

6. THE WATER ACTIVITIES CENTRE - APPLICATION TO LICENCE TO USE LAKE RUA AT ROTO KOHATU RESERVE

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The purpose of this report is to seek approval to grant a licence to the Water Activities Centre to use Lake Rua on Roto Kohatu Reserve for the purpose of undertaking a water safety programme for school children.

INTRODUCTION

The Water Activities Centre was set up with the support of the Water Safety Council in 1990 to provide a safe and fun environment in which school children can learn skills and experience the attendant rewards of sailing a small craft.

The programme also instructs the children in the necessary safety practices and precautions they need to be aware of when sailing small craft. A charge of between \$12 to \$15 per child is made for a 5 to 6 hours tuition period, usually during school hours.

Since becoming established, over 15,000 children have visited the centre gaining the skills, enjoyment and experienced the rewards that sailing offers. The predominant users are Christchurch school children between the ages of eight and twelve, many of whom would not usually have the opportunity to participate in a hands-on sailing experience.

PRESENT LOCATION

The water safety programme is currently run from Charteris Bay in Lyttelton Harbour and some sessions will continue to take place at Charteris Bay. However, as this is a tidal location, unfavourable tides during school hours limit the use of Charteris Bay for around two weeks every month.

This severely limits the number of children they are able to offer the programme to as they only operate during the first and fourth term when the water and weather conditions are more conducive to the odd unplanned swim.

In the past the Water Activities Centre has used Lyttelton as an alternative location. However, with the development of the marina, this location is no longer available.

PROPOSED USE OF LAKE RUA

The Water Activities Centre has applied to the Council for a licence to use Lake Rua at Roto Kohatu Reserve as an alternative sailing venue. Lake Tahurangi has been set aside for powered water sports and is leased to the Canterbury Jet Ski Club.

While it has always been intended that Lake Rua would be used for more passive types of recreation, the current proposal does not conflict with this objective.

RECREATIONAL FISHING

The Council has previously granted approval to the Canterbury Float Fishing Club to release Tench into Lake Rua for recreational fishing. The club has released fish into this lake under the supervision of the North Canterbury Fish and Game Council and these fish should now be breeding and establishing.

Parks Unit staff have discussed the application with the President of the Canterbury Float Fishing Club and he does not see any conflict or problems with the current proposal. The most favourable times for targeting this particular species of fish is early morning or late evening which is well outside the times the sailboats will be operating.

OMAKA SCOUTS FACILITIES AND RESERVE DEVELOPMENT

There is still a substantial amount of development required before the reserve will be available for general public use. The reserve still lacks some basic amenities such as toilets etc. However this will not restrict the current proposal as the Water Activities Centre has negotiated the use of amenities at the adjacent Omaka Scout site.

The scouts are happy for the applicant to use their facilities until toilet and change facilities are available on the reserve. In return the Water Activities Centre has offered run some sail training days for scouts during scout camps.

SAFETY

Safety and risk management is of paramount concern to the operators. All instructors are Yachting New Zealand qualified and hold current First Aid certificates. The Water Activities Centre uses Optimist Yachts which are small one person dinghies with a single sail, providing a simple and safe craft in which to learn the basic skills needed for yacht handling.

Yachting New Zealand guidelines are strictly adhered to in relation to on-water instructor/pupil ratios, with the maximum number of yachts in the water at any one time being ten, ensuring safe and comprehensive instruction and (if needed) rescue abilities.

All students and instructors must wear a life-jacket before going out onto the water. The pick-up boats are inflatable dinghies with small outboard motors. A pickup boat will be on the lake at all times when sailing is in progress. Given the nature of the activities, the pick-up boats seldom reach speeds in excess of 5 knots.

LICENSING ISSUES

Roto Kohatu Reserve is vested as a Recreation Reserve under section 17 of the Reserves Act.

The Council is able to grant a licence to use part of Roto Kohatu Reserve to the Water Activities Centre pursuant to section 54(1)(d) of the Reserves Act.

The Parks Unit proposes to issue a licence for an initial period of one year during which time the Parks Manager shall reserve the right to adjust the conditions of the licence, to ensure its operation is as safe as possible. The renewal of the licence for a further term of four years is to be subject to satisfactory performance in the first year.

CONCLUSION

Kiwis love affair with recreational activities based around water is well known. However this association does have a downside in terms of the drowning statistics. The Council can take a proactive role in turning these statistics around by promoting and encouraging activities that focus on the education and safety aspects associated with water.

The Parks Unit is comfortable with the current proposal and believes that providing a venue where children and young adults can receive professional water safety training is a very positive and proactive use of the reserve as well as providing benefits to the wider community.

The above report was before the Shirley/Papanui Community Board at its meeting on 6 September 2000. The Board supported the above proposal subject to the following additional conditions:

1. The consultation process including the Northwest Rural Residents' Association and the business community at the Sawyers Arms/Johns Road intersection.
2. That all future reference to the lakes being by the names approved in 1993, Tahī and Rua.

Recommendation: That the application to grant a licence to Water Activities Centre over Lake Rua of Roto Kohatu Reserve pursuant to section 54(1)(d) for the operation of a Water Safety Programme for a period of one year with a right of renewal for a further four years be approved, subject to the following conditions:

1. Public notification and subsequent approval by the Minister of Conservation.
2. The consultation process including the Northwest Rural Residents' Association and the business community at the Sawyers Arms/Johns Road intersection.
3. The licence terms being negotiated by the Property Manager in consultation with the Area Parks Officer (Consents).
4. The licensed area being maintained by the applicant in a safe and tidy condition at all times while operating on the lake.
5. Lake Rua, which is the area covered by the licence, being available for public use at all times.
6. The applicant showing proof of having obtained \$1,000,000 public liability insurance to the Area Parks Officer (Consents) before commencing operations upon the site.
7. The applicant filing a copy of its Occupational Safety and Health Hazard Plan with the Area Parks Officer (Consents) before commencing operations upon the site.
8. No structures of any sort being built upon the site and marker buoys put in place on the day being remove at the end of sailing.
9. The speed of any motorised support craft not exceeding 5 knots at any time other than in the case of an emergency.
10. The Parks Manager reserving the right to withdraw the licence to use Lake Rua should there be any breach of the safety conditions contained in the licence, or Occupational Safety and Health Hazard Plan.

11. The applicant acknowledging the requirement for the planting of trees around the lake, and that they will not be pruned, or removed, to improve sailing on the lake.
12. All costs associated with the application are the responsibility of the applicant.
13. That authority to renew the licence for a period of four years being delegated to the Parks Manager subject to the satisfactory performance of the licensee, during the first year of operation.