

From: Chelsea Kenny <chkenny@doc.govt.nz>
Sent: Monday, 13 April 2026 3:39 pm
To: Robert Rose
Cc: Anastasia Boniface; Wendy Thompson; Demelza Low; Frances Walsh
Subject: RE: Pukepuke Lagoon is dry - site visit HRC, DOC, Iwi including compliance members

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Kia ora Robert,

Thanks for your input, definitely a collaborative approach is going to be needed going forward. Another site visit has been coordinated by mana whenua to meet on site tomorrow at 10am.

I also wanted to give you a heads-up that we've received an OIA request relating to the following matters, which are closely connected to the concession (WA-219 held by MDC). The issue is also being picked up by the media (RNZ, Taiuru news, Manawatū standard with some regional councillors also making comments on their own social media pages).

1. What involvement did the Department of Conservation have in the decision to dig or permit a drain at Pukepuke Lagoon, including any approvals, consents, or oversight provided?
 2. On what date was any drain at Pukepuke Lagoon authorised, and by whom?
 3. What ecological assessments, if any, were undertaken prior to the drain being dug, specifically in relation to tuna migration pathways?
 4. Was the Department aware that the timing of this activity coincided with the annual tuna heke; if so, what steps were taken to avoid disruption?
 5. What consultation occurred with mana whenua, including hapū connected to Paranui and Te Awahou, prior to this activity taking place?
 6. How did the Department give effect to its obligations under Te Tiriti o Waitangi in relation to this decision?
 7. What consideration was given to the cultural, customary, and food gathering significance of tuna heke to mana whenua in this area?
 8. Does the Minister consider the disruption of a tuna migration event to be consistent with the Crown's duty to actively protect taonga species?
 9. What immediate steps will be taken to restore the ecological integrity of Pukepuke Lagoon?
 10. Will the Minister commit to halting any further works in the area until a full investigation is completed?
 11. Will the Minister meet with affected mana whenua to discuss remediation and future co governance of the site?
 12. Is an independent investigation being considered into how this activity was permitted; if not, why not?
- Will keep you updated as best as I can.

Ngā mihi,

Chelsea Kenny

Project Lead, Community - *Kaitiaki, Ao Hāpori*
Department of Conservation—*Te Papa Atawhai*
M:0272396862



From: Robert Rose <Robert.Rose@mdc.govt.nz>
Sent: Friday, 10 April 2026 3:11 pm
To: Chelsea Kenny <chkenny@doc.govt.nz>; Frances Walsh <fwalsh@doc.govt.nz>
Cc: Anastasia Boniface <Anastasia.Boniface@mdc.govt.nz>; Wendy Thompson <Wendy.Thompson@mdc.govt.nz>
Subject: RE: Pukepuke Lagoon is dry - site visit HRC, DOC, Iwi including compliance members

Tēnā kōrua, Chelsea and Frances

I am glad Anastasia and I managed to time our site visit to coincide with the joint inspection. As discussed it was evident that no additional drainage had occurred and the dry conditions are most likely linked to a low groundwater table.

Since the site visit, I have reached out to the neighbouring farmers, and they have confirmed that the Lagoon has regularly dried up over the last ten years. They did however state that there is normally a small amount of water remaining in the lagoon which is not the case now. The difference between a small volume of water remaining like last year and the lagoon being 100% dry is one or two weeks. Therefore, while the lagoon did not dry out to the same extent last year it was not far off.

Manawatu District Council are of the opinion that to move forward a collective approach is required. While discussions around the cause of the low groundwater table will ultimately occur, I think initial conversations should be centred around how can we prevent a reoccurrence of this situation.

Apparently approximately 20 years ago, part of the lagoon used to be dredged to ensure that a part of the bed would remain below the groundwater table. Ultimately this is probably the only way to prevent a similar event from reoccurring in the future. Due to the cultural significance of the site, this form of intervention may not be deemed appropriate. Notwithstanding this, I would be keen to have this as an option that we discuss as part of the wider group.

I am happy to go back out to the site next week and dig a hole by hand to determine the current depth of the groundwater table. After the conversations at the end of the site visit it would be prudent to get cultural approval prior to any investigation of this nature.

Ngā mihi

Robert Rose
Senior Environmental Advisor



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From: Chelsea Kenny <chkenny@doc.govt.nz>
Sent: Friday, 10 April 2026 2:14 pm
To: Robert Rose <Robert.Rose@mdc.govt.nz>
Cc: Andrew van Bussel <Andrew.VanBussel@mdc.govt.nz>
Subject: Pukepuke Lagoon is dry - site visit HRC, DOC, Iwi including compliance members

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Kia ora Rob,

Just letting you know that there will be a site visit tomorrow with HRC, DOC and Iwi regarding the dry lake at Pukepuke with numerous number dead fish. If you think it's relevant, your than welcome to attend – 9am at Pukepuke Lagoon, Friday 9th of April (attached invite). Further context is within the email chain.

Cheers,

Chelsea Kenny
Project Lead, Community - Kaitiaki, Ao Hāpori
Department of Conservation—Te Papa Atawhai
M:0272396862

From: Chelsea Kenny
Sent: Thursday, 9 April 2026 2:30 pm
To: Debbie Te Puni <debbie.tepuni@romst.iwi.nz>; Kahurangi Hapi-Tangaroa <kahurangi.hapi-tangaroa@romst.iwi.nz>; Hayden Turoa

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Cc: Neal Phillips <nphillips@doc.govt.nz>; Demelza Low <dlow@doc.govt.nz>; Dan Tuohy <dtuohy@doc.govt.nz>; Kelly Hancock
<khancock@doc.govt.nz>; Moana Smith-Dunlop <msmithdunlop@doc.govt.nz>; 'Caitlin.Wheeler@horizons.govt.nz'
<Caitlin.Wheeler@horizons.govt.nz>; Talia Rangiwananga <nrangiwanang@doc.govt.nz>; Frances Walsh <fwalsh@doc.govt.nz>
Subject: FW: Pukepuke Lagoon is dry

Kia ora koutou,

I'm getting in touch to advise you of the unfortunate developing situation at Pukepuke Lagoon. The lagoon is completely dry with a lot of fish dead.

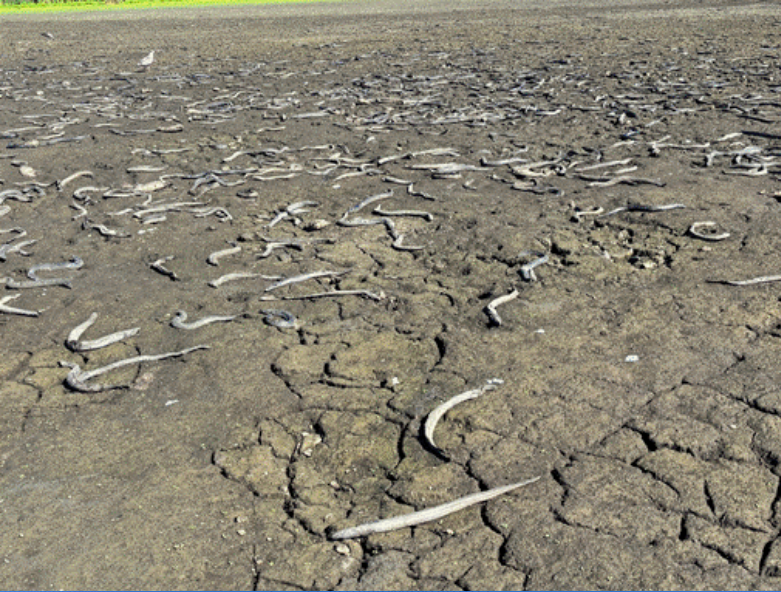
HRC are proposing a site visit with DoC and Mana whenua at 9am tomorrow?

Their suggested purpose of the visit would be to:

- check the weir/drain (including Compliance staff), and
- identify and roughly count the dead fish (Biomonitoring team).
- assist with or undertake the collection of deceased tuna, and/or
- consider whether tuna could be collected for **otolith studies**
- explore whether, in situations where shallow dune lakes are at risk of drying, there may be opportunities for DOC, mana whenua and HRC to work together to relocate tuna or native fish.

You're very welcome to let me know if you're able to attend, and I'll provide an update regardless. Given the short notice, I'm also happy to arrange a follow-up hui if that would be helpful.

Photos:



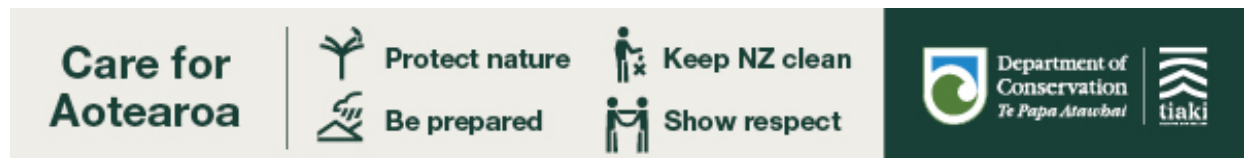


Please let me know if you have any questions.

Ngā mihi,

Chelsea Kenny

Project Lead, Community - *Kaitiaki, Ao Hāpori*
Department of Conservation—*Te Papa Atawhai*
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From: Caitlin Wheeler <Caitlin.Wheeler@horizons.govt.nz>

Sent: Thursday, 9 April 2026 2:02 pm

To: Demelza Low <dlow@doc.govt.nz>

Subject: Pukepuke Lagoon is dry

Hi Demelza,

Thanks for the call. As a summary, this morning our Hydrology team visited Pukepuke Lagoon and reported it is dry with a large amount of fish dead. I've included links for their photos and videos in this email. Currently we're unsure whether this is a continuation of the low dune lake levels we've seen this past summer and currently see in other lakes in the region, or if the weir was tampered with.

https://www.icloud.com/photos/#/icloudlinks/0bcM6g5_NEhjOV-jQs3czA9SQ/





We'd like to suggest a visit to the lagoon tomorrow with DOC and HRC staff, including a Compliance member to check the weir/drain and our Biomonitoring team to identify and roughly count the dead fish. Could DOC please contact mana whenua and see if they want to come and assist or collect the dead eels? We also wonder if DOC and iwi would be interested in collecting eels for otolith studies. This activity isn't covered under our sampling permit for Pukepuke Lagoon so we'd need agreement.

I'm also keen to discuss if in future we could assist DOC and iwi in relocating eels or native fish if there are situations where these shallow dune lake levels are very low and considered at risk of drying. We've assisted recoveries before, and can help support the manpower required.

Cheers,

Caitlin Wheeler

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