

# 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 25 February 2023

1. Mr Klee provided an update on the botulism outbreak in the Whangamarino wetland:
  - DOC were spending one day a week in the wetland and were contributing \$5,000 towards employing contractors.
  - Waikato Regional Council had contributed \$5,000 to the cleaning efforts.
  - Fish & Game staff were spending 3-4 days a week on the outbreak.
  - Another large fish kill had recently occurred in the Maramarua River.
  - There were still healthy birds in the upper Maramarua, and this population was being regularly monitored.
2. A letter was tabled from Mr Ken Parker and Mr Bruce Street regarding the game regulations. The Chairman recommended that at the next game regulation review, licence holders were informed as to Council's policies and procedures regarding the game regulations.
3. Councillor Williamson was nominated to the Game Bird Habitat Trust.
4. Councillor Barnes spoke on the Governance Review emphasizing that it was up to the regions to implement the review. A working group had been set up to look at matters that will benefit Fish & Game that will require legislative change, including the amalgamation of regions. It was agreed that funding is sought from the NZ Council for Governance training.
5. Councillors requested an update on the duck banding programme. In reply, Mr Klee stated that the total number of ducks banded was likely to be down by a third, mainly due to the difficulty of attracting birds to the cages as they weren't interested in eating maize due to the abundance of natural foods. He emphasised that total numbers caught in the banding programme didn't reflect overall population levels.
6. The Chairman congratulated Councillor Barnes for being elected as Chairman of the New Zealand Fish & Game Council.
7. Councillor Clark expressed disbelief that any region would support the phase out of lead shot for .410 shotguns. It was agreed that the other Fish & Game regions be requested for their position on the proposed phase-out of lead shot for .410 shotguns.
8. Councillor Barker stated that he had been approached by one of the organisers of the recent national secondary school clay target competition, noting that the Auckland/Waikato girls had won the Fish & Game shield and enquiring whether Fish & Game was still funding free licences for the winner. Mr Wilson agreed to contact the National Office about funding.
9. It was agreed that a letter of thanks should be sent to volunteers who assisted in the botulism clean up.

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

**Swan Research:** 22 black swans have been caught and 20 banded on the Manukau Harbour. Ten of those were fitted with solar-powered tracking collars supplied by Auckland Airport as part of their ongoing study. These transmitters download the swan movements when they pass a cell phone tower. If any hunters shoot or come across a banded swan, or one with a black neck-mounted tracker, damaged or not, they should inform F&G so the tracker can be recovered.

**Swan trend count:** Numbers are the highest at Lake Waikare since our trend count first started back in 1984. In recent years:

- 2023 – 1,100
- 2022 – 593
- 2021 – 316
- 2020 – 302.

**Healthy Rivers:** The mediation process started again in mid-January, but the process is very slow and not expected to finish until early May. We're currently spending 1-5 days a week in mediation on Zoom from 9.30am to 5.30pm, followed by strategy meetings with our team. DOC are now much more heavily involved especially in regard to the Whangamarino Wetland.

**Proposed Waitomo District Plan:** We made a submission on the Proposed Waitomo District Plan on the 23<sup>rd</sup> of December 2022. Overall, we were pleased with the proposed plan and that a lot of our previous concerns were addressed from our initial submission.

**Review of the Wildlife Act:** Mischa Davis provided a summary outlining what the proposed changes to the Wildlife Act could entail and how they might affect Fish and Game. In December 2021 Conservation Minister Hon Kiri Allan announced a review of New Zealand's conservation laws. The reform will be staged over several years, starting with a review of the Wildlife Act 1953. Being part of this review will be paramount to Fish and Game as the Wildlife Act establishes Fish and Game's role as managers of game species, the issuing of hunting licences and monitoring and enforcement of regulations.

**Thames Wastewater Treatment Plant (WWTP) s127 Change to the Consent:** In 2018 we made a submission on the Thames 20-year WWTP consent application requesting additional information to ensure the application will make appropriate improvements to its discharge for that term, and to ensure that there are no undue effects to gamebird populations and their habitats in receiving environments. A meeting was held between the consultant for TCDC and F&G staff to see whether we would support a change to the consent application, we responded with conditional approval so long as significant nutrient reductions are written into the conditions.

**2023 Tree Order:** We were again heavily oversubscribed for the 2023 order and have had to make some reductions to requests. It is unrealistic for us to supply thousands of plants free of charge to individual projects. In most cases we can supply a few hundred and supply extras at cost.

**Drift diving:** Unfortunately drift diving has been delayed significantly due to constant rain. The Mangatutu has been at least double the base flow since May 2022. Fortunately, there were no major rain events during the spawning and early rearing period for trout.

**Arapuni fish returns:** Although all river fisheries have been high with over 250% of the average January rainfall the Waikato River has been fishing well with cooler water temperatures. Fish returns from Lake Arapuni have been up. There have also been reports of Lake Arapuni fish recovered in Lake Karapiro due to large amounts of spill.