

# Land Use Futures Board Landowners Seminar Meeting April 2009 – Rotorua



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Addressing Land/Water Issues Through partnerships in Rotorua

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Milestone 4 – April 2009



Sustainable Management Fund



**NZ Landcare Trust**  
*landcare action on the ground*

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## **Introduction / Summary of Seminar**

As part of the Land Use Futures (LUF) Board's objective to connect with the farming community of the Rotorua lakes catchments an open seminar was held to inform them of the role of the LUF Board and attempt to gain an understanding of what the farmers believe to be the most pressing issues in the effort to reduce the nutrient load caused by farming practices on the lakes.

This report captures farmer feedback on science and research, best management practice and land use optimisation options for the lakes catchments.

# LUF Landowners Seminar Meeting – 14<sup>th</sup> April 2009

## Te Ao Marama Hall, Rotorua

Chaired by Rick Vallance – Chairman LUF Board

Notes compiled by Melinda Dresser and Monica Peters - Project Coordinators, NZ Landcare Trust

## Agenda

1. Introducing the LUF Board – appointed by the Rotorua Lakes Strategy Group.
2. Concept and strategy of the LUF Board – direct landowner input into problem definition and solution development (Collaborative strategy 'vs' Top down regulation)
3. Ways forward – landowner feedback

**Apologies:** Lachlan McKenzie, Schweizer Family, Malcolm Short, Piri Fenwick, Tai Eru, Jim Gray, Alex Wilson, Jessie Chan, Peter Guerin, Chris Sutton, Linden Hunt

## Discussion

### 1. Do we accept that mankind is exporting nutrients into the lake?

Overall opinion was YES. However must take into account the effect of natural nutrient levels from geothermal, forestry and native bush sources.

### 2. Science

- Accuracy – how do we achieve it?
- Science can give a very wide range of values - do we head for the middle set of values?
- Methodologies for gathering data can differ (reference to soil testing)
- Trusts, Farmers, EBOP need to work together to get figures which are more accurate than those EBOP are currently using
- Further research required on the geology of the region
- Farmers were excluded from the science committee (Lakes TAG)
- Key industry bodies entered late into the discussions
- Discrepancies on the content of science is a concern
- If it takes 50 years for the nutrients to reach the lake then is it really necessary to make changes as it won't affect farmers personally
- Need a review on the TLI numbers – science of the whole water quality issue needs looking at
- An ongoing review is also needed to keep track of further research findings

*"If we can't resolve this issue here with 20 farmers, then how can we solve it elsewhere in the country?"*

<b>Nitrogen inputs to Lake Rotorua (Draft Rotorua/Rotoiti Action Plan)</b>		
	<b>Future</b> (tonnes)	<b>Now</b> (tonnes)
Total inputs to Lake	746	556
Natural Sources (e.g forestry, geothermal)	83 <sup>1</sup>	113
Urban	36.2 <sup>2</sup>	50
<b>Rural</b>	<b>580</b>	<b>300</b>
<b>Total sustainable inputs to achieve target TLI</b>	<b>435</b>	<b>435</b>

Note that “Now” reflects nutrient inputs from c 50 yr ago

### 3. Best Management Practice Toolbox

- Needed for farmers to be able to implement a reduction in nutrient exports
- At the moment the opinion is that there are no tools in the tool box – farmers need simple recommendations: ‘if we do this then we achieve this’
- Practicality and cost effectiveness of adoption (e.g. DCD’s proven ineffective in catchment)
- Existing information needs to be better used (e.g. Helen Ritchie’s report)
- There is a huge amount being done by individual farmers which is not recognised though they feel that the bigger projects such as fencing off large areas should be up to EBOP. EBOP should implement the toolbox. There is already support from Industry within the catchment

### 4. Disconnect between farmers and Regional Council

- Lack of connection and willingness between what the landowner can do and EBOP
- Lack of respect from EBOP towards farmer’s knowledge and ability to fix the problem
- Some EBOP staff who deal with farmers lack farming knowledge

### 5. Implementation

- What is the solution to this issue?
  - o Better funding for farmers to implement BMP’s
  - o Old Kaituna Scheme was very successful and would be a good way to go forward
  - o Difficult as EBOP cannot be the supporter and the policeman at the same time - though this can be solved by a group of farmers working together with EBOP staff and another department be in charge of policing
  - o Standards are mutually agreed between the Regional Council and farmers.  
Who would farmers respond best to?
  - o Own representatives / industry
  - o Main feeling was that it should be the Regional Council but need much better communication between the landowner and EBOP staff

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<sup>1</sup> Following treatment of Tikitere geothermal

<sup>2</sup> Following reticulation / septic tank upgrades and stormwater treatment

## **6. Measurement**

- Measurement is necessary and many farmers have already started to make changes but these haven't been measured, therefore, haven't been taken into account
- Lakes are probably much better off than we think because of work that has been done but not taken into account for the benchmarking. Each Maori Trust block needs its own review. Ownership of the figures is an issue i.e. could they be used against the farmers by EBOP?
- In the past Nplas was used, now with OVERSEER measurements have to be redone
- Farmers have already provided figures for benchmarking and now they are being asked for them again, what happened to the first lot of figures?

## **7. Legal Issues**

- Needs to be comfort between landowner and council before the farmers will give over their benchmarking numbers – not sure what the numbers will be used for.
- Independent measurement system may be a solution – need to have a measurement similar to the carbon credits system (this is being worked on now)
- People want to be able to see what the rules are and how the information is going to be used before handing over their figures
- All comes back to the RMA.

## **8. Targeted rates**

- This has not been discussed by LUF as LUF is not a political body. Lobbying is role of organisations such as Federated Farmers.
- However the LUF board should bring to RLSG notice what is happening in regard to fairness and connectivity.

## **9. Land use optimisation**

- Need to have sustainable solutions
- What alternatives are there? Eg. Maize has a big nutrient footprint and farmers don't want to "lock up" their land in forestry. And what are the impacts? –
- Undeveloped land covered in gorse – leaching problems. In some cases Maori land has been cleared of gorse and then has been slammed for taxes
- It may not be in the best economic interests of larger Maori Trust landowners to reduce their footprints as the largest rate payers; changes may be more feasible for smaller block holders
- All to do with economics – big land blocks have the ability to change land use. Rule 11 is a blunt tool, it has raised awareness on nutrient leaching but has not been effective. It has ruined the relationship between land owners and EBOP. The benchmarking system is inequitable. There needs to be space for negotiation. A replacement is needed which can be agreed on between EBOP and landowners.

## **10. LUF Communications with Landowners**

- Phone calls – one to one is best
- Newsletter sent to agencies and industry bodies to distribute
- Develop a LUF website

- Personal letters / small scale meetings

**Attendees:**

There were 27 attendees 16 of whom were farmers in the lakes catchment.

