

# 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 14<sup>th</sup> October 2023

The Chairman requested a moment of silence for the passing of ex-councillors David Syme and Dan Hartley.

- 1. Hamilton Fish and Game:** The Chairman, Grant Annan, gave his personnel thanks to Dr Adam Daniel for his efforts as a member of the Raglan Coast Guard in the recent incident involving the Hamilton Fish & Game Club on a charter fishing vessel attempting to cross the Raglan bar. The Chairman also expressed his appreciation to Mr David Klee for his concerns expressed immediately after the incident.
- 2. NZ Council:** Mr Wilson expressed his concern that the current level of expenditure by the New Zealand Council was unsustainable in the long term. Councillor Barnes disagreed and stated that the current level of expenditure was sustainable and within budget. He noted that the Governance Review was "dead" in regards to the recommendations requiring legislative change.
- 3. Cost Optimisation and Resource Allocation Project:** A letter from Mr Barrie Barnes, New Zealand Fish & Game Council Chair, regarding "*Upcoming Cost Optimisation and Resource Allocation Project*" was tabled. Mr Barnes informed Councillors that a contract for the Allocation Project had not yet been signed, and that regions could optout. It was agreed that the letter be reconsidered at the December Council meeting.
- 4. Whangamarino Weir:** Councillors discussed the Whangamarino weir and potential short term (repairs) and long-term expenditure (re-consenting).
- 5. Draft policy on setting national policy:** Councillor Barnes informed Councillors that the draft policy was required to speed up the process of setting national policy. Mr Wilson noted that the NZ Council would no longer require a majority of regions to agree to a proposed policy. Councillor Barnes stated that this change was required so that the policy was compliant with the relevant provision of the Conservation Act. It was agreed that the NZ Council be informed that Council does not support the proposed changes to this national policy.
- 6. Draft Conflict of Interest Policy:** It was agreed that the draft Conflict of Interest Policy be accepted by Council.
- 7. Draft staff code of conduct:** It was agreed that the draft Staff Code of Conduct Policy be accepted by Council.
- 8. Auckland/Waikato policy review:** Council's policies were reviewed and policies regarding the Piggott Wetland, Licence Commission, Licence agents and staff clothing were revoked.
- 9. 2023 Drift dive report:** Dr Daniel's Drift Dive Survey report was tabled. Councillor Barker enquired as to why there was such huge variations in juvenile trout numbers from year to year. Dr Daniel replied that floods during late winter/autumn affected spawning success. However huge changes in juvenile numbers were also observed in spring-fed rivers that rarely flooded. Mr Wilson suggested that this may be due to winter temperatures with poor recruitment in warm winters.
- 10. OSH update:** Dr Daniel introduced the new SeaFlux app for monitoring the Maritime Marine requirements for Fish & Game boats.

The next meeting of Council is scheduled for 9<sup>th</sup> December 2023.

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

**Annual Shoveler Survey:** David Klee, John Dyer and several volunteers conducted the regions annual shoveler count as part of the national census. There were good aggregations of birds in the Whangamarino wetland, although widely dispersed due to the continued high-water level which made it difficult to get accurate counts. At the time of writing the final annual shoveler report is not yet available, but it appeared that overall counts in our region were down this year.

**Staff Conference:** David Klee hosted the breakout session focused on gamebird monitoring and research at the recent staff F&G conference. This focused on the ongoing discussion surrounding our current monitoring programmes and review of species monitoring SOPs.

**2023 Game Bird Harvest:** Interestingly despite a large portion of hunters stating that they felt there were more ducks around this year the numbers shot per hour of hunting was relatively low. Many hunters reported that despite seeing lots of birds they were hard to decoy, or the birds appeared to be heading elsewhere. The amount of available habitat due to the amount of flood water around during the season likely played a role in dispersing birds and meant they had plenty of options.

**Healthy Rivers/Wai Ora: Proposed Waikato Regional Plan Change 1:** David Klee and Adam Daniel attended a total of 6 days of expert conferencing. The hearing dates span multiple weeks spread across September, October and November and will be held at the Distinction Hotel in Hamilton and the Environment Court in Auckland.

**New Wildlife Act:** On the 9<sup>th</sup> of September the Minister of Conservation Willow-Jean Prime announced that the Wildlife Act will be replaced with new legislation to protect native species better and improve biodiversity outcomes.

**Whangamarino Weir Section 128 Review:** The final planning assessment and technical report will be submitted by the end of September. David Klee has had significant input into this process with almost weekly meetings in the last few months.

**Trout Habitat:** Adam Daniel has completed a significant multiyear mapping project for trout habitat and trout spawning habitat.

**Fish and Game Comprehensive consent application:** In August we were informed that our consent application 'Wetland Maintenance; Auckland Waikato Fish and Game - Lower Waikato Wetland' was accepted, receiving a s42a Report and Notification Decision. As part of the conditions, we are to provide the Waikato Regional Council with an annual wetland maintenance plan prior to the works, by the 31<sup>st</sup> of November each year.

**Whangamarino Fish Kill and Botulism Outbreak:** David Klee attended a recent meeting with iwi, DOC and the WRC, and has contributed to the anoxic response plan which is due to be finalised by the end of October.

**Golden Clam:** Adam Daniel has spent a considerable amount of time as a member the Gold Clam Technical Advisory Group to MPI. The group reviewed the data on control and introductions of the gold clam and then reviewed a technical report that will be presented to a governance board.

**Trees:** A completed 8-page document detailing where various rare tree species are that can be used as seed sources for our F&G tree programme has been prepared by John Dyer to assist future field staff and interested volunteers to locate them.

**Maritime NZ:** Adam Daniel has spent a considerable amount of time responding to the Maritime NZ audit of the NZ Council boating program and seeking legal advice on liability.

**Website:** Over the last two months Roslyn Simmonds has been working on the new website, going through each page and reformatting if needed, checking links and documents. This may sound a small job but with over 500 pages it has been a long process. New images have also been added to have more variety throughout the website.