

Lake Rotorua and Tributaries



EASTERN REGION

Trout fishing on Lake Rotorua and its tributary streams is considered world-class. There are few places with trout fishing of such superb quality and diversity so close to a major centre.

The district offers boat fishing, lakeside fly and spin fishing for both rainbow and brown trout, along with excellent stream opportunities.

1 Ngongotaha Stream

The stream and access. The Ngongotaha is Lake Rotorua's largest tributary stream providing a wealth of natural spawning for both lakes Rotorua and Rotoiti. Beginning northwest of Mt. Ngongotaha and running east towards the lake, the stream runs off the Mamaku ranges and is joined by a number of cold water spring tributaries.

The upper reaches run through a combination of native, revegetated farm land and small lifestyle blocks. The flow is of moderate speed and small pools, riffles and slower glides under shaded cover are common. The stream bed is a combination of fine gravel and sand with easy wading. The middle and lower reaches of the stream run through farm land and into public reserve, then through the village of Ngongotaha where access is good. Here the stream character changes, the flow is slower and pools form where the river twists and turns. The stream enters the lake at Ngongotaha between Taiui Street and Beaumont Road. The mouth is shallow and easily wadeable except immediately after flooding when caution is required.

Above SH5 fishing access is mostly off Paradise Valley Road and via the Fish & Game access points clearly marked with signage. Some of the upper reaches run through private property and anglers must seek the permission of landowners before crossing properties. Below SH5 access can be gained via council reserve off Brookdale Drive, or from the Elliot Park reserve from Western Road where 4km of meandering stream flows through re-planted native bush, much of which has good access

Easy access can be gained through Ngongotaha village and by access downstream of the old rail bridge on the true right bank only. Some access is through private property and anglers are asked to respect this. Walking access to the stream mouth can be gained either from Taiui Street or Beaumonts Road. Some private lakefront property exists so anglers are advised to walk along the lake edge.

Fishing the Ngongotaha. The Ngongotaha Stream is a world class fishery featuring rainbow and brown trout. The browns can reach 5kg and often average around 3kg while rainbows range between 1kg and 2kg, sometimes bigger. The stream provides excellent year round opportunities for trout fishers (anglers should check regulations before fishing).

During summer, resident trout numbers increase when Lake Rotorua trout seek cold water refuge and feed in the stream. Rainbows run upstream year round with spawning peaks in winter and early spring, whereas brown trout often migrate in summer taking up residence until spawning in autumn. Migrating fish can be targeted throughout the river with a selection of methods. Weighted nymphs and smelt flies under an indicator work well as do traditional wet flies such as Woolly Buggers swung on a sinking line. During summer, dry fly action occurs in the higher section with fish rising to caddis, mayfly or cicadas during the evening. Spin fishing is allowed in the lower reaches below SH5. The stream mouth produces fish year round and is especially productive at night. Expect to pick up a big brown trout here occasionally but be warned you'll need stout tackle as they can reach massive sizes.



2 Waiteti Stream

The Waiteti Stream can provide excellent fishing opportunities throughout the year below Hamurana Road where it remains open to angling. There is good access via council reserve on the true right bank of the stream in the area from the stream mouth upstream for approximately 500 meters. Above Hamurana Road there is limited public access to the stream. Anglers can accessed the stream above Hamurana Road on public reserve land for approximately 100 meters above the bridge.

There is public access to the stream off the end of Hampson Place, which is off Dalbeth Road. In this area the stream can be accessed upstream for approximately 500 meters and downstream for approximately 300 meters. In other areas where the stream runs through private property, land owner permission for access must be obtained.

3 Utuhina Stream

Good public access to the Utuhina Stream and its proximity to Rotorua city enhance its popularity. There is a large network of Rotorua District Council reserve on the stream and access is signposted. Nymphing and use of glow bugs are popular and productive methods although light spin fishing tackle can be used with good results. The stream mouth, which can be accessed from Whittaker Road also fishes well throughout the year.

4 Awahou and Hamurana Stream mouths

Both stream mouths offer great summer fishing. The Hamurana Stream is open below Hamurana Road bridge all season and fishing peaks during the warmest period when the lake water temperature encourages trout to find cooler flows. Evening and night fishing offer the best chances for success with smelt or bully type patterns. Large brown trout can also be caught, especially during November and December. Access to the Awahou Stream mouth is through private property and anglers are asked to respect this. The Awahou stream mouth and extending 200m is open to fly and spin fishing.

5 Lake Rotorua

Lake Rotorua is the North Island's second largest lake by area at around 79 sq km. Mokoia Island sits just East of centre and provides sheltered and successful trolling runs for boaties. Other than the northern shore between Hamurana and the Ohau Channel, the lake can be exposed to winds. There are seven well placed boat ramps all are within 20 minutes drive of the central city. The lake's bottom features shallow margins with distinct drop-offs and underwater banks which serve to concentrate fish and produce productive trolling runs. The edge of large weed beds dropping into deeper water is also a feature worth targeting.

The lakes surface temperature range changes drastically through the year from a chilling 8 degrees Celsius in winter to a bath-like 24 degrees in the heat of summer. In many respects, the lake's large area/shallow nature and the effects this has on the water temperature control the characteristics of this fishery, but not to its detriment. Summer fishing is dominated by the trout's desire for cold water. Being shallow, a cold water thermocline doesn't form, so water temperatures become uncomfortably warm for trout and they congregate in their thousands at the cold water stream mouths.

Lake Rotorua continued;

Lake Rotorua & tributaries

Northern stream mouths, especially the Awahou and Hamurana situated 12km and 16km respectively from Rotorua city, fly fish exceptional well during the heat of summer. Fly fishers wade the shallow lake bed mostly in the evenings and use floating lines and smelt, bully or small nymph patterns. Offshore, boats either anchor within the 200m limit and fly fish, or troll shallow lures with spinning rods and monofilament line if beyond the regulated 200 metre mark. Popular lures include the Tassie 'brown trout', purple and white colours, soft plastics and moderate size smelt flies like Grey Ghosts or Parsons' Glory.

During spring and autumn the fishing focus moves more to boat fishing methods. Spring is also the time when large brown trout can be picked up by shallow trolling the areas around stream mouths, the airport and off Kawaha Point.

The favoured Rotorua trolling set-up targets fish in the 3-6 metre depth commonly with spinning tackle and monofilament, fly line, LED or two to three colours of lead line, a Tassie or black toby and fly combination. Anchoring or slow drifting at shelves and along the edge of weed beds with spinning gear is also great sport.

As spring begins to give way to summer the huge Rotorua brown trout frequent shallow water, cruising the edges around the stream mouths especially the Ngongotaha, Awahou and Hamurana. Fly fishers equipped with Polaroid glasses can sight-fish cruising trout against sandy flats, but they can be frustratingly difficult to hook in daylight so are often targeted under the cover of darkness. Stout equipment and big bully or koura patterns are preferred.



Many of the big browns will migrate into cold water tributaries over summer, not to spawn but to shelter from the lake's oppressive summer heat.

During winter the lake fishes successfully with all methods, and having such a diverse and popular fishery open 365 days a year is a real bonus. Spawning run rainbows congregate around stream mouths providing opportunities to most methods. These streams provide enough natural spawning to populate the lake and produce one of the highest rates of catch in the district. Fish & Game monitor Lake Rotorua's fish populations by trapping the Ngongotaha spawning runs noting quantities and size of fish throughout the year.

The lake suffers from seasonal water quality problems resulting in summer algal blooms. Fortunately this doesn't seem to affect the quality of the fish or fishing, although it can look a little unappealing during a heavy bloom. A water quality monitoring buoy situated to the west of Mokoia Island actually provides a key tool for anglers wanting to venture out onto the lake. Live data from the buoy is transmitted to the Bay of Plenty Regional Council web site (www.boprc.govt.nz) and anglers can download information such as wind direction and speed, water temperature and barometric pressure – all valuable information when planning a trip.

Anglers should refer to the latest North Island Sport Fishing Regulations for season duration, bag limits and regulations applying to Lake Rotorua and its tributaries. It is available through licence agents or from Fish & Game, and can be downloaded from the Fish & Game web site listed below. Anglers should seek the permission of landowners before accessing private property.



Eastern Region
Private Bag 3010 Rotorua
Telephone 07- 357 5501
Email: eastern@fishandgame.org.nz
Website: <https://fishandgame.org.nz/eastern/>
0800 LICENCE 0800 POACHING



Go to the Eastern
Fish & Game web page

Protect our waters

Unwanted aquatic weeds, algae and pest fish threaten freshwater environments for the trout fishery, native species, and all recreational users. Be a responsible user...



Check, Clean, Drain & Dry



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KEY

- Boat Ramp
- Trolling run
- Closed water, no fishing
- Angler access point
- Location - see over
- Depth in metres
- Roads

1km 3km

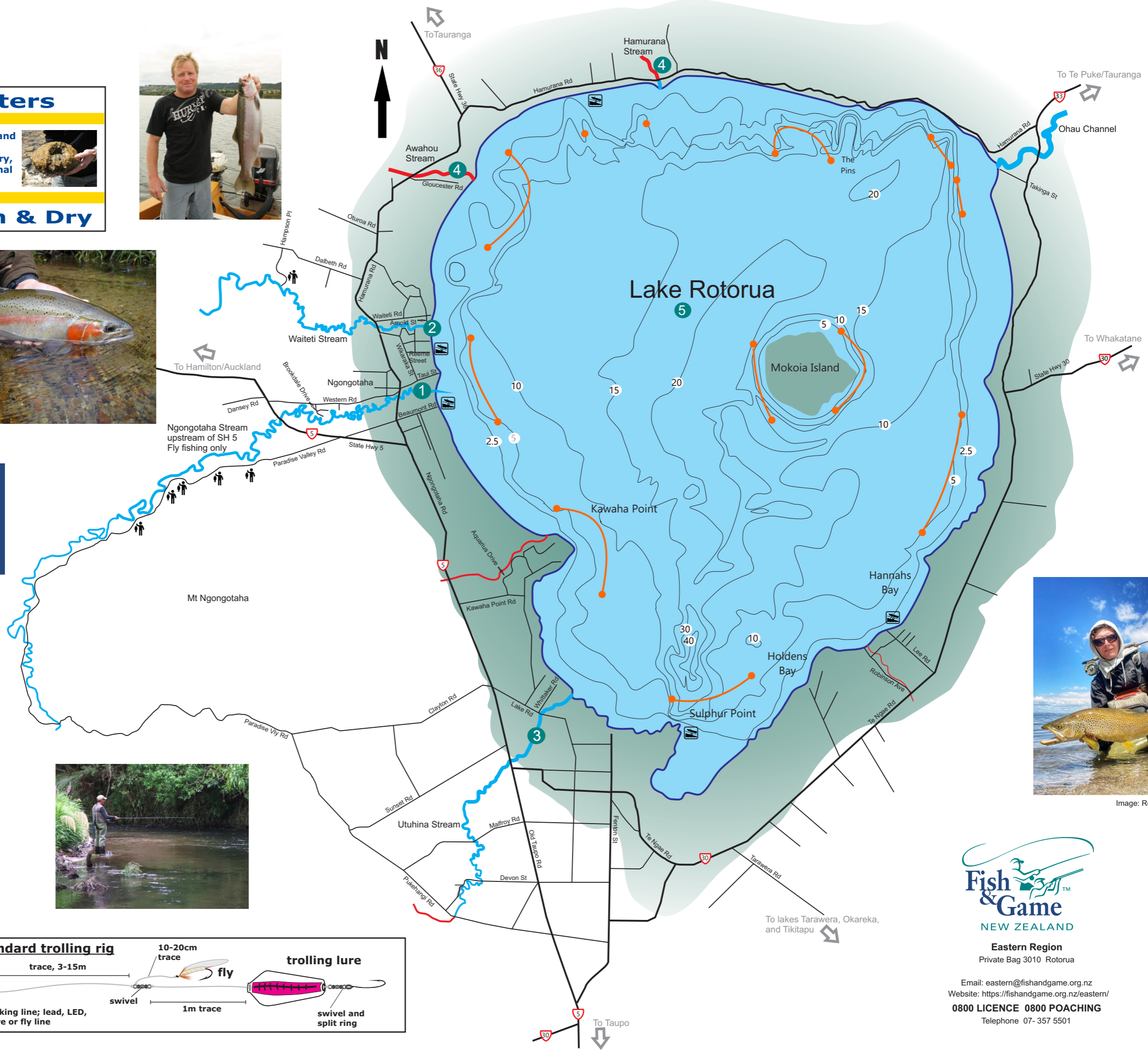
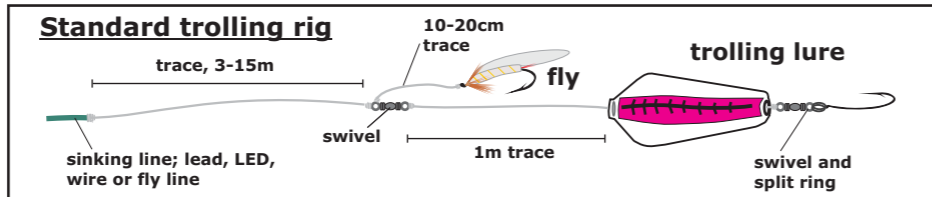


Image: Rotoruatrout NZ



Eastern Region
Private Bag 3010 Rotorua

Email: eastern@fishandgame.org.nz
Website: <https://fishandgame.org.nz/eastern/>
0800 LICENCE 0800 POACHING
Telephone 07- 357 5501