Lake Ōkāreka
COMMUNITY ASSOCIATION

Newsletter August 2026

INSIDE NEWSLETTER

Chairs Report
Rotorua Lakes Community Board Update
See something? Do something!
Lake Ōkāreka Volunteer Fire Brigade
Harbourmaster Update
Freshwater Biosecurity Update
BOPRC Lakes Operations Report
Tikitapu Pest Control Project - Forest & Bird Care Group
Landcare Ōkāreka Report
Lake Ōkāreka Scenic Reserve Restoration Project
Lake Ōkāreka Tennis Club
Weweia / New Zealand Dabchick for Bird of the Year
Lake Ōkāreka Preschool News

Lake Ōkāreka
COMMUNITY ASSOCIATION

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Editor: Victoria Jantke 021 2255867 Email: victoriajantke@gmail.com
Website: www.lakeŌkāreka.org

Your Committee:

Neil Oppatt, Chair 021 708052
Stu Wallace, Treasurer 021 665 955

Dennis Falconer	Charlie Graham (Charlie)	Gregg Brown
Peter Muys	Colin Jackson	Richard Lang
Charlie Richardson	Rick Manley	Hamish Marshall
Les Falconer	Wendy Hague	

Disclaimer Statement: The views & opinions expressed in this newsletter are not necessarily those of the LŌCA Committee.

Lake Ōkāreka
COMMUNITY ASSOCIATION

CONTRIBUTOR

Chair's Report: Winter 2026

Neil Oppatt
LŌCA - Chair
021 708 052

Lake Ōkāreka Planning for Our Future

The DOC campground is a vital source of income for the Lake Ōkāreka community, currently providing around $40,000 each year towards conservation programmes in the catchment. Its future is therefore important not only for the campground itself, but also for the wider work we undertake to protect Lake Ōkāreka and its surrounding environment.

Caring for the catchment

The LOCA Committee has approved the draft Lake Ōkāreka Conservation Management Plan, developed by LOCA Committee member Hamish Marshall and his sub-committee.

The Plan focuses on three key areas: protecting what we already have, restoring areas that need improvement, and involving the community in caring for the catchment.

Priorities include invasive plant control, wetland restoration and increased predator control to protect native birds.

Hamish is now taking the draft Plan to iwi, conservation organisations, government agencies and community groups for their input before it is finalised.

An exciting opportunity for the campground

The Department of Conservation has proposed a new long-term lease arrangement that would give LOCA greater certainty over the campground's future income and management.

This presents an exciting opportunity for our community. Greater certainty will allow LOCA to determine how the campground operates and make decisions about its future development. Most importantly, it provides an opportunity to ensure the campground continues to generate income that can be invested back into the lake and catchment.

LOCA is now developing a new business plan to identify opportunities and ensure that any new arrangement provides a sustainable future for the campground and its contribution to our conservation work.

Funding our future

The LOCA Committee has resolved to establish an Environmental Endowment Fund to support the long-term delivery of conservation work in the Lake Ōkāreka catchment.

The fund will be managed by the Geyser Foundation, with an initial $30,000 contribution from LOCA.

We hope the fund will grow over time through contributions and bequests from Lake Ōkāreka residents and others who want to support the future of the Lake Ōkāreka catchment.

The aim is to create a stable and enduring source of funding for conservation, enabling ongoing pest control, planting, monitoring and biosecurity initiatives. This will reduce our reliance on campground income and grants as the sole sources of funding for this important work.

Protecting the lake

The Te Arawa Lakes Biosecurity Pathway Access Control System project has also made excellent progress. LOCA has secured $250,000 to establish a full working model at Lake Ōkāreka, with design and construction of the system components now underway.

In August, representatives from LOCA, Bay of Plenty Regional Council, Earth Sciences NZ, WatchU Security and Gallagher Security presented the proposed system to biosecurity managers from seven regional councils, as well as Biosecurity New Zealand and the Department of Conservation. The presentation was very well received, with interest in the Lake Ōkāreka model potentially becoming a template for a national freshwater biosecurity system.

The design of the Trial Decontamination Centre is also progressing well, with technical specialists developing separate treatment systems for jet skis, outboard and inboard boats, and boats with ballast tanks. The aim is to provide effective protection against invasive freshwater pests while making the process as straightforward as possible for vessel owners.

The current target is to have the working model ready for trial by late December. LOCA will hold community meetings before the trial to explain how the system will operate, answer questions and involve local boat owners in helping to test and refine the system.

Looking ahead

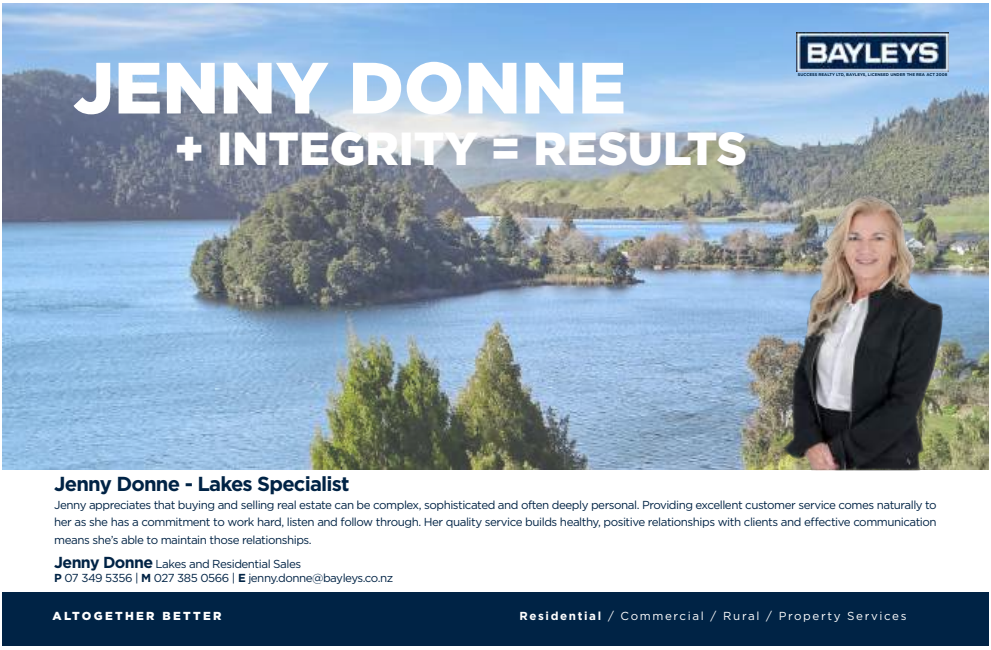
There is considerable work underway, but these projects are connected by a common goal: protecting Lake Ōkāreka and its catchment while building a stronger and more sustainable future for our community.

The campground provides an important income stream for conservation, the Endowment Fund is intended to provide longer-term financial support, and the biosecurity project is focused on protecting the lake from new threats.

As Chairman, I am pleased to see these initiatives progressing and, importantly, being developed with the involvement of our community and our partners.

Neil

Neil Oppatt
Chair - Lake Ōkāreka Community Association



ROTORUA LAKES COUNCIL
Te Kaunihera o ngā Roto o Rotorua

CONTRIBUTOR

Mitch Collins
Rotorua Lakes
Community Board

Rotorua Lakes Community Board Update: Winter 2026

Kia ora koutou,

Well, that escalated... A few changing faces, but still the same teeth. The Rotorua Lakes Community Board are the Council conduit to our lake communities. This year, there has been a renewed emphasis on strengthening local engagement, improving collaboration with community associations, and advocating for practical outcomes on issues that matter most to our residents.

One of the key changes already underway relates to the Board's operation, with a focus on ensuring resources and decision-making are made closer to the communities. There are also potential future changes involving Head Start and how communities may be represented across the lakes area with historic low turnout. While discussions are ongoing, the objective remains clear: creating stronger representation for local communities and the organisations that help deliver projects on the ground.

A significant focus for the Board has been more effective use of limited devolved funding. Previously there has been a tendency towards directing this funding towards visitor infrastructure (toilets and park benches), but now the push is towards projects developed in partnership with local community associations, ensuring investment reflects priorities identified by the communities themselves.

With last year's devolved funding allocation expiring after the by-election, this was directed towards the Tikitapu Walkway project - improving safe access above high lake levels. With 80,000 people movements last year, it needed a lift. Importantly, the work extends beyond Tikitapu, including the development of a master plan and improved walking and bike access connections to Lake Ōkāreka to improve connectivity and recreation.

An area of ongoing advocacy is Plan Change 8 - Natural Hazards, and its implications for lakes residents. The Board has continued to engage with the process and that decision-making is informed by the best available evidence. The Board welcomes direction from Minister Watts supporting rational flood modelling as well as the hearing commissioners who echoed concerns and suggested reviews of excessive projected levels by BOPRC. Ensuring robust scientific analysis underpins future decisions is critical, particularly for communities affected by flooding, property impacts, and recreational use of the lake.

Community engagement also remains a priority. The recent Community Forum at Lake Tarawera demonstrated the value of bringing everyone together to discuss issues face-to-face. Given the positive response, there is strong interest in holding additional community forums across the lakes communities. Ōkāreka will be sometime later next year.

Together, through strong partnerships and active participation for all community groups, we can continue to improve outcomes for Lake Ōkāreka and all Rotorua lakes communities.

Mitch
Mitch Collings
Chair, Rotorua Lakes Community Board

Support for community-led climate adaptation planning

You know your place best.

Climate change is affecting communities across the Bay of Plenty in different ways. Whether you're concerned about flooding, drought, coastal erosion or other climate-related risks, support is available to help your community plan ahead.

Get up to $20,000 for community-led climate adaptation planning, with access to technical expertise where needed. The fund can support workshops, community conversations, local risk assessments and adaptation planning.

Understand local climate risks. Explore your options. Plan your next steps together.

Applications are open year-round.

Find out more: www.boprc.govt.nz/adaptation-planning

Lake Ōkāreka
COMMUNITY ASSOCIATION

CONTRIBUTOR

Rich Lang
LŌCA - Member
Serving Police Officer
0274 599 018

See something? Do something! Winter 2026

Winter has certainly settled over Lake Ōkāreka. The cooler weather has brought quieter roads, fewer visitors and a slower pace around the village. It's a welcome opportunity to catch our breath before the warmer months arrive once again.

With spring now just around the corner, we're all looking forward to longer days, warmer temperatures and seeing our community come alive again.

Community Safety

Although we've seen very few reports of anti-social behaviour over the winter months, there have been several reports of residents feeling uncomfortable or unsafe while walking within the community. These incidents have involved encounters with people in vehicles, around the village, and on foot.

Fortunately, these incidents have not escalated, but they serve as an important reminder that if something doesn't feel right, please report it.

As I've mentioned in previous newsletters, reporting isn't just about dealing with one isolated incident. Every report contributes to a broader intelligence picture. Individual reports may seem insignificant on their own, but when combined they help identify emerging trends, locations of concern and patterns of behaviour. Often it's this cumulative information that enables intervention before more serious offending occurs.

- 111 – Immediate danger.
- 105 – Non-emergency incidents.
- Crime Stoppers (0800 555 111) – Anonymous reporting.

Our community has shown time and again that early reporting, good descriptions, photographs or video where safe to obtain, all make a genuine difference.

See Something? Do Something.

We all share responsibility for helping keep Lake Ōkāreka a safe place to live.

Take Care on Our Roads

While traffic has been noticeably lighter over winter, don't let quieter roads lead to complacency.

The colder months have allowed moss and lichen to build on many of our shaded roads. These

surfaces can become surprisingly slippery, particularly during frosty mornings or after rain. Please continue to drive to the conditions and take extra care on corners, around the quarry road, and other shaded sections throughout the village.

A few extra moments behind the wheel can make all the difference.

Looking Out for One Another

One of the things that makes Lake Ōkāreka such a special place is the way neighbours look after neighbours.

As we head towards spring, let's continue to check in on one another, offer a helping hand where needed and keep an eye out for those who may need a little extra support.

Looking after each other is what makes this more than just a place to live, it's what makes it a community.

Community Hub

The Lake Ōkāreka Community Hub continues to gather momentum.

The vision remains the same: creating a community resource that strengthens our resilience during emergencies while also bringing people together throughout the year.

- Skills and experience
- Equipment and resources
- Professional networks or contacts
- Residents who may require additional assistance

Community Hub Contact: Rich Lang
jumborich17@gmail.com
0274 599 018

As always, thank you to everyone who contributes to making Lake Ōkāreka such a welcoming, safe and supportive community.

Here's looking forward to brighter days, warmer weather and another fantastic spring together.

Rich

Best, Rich Lang, LŌCA - Member, Serving Police Officer

Stay Prepared, Stay Connected: Community Emergency Support Register

Scan the QR code to register your details with the Community Emergency Support Register.

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Important Numbers – Please Keep Handy

Emergency – Police, Fire, Ambulance: 111
If there is an immediate risk to life or property, or an incident is happening now.

Police – Non-Emergency: 105 or report online
For incidents that have already happened and there is no immediate danger.

Crime Stoppers (Anonymous Reporting): 0800 555 111
If you wish to report information anonymously.

Dangerous or Anti-Social Driving: *555 or online reporting
For unsafe driving behaviours where there is no immediate emergency.

Water Safety / Boating Issues: Harbourmaster (via Rotorua Lakes Council)
For unsafe behaviour on the water, breaches of 5-knot zones, or boating concerns.

Rotorua Lakes Council: 07 348 4199
For road issues, signage, reserves, infrastructure, or environmental concerns.

Lake Okareka. A Special Place.

RayWhite.

Lake Okareka holds a special place in Anita Martelli's heart.

As a local resident specialising in the lake's premium waterfront and lifestyle properties, Anita brings an insider's advantage to buying and selling in our community.

Anita is known for her extensive market knowledge, skilled negotiation, and commitment to achieving the very best outcome for her clients. Her genuine, down-to-earth approach, combined with clear communication and meticulous attention to detail, has earned her a loyal client base and many repeat referrals.

If you're thinking of selling and want to work with a local expert who truly values our community. Contact Anita today.

AnitaMartelli
027 552 6482
anita.martelli@raywhite.com

CONTRIBUTOR

Kierin Oppatt
Chief Fire Officer
027 777 5130

Lake Ōkāreka Volunteer Fire Brigade

Phil and I are currently deployed in the United States Pacific Northwest, where the region is facing one of its most severe wildfire seasons in recent years.

Washington is battling multiple major fires, with over 800 structures damaged or destroyed and around 60,000 residents were evacuated, one of the largest wildfire related evacuations in the state's history.

Nationwide, the scale is even more striking. As of 13 August, more than 100 large fires are burning across the country, with over 2.6 million hectares burned in 2026. More than 30,000 personnel are currently assigned to incidents.

We are working in extreme conditions: persistent heat, deep drought, critically low fuel moisture, and wind events that are driving rapid fire growth across the Pacific Northwest.

Bay of Plenty Firefighters: Jo McNickle, Kierin Oppatt, Phil Muldoon, Roger Nelson, Mark Cleghorn, Ray Dunbar, John Harrison & Ken Hussey

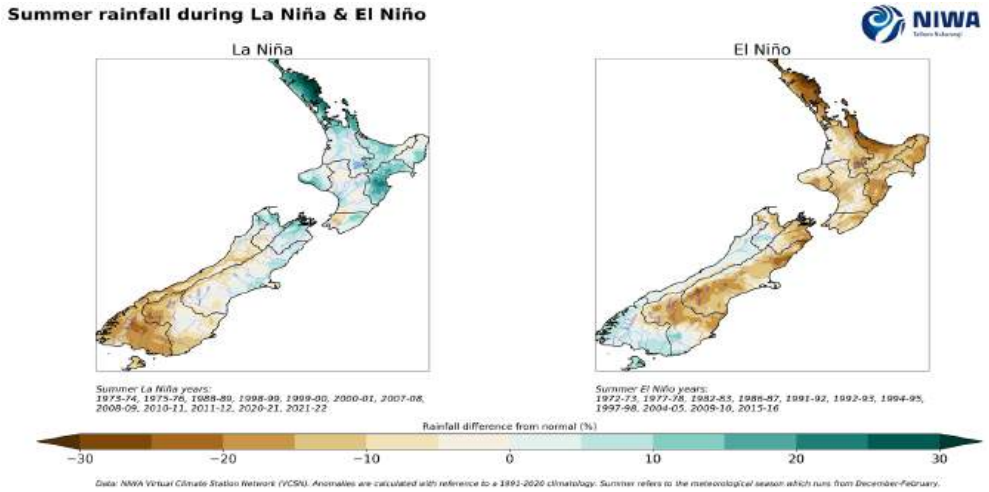
El Niño: What It Means for Lake Ōkāreka This Summer

El Niño has been officially declared and is expected to strengthen into one of the most powerful events on record, with central Pacific Sea temperatures already exceeding 1.0°C above average.

What this means for us locally

- Drier, windier conditions are likely for much of the North Island, increasing vegetation fire risk, especially in areas with cured grasses and scrub.
- Reduced rainfall is expected for northern and eastern regions, including much of the central North Island.
- Above-average temperatures may further dry out fuels and elevate fire danger.

While El Niño typically brings drier conditions to our region, the unusually warm ocean temperatures around New Zealand may create more unpredictable swings, meaning we need to stay prepared for both sudden dry spells and bursts of active weather.



Preparing Lake Ōkāreka for Summer Fire Risk

We encourage residents to:

- Clear gutters and remove dry vegetation
- Maintain safe zones around structures
- Check pumps, hoses, and water supplies
- Review your household emergency plan
- Stay updated on fire danger levels and restrictions

Join the Lake Ōkāreka Volunteer Fire Brigade

Our brigade is growing and we'd love to welcome new members from our community. Volunteering offers:

- Practical skills and nationally recognised training
- A tight-knit team environment
- Opportunities for medical response, wildfire operations, and community support
- Pathways to specialist roles and international deployments
- A meaningful way to contribute to the safety and resilience of Lake Ōkāreka

We're looking for people who are:

- Community-minded
- Keen to learn
- Physically capable
- Ready to be part of a supportive, motivated crew

If you're interested, come along to a training night, have a chat with our members, or reach out through the Lake Ōkāreka Volunteer Fire Brigade Facebook page.

Kierin Oppatt - Chief Fire Officer

Lake Ōkāreka Volunteer Fire Brigade

027 777 5130 or kierin.oppatt@fireandemergency.nz

Kierin

Kierin Oppatt - Chief Fire Officer
Lake Ōkāreka Volunteer Fire Brigade
027 777 5130 or kierin.oppatt@fireandemergency.nz

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BAY OF PLENTY REGIONAL COUNCIL TOI MOANA

CONTRIBUTOR

Roly Bagshaw
Senior Maritime Officer - Lakes
0800 884 880

Harbourmaster Update: Winter 2026

Kia ora koutou,

Winter has well and truly settled in across the Rotorua Lakes, bringing those crisp, clear days and some beautiful lake views. It is a great time of year to enjoy the water, but the colder conditions mean we all need to be even more mindful of safety. Lake temperatures have dropped, and an unexpected fall into the water at this time of year can become serious very quickly.

If you are heading out, please take a few extra minutes before you launch. Check that your vessel is well-maintained, look at the latest weather forecast, carry two waterproof ways to call for help, and wear your lifejacket. With fewer people out on the water during winter, assistance may not be close by, so preparation really is your best friend.

For the Harbourmaster team winter is also a busy time for servicing assets and checking that our signs and navigation aids are in the right place and fit for purpose. Around the lakes this includes boat ramp and beach signage, navigation buoys, beacons, and particularly the yellow 5 knot buoys. If you notice any maritime signage that is damaged or missing, or a buoy that appears out of place, please let us know so we can follow it up. (Call 0800 5KNOTS, 0800 556687)

One of the simplest ways we can all help keep the lakes safe is by knowing the 5 KNOT RULES. That means keeping your speed under 5 knots when you are within 200 metres of shore, a beach, a wharf, jetty, ramp or other structure. You must also slow to 5 knots when you are within 50 metres of swimmers, kayakers,

paddleboarders or other vessels. Pretty common-sense stuff, and the rules are there to protect everyone sharing the water.

Saturday 25 July was World Drowning Prevention Day, a global initiative led by the World Health Organisation. As a country surrounded by water, and as a community that treasures our lakes, we all have a part to play in building a strong culture of water safety.

Whether you are boating regularly, taking the whānau to the lake edge, swimming, fishing, kayaking or heading out on a paddleboard, a few simple choices can save lives. Last year, 74 people lost their lives to drowning in New Zealand. Each of those deaths represents a family, a group of friends and a community forever changed.

The numbers are sobering. In 2024, 90% of craft-related drowning fatalities involved people who were not wearing a lifejacket. 73% were adult men aged 25 years and over. Many incidents involved preventable factors such as not wearing a lifejacket, swimming alone, alcohol or drug impairment, or overestimating swimming and boating ability.

The message is simple when it comes to lifejackets: wear it, don't just carry it. Most water emergencies happen suddenly and without warning. Having a lifejacket onboard is not enough if you end up in the water unexpectedly and can't reach it. Whether you are on a boat, jet ski, kayak, paddleboard, dinghy or raft, the safest lifejacket is the one you are already wearing.

This year's World Drowning Prevention Day campaign also highlights two important reminders: Fall in? Float First. If you unexpectedly enter the water, try to float on your back, control your breathing and conserve your energy until help arrives. See someone in trouble? Flotation First. Throw or provide something that floats rather than entering the water yourself.

From all of us in the Harbourmaster team, enjoy the lakes, stay warm, and stay safe.

Roly

Roly Bagshaw
Senior Maritime Officer (Lakes)
Harbourmaster Team BOPRC, Bay of Plenty Regional Council

CONTRIBUTOR

Rex Fairweather
Biosecurity Officer
Marine & Freshwater
Bay of Plenty Regional Council Toi Moana
0800 884 880

Freshwater Biosecurity Update: Winter 2026

Kia ora koutou,

Despite less people on the water over the winter months, efforts to protect the lakes from freshwater biosecurity threats continue.

Check Clean Dry Certify Community Compliance

The annualised results for the levels of self-certification and compliance of the Regional Pest Management Plan (RPMP) rules for not bringing freshwater pests to a waterway are now available.

Encouragingly the percentage of vessels and trailers found at boat ramps who have self-certified has increased to 48% which is up from 28% the previous year. While there is still room

for improvement, the trend indicates that the self-certification behaviour is slowly becoming embedded. The number of people going online to complete the self-certification form has also increased to 2,255 forms being completed.

The number of failed physical inspections remain relatively low at 12% but anything other than 0% is always a concern.

Boat ramp inspections will resume again in the coming months.

Check, Clean, Dry reminder.

Whether you're launching a boat, dropping in a kayak, or hauling out a paddleboard, keeping our Te Arawa lakes pristine comes down to this one crucial requirement before moving between waterways.

CHECKING means physically removing every single piece of weed, plant fragment, or mud from your hull, trailer, anchor, and gear before leaving the ramp.

CLEANING requires thoroughly flushing boat bladders, live wells, and cooling systems as well as the boat & trailer itself. It is also vitally important to remember that as well as checking cleaning and drying your vessel, the same principle is to be applied to associated equipment like wetsuits, waders, anchor ropes, and anything else that has touched the water.

DRYING. Finally, dry everything completely. If gear remains damp inside or out, pests can survive for days and hitch a ride to the next lake. Leave to dry for 48 hours. Taking these few extra minutes, every single time ensures our lakes stay healthy & beautiful for generations to come.

Lake Ōkāreka Boat Ramp Access Pilot scheme

Lake Ōkāreka has been selected as the site for a pilot project exploring new ways to protect our lakes from freshwater pests such as gold clam, which can spread between waterways on boats and trailers. The lake was chosen because it has a single public boat ramp, strong community support and a history of successful weed control work.

As part of the pilot, Bay of Plenty Regional Council is supporting Lake Ōkāreka Community Association (LOCA) to develop a Biosecurity Pathway System that would check whether boats have moved between lakes and, where needed, require decontamination before they can use a boat ramp.

The project has been strongly championed by LOCA Chair, Neil Oppatt, who as project lead, has played a key role advancing the concept.

One feature being explored is a “home lake” scheme for regular lake users. Boats that stay on the same lake would use an electronic seal to show they have not visited another freshwater waterway, allowing them to launch without repeated decontamination. Boats travelling between lakes would need to be cleaned and cleared before launching.

The pilot would combine electronic seals and automated boat ramp technology to help reduce the risk of freshwater pests spreading. Testing and evaluation is expected to take place over summer and throughout 2027, with lessons helping shape future lake protection efforts across the region and potentially New Zealand.

Protect Our Lakes & Rivers

Sign up to the national **Check Clean Dry** newsletter.

Stay up to date with the latest news, stories, and updates from the people and organisations working to protect New Zealand’s waterways from invasive freshwater pests such as gold clam.

Go to: https://ministryforprimaryindustries.createsend.com/h/d/E4963784FDFD1940/ to subscribe.

Gold clam community update

It’s been three years since the gold clam (Corbicula fluminea) was discovered in the Waikato River. Since then, an extensive national and regional programme of research, surveillance, and pathway management has been in action to contain its spread.

While isolated populations have since been detected outside the main Waikato river stem such as Lake Rotomanu in Taranaki and the recently discovered industrial site at Ruakohua Stream in South Auckland (linked to the Waikato River), containment and surveillance efforts remain critical. In the Bay of Plenty, we have included gold

Stuart Mackay / Earth Sciences NZ

Gold clams scooped from the sediment at Lake Karāpiro

clam in the Regional Pest Management Plan to ensure the rules, monitoring tools, and resources are in place to protect our waterways.

During April and May, Biosecurity New Zealand coordinated a national surveillance programme targeting gold clam and three other high-risk freshwater mussels (Zebra, Quagga and the Golden Mussel).

Around 65 lakes, rivers, and water bodies from Northland to Southland were surveyed by regional councils alongside regional partners, including Te Arawa Lakes Trust locally to provide a national baseline. Plankton netting & Benthic dredging techniques were used to detect both microscopic larvae and settled clams, and the positive news is that no new detections were found across any of the surveyed sites, including our Rotorua Te Arawa lakes.

This surveillance programme, combined with our ongoing eDNA monitoring and boat ramp sediment sifting programmes, strongly suggests that our local waters remain free of gold clam. However, vigilance is vital. Please continue to follow established rules and protocols, such as Check, Clean, Dry on all boats, trailers, and gear before moving between waterways. This not only helps in the fight against gold clam but also stops the spread of other aquatic pests.

Gold clam national research update

Crucial to the ongoing containment and control of gold clam is research. Earth Sciences NZ (ESNZ) undertakes an extensive research programme. As part of the programme, they produce an e-newsletter (search niwa.co.nz stopping gold clam programme). Key highlights in the latest edition include:

- Investigations on how gold clam could affect New Zealand's lakes and rivers if they become more widespread.
- Examining the impacts on water quality, nutrient cycling, oxygen levels and algal blooms.
- Exploring implications for drinking water treatment and freshwater management.
- Looking at how gold clams interact with native species and whether fish help spread them.

Benthic barriers research

- Investigating whether pūkeko may feed on gold clams instead of native kākahi.
- Testing control methods, including lakebed barriers and underwater sound technology.

Rex Fairweather
Biosecurity Officer Freshwater
Bay of Plenty Regional Council Toi Moana

CONTRIBUTOR

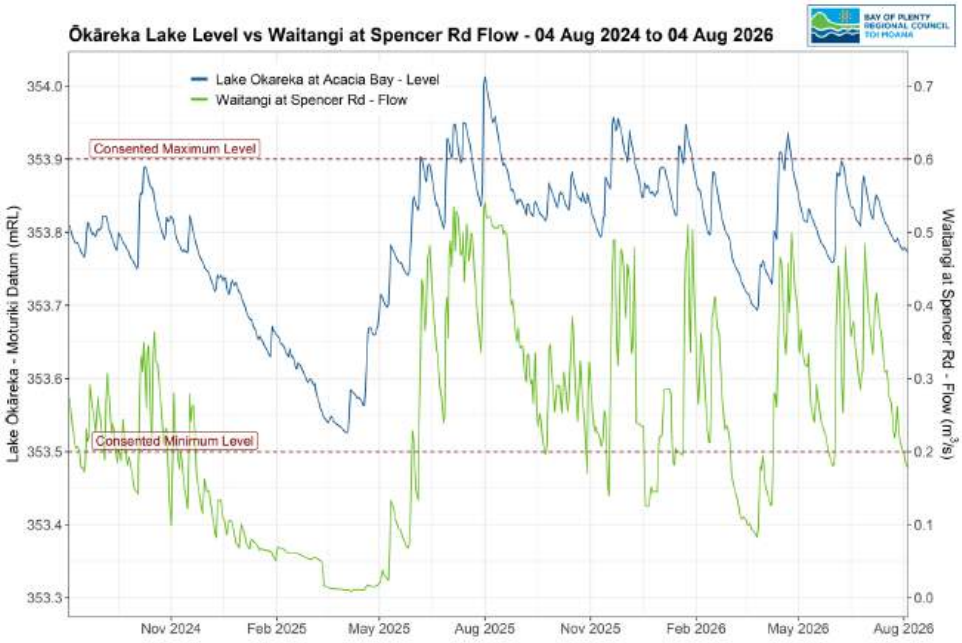
Justine Randell
Lakes Operations Officer
0800 884 880

BOPRC Lakes Operations Report: Winter 2026

Kia ora koutou,

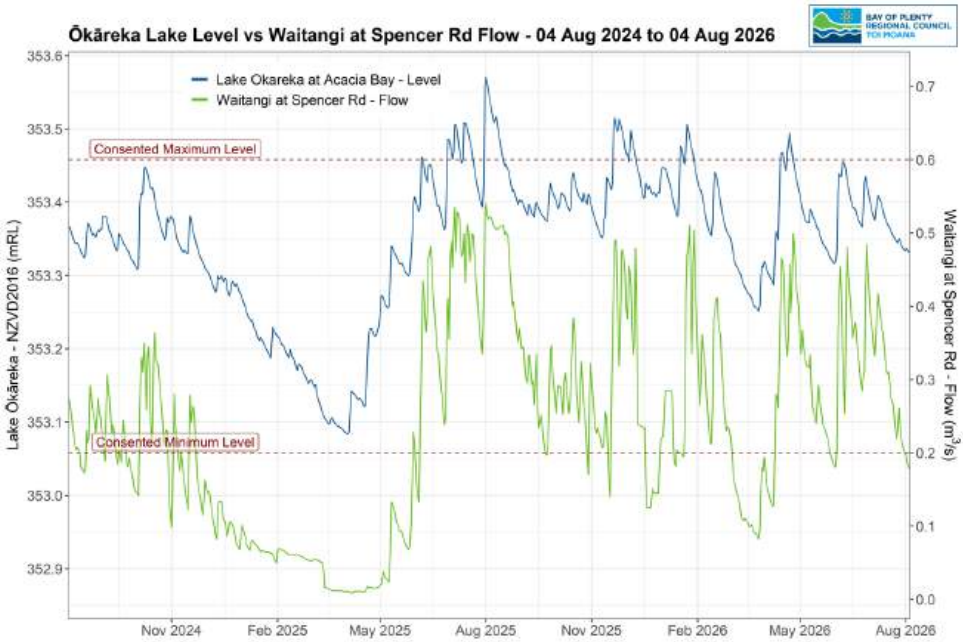
A relatively dry winter, compared with previous years, has resulted in the lake level gradually making its way down to the middle of the operating range (353.7 mRL). Flows through the outlet reduce naturally with lower lake levels, despite the valve being fully open. To help prevent low lake levels during the upcoming summer, flows will continue to be monitored closely over the next few months as we head into summer. By targeting the middle of the operating range, the lake will have capacity should an unexpected rain event occur, and conversely, should a period of dry weather be experienced.

Rotorua Te Arawa Lake levels have historically been reported using a local datum called Moturiki Datum. As part of a national standardisation programme, reporting of water levels is transitioning to the New Zealand Vertical Datum (NZVD). While lake levels are referenced



as Moturiki Datum in consents and BOPRC management plans, moving forward they will be reported on BOPRC's Environmental Data Portal as NZVD. The measurement scale remains the same, simply with a datum offset applied to convert between datums. These are site specific and for Ōkāreka the offset is -0.442. The graphs below, and BOPRC's Environmental Data Portal, now display the lake levels in both Moturiki Datum and NZVD.

If you have any questions or concerns around this work, please do not hesitate to contact me: Justine.Randell@boprc.govt.nz.



Justine

Justine Randell, Bay of Plenty Regional Council Toi Moana

Forest & Bird
TE REO O TE TAIAO | *Giving Nature a Voice*

CONTRIBUTOR

Margaret Dick
Forest & Bird
rotorua.branch@
forestandbird.org.nz

Tikitapu Pest Control Project – Forest & Bird Care Group: Winter 2026

Toxin operation targeting rats

Our annual toxin operation to reduce the rat population in the reserve is underway. This year we will be putting small quantities of two different toxins (Cholcalciferol and Diphacinone) into the Philproof bait stations during August. On the 2nd and 3rd of August a group of volunteers put a non-toxic prefeed into the bait stations. The aim is to customise the rats to the bait and encourage rapid uptake when the toxic version goes out. Toxin will be distributed on the 16th and 17th of the month and topped up two weeks later. Perimeter signs will go up at strategic points around the reserve the day before the toxin goes out and these will remain in place until DOC gives permission for their removal (when all danger of toxin residue in dead animals is over). Dogs, in particular, are very susceptible to the anticoagulant that we are using.

Pre-operation monitoring for rats and marsupials was undertaken in mid-July; results have not yet been confirmed for marsupials but 46% of the rat tracking cards were positive.

Many of the Philproof bait stations in TSR are showing their age and blending in to the background. The absence of groundcover can be attributed to the wallaby invasion.

Trap results:

The band of trappers continue their twice monthly checks of the trap network (60 x DOC200's and 60 x Sentinel traps). In the first 6 months of 2026 a total of 268 predators have been despatched – these comprise 163 rats, 58 possums, 4 mustelids, 30 mice and 13 hedgehogs. A further 37 rats and 19 possums were caught in July.

It has been great to welcome some new faces to the volunteer group recently, both at the monthly work bees and joining the trap team.

We would be very pleased to welcome new volunteers to this project. If you are interested, please get in touch.

You can reply to the branch email address:
Rotorua.branch@forestandbird.org.nz or phone or text Margaret (0274202022.

Alternatively, come along and have a chat to the people at the base station during the work days. The Forest & Bird flag will be up in Okareka Loop Rd alongside the fire station. We begin at 9.00am and run through to approximately 1.00pm. Dates are 16th, 17th 30th and 31st August to distribute the toxin, and then 20th and 21st September to remove any remaining toxin.

Mistletoe, the saving of which was the primary objective of this programme, continues to thrive – and so do the native birds. Our thanks to all the volunteers who, in many and varied ways, contribute to the success of this project.

Margaret

Margaret Dick
Forest & Bird
Ph: 0274202022
rotorua.branch@forestandbird.org.nz

CONTRIBUTOR

Sandra Goodwin
Landcare Ōkāreka
slgoodwin.nz@gmail.com

Landcare Ōkāreka Report: Winter 2025

Landcare Ōkārekaa volunteers have continued with their projects around Lake Ōkāreka over summer, autumn and into winter 2026. Pest animal trapping has continued throughout these months along with wetland weed removal of willows and other weeds species and preparation of planting sites for this coming winter and spring of 2026. Thank you to all of the Landcare Ōkāreka volunteers helping with these on going projects.

PHOTO: Native vegetation flourishing in the Millar Road wetland area, after the removal of invasive pest weed willows.

Annual Statistics 1/07/2025 to 30/06/2026

Overall this last financial year, from 1 July 2025 to 30 June 2026 Landcare Ōkāreka volunteers have undertaken 1250 hours of volunteer work around the catchment. This is a huge amount of work for which this community should be very grateful.

Over 440 hours of trap checking and setting by volunteers has resulted in 753 pest animals caught. This has included 538 rats, 20 weasles and stoats and 115 possums.

There have also been over 200 hours spent on pest plant control (mainly willow trees) along with around 170 hours on new plantings.

Plantings:

So far this winter we have held 1 main planting day in the Millar Road wetland area. This year, like last year, the plantings have been scattered throughout the area, and more infill planting has also been done. Plants this year came from Bay of Plenty Regional Council, with additional donated plants from Treeline Nurseries in exchange for seeds gathered by local LO volunteers for the nursery, and also seedlings grown on by local LO volunteers.

Animal Pest Trapping:

The team of Landcare Ōkāreka volunteers have continued to check and rebait the traps along the various trapping lines around the edge of Lake Okareka and in the Millar Road wetlands on a regular basis. See figures above in Annual Statistics.

A huge thank you to everyone who is helping with this project. And a big thank you to local Ōkāreka people who have donated lures for the trapping team to use in their traps for rats and possums!

If you are keen to help with trapping, please contact Mike Goodwin 0274 996 082 or email him: mikegoodwin.nz@gmail.com

As per usual we ask parents and children to take a responsible attitude towards traps if you should notice them. Do not touch or poke anything in to the traps. They are there for a purpose.

Rat Bait Available:

Ditrac rat bait for bait stations is still available. This is funded by Bay of Plenty Regional Council. If you require bait for your bait station please contact either Rod Stace 362 8523 or Mike & Sandra Goodwin 362 8865 to arrange a time to collect.

Wasps:

Wasps do not really seem to have quitened down too much over winter this year, in spite of the frosts and rain we have been getting. If you have a wasp trap early spring is the time to get it out and try to trap queen wasps as they head out to create new nests.

Dogs:

If there are NO DOGS signs up, such as on the Walkway and Walking Track around Lake Ōkāreka, please DO NOT take your dog into those areas. Also keep your dog under control – voice or on lead at ALL Times – and not jumping all over members of the public while they are out walking!

It is disappointing to have to report yet another dabchick or weiweia has been mauled by a dog/dogs in the Boyes beach area. These little aquatic birds are rarer than kiwi. Please be a responsible local dog owner.

Litter and Rubbish Collection:

A huge thank you to those caring local people who have been undertaking recent litter and rubbish collection around Lake Ōkāreka roads and reserve areas. Your efforts are really appreciated.

Weed Control:

This is always ongoing especially over summer and autumn.

More recent property owners at Lake Ōkāreka have no idea how different this place used to be. Over the years since Landcare Ōkāreka formed in 2003, 1000's of weeds have been removed and in their place many 1000's of NZ plants, shrubs and trees have taken their place.

If you are keen to help out with weed and/or animal pest control or planting, please get in touch.

Sandra

Sandra Goodwin
Secretary, Landcare Ōkāreka
slgoodwin.nz@gmail.com or 073628865 or 0274 711 915

And don't forget to LIKE our Landcare Ōkāreka facebook page!

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110 Lake Road, Koutu, Rotorua | 07 343 9090

CONTRIBUTOR

Claire Gower-James

Lake Ōkāreka Scenic Reserve Restoration Project

For the past two years, a small and passionate group of local volunteers has been quietly working away on the North East Face of Lake Ōkāreka, as part of the Lake Ōkāreka Scenic Reserve Restoration Project.

At its heart, this is about restoration - protecting what we have while steadily improving the health and resilience of this special piece of bush. Pest control has been our main focus so far, helping give our native birds and wildlife a better chance to thrive, but restoration can encompass much more; pest and weed control, caring for native flora and fauna, access, and strengthening our community connection with the reserve.

Keen to lend a hand?

Our practical volunteer role is straightforward: clearing and rebaiting our possum and rat traps along either the top or bottom track.

The traps are checked on a fortnightly roster, but with enough volunteers, each person would only need to head out around 3 - 4 times a year. The more people involved, the lighter the load for everyone.

It's a great reason to walk this beautiful track, spend some time in the bush, and know that along the way you're making a very real contribution to protecting and improving our native wildlife.

And you don't need to be a trapping expert; we can show you what to do. It's a big area for a small team, and every trap checked, every hour volunteered and every bit of support makes a difference.

There are many ways our community can get behind the project; through practical help, resources, local knowledge, sponsorship, spreading the word or simply taking an interest in what is happening on our doorstep.

We look forward to sharing more about our progress and the different ways you can be involved. **Next publication we will share our most recent 'catch stats'!**

If you'd like to volunteer, find out more, or support the project in another way, please contact us on: 021 831 200

Lake Ōkāreka Scenic Reserve Restoration Project

Local people. Practical action. Restoring Ōkāreka together.

LOCA Coffee Club

LOCA Coffee Club at the Lake Ōkāreka Fire Station 10.30-11.30am the last Friday of every month - 28 August, 25 September, 30 October, 27 November, 18 December.

Grab your friends and your neighbours and join us for a coffee hosted by Rick & Lucy with the support from LOCA and the Fire Brigade. No pressure to bring anything other than yourselves and a good yarn, meet someone new or stick to the people you know. Just an opportunity to get together.

CONTRIBUTOR

Lake Okareka Tennis Club

Lake Ōkāreka Tennis Club: Winter Update

Although winter has brought the colder weather, our courts have continued to see regular use, with members making the most of every opportunity to get out for a hit. It's been great to see the courts remaining active throughout the quieter months and a reminder of what a fantastic facility we have in our community.

As we look ahead to the coming summer season, planning is already underway for another busy and enjoyable year. We're excited to continue offering Junior and Adult Tennis Coaching, with lessons expected to begin in Term 4. Whether you're picking up a racquet for the first time or looking to improve your game, coaching is a great way to develop your skills in a fun and supportive environment.

Pickleball continues to build momentum at the club and we're looking forward to sharing further news about pickleball over the coming season as this exciting addition continues to grow.

If you're interested in joining the coaching programme or would simply like to become involved with the Ōkāreka Tennis Club, we'd love to hear from you.

Coaching Enquiries: Emily Scott
emilyscott4@gmail.com
027 431 9110

General Club Enquiries:
Contact any committee member or via the Facebook page: Lake Okareka Tennis Club.

Club memberships for the upcoming season will be confirmed following our Annual General Meeting. Membership provides access to the club's facilities, organised activities and a welcoming community of players of all ages and abilities.

We look forward to seeing familiar faces back on the courts and welcoming plenty of new members over the coming season.

Rich Lang, Chairperson
Lake Ōkāreka Tennis Club
Ably assisted by the Tennis Club Committee

Rich, Emily, Tamson, Shelley and the Team

CONTRIBUTOR

Melissa Boardman

Weweia / New Zealand Dabchick for Bird of the Year

We are lucky to share our beautiful lake with the special and rare weweia / New Zealand dabchicks. Dabchicks are our only endemic grebe and there are less than 2,000 of them left, they're rarer than kōkako and yet they're relatively unknown and often overlooked!

Dabchicks are dainty, chocolate coloured aquatic birds with portly bodies, buoyant butts and intense yellow eyes. They spend their lives on shallow lakes and ponds, preferring to tuck themselves away in sheltered inlets where they can build their floating nests.

Dabchicks are small for a water bird, you might see them foraging alongside the scaup and coots. They are recognisable by their long neck, 'Lochness monster' silhouette and fluffy white rear. They usually hang out in pairs and they dive frequently. They are perfectly adapted to life on the water, their legs are set very far back on their bodies to make swimming effortless and they have individually webbed toes that help them move around quickly underwater. However these features make them clumsy on land and young grebelings are unable to fly for their first couple of months of life which makes them vulnerable to many threats.

Dabchicks love to dance! They form very strong pair bonds and mate for life, dancing is one way that they communicate with each-other. They will dance in response to a threat, and in

the lead up to nesting season as a way to show their commitment to each other. Dabchicks are territorial and dedicated pairs will occupy and defend a territory year after year, so if you regularly see a couple of dabchicks in the same place, chances are that they are the same ones. If you're very lucky you might have seen them carrying their tiny grebelings on their backs!

I'm campaigning for weweia / New Zealand dabchicks for Forest & Bird's annual Bird of the Year competition this year. The competition raises awareness of native birds and gets people talking about conservation in a fun way. I decided to try and raise some awareness within the Rotorua region to make people appreciate them more and hopefully get involved with protecting them.

The dabchick population has suffered greatly from habitat loss, much of their original wetland habitat was destroyed to make way for farmland. The introduction of rats and increased human activity on lakes also contributed to the decline in their population.

Currently the biggest threat to dabchicks is human activity. They nest year-round and surges in water from boats, jet skis and lake users flood and destroy their nests, killing their eggs. Norway rats and uncontrolled dogs are their main threats on land as dabchicks come ashore to nest, mate or roost. At least two dabchicks have been killed by dogs in the Boyes Beach area in the past two years, one of which was killed within the DoC Conservation Reserve.

We can help dabchicks by:

- Reducing single use plastics that could end up in their habitat.
- Keeping dogs on leash and respecting dog prohibited areas.
- Predator trapping at home and/or as part of a community effort.
- Not feeding bread to ducks or other wild birds. Bread is toxic for birds, spreads disease, pollutes the lake and causes dangerous botulism to thrive which can kill a range of birds.
- If you are a boat or jet ski user, by respecting speed limits and avoiding areas that dabchicks might be nesting, like sheltered inlets.
- If you fish, make sure you remove all fishing gear, including hooks and fishing line, which can easily trap or kill dabchicks.

You can especially help by voting for them in Forest & Bird's Bird of the Year competition and encouraging your friends and family to vote too. Let's celebrate having these rare and wonderful birds living on our lake!

Voting is open from the 4th until the 20th of September at birdoftheyear.org.nz

Follow the Bird of the Year campaign:
Instagram: @welovеweweia
Facebook @welovеweweia
Tiktok @welovеweweia

If you have a local business that would like to support this campaign, or would like to help in any way please get in touch: welovеweweia@gmail.com

Melissa

Melissa Boardman (Campaign Manager) Weweia / New Zealand Dabchick for Bird of the Year

CONTRIBUTORS

Erin, Megan, Davina & Leslie
Preschool Teachers
Phone 07-362 8606

Lake Ōkāreka Preschool News: Winter 2026

We are fortunate to work alongside our Rotorua East primary schools and early childhood centres to learn our local pūrakau, whakapapa and make connections to our whenua. As a collective we have already produced two wonderful books retelling the story of Ko Whakapoungākau te Pae Maunga and Īhenga – The Name Giver using art and illustrations from our tamariki. Following these wonderful pūrakau we visited Te Pūtake o Tawa where we remembered Hinemoa and Tūtānekai retelling the story of their aroha for each other and that Hinemoa had swum all the way to Mokoia island to be married to Tūtānekai.

Lake Ōkāreka Preschool has been named the Early Childhood Council Exceptional Community-Based Centre Award winner for 2026!

This is a wonderful recognition of our small community preschool and the care, learning and connection that happen here every day. It reflects the dedication of our teaching team, parent board, whānau and wider community, who all help make Lake Ōkāreka Preschool such a special place for tamariki to learn and grow.

A special thank you to our amazing teaching team for the aroha and commitment they bring to our preschool. We were also proud to be shortlisted alongside other fantastic centres, including our friends at Pathways Steiner Kindergarten Rotorua.

Congratulations to our whole preschool community. We are so lucky to have such strong early childhood education in Rotorua.

Your Teaching Team.

Leslie, Davina, Erin & Megan

Preschool contact 362 8606,
email office@lakeokarekapreschool.co.nz.

www.lakeokarekapreschool.co.nz Like us on Facebook to see more adventures.