**Unconfirmed Minutes of the Fish & Game NZ, Southland Region Council meeting held at the Council Office, 17 Eye Street, Invercargill on Thursday 8th June 2017.**

**Present**: Graeme Watson (Chair) Chris Owen

Paul Stenning Russel Graham

Corey Carston Dave Harris

Ray Waghorn Michael Hartstonge

**In attendance:**

Z Moss (Manager). W Jarvie, E Garrick, C Stewart.(Field Officers).

C Mason (Minutes).

**Members of the Public:** Brad Johansen.

**Welcome:**

The Chairman opened the meeting at 6.30pm and welcomed those present.

The Chairman gave a Health & Safety briefing to the meeting, pointing out all emergency exits etc.

**Apologies:**

***Resolved Hartstonge/Graham that apologies be received & sustained from Chris Frisby, Kevin Fiveash, Fred Inder, Ken Cochrane, Cyril Gilroy & Jacob Smyth.*** Carried.

**Conflicts of Interest with items on the agenda:**

There were no conflicts of interest advised to the Chairman.

If any conflicts should arise during the meeting Councillors were to let the Chairman know before any discussion began.

**Health & Safety:**

The health & safety report for the period 1st April – 31st May 2017 was attached to the agenda for consideration.

All known hazards were listed in the Southland Health & Safety Plan.

***Resolved Hartstonge/Owen that the Health & Safety Report to 31st May 2017 be received***. Carried.

**Minutes of the meeting held 6th April 2017.**

***Resolved Waghorn/Harris that the minutes of the meeting held 6th April 2017 were a true and accurate record.*** Carried.

**Matters arising from Minutes:**

**Game Bird Harvest Survey:**

Councillors had agreed to do the game bird harvest surveys & hunter satisfaction surveys this year, as a means to enable direct contact with hunters. Most had enjoyed doing the surveys and found them very useful, they were pleased & somewhat surprised with the generally positive feedback they had received.

Cr Stenning noted that it bought home to him that we should not always just listen to the minority dissenters, as it can distort our views of the majority of the hunting public. We had to represent the best interests of the majority and not just listen to the minority.

The next survey was due to begin on the 19th June and the Manager noted that at this time in the season not many would have been out hunting and reminded Councillors to use the survey opportunity to encourage hunters out and to consider all opportunities to harvest the birds.

Disposal of shot carcasses had been an issue in the past and with this in mind Zane reported that we were looking at some sort of regulation mechanism, to use next season, re disposal of birds.

There was no regulation available at present for that.

**Hunter satisfaction survey:**

Part of our statutory requirements was to conduct hunter satisfaction surveys and as far as we were aware the Southland Region was the first to conduct a comprehensive hunter satisfaction survey. Other regions had dabbled in satisfaction surveys but to a lesser degree.

Cohen Stewart then ran through the key points of the hunter satisfaction survey results to date.

He thanked Councillors for giving their time to do these surveys and was sure licence holders appreciated and valued being able to talk to Councillors directly.

The biology of species and the human dimension were important to understand in game management. The information we have obtained from these surveys would be very useful and helpful in the management of the game bird populations. e.g justifying bag limits, setting management goals and defending our sport.

**Email vs phone surveys**

Email & phone surveys were used in the satisfaction survey, which had advantages and disadvantages in the methods. Email surveys allowed a large sample size with relative ease, but did not give a random sample, which had the potential of a response bias. Phone surveys were more random and therefore more representative of the entire hunting population. Disadvantages were it was more labour intensive and therefore we couldn’t get as big a sample size.

**Response rate**

The response rate was a good measure of how receptive hunters were to our requests for their opinions. The response rate was the number of respondents who answered the survey relative to the number of invitations to participate in the survey.

Response rate of 19% for our email survey was very good for this survey type. We don’t have an exact figure for the phone survey response rate but was likely to be in excess of 90% which was very high.

It was important to realise there were advantages and disadvantages to the different survey approaches.

Email surveys were great as they allowed for a large sample size to be obtained very quickly. However, the respondents were not randomly selected and there was the potential for response bias. Email respondents were likely to be supporters of Fish and Game/keen duck hunters or critics of Fish and Game. These were the individuals most motivated to reply to an email survey of this type. It was likely that the views of the average Joe (apathetic) hunters would not be sufficiently represented.

Phone surveys had the benefit of being more random and thus more representative of the entire hunting population, because most hunters had a phone so there was a better chance for all hunters to be selected. In the email survey, only one in three of our hunters provided an email address when purchasing their licence. However, the main disadvantages with phone surveys was that they were more labour intensive and sample size was generally smaller.

**Bag limit**

In both the phone and email surveys, a vast majority of hunters suggested a bag limit of 20 mallards per day over opening weekend. This would be important to keep in mind when setting bag limits in the future. If a hunter suggested a bag limit then we could infer that they would be happy with such a bag limit.

Interestingly, 11% of hunters did not give a suggested bag and said that the bag should be based on science/breeding season/data. It was great to see a significant number of our hunters interested in mallard population management based on science.

**The number of mallards a Southland hunter needs to harvest to have an enjoyable hunt.**

When it came to the number of mallards a Southland hunter needed to harvest to have an enjoyable hunt, there was a huge amount of variability. A large number of hunters were happy with none, 1 or 2 whilst others needed to shoot the 20 bird limit.

Interestingly, in both the email and phone survey, 10 birds was the most frequently given answer to this question. On average 7-8 birds were required for an enjoyable hunt. This figure was useful for mallard population management as it gave us a target. If we wanted hunters to have an enjoyable opening day hunt, then we needed to be able to support a mallard population that would allow for the hunter to take eight birds on average. Over the last few years, on the opening Saturday, the average bag had been around ten birds.

**Expect to shoot the bag?**

Only one quarter of hunters expected to shoot the O/W bag, and only 10% of hunters were disappointed if they didn’t shoot the bag.

From this we could conclude that an unattained bag limit was not influencing hunter satisfaction. We didn’t have to worry about a high unachieved bag limit affecting hunter satisfaction.

**Satisfaction**

Overall, a vast majority (92-95%) of our hunters were at least somewhat satisfied with their opening weekend hunting experience. In the phone survey, 72% of hunters were very satisfied with their opening weekend, much higher than in the email survey. Weather was often quoted as a reason for an unsatisfying O/W and we couldn’t influence that.

**Is O/W satisfaction affected by the number of ducks shot?**

Yes. In both the phone and email surveys, hunters who said they were very satisfied with their opening weekend experience shot significantly more ducks on O/W than hunters who said they were somewhat satisfied. Hunters who said they were somewhat satisfied with their opening weekend experience shot significantly more ducks than hunters who said they were not satisfied.

Interestingly, those hunters who were very satisfied with their opening weekend had very variable bags. Some very satisfied hunters shot no ducks, which leads on nicely to why our hunters hunt.

**Why our hunters hunt?**

It’s not just about the ducks. Time with friends and family were key reasons why our hunters hunted and this was particularly evident in the phone survey. Enjoyment and harvesting of ducks for the table were also key reasons for hunting ducks.

When it came to **hunter values and bag obtained**, we were able to tease out some really useful information.

Lead shot advocates, despite being unhappy they couldn’t use lead, still had a successful and enjoyable O/W. The lead advocate’s bag was statistically no different to the rest of the population. Of the lead advocates, twenty were very satisfied with their opening weekend, twelve were somewhat satisfied and one was not at all satisfied.

In general, lower licence cost advocates also had an enjoyable O/W. Their bag was statistically no different to hunters who did not mention licence cost and of those hunters who were unhappy with licence cost or wanted an O/W licence, 29 were very satisfied with their opening weekend hunt, 22 said they were somewhat satisfied and six were not at all satisfied.

**What can F&G do to improve your O/W hunting experience?**

It was safe to say that a majority of our hunters were happy with F&G’s performance and this was particularly evident in the phone surveys. Positive answers were the most frequently given response to this question in the phone surveys.

Other key issues that cropped up in both surveys, were licence price and the desire for an opening weekend licence.

The desire for a return to lead shot was also an issue identified by a few hunters.

In both the email and phone survey, only four hunters brought up the issue of sub gauge lead.

Councillors had found the exercise very worthwhile and agreed that it was important to promote this hunter satisfaction survey nationally to other regions, as the information received was very valuable to Fish & Game for its game management.

**Administration Reports:**

The accounts paid, direct credit/debit list & automatic payments since the last meeting, budget to actual report to 31st May 2017, licence sales progress to 16th May 2017, and correspondence reports were attached to the agenda for Council’s consideration.

**Licence sales:**

Southland Fish licence sales as at 31st May 2017 were 2.6% up on last year at the same time and Game Sales were -2.2% down on last year at the same time.

Nationally fish licence sales were down -2.3% and game sales down -0.3% on last year at the same time.

**Correspondence:**

Zane explained that the letter from DoC was an Authority under the Reserves Act 1977 to create an artificial opening to the sea at Lake Waituna required by the Lake Waituna Control Association before they could open the lagoon mechanically to the sea.

**Staff Reports:**

The staff report was attached to the agenda.

**Around the Mountain Cycle Trail: (ATMCT).**

The Southland District Council had withdrawn their High Court Appeal and made settlement of costs of $152,174 (GST excl.) to the Southland Fish & Game Council for the ATMCT on the 6th June 2017.

Zane Moss asked how Council wanted the settlement distributed.

The Environment Court & High Court Appeal total cost to Fish & Game was $370,806. (GST excl.) Of that NZ Fish & Game Council legal fund contributed $203,142 and Fish & Game Otago $20,000. The Southland Council paid $147,664, from their back country levy reserves ($45,943) and general reserves ($101,721).

As at the 31st August 2016 the Southland Council had general reserves remaining of $127,130 which did not include the Asset replacement reserve, which we believed to be a dedicated reserve. This left us with a shortfall of $70,990 in general reserves to be at the 30% level of our bulk funding allocation as required by NZ Council.

Council considered the settlement and agreed that we should reinstate our general reserves to the 30% level $70,990 and reimburse the NZC legal fund for the remainder $81,184 (GST excl).

***Resolved Hartstonge/Graham that the ATMCT settlement from Southland District Council be distributed to replace Southland general reserves to 30% of the bulk fund, not including the asset replacement reserve, and the remainder to be reimbursed to NZ Council legal fund.*** Carried.

Zane thanked the Chairman for his significant contribution to the cycleway appeal. Zane believed that at the end of the day good relations were maintained with the Southland District Council and was pleased that generally there had not been any negative feedback on the good outcome.

**Proposed Southland Water & Land Plan:**

The Manager commended Jacob Smyth for his work on the Water & Land Plan submission, filed on 19th May 2017. It was a significant body of work completed with detailed technical evidence and of big importance to Fish & Game. It would now go through the statutory planning process.

Fish & Game would have the opportunity to speak to their submission and present their evidence in August or September 2017. Both Cohen and Zane would be involved with that along with Jacob.

Zane said that Federated Farmers were generally opposed to any further regulation and believed that farmers should just be encouraged to use good management practises. However that approach had not been successful in the past and was not going to turn back the changes in water quality, so Fish & Game would need to push hard for regulation of good management practises.

The next step of limit setting on a catchment by catchment basis would be very difficult without the base of those regulations, to try and improve values of the catchments.

It was well recognised that WAL2020 was only intended to hold things where they were, with no improvement of where things needed to be.

**Mallards and E. Coli.**

Questions had been raised by landowners & ES staff about E. coli production by mallards with respect to ponds and wetlands & human health risks. We had produced a simple fact sheet, using information from scientific literature, which explained that mallard faeces in ponds and wetlands were of low health risk to humans, especially when compared to bovine or ovine faeces.

Cr Owen reported that fingerprinting of water samples was being undertaken to determine where the origin of pathogens was coming from.

Zane noted that he was less concerned with E coli & more concerned about phosphorus and particularly sediment in our systems. If appropriate rules were made to avoid and mitigate sediment loss, faecal pathogens would be less of an issue. Nitrogen was also an issue, but to a lesser degree.

**Pond surveys:**

Good pond creation was continuing. Erin Garrick had completed a video & photo sequence of a large wetland development and placed it on Facebook. This footage was very useful for potential F&G media use.

**Consents:**

Cr Waghorn asked the outcome of an instream works consent to pipe and infill a section of a tributary of Waituna Creek. Zane reported that F&G had opposed the consent and explained why.

Cr Waghorn also asked the outcome of a land use consent to convert and use land for new dairy farming in the Waituna Creek and lagoon catchment. Zane said that this consent was not opposed to, as nitrogen losses would be less to the catchment than was currently happening there due to wintering of animals. Under the new regime no wintering of animals would take place. However the applicant’s attention was drawn to the fact that limit setting would ensue in the catchment and losses may not be able to happen in perpetuity.

**Game ranging opening weekend:**

Game ranging activities were held over opening weekend. 13 x offences of hunting without a licence and/or possession of lead shot was found. Unfortunately one hunter was particularly abusive & hostile and would be prosecuted by the Police.

Cr Graham asked if hunting with lead shot ended as a prosecution, did that go on record as a firearm offence, which could have ramifications for overseas travel. Zane replied that it would be an offence under the Wildlife Act, and not a firearms offence. However that could have significant consequences also to entering countries like North America.

Zane explained a case to the meeting that was currently being held in another region that could have significant consequences for all F&G compliance work nationally.

**Environment Southland Contracts:**

Cr Owen, acknowledging that what he was about to say bordered on a conflict of interest for him and then queried the Council as to their awareness that in his view having contracts with ES could be a conflict of interest for Fish & Game. He realised it was small scale at the moment but it could become important in the future. On one hand we were making submissions to them, sometimes in opposition and on the other hand we were receiving income from them for small contracts.

Zane replied that the integrity of staff would never be influenced by a contract. Generally F&G were supportive of ES science. Working with them built good relationships with the organisation and both parties could separate policy and politics well. The work we did for them and others always coincided & fitted in well with our own work, while offsetting some of our costs.

Southland had been more proactive than other regions in trying to supplement income with partnership contracts with Meridian, NIWA, Cawthron, DoC, MPI, ES etc. which had enabled us to fund research like the mallard research that we would not have been able to do otherwise.

Bill Jarvie said that any contract work was always done within reason and fitted in with our own work and was often done at the same time.

Cr Stenning saw the contracts as an efficiency and Cr Harris noted that assisting with water sampling of the lakes was very much in F&G’s interest.

**NZ Council Issues:**

Cr Stenning reported the last NZC meeting was held in Wellington on the 19th & 20th May 2017.

The first part of the meeting was held in public excluded session to discuss the Chief Executive position. A short list of applicants had been made and the Executive Committee would make a recommendation at the next meeting. Excellent applications had been received.

* A Conflict of Interest register was now been signed at each meeting by NZ Councillors to say they had no conflicts or that they did, rather than the previous way of only signing to record a conflict.
* Plastic pollution and the impact on the environment was a huge current issue and game bird hunting plastic wads and shell cases had become part of that concern. This was something F&G had to address.
* Legal Fund – Otago Kye Burn Catchment Group Consent application $50,000, Ruataniwha Water Storage & Plan Change 6 $45,000, Staff attendance to RM related events $10,000 were all approved.
* 4 x Research applications totalling $95,000 were also approved.
* Staff development grants were approved – Ian Hadland & Rudi Hoetjes.
* The Governors Forum would be held 24th and 25th November 2018 with the subject being “Future proofing Fish & Game”.
* Doug Stevens from NZ Fishing.com wanted NZ Council support to his campaigning anglers for donations on the fish and game licence (tick box) for research on a new control for didymo. This had been concerning to NZ Fish & Game as it had created false expectations that Fish & Game was driving the research, which was not the case. Also the income from licences belonged to regions and not NZ Council. The subject warranted support but not necessarily through a tick box on the licence application. More investigation of other fund generating options was required to support the research.
* Non-toxic shot for sub gauges had been approved by NZC and press releases from NZC had occurred, along with a release from the Minister of Conservation. A transition period of four years would follow with 2021 being all non-toxic shot for waterfowl hunting over and around all water, except for .410 gauge shotguns, which were the only exemption.
* With tourism numbers expected to keep increasing each year the DG of Conservation (Lou Sanson) gave his views on the issue of how the Dept of Conservation was grappling with ever increasing tourist numbers and the demand they placed on Conservation infrastructure. The Government wanted an open policy for tourism, so it was not going to be easy to address Fish & Game issues of increasing tourist numbers.
* Guides licence – Zane reported that the advancement of the guides licence had suffered a setback, but more detail could not be provided until a letter from the Minister was received by the NZC at their July meeting.

**Licence dispensations:**

The Chairman referred to the recent request for medical dispensation for a game licence. He had checked with NZ Council on licence dispensations and said this was an issue that needed further discussion, there was no national policy on the issue. Cr Stenning said that under the Wildlife Act it was illegal to grant dispensations for game licences. Zane suggested management would like to have a mechanism to grant a free game licence in some cases. Fishing licences was a different matter and could be granted in special cases and was done so under the Conservation Act.

For game however Cr Hartstonge suggested a separate fund could be set up & used at the discretion of management for payment of a game licence in some cases if required.

It was generally agreed a national policy for licence dispensations was needed so there was consistency throughout the country. In the meantime Council would discuss further at the next meeting so there were clear guidelines for staff.

Regarding issued group licences & fishing gear loaned to groups Cr Graham noted the poor condition of the loaned gear and asked that they be upgraded. This would be actioned.

**2017/2018 Licence fee recommendations:**

For the purpose of consultation with regional Fish & Game Councils, the NZ Council recommended a 2017/2018 adult whole season sports fish licence of $127 and the adult whole season game licence of $94 (inclusive of a $3 fee for the Game Bird Habitat Stamp).

This was a $2 increase for fish licences from last year and a $1 increase on game licences.

Discussion followed.

Zane noted that with the top up of reserves to a 30% level turned down for Wellington, Auckland/Waikato & Southland because of the asset replacement reserves, which we did not agree with, this made funds available for other projects. However he believed managers needed to look more rigorously at these other projects in the future. Our region expected managers to have more rigour when it came to regions wanting funds for different projects.

After discussions:

***Resolved Owen/Hartstonge that the Southland Council agrees to no increase in licence fee either for Game or Fish licences for the 2017/2018 season.*** Carried.

Council consensus was that there be no increase in either licence as Council could see no justification for an increase. It was not needed for the regional / national budgets and inflation was at a ten year low.

**General Business:**

**Theft & Fraud Prevention Policy:**

The Council Theft & Fraud Prevention Policy was adopted by Council in December 2011 and became effective from that date.

The policy was now due for review by Council and a copy attached to the agenda.

After consideration of the policy there were no changes suggested.

***Resolved Hartstonge/ Owen that the Theft & Fraud Prevention Policy has been reviewed with no changes required.*** Carried.

**Vice Chairman Position:**

After further discussing the need for a Vice Chairman, Council reached a consensus that all members had the chance of having a conflict of interest somewhere along the line.

If the Chairman had to stand down for any reason i.e. absent or a conflict of interest then the Executive Committee would nominate an Executive Committee member for the role to be approved by Council at the start of that meeting.

***Resolved Stenning /Owen that for any reason should a replacement Chairman be required then the Executive Committee would select an Executive Committee member who had no conflicts with the agenda for the role, to be approved by the Council at the start of the meeting.*** Carried.

**NZ Council new web site:**

The Southland regional page of the new website was discussed. It appeared that if nothing had been added from the region it defaulted to the NZ Council material. With this in mind the Chairman asked if Councillors would like a short profile added on the website perhaps with a photo, for licence holder’s information. If so please send to the office for addition to the website.

Staff would look at the regional pages and correct the input from NZ Council material to Southland material once they were able to do so.

**Combined Southland/Otago Council meeting:**

The date for the combined Council meeting had been set for July 18th 2017, at Clinton.

Discussions would include the topic of Non Resident Anglers.

**Honorary Rangers:**

Zane asked Councillors to think seriously about suitable people for the next ranger intake. Please advise the Manager or Bill Jarvie if you have any suggestions.

**Items for next Council meeting - 10th August 2017.**

* Cyril Gilroy – Iwi perspective on F&G matters.
* Allan Baird – Provincial President, Federated Farmers Southland.

There was no further business and the meeting was closed at 8.45pm.

Chairman\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_Date\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_