

# AUCKLAND/WAIKATO FISH & GAME NEWSBRIEF

If you require further elaboration or clarification of items contained herein, or any other matters relating to F&G business, please don't hesitate to contact your local councillor or the office.

## Matters arising from the Council Meeting of 11<sup>th</sup> June 2022

1. The Chairman spoke on the recent passing due to a tragic accident of Councillor Guy Ralph and called for a minute silence.
2. Councillor Annan reported on the Arapuni fishing day. He noted that there was no significant difference yet between the growth rates of sterile and non-sterile trout, which was to be expected. Any difference in growth rate should become apparent in the next 12 months.
3. The Whangamarino weir consent review was discussed. Consultants were looking at the potential issues with the option of using the flood gates for water level control, including whether to retrofit one gate to allow fish passage or construct a fish bypass around the gates. There was five years left on the existing consents for the weir.
4. The Chairman acknowledged the significant work on wetland restoration carried out by Mr Klee.
5. Councillors also spoke in appreciation of the considerable efforts by the Office Manager Roslyn Simmonds with the band returns, especially the return form on the website.
6. Councillors discussed the current situation where two ponds on the Piggott wetland were balloted out every 5-years by the Frankland Acclimatisation Society. This situation was considered to be undesirable because in the final year of the tenancy the ponds were not adequately maintained. It was agreed that control of the Franklin ponds on the Piggott wetland be taken back by Council.
7. Mr Klee spoke on his concerns that some ponds in the Fish & Game wetlands were not utilized on Opening Weekend. It was agreed that pondholders would be informed in 2023 that if they were not going to use their pond on Opening that they should inform the office so that the pond could be used by other hunters.
8. Councillor de Preez informed the meeting that regretfully he had to resign from Council due to his acceptance of a job offer in South Africa. He enjoyed his time on Council and regretted that his contribution had been for only a short duration.
9. The Chairman expressed his concern that the NZ Council was delegating too much decision making to an executive committee. This practice might suggest poor governance practice with too many late papers and inadequate information for the full council to make a decision.
10. Councillor Williamson expressed his concern that the Wildlife Act review had been delegated to a working group of NZ Councillors who were finalizing approval of a staff paper to the Department of Conservation. Councillor Williamson considered that the paper should be circulated to the regions for review and comments. It was agreed that the Chairman write to the NZ Council with Council's concerns over the Wildlife Act review.
11. The following licence fee recommendations were approved
  - 2022/23 adult whole season sports fish licence fee is set at \$145.
  - 2023 adult whole season game licence fee is set at \$107 (inclusive of a \$5 fee for the Game Bird Habitat Stamp).
  - That the non-resident adult whole season sports fish licence is set at \$250.
  - a \$50 day licence for non-resident anglers on designated waters.
12. Councillors Matt Barker and Nigel Juby were asked to represent Council in discussions with the Northland Council regarding any potential amalgamation of the two councils.
13. Councillors agreed to ask the new NZC CE, Corina Jordan and NZC Chairman Ray Grubb to a meeting of Council.

## **Matters Arising from the Chief Executive's Report**

**Trout Releases:** Adam Daniel made the first of two planned trout releases into Quarry Lake.

**Waikato Botulism Outbreaks:** We are generally very pleased with how most territorial authorities are managing their Wastewater Treatment Plants in the Waikato Region. Over the past decade David Klee has managed to facilitate the training and deployment of specialised contractors who are tasked solely with managing avifauna on these ponds. By conducting early intervention including pre-moult dispersals we have reduced the impact of outbreaks significantly. Ponds which had deaths totalling into the thousands are now killing a few hundred or less birds.

**Auckland Botulism Outbreaks:** A zoom meeting was held between F&G, Watercare, DOC, BirdCare Aotearoa and others to look at what could be done about botulism on wastewater treatment ponds and other locations in the Auckland Region.

**Healthy Rivers (Plan Change 1):** We are preparing for two judicial workshops scheduled for June, with substantial assistance from our consultants (Sarah Ongley and Helen Marr). The workshops will be on alternatives to Overseer and point source discharges.

**Diazinon:** The application for extensions to the phase out date for Diazinon to 2038 from the Vegetable Research and Innovation Board was denied by the EPA, and use of this insecticide will be phased out by 2028. An extensive submission by Fish & Game gets multiple mentions throughout EPA report.

**Whangamarino Weir Section 128 Review:** Consultants are waiting for new LIDAR data to help build a better hydrological model for the wetland. In the interim, cursory scoping assessments are being conducted to look at the preferred structural option for water control in the catchment.

**Cambridge WWTP:** David Klee attended the latest virtual meeting. Good progress is being made towards upgrading the plant which will lead to significant improvements in nutrient and sediment discharges. David negotiated that \$50,000 be set aside per annum for mitigation works that will lead to water quality improvements in the upstream catchment of the Waikato River.

**Te Aroha Wetland:** David Klee is preparing a management plan for this wetland. We own approximately 1/3<sup>rd</sup> of the wetland with the Matamata Piako District Council owning the remainder. The site historically provides an important refuge area for birds during the hunting season but is almost completely dry for the first time in living memory. Once we have established the flows required to maintain wetland water levels we will look at the feasibility of obtaining a surface water take consent and pump to recharge the wetland.

**Wetland Projects:** David Klee completed the earthworks and some fencing components on 4 large wetland projects on private land co-funded by the landowners, WCEET and the GBHT.

**Maimai disputes:** Appeared to be more than usual, and they took considerable staff time to arbitrate. Most of the disputes appear to be due to hunters failing to tag before pegging day.

**Complaints:** Less complaints than usual on Opening Weekend, usually by new property owners. However, one area of concern is the Waikato River between Cambridge and Hamilton. Downstream from Cambridge a new cycle track follows the river for some 7km on the true-right bank, at times less than 20m from the river. Further downstream the reach between the Narrows and Hamilton is becoming increasingly developed. This area is zoned for intensive residential development, including a cycleway along the river once the new bridge is completed at the end of Wairere Drive.

**Wildlife Act Review:** Staff contribute to a F&G submission on the Wildlife Act Review. There are significant risks but also some opportunities for Fish and Game to consider. It should be noted that this will be a 'first principles'-based review meaning it will be an entirely new iteration rather than a rejig of the existing Act. Some big picture items that we need to consider is the potential for co-management of native species, possible conflict between native and introduced species and the potential privatisation of hunting and fishing rights.