

UPDATE ON THE ROTORUA LAKES NUTRIENT MANAGEMENT PLAN IMPLEMENTATION

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Lake Rotorua is the largest lake in the Rotorua district. It is highly valued by iwi and community – and is of national importance. Lake Rotorua was returned to Te Arawa via the 2004 Deed of Settlement and the lakebed is vested in Te Arawa. The management of the Lakes is shared between the partners to the Rotorua Lakes Strategy Group (Te Arawa Lakes Trust, Bay of Plenty Regional Council and Rotorua Lakes Council). The Lake Rotorua catchment is dominated by pastoral farming and forestry. The catchment includes around 9,000 hectares of indigenous vegetation. Dairy farming occurs on about a quarter of the pastoral farming land in the catchment, with drystock landuse occupying the balance. Forestry occupies around 43% of land within the catchment.

The water quality for Lake Rotorua has been the subject of concern for a number of decades. The water quality of the 1960s was identified as a suitable and achievable target for the lake by the community. This has been endorsed through the Bay of Plenty's Operative Regional Water and Land Plan which established a target Trophic Level Index (TLI) for the Lake of 4.2. The Lake is co-limited by nitrogen and phosphorus and management of both these nutrients is required to achieve the TLI. Scientific research has shown that 435t/N and between 33.7 to 38.7t/P are the annual sustainable nutrient loads required to achieve and maintain the TLI of 4.2. The steady state nitrogen load is 755 t/N.

Nutrient management, lake health, cultural impacts, economic challenges and the required level of behaviour and land use change means this is a challenging issue for the Rotorua community, as well as the Bay of Plenty. There has also been considerable national level involvement in finding a proposed solution. The Proposed Rules have been developed as one element of an integrated framework that also includes an incentive scheme (\$40million), gorse conversion funding and engineering solutions. Funding is also being provided for the development of provisional Nutrient Management Plans.

The Proposed Rules (Plan Change 10) were developed through a community group process. They are a combination of permitted activities (below certain thresholds) and Controlled Activity consent requirements. Nutrient Management Plans are the key element of farming enterprises reducing nitrogen loss down to Nitrogen Discharge Allocations (NDAs). The base data used by the Proposed Rules (for allocation) comes from a benchmarking exercise from the period 2001-04. While the rules are still only at the proposed stage, there are a range of implementation actions already occurring in preparation.

History

2010: Regional Policy Statement notified

2012: Oturoa Agreement signed

2012: Stakeholder Advisory Group established

2013: Regional Policy Statement operative

2014: Revised Funding Deed – \$45.5m incentives

2015: Rule drafting process, allocation

2015: PC10 Notified in December

2017: Hearings....

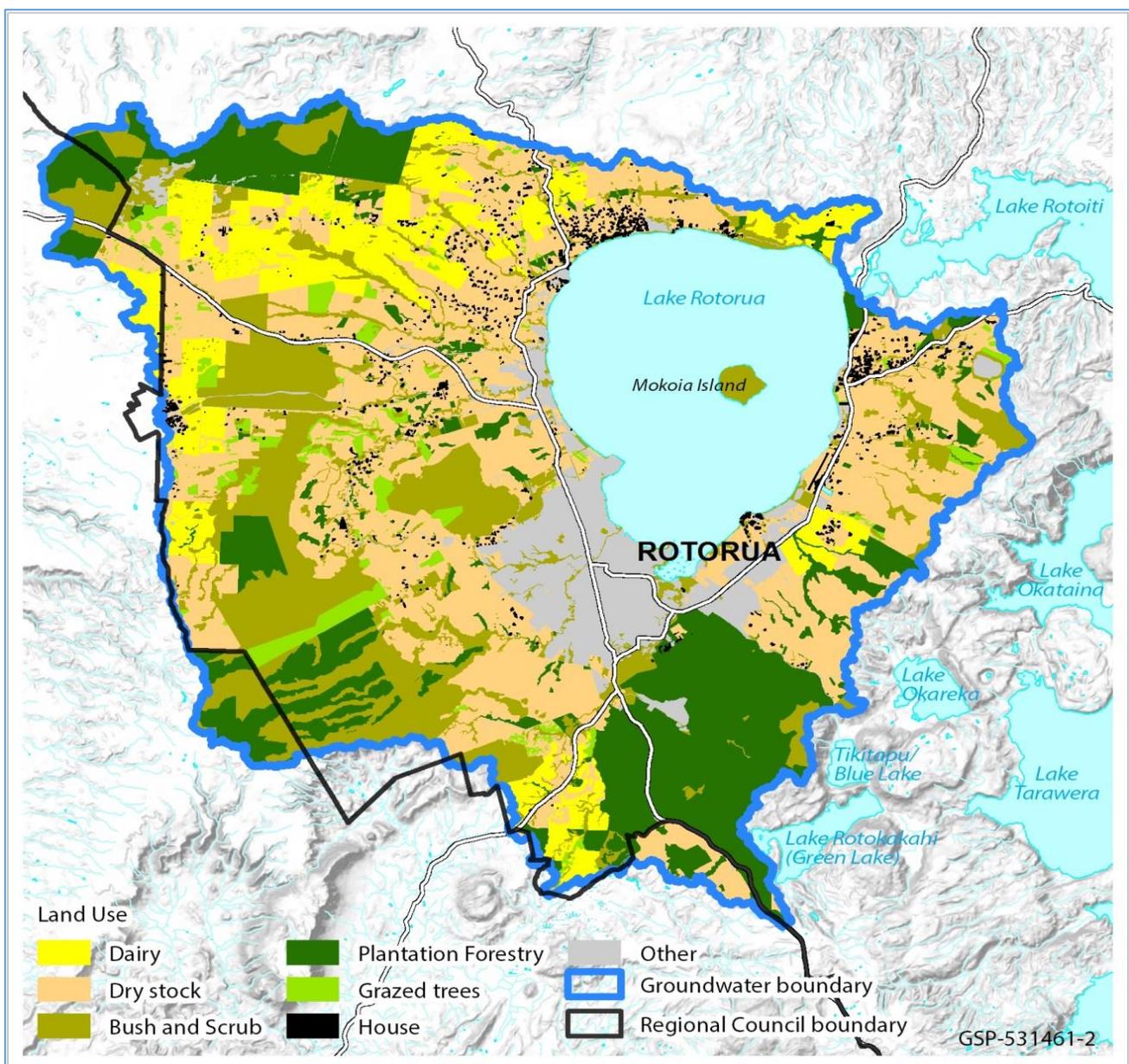


Figure 1. Land use in the Lake Rotorua Catchment

The principles behind Plan Change 10 are:

- “Everyone needs to be part of the solution”
- Land use rules to manage discharges
- Focus on nitrogen, recognition of phosphorus
- Allow time for transitions – phasing, managed reduction
- Adaptive management
- Balancing nitrogen risk with resources
- Accept or manage uncertainty.

And the issues that are having to be dealt with are:

- OVERSEER[®] version change
- Blocks and properties and enterprises
- Complex farming systems
- 140 large pastoral properties, many smaller
- Benchmarked and not benchmarked
- Timing of implementation
- Attenuation
- Trading
- Catchment boundary change

..... and more !

The Rotorua Te Arawa Lakes Programme is supporting farmers through:

- Incentives Fund - \$40 million to purchase nitrogen so farmers don't have to reduce
- \$3.3 million fund - to explore low nitrogen agricultural opportunities
- \$2.2 million fund - Advice and Support for farmers to prepare for the rules
- Land management staff – expertise and assistance.

Further information about the Rotorua Te Arawa Lakes Programme can be found at:
<http://www.rotorualakes.co.nz> and for specifics of the Lake Rotorua Nutrient Management Proposed Plan Change 10 hearing from: <http://www.boprc.govt.nz/pc10hearings>.

Bay of Plenty Regional Council, Rotorua Lakes Council and Te Arawa Lakes Trust
Working as one to protect our lakes with funding assistance from the Ministry for the Environment