

Intent discussion on lake's rise and fall

FLUCTUATING levels of Lake Waikaremoana were a hot topic at the Waikaremoana Power Scheme meeting.

Genesis Energy ecologist Cam Speedy gave the community a run down on the hydrology compliance of the lake.

Mr Speedy said the lake rose over one metre last year due to a heavy rain event in September 2015.

He added when it rains heavily, the lake rises quickly as it is a large catchment with a small outlet.

There was an issue at Lake Kaitawa in April/May this year when the lake levels became quite low, Mr Speedy said.

He added that autumn is when the lake levels appear to reduce and with accurate recording equipment he is able to closely monitor the levels.

The compliance sees Genesis Energy reporting to Hawke's Bay Regional Council if the lake is over or under for seven consecutive days in a row.

He said the company treats non-compliance very seriously.

"No matter how minor — it is always discussed."

Mr Speedy said depending on the severity of the non-compliance, different actions are taken.

He said they could be issued a warning, an abatement notice or could be taken through the environment court

and fined heavily.

He added it wouldn't affect the overall compliance rating too much as there would be operational reasons for the non-compliance.

Genesis Energy also run a range of monitoring programmes at the lake to keep an eye on shoreline erosion and vegetation.

A survey conducted in March looked at how the vegetation is changing around the lake's shorelines.

Most of the 32 shoreline profiles were re-measured.

Mr Speedy said there were high lake levels in 2012 which changed areas exposed to wave energy from the west, however sheltered sites showed very little effect.

Mr Speedy said there was also increasing weed showing around the lake, such as monbretia and poplar.

He said it washes up and coats the vegetation along the shoreline.

"Invading weeds are problematic."

Mr Speedy said the shoreline vegetation is in otherwise excellent condition.

Event-driven monitoring also takes place when there has been a strong weather event.

The programmes have been in place for 17 years, and take place every five years.