

# Unlimited access to lake at risk

POOR behaviour and littering continues to dismay both tangata whenua and visitors to Waikaremoana while also raising questions around the direction of the lake's management.

Wairoa Mayor Craig Little supports the Ngai Tahu plea for visitors to stop trashing Lake Waikaremoana and the surrounding area.

Mr Little said for people to treat such a beautiful area with so little respect was disappointing.

"These people have a sense of entitlement, and this same type of behaviour is occurring by these same types of people all over New Zealand.

"I commend Tuhoë for being so tolerant, but if this situation does not improve, I believe a system needs to be established where people are registering and paying to use the lake.

"Like Lake Taupo, there needs to be a process in place where people register so Tuhoë know who is on the lake.

"People are filling their boats with hundreds of dollars of petrol and then paying nothing to use the lake.

"To preserve the park, there needs to be more controls and accountability in place.

"I do commend Tuhoë on their sensible approach as it must be so frustrating to have a small group of disrespectful people ruining it for everybody.

"I hope people hear and listen to this rational appeal and start respecting our country's beautiful natural areas or they risk losing the unlimited access that they currently enjoy."

On Stuff yesterday a regular Waikaremoana Holiday Park camper was reported as saying the iwi needed to be accountable for the area's well-being.

"It is one of the most magic places in New Zealand and DoC (Department of Conservation) have shown it can be open to all and well managed."

A DoC spokesperson said it would not be appropriate to comment given the department no longer managed the area.

Te Urewera Board and Ngai Tuhoë Te Uru Taumatua chairperson Tamati Kruger said

subscribing to a set of rules then penalising those who did not comply "contributes nothing to learning and improving behaviour over time".

Mr Kruger said the iwi was astonished at the severity of rubbish dumping and vandalism at the lake this summer.

The issue wasn't new; however, the scale of the problem this year had shocked them, he said.

"There is a huge distance between one's love of nature, one's love of Te Urewera, and actually living the behaviours and practices which meet that standard."

Mr Kruger said rather than the iwi acting as "the park ranger and as the police", it was about working with groups who used the lake to understand the principles of good, respectful, common-sense behaviour.

"We'd like to work that way rather than dish out a set of rules by which people then feel obliged to follow . . . If they love nature, they love Lake Waikaremoana, they will just not do those things."

Stuff reported there had been calls on social media for Lake Waikaremoana to be closed to visitors if things did not improve.

Last October Te Uru Taumatua commissioned an independent control expert to raise their understanding of DoC methods employed over the last 30 years.

This analysis would show what they were dealing with when it came to introduced animals — essential information as they take responsibility for developing new standards of control and balance in Te Urewera.

## Accountability of caretakers questioned

VERN Winitana, an owner of Te Maara-A-Te-Atua, one of 12 Waikaremoana lake reserves, said Te Urewera was in a mess and the situation was the result of former Minister for Treaty of Waitangi Negotiations Chris Finlayson's hurry to complete

the Ngai Tuhoë settlement.

The WAI 144 claimant said the i's were not dotted and the t's were not crossed because the then National government wanted to speed up the settlement of the claim.

Mr Winitana said Te Uru Taumatua chairman Tamati Kruger was trying to promote a philosophical stance to managing Te Urewera and the lake.

"This argument about rubbish and vandalism is something DoC had been able to manage, albeit not always that well in the past," Mr Winitana said.

"These claims are spurious and a way of deflecting attention away from the shortcomings of Te Uru Taumatua's

management plan.

"It is failing in its duties even though every year it has \$2 million of taxpayers' money to manage the park.

"Where is the evidence of this taxpayer-funded work?"

Mr Winitana said there were several agencies who had told local iwi Ngati Ruapani that Te Uru Taumatua had refused to engage with them and it was time they were held accountable.

He said Hawke's Bay Regional Council was responsible for water bodies and ensuring Genesis Energy complied with its resource consent to take water from the lake.

This activity was reported on each year at Tuai but he said a contractor was refused permission to undertake an underwater habitat survey of Lake Waikaremoana by Te Uru Taumatua and this was not reported on at Tuai last year. He found out about it at a Rotorua meeting this year.

"It is a mess and the personality status given to the park and agreed to by Finlayson has not

helped the park.

"It means that everyone is an owner and no one has responsibility except the people that control the purse, and the key person is Tamati Kruger."

He also wondered what Te Urewera Board members have been doing since they were appointed and what their process was for monitoring, managing, reviewing and reporting on the state of the environment.

"Why is there no annual board community consultation of their performance managing Te Urewera and why do they not report publicly?"

"Where are the reports from the board?"

"How has it come to this?"

Mr Winitana questioned the accountability of board members appointed by Te Uru Taumatua and what Minister for Treaty of Waitangi Negotiations Andrew Little was doing about it.

## Lakebed lease not renewed

NEGOTIATIONS over the lease of the Waikaremoana lakebed have stalled.

A court decision over the fiduciary (trust) relationship between the descendants of the original owners and Te Uru Taumatua and Wairoa Waikaremoana Maori Trust Board has yet to be released.

The long-standing grievance over payment of rental monies from the Lake Waikaremoana lessees to the owners' descendants was heard in the High Court at Wellington in October.

Applicant Vern Winitana said it was a good sign the High Court had not yet reached a decision.

The respondents are the Crown, Wairoa Waikaremoana Maori Trust Board, Te Uru Taumatua, Te Uru Taumatua Charitable Trust and Genesis Energy Ltd.

The 50-year iwi-Crown Waikaremoana lakebed lease was due for renewal in July 2017. The Government held a right to renewal, but the lease was not renewed.

"That is why this lakebed lease has operated on a month by month basis since its lapse in 2017, but is this legal?" Mr Winitana asked.

There is a huge distance between one's love of nature, one's love of Te Urewera, and actually living the behaviours and practices which meet that standard.