

GUARDIANS OF LAKE HĀWEA

2023 ANNUAL REPORT TO HCA

The Guardians held 7 meetings during the past year. Chair was Jane Forsyth from December to June and then Geoff Kernick; Secretary was Alison Brown.

The following outlines most of the issues/projects the Guardians have been involved in over the past 12 months in no particular order.

Lake level - The lake level dipped to a very low 338.7masl in early September. This is the lowest the lake has been since 2019. Fortunately we then received some significant rainfall which has helped bring the lake level up. On 9th Oct the level was 340.9masl so an increase of more than 2m.

Weeds/pests – Weeds on the lake shore and underwater are monitored and we advocate for control where possible. Weed species dealt with this year are Gunnera (Chilean Giant Rhubarb) on the shore near Glen Dene, where we liaise with LINZ and their contractors re spraying, and Elodea (invasive Canadian water weed) which is turning up around the lake. Some areas of Elodea could possibly have been controlled at the low lake levels that we've seen recently but this did not happen as the weed is not an ORC priority; however local action could still be possible. Canada Geese populations near the head of the lake may be at pest levels and we have discussed best approaches for control.

Biodiversity – Guardians are involved with enhancing breeding of grebes near the dam, dotterels at Craig Burn, and enhancing Lake Hāwea's Riparian Zone, local water quality and Indigenous Biodiversity

Grebes bred 3 times during the past season at Anzac inlet, hatching 9 chicks (though probably not all survived). The population of grebes on the lake is increasing and some natural nesting was also noted. Guardian provided nest boxes were once again a big hit with the Grebes.

At Craig Burn the water levels during the breeding season were again so high that gravel beaches were not exposed for dotterel nesting. However the signage about not driving/running dogs on the beaches was again put up to help educate people about best practice behaviour.

Thanks to good liaison with Contact Energy's environmental officers, we receive annual reports on restoring eel populations in the area by transferring young eels (elvers) to Hāwea from below the Roxburgh Dam and adult migrating eels in the opposite direction.

There have been significant pest plant clearing and plantings undertaken at all three target sites (Grandview creek, Urquhart Bay, and Rowley Bay). The dry summer resulted in some plant losses despite regular watering by small group of dedicated volunteers. Progress throughout the year is recorded on Facebook: <https://www.facebook.com/Hāweanz> For the period Jan – Sept 2023 there had been 12 working bees involving 342 person hours. Approximately 500 plants were planted across the three sites.



Catchment Groups – The Guardians are a member of the Lake Hāwea Stakeholders Group (current representatives Don Robertson and Geoff Kernick). We have raised a couple of issues during the past year with members of the Lake Hāwea Catchment Group. Guardians and Catchment Group have developed protocols with WAI Wanaka to enable respectful interactions between parties.

The ORC are currently running a series of 5 workshops with the Lake Hāwea Stakeholders Group with a view to developing a Lake Hāwea Catchment action plan. The aim is to have at least a portion of this plan in place by end of Q1 2024.

Water quality – Guardians and WAI Wanaka are currently scoping testing of stormwater that flows from the township to the lake. When implemented this should complement the water testing that the Catchment Group is already doing for water adjacent to farmland, and stormwater testing at Wanaka.

Consents - We made submissions on 2 consent applications: Our response to the Aotearoa Anglers fishing charter was in support of their application to run raft based fly fishing charters but with some conditions. These conditions include aspects of environmental stewardship that we would expect any business operations in and around our lakes and catchments to adhere to. Our response to the proposed ORC monitoring buoy consent application was in strong support. More details can be found in the submissions.

Flora Dora Cliff Erosion (mitigation options) – Contact Energy have reported a rough draft report has been prepared, but the investigations show there is a need to survey the shoreline cross sections again. Due to lake levels in 2021 the survey was unable to detail the full foreshore bed profile. A survey deeper into the foreshore will more effectively determine the erosion process. The next 3-yearly survey was scheduled for 2024 but Contact feel it would add value to the assessment to re-survey the Flora Dora cross sections this year when the lake is low. They are also due to survey the cross sections on the dam for gravel build-up this year and this will also provide information on long shore drift quantities which is also relevant to the assessment. Also planned is an inspection of the groynes that were installed as an erosion mitigation measures at Lake Pukaki as this will provide insight into the effectiveness of this option.



High lake level + stormy weather = cliff erosion

Waterways matters – Cougar Security (current Waterways contractor) have carried out maintenance on the jetty over the last twelve months to replace connectors. They are still to replace pile caps and a pile bracket. They do now have rope available to be attached along the jetty.

We were praiseworthy of them late last year in their work to reinstall the swimming area buoys at both Scott's Beach and the Esplanade Beach. We were also initially happy to see the extra yellow 5 knot buoys until realising their true intent!

These lead to the installation of the ski lane, an action for which there was no communication or consultation with the community at all. We could say that the ski lane was placed in a tricky location and what it achieved was friction between boaties and folk using the Scott's Beach swimming area in particular.

The community had long ago opted for swimming areas over ski lanes. This was achieved through consultation by Southern Monitoring Services, the then waterways contractor, and the community. With Lake Hāwea's very long and extended beach area SMS applied common sense and practicality.

The Bottom Bay reef buoy has once again broken loose to fortunately end up within the bay and not miles away.

Cougar will reinstate the Scott's Beach swimming area buoy line around mid October or soon thereafter, subject to weather.

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Guardians Aim: To ensure that Lake Hāwea, its surrounds, water quality, biodiversity and ecosystems are protected, maintained, enhanced, and managed for the benefit of all.

The Guardians shall:

- encourage the development of an evidence-based management plan for Lake Hāwea building on the WAI Wanaka Community Catchment Plan and the Shaping Our Future Water Taskforce Report;
- liaise with users, stakeholders, and statutory authorities of the lake and its catchments, concerning catchment run-off, lake water quality, pest species, biodiversity and ecosystem function;
- foster measurement and monitoring of lake conditions, physical and biological properties including water quality, biodiversity, biosecurity, lake use, and impacts on the lake of catchment land use;
- maintain a good working relationship with Contact Energy paying particular attention that consented water levels and conditions of usage are adhered to;
- contribute to any review of lake use, including any applications for consent to use the lake and its catchments;
- where uncertainty exists about any effects on Lake Hāwea water quality, management decisions shall be based on the precautionary principle.

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Jane Forsyth/Geoff Kernick - Chairpersons