray*, Group Manager, Land Management, EBOP, said that he had been working with the Land Use Futures Board and farmers in the area. Action Plans would be completed as soon as possible and a review of Rule 11 undertaken to see if it is working well. A busy programme included such things as a trial plant at Tikitere, weed harvesting at Rotoehu, floating wetlands and sediment capping at Okaro.

EBOP was required to find the equivalent funding to match Government and this year it was \$12.1 million compared to the last year of \$7 million. This was a huge gap to fill in difficult economic times.

He acknowledged that the Symposium had been excellent for EBOP and congratulated LWQS for the very effective task they had achieved and getting the excellent information out into the community.

Warwick said that he works with land owners to bring about land use change and has three points in mind -

- Relative priorities of the lakes
- Land Use Futures Board
- How these factors link in to the projects

The funding from Government has forced the main focus on Lakes Rotoma, Rotoiti, Rotoehu and Okareka. Lake Rotorua has been set aside as it is a much bigger and long term problem with the nutrients coming from underground waterways and with a sixty to eighty year delay. The other lakes have fewer farm properties and the solutions are more short term. Lake Okaro had been the trial lake and Warwick believes that they have just about got the strategies in place to lock in the gains.

Lake Rotorua required 170 tonnes of nitrates to be reduced. Farmers had originally been very concerned about such targets which they believed were impossible to achieve. He believes that in the past year there has been some fundamental philosophical change in the Land Use Futures Board. They looked at best practice and were working on more research for reducing nutrient discharges. He knows that they do not have all the answers but with the attitude change from the farmers he believed that they were a lot further down the track of reducing nutrient discharge from their land.

Rule 11 had proven an excellent tool in capping the situation, and given some certainty to the farmers by locking in gains that were achievable. He believes that using consents is the best way but other methods such as memorandums of agreement on titles were another alternative. Progress is now being made and the land owning community have accepted that they have a problem.

EBOP had more work to do in the sheep and beef community and with Maori land owners.

Presentation: Ms Penny Nelson, Regional Policy Manager, Dairy NZ

The Chair introduced Penny as one of two people responsible for developing and designing environmental programmes at Dairy NZ. She has been at Dairy NZ for five months and came because she was excited by what they wanted to achieve. Prior to that she was a science leader at Landcare Research and had fifteen years in Central Government policy including economic, environmental and labour relations portfolios.

Penny started by congratulating LWQS on their Proceedings which was a very useful set of papers. Dairy NZ was a new organisation and had an environmental focus. It represented all farmers who funded it by a levy on milk solids. Their focus was on productivity, sustainability and competitiveness. They invested \$6.1 million in environmental and climate change research and had a strong focus around nutrient management and tools for farmers. They are involved with regional councils, in setting targets backed up by good science. They are focusing on some important principles –

- Get the targets right and keep the farmers out of the Environment Court
- Farm Enviro Walk – a tool to work out problems
- Encouraging more leaders
- Good communication
- Training the trainer so they can help farmers to do better

Penny suggested that this was quite a shift in the farming community. Dairy NZ are working with Fonterra and focusing on environmental management systems, performance and creating benchmarks.

Penny said her initial introduction to the region was a meeting with Federated farmers, Fonterra, Dairy NZ and five leading farmers around Rotorua who wanted to contribute to a healthy lake. They understand the problem but want to solve it in a fair and equitable way. The question is the target and the farmers would like time and certainty that the infrastructure and economic investment they plan to make will achieve the required target. They have a nervousness that the rules could change.

Dairy NZ are proposing a position paper looking at the problems, what is contributing to it, the range of ideas that have been considered, the targets and what needs to be put in place for adoption of those targets and the tools that can motivate and change. She suggested that this would eventuate in the next few months. That was her commitment. She believes that it would give a clear link between the farm and the environment and give drivers for change and provide easy tools to the farmers supported by trusted advisors.

The Chairman: asked Professor Hamilton to clear up a point often asked whether lakes were nitrogen or phosphorus limiting and he said that it could be either depending on the lake. Good management was keeping the nutrients on the land and out of the waterways.

Penny Nelson: stated that Mike Scarsbrooke of Dairy NZ was currently doing some analysis of current data of both nitrogen and phosphorus and this would give the farmers a dairy sector view of the problem.

Peter Carr-Smith: Is it “what is causing the problem” or “how to fix the problem”? He questioned whether larger farming corporations have too much influence? They are like any other business and should not be given special treatment.

Warwick Murray: said that EBOP has focused on the target for cleaning up the lakes and it is about changing the rules or working with land/owners. He believes that the regulatory way would be to spend the next ten years in the Environment Court and the only constructive way is to work with land owners. The dairy sector is now taking on the problem.

Penny Nelson: stated that farmers need to understand the problem and if spending big money want to know how it is best spent. There is a shift to corporate farming and they recognise that they do need a licence to operate. We do need environmental tools to manage and that is important in our community and in our export markets.

Don Atkinson: said it was nice to have Penny here but we are poles apart. Science shows the facts but he feels that the farmers are still questioning them and the time frame for action has been a long one. We have been waiting seven years.

Penny Nelson: said “don’t feel poles apart”. Farmers agree with the problems and the interventions for healthier lakes but there has not been enough discussion within the industry. They have to have the confidence and the tools to achieve the necessary targets.

The Chairman: said that there had been a robust action plan process for Lakes Rotorua/Rotoiti over four to six years yet there had been little change in farmers’ attitudes or behaviour.

Geoff Palmer: stated that in Okareka with their process of the action plan there had been no change at all. The action plan was not being implemented by the farmers.

Penny Nelson: said that now there is a demonstration that farmers want to get a range of different methods and tools and they have a mind switch of what is possible. She believes that there is a difference between farmers being told what to do by non-farmers as opposed to working with farmers and scientists together. That mind shift has happened.

Geoff Palmer: said that in Okareka 30% of the pollution from sewage was being fixed but 70% of the animal pollution was not.

John Keaney: suggested that this year he had seen that Okawa Bay, Lake Rotoiti was wonderful and in Lake Rotorua's Holden and Hannah's Bay the beaches had returned to clear water. Thirty seven years ago that was not the case and there was no water quality testing done then, it was the naked eye and that shows today that they have greatly improved. He added that there were no dairy farms then, but now there are four (recently three) and farmers are now environmentally aware. Things have changed and farmers in general have the desire for knowledge and improvement of their land. (Note – John, a life member of our Society, died only a couple of days after this meeting. We were privileged to have him attend.)

Jim Howland: reminded us that Environment Waikato and Environment Bay of Plenty are very encouraging of good environmental farming through national and regional awards. He also suggested that it was important to have a bottom line for dirty farmers. It is the carrot and stick approach.

Marcus Wilkins: said there was no doubt there had been a big shift in farming but there had also been a huge input of nitrogen as well. He did not believe in nitrogen trading but rather we simply have to reduce the quantity of nitrogen put on the land, but at the same time he recognises that farmers want to be profitable.

Phillida Eivers: said that as a fourth generation farmer in Gisborne good farming was simple – fencing and good planting, shade and shelter and protecting the waterways.

Ian McLean: stated what a wonderful job farmers were doing at Lake Rerewhakaaitu. He believed that Ms Nelson should be supported in her task of persuading farmers to be responsible with the environment and stay afloat. Keep presenting relevant information which is fresh and sharp and to the point.

Penny Nelson: said that she had been working with a group of farmers and they have a lot to offer. She would also like to learn from those at Lake Rerewhakaaitu. Farming is not as simple as planting and fencing, it needs more than that to meet the bigger targets. It is about how we link environmental management with regulation framework standards – rewards and incentives.

She understood the cynicism in the meeting and would like to come again with the next stage -how the dairy group sees the problems, the targets, what can be done, how it works and with the tools for the farmers.

The Chairman: believes there is a strong relationship between EBOP and RDC regarding land use change and the district plan. We need to encourage progress and they need to be innovative and flexible and allow for retiring land and compensation for the benefit of the lakes.

Mary Stanton: speaking on behalf of Te Arawa whose voice she believed had not been heard. The problems with sewage had long been ignored when focusing on water quality. Now the farmers need to change as the lakes are our food basket and who would put cows' dung with food in a basket.

Arapeta Tahana: commented that we have no Ngati Pikiaio on LWQS committee and he would like to invite the committee to meet and discuss the issue.

The Chairman thanked every one for coming and their input and invited them to morning tea.
The meeting closed at 12.20 p.m.