

Waikato University dives into lake-bed research

By BEN STANLEY - Waikato Times

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MARK TAYLOR/ Waikato Times

SLEEK MACHINE: University of Delaware under-graduate students watch Dora the AUV working in Huntly's Weaver's Lake.

Waikato University launched its very own yellow submarine at Huntly's Weaver's Lake yesterday.

Researchers will use the \$700,000 Automated Underwater Vehicle (AUV), nicknamed Dora, to study the effects of algal blooms and humans on lakes. The AUV is on loan from the University of Delaware for several months.

Waikato University professor Craig Cary, who is also a faculty member at the University of Delaware, said the AUV's cutting-edge technology meant geological and biological researchers could look at things differently.

The AUV's tiny conning tower contains an iridium cell phone transmitter to relay data. Sonar attached to the hull creates a contour map of the lake floor accurate to within 15cm, and sensors collect data of algal blooms and other scientific variables.

"We can find out what's driving the algal community in the lakes, and that's critical to our knowledge of getting them back to what they should be," Professor Cary said.

The sub, one of 13 worldwide, also carries a camera but the lake's murky water limited visibility. The launch was watched by 29

Delaware University under-graduates doing five weeks of research in New Zealand.