



Okere Gates and Ohau Weir - frequently asked questions

What are the Okere Gates and Ohau Weir?

Both the Okere Gates and Ohau Weir are man-made structures that help control water levels in lakes.

Why were the Gates and Weir built?

The Okere Gates were constructed in 1982 to regulate the flow of water from Lake Rotoiti into the Kaituna River to control lake levels, preventing lakeside flooding and extreme low lake levels. The Ohau Weir was constructed in 1989 to control water level fluctuations in Lake Rotorua.

Lakes and river systems are greatly affected by the weather. Lots of rain means the lakes can flood so to reduce the impact of floods the Gates and Weir can release excess water into the Kaituna River maintaining a safe water level in the lake.

At times when there is little rain, the Gates and Weir can be closed to prevent lake levels falling too low. The Gates can be adjusted to ensure enough flow so that the ecosystems relying on the river can survive through dry or drought conditions. Control of river flow also helps the businesses who rely on the river (for example, kayak and rafting tourism operators), and recreational users.

Having some control over the water levels in Lake Rotoiti and Lake Rotorua provides safety and certainty for the people and businesses that rely on the lakes.

Who is responsible for the Gates and Weir?

Both the Okere Gates and Ohau Weir were constructed for the Bay of Plenty Catchment Commission (which is now the Bay of Plenty Regional Council), and it is the Bay of Plenty Regional Council who is responsible for their operation and management.

Council held a resource consent, under the *Resource Management Act* for the construction, maintenance and management of the Gates and Weir. The most recent consent expired in June 2010 so Council applied for a new consent in December 2009 for the ongoing management of the Gates and Weir.

What is a resource consent, and what does it mean for the Okere Gates and Ohau Weir?

Resource consents help to ensure that natural and physical resources are allocated and used efficiently and sustainably. They are required for activities that will have an impact on the social, economic, environmental and cultural wellbeing of communities.

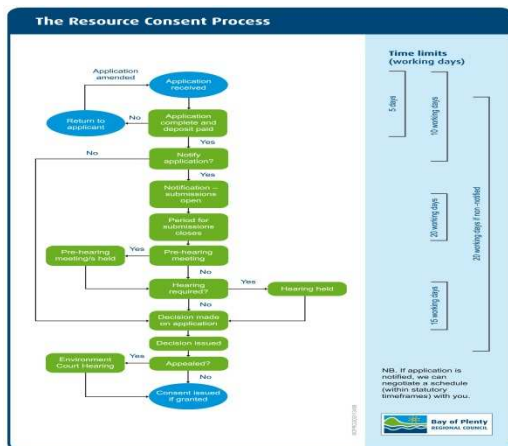
The Resource Management Act requires a resource consent for activities that include the diversion of a watercourse, or constructing a dam or stopbank.

The ongoing operation of the Okere Gates and Ohau Weir requires a resource consent because they affect a natural watercourse and can be used to dam the flow of water.

Who is involved in the resource consent process?

For information on the Resource Consent Process you can read the Resource Consent Process Guide on [the Ministry for the Environment \(MfE\) website](#).

In the Bay of Plenty, Regional Council is a statutory authority that considers applications for resource consents in some situations. Click on the thumbnail below to see a diagram of the consent process.



In the case of the Okere Gates and Ohau Weir, the Environmental Hazards group of Regional Council was the applicant while the Consents Department is the statutory authority. The usual process was followed with the application being treated as any other application.

Leading into the lodgement of the application, Regional Council had consulted with stakeholders (including the Te Arawa Lakes Trust who are the new owners of the lake bed under a Treaty Settlement agreement) and the resource consent was awarded in January 2011.

The consent was appealed to the Environment Court by a local iwi, Ngāti Pikiao who believed their environmental and cultural concerns had not been adequately addressed in the application. The Environment Court asked all interested parties to reconsider the terms of the application through mediation.

A new agreement was reached, and the Environment Court confirmed the new 35 year resource consent on 26 March 2012.

Who was involved in the resource consent mediation?

Involved in the negotiations were several stakeholders, including (but not limited to):

- Bay of Plenty Regional Council (applicant and existing consent holder)
- Te Arawa Lakes Trust (lake bed owner)
- Ngāti Pikiao (local Iwi)
- Lake Rotoiti Community Association (community stakeholder group)
- Fish and Game (Government stakeholder)
- individual interested parties

Negotiations and mediation resulted in a settlement agreement being reached in October 2011 with amended consent conditions. The agreement was referred to the Environment Court in November 2011, and the court confirmed the new resource consent on 26 March 2012.

Why did it take so long to reach a settlement?

All parties entered into mediation in good faith, and worked hard to understand the different opinions and needs of other affected parties.

Reaching an agreement that satisfies the legal, social, economic, environmental and cultural concerns of such a diverse range of stakeholders takes time. All stakeholders were willing to take as long as necessary to reach an appropriate agreement that will last for the 35 years of the resource consent.

What are the terms of the new settlement agreement for the resource consent?

The resource consent balances the social, economic, environmental and cultural wellbeing needs of our communities.

The 35 year resource consent includes several requirements for the ongoing monitoring of the environmental and cultural impacts of the Okere Gates and Ohau Weir.

Regional Council will manage, maintain and monitor the Gates and Weir, and will work with the community on environmental management of the area.

A Kaitiaki Group and the Rotorua Te Arawa Lakes Operational Liaison Group will be established to provide a voice for the community. These two groups will be supported by Regional Council, to ensure that interested community members can have input into the monitoring and management of the Gates and Weir.

In accordance with the new consent conditions, Regional Council will develop an operational management plan covering a wide range of requirements, including lake levels, flows into the Kaituna River, environmental management, communication and community engagement.

The terms of the resource consent may be reviewed if needed, to ensure that it continues to balance the needs of all stakeholders. All parties to the agreement look forward to working together for the benefit of the community and the environment.

Who do I talk to about the operation of the Okere Gates or Ohau Weir?

If you would like more information about the operation of the Okere Gates or Ohau Weir, please contact the Environmental Hazards group at Bay of Plenty Regional Council on 0800 884 880.