

PRESS RELEASE 3rd January 2010

Standing room only at Lake Rotoiti

Lake Rotoiti residents turned out in their hundreds to hear of Environment Bay of Plenty's proposals for the future control of water levels in the Lake.

The resource consents for the Okere Falls control gates and the Ohau Channel weir expire in June this year. EBOP is proposing a departure from the present operating range of 152.4 mm (6 inches) to a new operating regime that would see lake levels controlled over a 812.8 mm (32 inch range). This could see the lake level fall to well below levels ever seen since records began, over 100 years ago and has the potential to seriously affect environmental issues and recreational activities on the lake.

Residents listened to details of the proposals and strongly expressed their concerns. Passions ran high when the possibility of the lake being used as a hydro storage reservoir for a proposed power station on the Kaituna River was raised. Comparisons were made with the Lake Manapouri debate of 50 years ago

The responsibility for the consent applications rests with Mr. Ken Tarboton, EBOP's Group Manager Rivers & Drainage. After originally accepting an invitation to address the meeting, Mr. Tarboton declined to attend.

The meeting was chaired by Ian McLean, a former National MP and non-lake resident, who did an excellent job of ensuring that members of the public were able to express their many concerns and who facilitated a smooth running meeting.

In the end, the residents voted 532 in favour to 18 against any change to the current operating regime, sending a strong message to EBOP to revisit its proposals.

There was a unanimous vote in favour of the Executive Committee of Lake Rotoiti Community Association representing the community and conducting negotiations and proceedings as it sees fit.