

LAKESWATER QUALITY SOCIETY INC. ANNUAL REPORT 2013

The season's greetings to you all.

The committee has worked hard this year to keep abreast of the many programmes being carried out on the Rotorua Te Arawa lakes. These programmes are overseen by the Rotorua Te Arawa Lakes Strategy Group comprising Te Arawa Lakes Trust, Bay of Plenty Regional Council, Rotorua District Council and the Ministry for the Environment. The programme budget for the Strategy Group is over \$233 million through to 2022, of which \$72.075 million is Crown funded. As one can see this is a very significant programme for Rotorua and the Bay of Plenty region and it is achieving remarkable results.

Status of 12 lakes

The lakes have been assigned status classifications based on water quality measures of Trophic Level Indices (TLIs) and the trends these TLIs are tracking. More detail can be found on <http://www.rotorualakes.co.nz/>. The 12 lakes status is as follows:

Improving	- Rotorua, Rotoiti, Rotoehu
Stable	- Rotoma, Okataina, Okareka, Tikitapu, Rerewhakaaitu
Declining	- Tarawera, Rotomahana, Rotokakahi
Investigation needed	- Okaro

A concern over the past few years has been that the Rotorua community were not aware or understood the problems of our lakes, nor what the Councils were doing to solve them. The website (above), set up by both Councils and Te Arawa Lakes Trust, is now available for the general public which is a very comprehensive site of all the programmes, research, updates on each lake, projects running and lake information. It is well worth looking at.

Key Lake Issues

Lake Rotorua

The Alum dosing programme for the Utuhina and Puarenga streams has resulted in 'phosphorus locking' of P to such an extent that the TLI target for the lake was achieved in the 2012-2013 year. This is a remarkable outcome given the presentations our society has received over the years that that lake is a 'monster' and it will take decades to fix. It has pleasantly surprised everyone. Nitrogen levels in the lake are still rising, and the sustainability of continuous alum dosing is open to question. We, like other stakeholders, are working through the implications of this result with the assistance of Professor David Hamilton.

Stakeholder Advisory Group

Our local member of parliament, Todd McLay, worked hard to bring about the signing of the Oturoa Agreement earlier this year between the Rotorua Catchment Farmers' Collective, Federated Farmers and LWQS. It has given the foundation for the Stakeholders Advisory Group (StAG). This is a first for New Zealand and the goal is to inform direction for the Lake Rotorua catchment. The challenge is to gain stakeholder agreement on achieving a sustainable load of 435 tonnes/N/pa by 2032 with 70% achieved by 2022. This is a significant challenge and will require a lot of goodwill and cooperation by all parties to get the outcomes we all want. Details of the StAG minutes can be accessed on the Rotorua Lakes website <http://www.rotorualakes.co.nz/>

Rotoma

The major measure required to protect and improve Lake Rotoma is sewerage reticulation. Unfortunately the planning and consent application for the proposed scheme did not survive an environment Court hearing and the application was withdrawn by RDC.

Hence RDC has commenced the consultation process with a view to dealing with the issues raised in the environment Court hearing and judgement. This work is of major importance and needs to be carried out expeditiously in order to retain the Ministry of Health subsidy.

Lake Okataina

This lake has above average levels of P entering the lake waters. Given that the majority of the lake's catchment is in native bush there is some question as to why this is occurring. It would appear that the high numbers of pest animals (wallabies, possums, rabbits, etc.) are destroying the 'understory' of the native bush to such an extent that erosion of saturated soils are ending up in the lake. A study is being carried out to confirm this is the case and what actions need to follow.

Tarawera, Rotomahana and Rotokakahi

For the 3 lakes which have been given a declining status the process is to develop a lake plan setting out the actions needed to reverse the status of the lake.

- Tarawera - plan due by June 2014
- Rotomahana - TLI decline has not yet triggered planning action
- Rotokakahi - The requirement for a lake plan is being discussed with lake owners

Symposiums

During the year our society conducted two symposiums. The first was on the subject of Transferable Development Rights (TDRs) and the second on the future of the Rotorua Wastewater Treatment Plant (WWTP).

TDRs are a complex tool that have been used elsewhere in New Zealand and different parts of the world with mixed success. LWQS considers them to be a useful tool to achieve nutrient reductions in the Lake Rotorua catchment through sub division rights and therefore achieving an environmental benefit for the greater catchment. The outcomes from the TDR symposium were a greater level of community understanding of how TDRs can work and the role they could play in assisting land use change in a lake catchment. Bal Matheson, a specialist in resource management and environmental law, and partner in Russell McVeagh's Environment, Planning and Natural Resources Group in Auckland, summed up the symposium with very effective insights on the use of TDRs. They have been included in the Draft District Plan and will be the subject of public consultation early next year.

My thanks go to our committee organisers of Don Atkinson, Warren Webber and Ann Green for their outstanding organisation skills. We also gratefully acknowledge the strong support that RDC gave for this project.

The second symposium was about the WWTP and the continual spraying of treated water into the Whaka Forest. Over the last few years this forest has been under stress from the increasingly saturated soils and many trees are dying. The increased load now coming into the system from the new sewerage systems around the lakes has compounded the problem. The consent for RDC to spray the treated water into the forest ends in 2021 and RDC are currently in breach of the N discharge allowance. All Rotorua residents should be concerned about the way forward.

LWQS, as a totally independent group, saw this as an opportunity to run a symposium and Ian McLean and Warren Webber took on the role of facilitating the programme and worked closely with RDC staff to organise a field trip of invited participants to inspect the existing WWTP site, the Whaka Forest and then a day of presentations and workshop discussions on options, potential solutions and process for engaging the community.

The recommendations of the workshop were very encouraging and are summarised as follows:

- The preferred option for dealing with treated effluent would:
 - restore the Mauri of the waste water plant discharge water by a return to potable standards .
 - By 2021 close the LTS in the Whakarewarewa forest.
- The preferred option involves mostly an upgrade and extension of the WWTP.
- Intensify water conservation measures (and consider metering).
- Remediate the ancient rubbish dump to the north and west of the WWTP
- Puarenga Stream improvement should go hand in hand with the actions at the WWTP
- There was unanimous opposition to looking at other options for discharge.
- An interim consent to continue discharge was supported, providing it required expeditious progress on the long term options.
- A Steering Committee for the Project involving iwi, landowners, rest of community, and councils.
- A Technical Advisory Group was also suggested, which Professor David Hamilton has since offered to lead.

RDC has taken on board the conclusions from the symposium and are in the process of setting up a steering committee to oversee the way forward for a sustainable waste water treatment process in Rotorua beyond 2021.

Centre of lakes' water excellence

Grow Rotorua Limited has acknowledged in its annual report 2012-13 the importance and magnitude of the Rotorua Te Arawa Lakes restoration programme. In so doing it is proposing to investigate the establishment of a centre of fresh water excellence in Rotorua targeting the considerable skills, knowledge and expertise built up over the last 13 years. This would be a very exciting opportunity and has huge potential for Rotorua.

Changes

Our society has supported a policy of appointing to its committee residents from all of the main lakes. This gives the committee a stronger up to date representation of lake matters and issues. Lake Tarawera and Rerewhakaaitu have been under represented and further representation from Lake Rotorua would also be appreciated. The work required during the year has placed a heavy load on the committee and new committee members willing and able to carry some of the load would be welcome.

On behalf of LWQS I would like to acknowledge the significant contribution by retired Mayor Kevin Winters to water quality issues in this district. Kevin was chair of the Rotorua Te Arawa Lakes Strategy Group and was deeply involved with all the lakes programmes over a nine year period.

John Cronin is no longer chair of the Bay of Plenty Regional Council but continues as a councillor. John's support for LWQS has been very significant over the years and his wise counsel greatly appreciated. We trust he will continue his support as a regional councillor.

During the year Peter Guerin retired from being chief executive of Rotorua District Council. Peter's contribution to the lakes programmes and especially lakeside sewerage schemes has been outstanding and we wish him well in his future endeavours.

We welcome our new mayor, Steve Chadwick, and chief executive of RDC, Geoff Williams, and new chairman of BOPRC, Doug Leeder. We trust that they will continue to take a strong interest in the lakes' programmes.

Our treasurer, Gerald Plested, has indicated he will be leaving us to go and live in the beautiful far north by the sea. We wish him well and thank him for the excellent job he did in governing

the society's financial resources. One of our current committee, Marcel van Leeuwen, has agreed to take over the role.

On behalf of our society I wish to thank all our committee members who have worked so hard this year. We are blessed with wonderfully talented and committed members.

We look forward to seeing you at our AGM which is at 10 am on Monday 27 January 2014, Auckland Anniversary day, at the Pikiaro Rugby League Clubrooms, Takinga Street, Mourea.

I wish you a Merry Christmas and a prosperous New Year.

John Green
Chairman