

WELLINGTON FISH & GAME COUNCIL

MINUTES OF MEETING OF THE WELLINGTON FISH & GAME COUNCIL, HELD ON TUESDAY 12 DECEMBER 2023 AT 3.15PM AT UPPER HUTT COSMOPOLITAN CLUB, 11 LOGAN STREET, UPPER HUTT

1. Present:

Chairman Paul Dewar. Councillors Aaron Passey, Steve Brown, Jennifer Yanko, Don Scott, Malcolm Francis, Jim Cook, John Hancock.

Video Link Councillors: Colin Shore, Prof. Stephen Haslett

In Attendance:

Fish and Game Staff: Phil Teal, Dr Matt Kavermann, Hamish Carnachan

Licence Holders: Chris O'Meara, Marc Flaws

Video Link Staff: Hamish Carnachan

Welcome and Confirmation of Agenda

Chairman Dewar opened the meeting and extended a welcome to all councillors, staff, and licence holders.

2. Apologies:

It was noted that apologies were received from:

Councillors Andrew McGregor, Richard McIntyre

Staff: Ami Coughlan.

It was moved

that apologies be accepted

Aaron Passey/Jim Cook

Carried

3. Conflict of Interest

The Conflicts of Interest Register was discussed – Mr Teal acknowledged that he was also formally undertaking the role of Chief Executive for Taranaki Fish and Game Council as required by Wellington Fish and Game Council as part of the shared resources agreement between the two councils.

Mr Teal confirmed that the Conflict-of-Interest register was updated accordingly from the previous meeting, and Conflict of Interest Management Plan was also updated with the new conflicts of interest that were identified and how Council intended to deal with managing a conflict.

4. Minutes of Previous Meeting of 10 October 2023:

Following consideration of the draft Minutes of the meeting of the Wellington Fish and Game Council of 10 October 2023 it was moved that ***the Minutes of the meeting of the Wellington Fish & Game Council of 10 October 2023 be approved as a true and correct record of the proceedings of that meeting.***

Malcolm Francis/Don Scott

Carried

5. Matters Arising:

Mr Teal confirmed that feedback had been sent to the NZ Council on a number of policy considerations including: draft policy on Staff Performance, draft policy on Staff Code of Conduct, draft policy (review) of Conflicts of Interest, and comments on draft policy on Setting National Policy. NZ Council staff provided an encouraging response to the feedback noting that it appreciated the positive and constructive nature of Wellington Council's contribution.

Further discussion was held on the policy to manage conflicts of interest with Councillor Hancock acknowledging that there were occasions where the person with the declared conflict of interest is often the most knowledgeable about a subject. Chairman Dewar confirmed that the process provided for determining the nature of the conflict of interest and what action should be appropriately taken. This was formally considered in the process by developing the Conflicts of Interest Management Plan – which doesn't rely solely on decisions on how to deal with conflicts of interest being made ad hoc at each meeting.

Mr Teal confirmed that feedback was also provided to NZ Council on the working groups established by NZ Council – Future Finance Working Group and Future Structure Working Group – with it expressed that there was a need to develop clear Terms of Reference, and identify mechanisms that will promote changes.

Mr Teal noted that Wellington Council had also provided feedback on the lack of a defined process for considering organisational research – in terms of defining research needs, prioritisation, and research procurement from providers - and that the terms of reference for the Research Committee needed to be developed urgently.

Mr Teal confirmed that Wellington Council had indicated support to NZ Council (and staff) to strongly advocate for licence holders' interests at a governance and operational level in addressing potential changes to legislation (including Wildlife Act and Resource Management legislation).

Councillor Brown noted that the application for the Upland Game Property was still being progressed as part of the Game Notice notification process. He reiterated comments from the previous meeting that Fish and Game needed to ensure best management practices are followed in order to manage perceptions relating to social licence to operate this hunting format. Councillor Scott indicated that there was awareness of the potential risks of this type of operation affecting social licence to operate - it had been considered in the deliberations previously.

Councillor Brown noted that using tenkara fishing techniques (without reel and running line) did not appear to have strong ethical justification to not be included in fishing regulations (nationwide). He indicated that he would use this as a potential example when deliberating on Wellington Council's working group to establish principles on which to base regulation setting.

Dr Kavermann confirmed that further details were sought on the application to remove perch and rudd from Lake Ponui (Lakes380 project) to confirm the study objectives, methods, and potential management actions. Further liaison was required with GWRC to establish the details for an application to remove sports fish.

Mr Teal confirmed that access had been given to the consultant to Wellington region's Xero accounting data to allow analysis for the Cost Optimisation Project. It was also noted that Chairman Dewar had sent specific comments to the NZ Council Chairman in order to strengthen the brief provided to the consultant and increase value of undertaking the exercise. Councillor Scott noted that reviewing the financial model for the organisation was a work in progress – and that changes to a more sustainable model may be required.

6. New Zealand Fish and Game Council Business

Wellington Council considered the report from Councillor Haslett on the NZ Fish and Game Council meeting on 24 -25 November 2023 - referring to the summary of the NZ Council meeting (by the NZ Council CE). It was acknowledged that the minutes of the meetings held by NZ Council were not being distributed immediately after a meeting due to concern of widely circulating unconfirmed minutes. The potential risk of this approach is reduced transparency (over an extended period) and reliance on the NZ Council CE summary report – while acknowledging that the current feedback had been adequate, it created a potential risk of reducing clarity and emphasis in the narrative in summarising outcomes and issues discussed.

Discussion ensued on the Cost Optimisation Project with it noted that no region has voted against the project proceeding but some regions hadn't consented for access to their accounting records and/or have put some conditions on relating to further consultation on the document prior to its final release. It was concluded that this review project should not be set up to disadvantage Taranaki and Wellington regions in a funding model as they are the only two regions that are collaborating on sharing resources.

Councillor Haslett noted that further discussions would be made at the February 2024 NZ Council meeting regarding the work undertaken by the Financial Futures and Future Structure Working Groups, and that any ways forward that they have identified may become clearer then. There are some general principles being considered by the working groups that relate to organisational structure and financial model processes - including a review of the contestable fund process and how these considerations fit into any wider review. Mr Teal noted that there could be some cost assessments made across functional areas for each region that might identify (in)efficiencies or particular regional focuses beyond core function. It was reiterated that the Terms of Reference for Cost Optimisation Project were broad (as they were for the Working Groups) and no mechanisms of change had appeared obvious from discussions provided in feedback to NZ Council. It was clarified that the NZ Council was still focusing some efforts in responding to the original Ministerial Review on Fish and Game governance, but any recommended mechanism(s) for change could vary from those recommendations defined in that report. This may be further complicated by the change in central Government and what changes if any they were contemplating for the organisation.

Councillor Haslett noted that there appeared to be some ambiguity of process to get items included in the NZ Council agenda, but it was ultimately at the discretion of the Chairman.

Councillor Haslett noted that the options presented for providing Liability Insurance would be discussed more fully at the February 2024 NZ Council meeting. He noted that the insurance provider had provided a proposal that might not cover all events – specifically Health and Safety events are not covered as all Council members have some level of personal responsibility. Chairman Dewar clarified that the current law does not permit individuals or entities to insure against Health and Safety incidents. Councillor Passey further noted that some insurance offerings can cover legal fees and reparation payments but not any fine imposed by the Court.

Mr Teal provided a brief overview of the issues currently being considered by NZ Council:

2023-2028 Organisational Strategy: The latest version of the NZ Council Organisational Strategy was distributed and will be considered as an agenda item on strategic directions planned for the February 2024 Wellington Council Meeting – with the purpose to indicate how Wellington Council can give effect to implementing the organisational strategy from a regional perspective.

Magazine Review: Confirmation that a review of the Fish and Game NZ Magazine is being considered as the principal communications channel to licence holders. It was noted that there are significant cost rises for production and postage, and revenue streams to offset costs have also materially changed (negatively). Other alternatives to the physical hardcopy magazine format are being considered but with a view to likely continuance of production for Game 2024 and Fish 2024/2025 editions.

Mr Carmachan has developed a discussion paper for NZ Council that considered identifying additional costs (increases) in the order of \$170K and noting the loss of current revenue arrangements - as well as identifying current alternative communication channels and methods.

Discussion ensued on the current situation, with it concluded that making a sudden transition would be unwise given the importance placed on this communication mode. It was acknowledged that this was still the preferred communication channel of many of the existing licence holders. Councillor Haslett confirmed that even while the unit price per licence holder being in the order of \$4.50 per unit was a large total project cost for the organisation, in terms of magazine unit cost to give the licence holder something tangible each year it was not unreasonable.

Mr Carnachan provided additional insight by noting that since the magazine's inception in the mid-1990s that Fish and Game have relied on advertisers to make their offerings to Fish and Game (or the previous publisher) rather than proactively seeking advertising revenue. To this end Fish and Game are considering opportunities to approach selected advertisers such as vehicle providers – with potentially an external provider with expertise being utilised to seek advertising revenue.

Mr Carnachan also noted that all production variables are being reviewed such as total paper weight and thickness to reduce postage rates, including on providing the option of smaller inserts from advertisers rather than the larger format catalogue.

Launch of Re-Wilding Communications Campaign: Councillor Haslett confirmed the launch of the social licence communications campaign in early November 2023, and how regions can leverage public awareness to contribute to the wider campaign goals. He noted that Dame Lynda Topp had given her time to support the launch of the campaign and that she was recently appointed the first patron of NZ Fish and Game Council.

Councillor Haslett noted that the Department of Conservation provided a Health and Safety presentation on how the Department implements procedures and protocols. The main conclusions related to ensuring focus on key critical risk management (situations that can cause serious injury or death), and it was important to adequately deal with liability aspects by ensuring governors promote and provide for a culture for safe practices’.

Councillor Haslett provided an overview of the RMA legal fund which had been earmarked by NZ Council to co-ordinate projects and make efficiencies in defining position statements:

- RMA Team training – from the NPS-FM budget(\$20K)
- Presentation to Regional Councils on NPS-FM topics by experts (\$10K)
- Complete the development of practice notes on NPS-FM 2020 topics by experts (\$35K).
- Providing expert advice and notes by agricultural expert to enable appropriate advocacy (\$15K)

Councillor Haslett provided an overview of the Research Sub-Committee’s activities and current proposals being considered by NZ Council. He noted that the current process should provide for a tender process for alternative research providers to give competing proposals – and this should have been required for the research proposal associated with getting an economic impact assessment. He further noted that the proposal by Cawthron Institute to do research on the potential effects of climate change on trout distribution was likely to be covered by Dr Adam Canning’s work and that no further work should proceed until this scientific paper is drafted to avoid duplication. Councillor Haslett updated Council on two other research projects regarding the benefits to wellbeing by freshwater angling and the Women’s Angling Survey results (with a notable finding being that the Family Whole Season licence category has come under criticism for not permitting the ‘spouse’ to fish on their own).

Councillor Haslett outlined the structure and purpose of the Research Sub-Committee of NZ Council. It was noted that the process for considering research proposal development may involve development of reports based on staff recommendations that go to NZ Council. It was anticipated that a revised application form would be developed to consider research proposals.

Councillor Haslett considered there was a need to define in the Research Strategy a clear process to follow a tender and request for proposals for large items. In addition it would be useful for the Sub-Committee to be aware of regional research being undertaken and understanding how that fitted into meeting information needs of the wider organisation.

It was further clarified by the NZ Council Chair that NZ Council would have delegates on the Research Sub-Committee and that some staff would form part of the advisory role to the Sub-Committee but not have voting rights. Councillor Haslett considered that the Research Sub-Committee must have an appropriate structure to make use of the expertise. He further clarified that the Terms of Reference were being confirmed for the research subcommittee and that they would report back to NZ Council at its February 2024 meeting.

Councillor Haslett confirmed that the staff Development Fund had been allocated to North Canterbury CE Rasmus Gabrielson for \$6000 to attend the World Fisheries Congress in Seattle, USA in March 2024. He clarified that a report on the Congress proceedings was requested but this wasn't in the original application per se so it may not be a requirement. Discussion ensued on whether there was a detailed budget provided for the staff scholarship for a four-day conference – with it noted that total costs were submitted that exceeded the amount applied for but it was still a substantial contribution.

Councillor Haslett outlined the issues in considering changes to streamlining processes for printing regulation books relating to sports fish and game bird notices - including investigating cost reducing options and including integration with apps and other similar initiatives utilised by some regions. Mr Carnachan outlined that the total cost per year for production of the regulation books was in the order of \$100K per year. He confirmed that the data format requirements are rather simple so they can be integrated into an app option that doesn't need connectivity. He confirmed that there appears to be some support for dispensing with every licence holder being given a hard copy option of regulation. Councillor Hancock noted that he retains a hard copy of regulations in his vehicle as coverage in remote areas (in the Wairarapa as an example) was very patchy off the beaten track. Councillor Brown noted that there was potential for technology to download regulations to the mobile device, and there was the ability existing to print off relevant regulations before you go fishing. Mr Carnachan outlined that there was also an option being considered as an opt-out option if the data is included in electronic format on an App. It was acknowledged that there is a requirement for Fish and Game to make reasonable efforts to provide the information to licence holders to meet compliance obligations.

Councillor Haslett outlined that NZ Council had recognised the importance of dealing with access issues for licence holders and Fish and Game's relationship with the Walking Access Commission. NZ Council had supported the development of a public access advocacy strategy with the intent to have a contestable fund application for the NZ Council meeting in April 2024. Discussion confirmed that the perception was the Walking Access Commission appeared to lack legitimate authority and mandate to resolve identified access issues. It was agreed that the access advocacy strategy should specifically include dealing with issues associated with the Department of Conservation, Territorial Local Authorities, and access across or to iwi land/resources. One of the key issues identified is that public access maps don't necessarily link to practical access on the ground.

Counselor Haslett noted that the 2023-2024 Annual Budget and meeting schedule was recently confirmed. He confirmed that discussion was held on the duration of NZ Council meetings and the possibility to reduce some meetings to one day duration where possible – with it acknowledged that this will require a lot of discipline and pre-meeting preparation work.

Councillor Haslett referred to the summary of the NZ Council meeting November 2024 (prepared by NZ Council CE) regarding feedback to consultations on policies: setting national policy, staff code of conduct, conflict of interest policies, and performance management policy. He noted that from the feedback that some of the large regions feel they don't need to commit to a national policy structure.

After brief further discussion it was moved that

The report from Councillor Haslett on NZ Fish and Game Council business and meetings be received

Steve Brown/Jim Cook

Carried

Councillor Haslett noted the wider plan for regional (operational and/or governance) amalgamations needed to be considered for the next Fish and Game elections as currently there is no momentum from other regions to pursue this approach - which could have a potential consequence of a potential loss of a vote on NZ Council for those that did amalgamate.

7. Ministerial Review of Fish and Game Governance

Chairman Dewar provided a brief update of progress made to reflecting recommendations made in the Ministerial Review.

- **Update of Meetings with Regional Chairs**

Chairman Dewar noted that the last meeting was held the previous week to the Council meeting. He gave an overview of an introduction from NZ Council Chair that provided an update on the NZ Council meeting (covering issues as discussed in the previous agenda item) when he was overseas and no meeting notes were taken.

There was discussion and clarification on the Future Finance Working Group and Future Structure Working Group findings and progress to date, as well as the Cost Optimisation Project details. With respect to the latter topic, he noted that several regional Chairs didn't want to be involved in the Cost Optimisation Project or at least delay the timing of the review. He speculated that this may have been motivated by some regions simply not wanting the detail of their accounts being additionally scrutinised beyond audit function. Chairman Dewar had the impression that the larger regions still felt insulated and buffered from economic pressures as they were 'paying a levy' and would seek to pay a 'lesser' levy. From an organisational perspective this is not sustainable using the current financial model

Councillor Brown sought clarification as to whether the NZ Council was being proactive in supporting amalgamations – but Chairman Dewar confirmed that it was still largely a voluntary and discretionary approach for regions to consider (resulting in only Taranaki and Wellington actively working to progress). This position is exacerbated by the Government reducing focus on actively promoting that the wider Fish and Game undertake amalgamations – i.e. the external pressure to consider amalgamations has receded. Councillor Francis noted wider angler (public) frustration in the process seemingly going on and on without momentum or resolution.

Chairman Dewar confirmed that the Chairs Meeting considered all the active policy reviews and that he considered those that didn't support refinement of the policies provided weak excuses as justification. He noted that other regional Chairs had been supportive of Taranaki and Wellington's approach to amalgamating operational services with a view to governance amalgamation in due course.

A. Contract Principles for Shared Resources – Taranaki and Wellington Fish and Game Councils

Discussion ensued on the draft principles for Shared Resources which was seen as pragmatic and practical to proceed with.

It was then moved that

the draft contract principles to provide shared resources to Taranaki Fish and Game Council (and vice versa) be adopted as a basis for a workable operational contract

Malcolm Francis/Aaron Passey

Carried

Councillor Haslett cautioned that Fish and Game is entering a period of even less clarity of legal structure for the organisation, especially since the implementation of the Ministerial Review recommendations has only been partial and some recommendations to changes in governance not being progressed. Another issue to highlight this is the lack of momentum to amalgamate regions with a recent focus more of operational efficiency focus rather than the Review's recommendation to reduce governance representation size.

B. Updates of any Outcomes of Lower North Island Fish and Game Councils

A brief update on the potential amalgamation and shared resources arrangements for the lower North Island Fish and Game regions it was confirmed that approach from Hawke's Bay Fish and Game Council to Wellington Fish and Game Council to supply management services as a 'shared resource' was not pursued. Mr Teal updated that NZ Council had entered into an agreement with Hawke's Bay Fish and Game to provide operational management oversight - with NZC CE being the principal provider. Mr Teal confirmed that he had made an offer to assist with the development of an operational work plan, but a decision needs to be made by the Hawke's Bay Council as to what external assistance they believe they require. Wellington Council also acknowledged Dr Kavermann's offer to assist with logistics support on a limited basis, but no uptake had resulted. There was a brief discussion acknowledging the risk in not sorting out Hawke's Bay Fish and Game's operational and governance focus with outcomes and work programmes potentially not meeting legislative requirements.

It was then moved that

the report on the Lower North Island Shared Resources proposals be received

John Hancock/Aaron Passey

Carried

8. Public Forum

No specific issue was discussed but Mr O'Meara commented that similar issues were still being discussed and remained unresolved since his departure from Council nearly two years ago.

9. **Health and Safety Reporting – October 2023 to November 2023**

Mr Teal confirmed that he had held the Health and Safety meetings of weekly frequency, and also provide an opportunity for more regular and timely health and safety discussions/updates.

It was moved that

Council receives the Health and Safety Report for October 2023 and November 2023

Jim Cook/John Hancock

Carried

10. **Recommendations for the 2024 Game Season Notice**

A. Recommendations for 2024 Game Season

Council considered the report presented by staff on the recommendations for season bag limits, duration, and special hunting conditions for each game bird species. The recommendation is collated by NZ Council and presented to the Minister of Conservation (via the Department of Conservation officials) for consideration of game season conditions for Wellington Region in the 2024 Game Gazette. These recommendations need to be finalised by 1 February 2024 but any material changes to the Game Notice should be alerted to Department of Conservation officials prior to the end of the calendar year – with justification provided for reasons for the changes recommended with supporting documentation.

Recommendations can be made subject to confirmation following January 2024 Trend Counts (black swan and paradise shelduck), but convention would normally have provisional conditions noted.

One significant change to be considered for 2024 Season Conditions is inclusion of an area specified for Upland Game Property with Special Conditions.

Dr Kavermann outlined the key elements in the staff report relating to the recommendations for the 2024 game season regulation recommendations. He noted that the draft recommendations for paradise shelduck and black swan are subject to the counts being undertaken in January. He reiterated that the recommendations need to be presented to the Minister of Conservation (via NZ Council co-ordination) by the 1 February 2024.

He noted that many of the regulations are 'status quo' and that a forecast El Nino weather pattern (which is yet to fully exhibit) was the predominant climate driver for this summer.

After discussion it was moved that

Council adopt the proposed recommendations for the 2024 Gamebird Regulations for the Wellington Fish and Game Region.

The Council review and formalise bag limits for paradise shelduck and black swan after January 2024 after trend counts are completed and analysed.

Jim Cook/Malcolm Francis

Carried

B. Application for Upland Game Property with Special Conditions

Mr Teal provided an overview of the application from Mr Vavasour to operate a specific Upland Game Property with special conditions at a site in the Martinborough area. He noted that Council had agreed at the October Council meeting to support 'in-principle' the application and no specific concerns were noted at that meeting regarding the proposal.

It was further clarified that the applicant was currently also seeking permissions from Department of Conservation under Schedule 3 of the Wildlife Act to establish an Upland Game Property with Special Conditions which is considered by the Minister of Conservation (processed by the Department of Conservation Permissions Team) – which could provide a different operating paradigm for a commercial focus.

Mr Vavasour was seeking to pursue a request for Fish and Game to consider the gazetting of the site operations using the Game Notice recommendations made by Fish and Game aware that this is made on a syndicate-based funding arrangement. The option was being pursued as a contingent for potential delays from the Department of Conservation in their deliberations – and the processing of the permit had not yet been progressed. The permit for release of game birds was also required from the Department of Conservation – but this should be a relatively straightforward consideration for the DOC Permissions Team.

Fish and Game would be the principal overseer of compliance with animal welfare practices and conditions of operations on site – those conditions would be consistent with historical permit requirements and current Fish and Game policy.

It was then moved that

the proposed site at Martinborough (known as Lagoon Hill Station) to operate an Upland Game Property with Special Conditions by Mr Vavasour be included

in the draft 2024 Game Regulation recommendations to the Minister of Conservation.

Malcolm Francis/Jim Cook

Carried

11. Legislative and Policy Review Considerations

A. Uncertainty in Priority of Review of Wildlife Act

Despite a review of the Wildlife Act being formally announced by previous Labour Government on 9 September 2023 it is now uncertainty whether this will proceed to the same timetable as planned or whether it will proceed with this proposal at all given other legislative priorities.

While no action is required immediately there needs to be an awareness that this review might be undertaken with urgency culminating in introduction to parliamentary processes in March 2024.

Discussion ensued on how significant the changes (and risks) were to species management governance and the potential effects on practical operations on the ground. Wellington Council reiterated its support to NZ Council to provide a comprehensive and proactive response for Fish and Game at a political and policy level to address the high risk of impact of Fish and Game operations and mandate – and attempt to ensure Fish and Game is included in influential discussions. This review was considered a critical issue to be included in the decision making an strong advocacy and representations were required.

It was then moved that

Wellington Council supports NZ Council to strongly advocate for licence holders' interests at a governance and operational level in addressing potential changes to legislation

Paul Dewar/Steve Brown

Carried

B. Draft Policy on Governance Code of Conduct

1. Draft Policy on Code of Conduct for Governors

Council considered a NZ Council generated policy consultation on a draft policy on Code of Conduct for Governors. Chairman Dewar considered that

that governance training for all new councillors was essential to provide a good education what governors can and can't do – and also provide a strategic focus rather than operational.

Councillor Haslett considered that the policy could be better worded such as “interpreting strong views” versus “predetermined”. Councillor Scott considered that a diverging view should be recorded to know what the wide spectrum of views considered.

Councillor Haslett considered that focus of the policy should be on consistent with proper performance of duties which is defined in the standing orders. Councillor Passey agreed that overly strongly worded statements contained in the draft policy could give rise to undue power of the Chair. He further noted that Councillors must adhere to the Conflict of Interest Management Plan and disclose perceptions of Conflicts of Interest.

It was further discussed that the wording should include “professional conduct” to allow for difference of opinion and that that suggested wording would be made to NZ Council.

It was then moved that

The Wellington Council supports the draft policy on Code of Conduct of Governors with suggested word changes to the policy to be suggested to NZ Council

Aaron Passey/Don Scott

Carried

2. Draft Policy on Health and Safety Policy Review

Council considered a NZ Council generated policy consultation on a draft policy on Health and Safety (review) and supported the intent and continued refinement and development. It was acknowledged that while it would not have National Policy status – regions should consider adopting good policy that was consistent across the organisation.

3. Draft Policy on HR Policy: Bullying and Harassment

Council considered a NZ Council generated policy consultation on a draft policy on Bullying and Harassment – HR Policy) and supported the intent and continued refinement and development. It was acknowledged that while it would not have National Policy status – regions should consider adopting good policy that was consistent across the organisation.

4. Draft Policy on Drug and Alcohol Use

Council considered a NZ Council generated policy consultation on a draft policy on Drug and Alcohol Use – HR Policy) and supported the intent and continued refinement and development. It was acknowledged that while it would not have National Policy status – regions should consider adopting good policy that was consistent across the organisation.

It was then moved that

Wellington Fish and Game Council would support the draft policies relating to Drug and Alcohol Use (HR Policy), Bullying and Harassment (HR Policy) , Health and Safety (review), for further development and refinement

Aaron Passey/Don Scott

Carried

C. Wellington Fish and Game Council’s policy review programme (August 2019) - revisit prioritisation

Reviewing policy review progress: Discussion ensued on the future policy prioritisation and updates. It was noted that as Taranaki and Wellington were working towards amalgamating the regions, it provides impetus to have all policies the same and that external help is likely to be required. A provider called The Policy Place had a full suite of policy which were updated at a modest cost of around \$3000.

12. Special Permit/Licence Considerations

Dr Kavermann provided a brief update of applications and processing of special licences/permits for taking of sports fish for monitoring purposes or research projects.

- A. Boffa Miskell: for Lower North Island research -want to catch and release back to water – specifically one of the projects involved determining sports fish abundance in the area of a wind farm.

It was moved to

The application from Boffa Miskell for fish removal permit in the be approved in line with the draft conditions proposed by staff

Aaron Passey/Steve Brown

Carried

Councillor Passey requested clarification as to whether Fish and Game has a policy on charging for permits (as DoC and other agencies do), and if so what rates are appropriate. It was agreed to follow up with NZ Council as to whether there was a consistent permit charging policy for regions – as it was in preliminary development in recent years.

B. Greater Wellington Regional Council – seek on application for permit to use to catch sports fish in Lake Ponui.

Dr Kavermann provided an overview that GWRC were seeking to undertake a proposed study on Lake Ponui (Wairarapa) – as part of the Lakes 380 research programme. They were seeking to confirm the presence of rudd in Lake Ponui by using gillnet for fishing/sampling technique which will likely have a by-catch of perch.

Council has previously not permitted the use of set gill nets overnight due to:

- the potential effects on population,
- this followed the Australian guidelines to limit the soak time for Nets and to ensure regular checks of one hour periodicity,
- DOC had indicated that use of set gill nets is not an appropriate tool for assessing fish abundance.

Discussion ensued on the purpose of the study and sampling if it is only to determine presence or absence then this is not likely to a lengthy netting sampling programme. An eDNA sample would likely indicate presence or absence of a species, although it was noted that this might not confirm whether the fish are still alive in the lake – only that their DNA is present. Councillor Brown questioned whether there is concern over the effect on the population of perch as a bycatch. Councillor Passey noted that GWRC were regularly requested the use of gill nets as a lake sampling technique but repeatedly told to use a more appropriate alternative technique. It was confirmed that they might use a different technique of an electric fishing boat but this comes with additional expense. Dr Kavermann considered there was a possibility of using gill nets but with limited soak times and regular checks. It was noted that there were reports of indigenous bird species being killed in previous operations undertaken by GWRC in the northern areas of Lake Wairarapa. Councillor Francis noted that we that Fish and Game should have a consistent approach with the allowing use of any gill nets. Councillor Cook considered a potential compromise of allowing use of the gill net with limited soak times and regular checks – and ceasing netting if they caught any rudd – the presence would be confirmed which is the study purpose.

Council agreed that their preference is for GWRC to consider all other methods and that these be discounted on practicality reasoning before use of gill nets for lake sampling is approved on a limited basis.

13. Request for Funding Habitat Enhancement from Dedication Reserve

An application was considered for funding to plant a wetland site near Taihape - it was clarified that it was for up to \$1500 from a dedicated reserve (Reparation Reserve- which is used for reparation or habitat enhancement purposes). Councillor Brown indicated a positive approach to promoting wetland enhancement but while noting that there was no public access to the site, he considered that Council needed to ensure the investment is protected by the applicant undertaking proper planting maintenance and pest control to ensure their survival.

It was then moved that

Council support the granting of monies up to \$1500 from the Reparation Dedicated Reserve as long as a maintenance plan and commitment was made to implement maintenance of the plantings.

Steve Brown/Jim Cook

Carried

There was brief discussion on assistance by staff to develop a maintenance plan and Councillor Yanko considered seeking additional assistance to help the landowner with physical planting.

14. Draft Sports Fish and Game Bird Management Plan

NZ Council is developing a contemporary template for developing Sports Fish and Game Bird Management Plans. Defer consultation on existing draft until this is completed.

A. Developing workshop for Iwi engagement plan for Wellington Iwi

Mr Teal noted the completion of some advisory work on Mana Whenua engagement undertaken by Kahu Environmental (co-ordinated by NZ Council). Discussion and shared which supported in principle that Fish and Game put together a list of every iwi grouping that we should interact with.

Councillor Francis noted that Fish and Game Councils needed a better understanding of the importance of water to Iwi and the perceptions they may have of introduced species.

A workshop to cover the basic relationship principles and Maori world view needs to be progressed in the new year (with a potential March workshop) and will require a working group to scope what should be covered and if external advice is required to supplement in-house capabilities.

B. Developing Workshop for Setting Regulations

This had not been progressed and will require a working group to scope issues and how the wider Council workshop will progress. Mr Teal noted that some progress had been made on getting this item as an active discussion item within regional Fish and Game management.

C. Strategy Workshop

Wellington Fish and Game Council confirmed that there will be an agenda item to workshop to consider developing a regional perspective and response to the wider organisational strategy at February 2024 meeting – and this will be required as link for Outcome accounting reporting from 2024/2025 Financial Year.

15. Licence Management System – Update on performance

The Licencing Operational Group provided a bi-monthly report on the functioning of the Licence Management System by ESL Ltd – and will update on the progress of contract obligations being fulfilled (bug fixes and material functionalities to complete).

Wellington Fish and Game Council is a signatory to the contract (as one of 13 entities) and should have an awareness of progress to comply with contract obligations, and general performance of the system.

1. Update on Licence Management System

The system has been operating with no significant failures or significant faults. The contract for service provision with ESL is transitioning from ‘development’ phase to ‘operational’ phase. A list of bugs and other contractual requirements such as development of booking systems will be required before Fish and Game signs of the ‘development’ aspect of the contract.

There are two other functionalities – Designated Water function and Salmon Fishing Endorsement Licence - that have been developed and are in operation.

2. Research Project on Licence Category Pricing Review

This research project was scheduled to start by the end of 2022 – to investigate and provide objective advice on the licence categories introduced from 2015 and ensure they are still fit for purpose.

The research project will now be undertaken in two stages - data cleansing and partial analysis. A further research brief was expected to be developed so that research providers could indicate interest in the project and provide a formal project proposal.

It was then moved that

Council to receive report on Licence Management System for September and October 2023.

Aaron Passey/Colin Shore

Carried

16. Meeting Schedule

The meeting schedule was presented for information but had been confirmed at previous meetings.

It was agreed that Councillors would consider a combined Council meeting as soon as practicable with Taranaki Fish and Game Council – or at least a delegation to attend each other's meetings.

17. R3 MARKETING UPDATE

Mr Teal provided an overview of the activities undertaken for the early part of the 2023/2024 Fishing Season.

This included:

- Fishing Pre Summer Newsletter sent in November 2023 - sent to all previous licence holders
- Weekly Angling Bulletin each week in season

Mr Carnachan provided an overview of additional marketing initiatives:

- Direct email of marketing information
- Email to all previous fish season licence holders and lapsed participants from two years prior to try and re-engage pre-Labour Weekend
- Email to all previous fish season licence holders not yet purchased (potential lapsed participants) and re-engage pre-Labour Weekend

- Email to all previous fish season licence holders not yet purchased (potential lapsed participants) and re-engage early December - to all regions - with specific template developed to allow regional content to each region's licence holders
- Weekly Angling Lowdown prior to season and each week in season – including Taranaki information also

18. Communications

Mr Teal gave a brief overview of the key recent communication actions. He also confirmed that Mr Carnachan was currently contracted to NZ Council for 0.2FTE (8 hours) per week to assist in preparation of press releases for NZ Council CE, as well as assisting in larger projects related to social licence campaign.

Meeting adjourned at 5.55pm for dinner and reconvened at 7.25pm

Mr Carnachan left the meeting at 5.55pm

19. Regional Planning Updates

Mr Teal provided an overview of four regional planning projects that Wellington Fish and Game Council is actively engaged in:

A. Horizons – One Plan – Plan Change 2 Appeal Update

Mr Teal provided an update was be provided on the PC2 Appeal - nitrogen loss risk matrix development and use of GMP (Good Management Practices) as a principal tool for consenting. An update will be provided on the PC2 Appeal - risk matrix development and use of GMP (Good Management Practices).

Mr Teal confirmed that the hearing started on 20 November 2023 – adjourned until 18 December 2023

Decision is required on scope – then whether the Overseer Model is fit for purpose and whether the Risk Matrix is a useful tool also assess if fit for purpose.

B. Horizons Regional Council – Freshwater Futures (Oranga Wai) Update

- Progress has been made on identifying community values (2022)
- Identification of locations of River Users for a summer period (Feb 2023)
- Engagement with Iwi Groupings to Define Implementation and Interpretation of Te Mana o te Wai (2022 – 2023)

- Engagement with Stakeholders on defining Outstanding Waterbodies (2023)
- Engagement with Stakeholders on Water Quantity Limits (Sept 2023)
- Engagement with Stakeholders on Water Quality Limits (Nov 2023)

C. GWRC – Plan Change 1 Regional Policy Statement

- Hearing Stream on including recognising the protection of trout habitat hearing held in November 2023.
- Hearing Stream on indigenous ecosystems to be held in February 2024.

D. Regional Plan Approach for NPS FM 2020 Implementation

- NZ Council are developing an RM Strategy which should provide some guidance on multiple regions undertaking plan changes.
- Practice notes (position statements are being developed).

E. GWRC - Plan Change 1 – Natural Resources Plan (Regional Plan)

- Changes to give effect to Whaitua Recommendations for Porirua and Wellington Catchments. Submissions close 15 December 2023

20. Western Region Resource Consent Applications

Mr Teal provided a brief update on the following projects:

- A. GWRC: Otaki and Waikanae River Catchments** – no progress or iwi engagement
- B. GWRC and Consortium: Hutt River – RiverLink project** - update will be provided.

A substantial project intended to recontour the Hutt River for about two kilometres near Melling Bridge have resource consents granted by the Environment Court. This work will include substantial work in the river, and be prolonged (over 2 years). It is anticipated that work will start in spring 2023 for the summer construction period.

Additional drift dive undertaken during October 2023 – prior to commencement of works,

C. Horizons: Oroua and Pohangina River Management Investigation

Horizons Regional Council have received funding (\$300K) to look at various options for future management options for the two catchments.

Consideration will be given to better incorporating the natural geomorphological form and incorporating wetlands into the rural landscape.

This study could identify:

- review levels of protection provided by the Flood Control Scheme,
- Sites where buffer zones might be used as sacrifice zones
- Width of floodways to handle anticipated flood volumes
- Expectation and modelling of climate change models – estimates of hydrological changes.
- Value assessments of incorporating wetlands into farm systems to reduce flood peaks.
- Meeting current expectations of rural landowners – current expectations of level of protection versus reality of flood design capacity and cost to maintain.
- Establishment of governance group to oversee research and development of options.
- Support to continue expressed by the community members present.

21. Lake Wairarapa Update

A. Treaty Settlement update

Transfer of Land Titles and establishment of Statutory Reserve Board occurred on 7 March 2023.

A meeting was required to meet within 6 months of establishment.

Statutory Reserve Board met as a workshop on 13 October 2023.

Next workshop (meeting) to be held on 15 December 2023. Intention is to attend part of meeting.

B. Exotic Fish Management Plan Progress

- Suggestions for refinement and additions provided to consultant

C. Fish Removal Proposal

- No further updates – GWRC recommendation was to continue
- Ponui Lagoon Project

D. Jobs for Nature Project Management – Wairarapa Moana Research Funding and Restoration Plan

- Planting of trees on margins completed for season – no reports yet on survival rates

After brief discussion it was moved that

Council receive the report on Wairarapa Moana activities and management issues

Aaron Passey/Malcolm Francis

Carried

22. Research Update

A. E-DNA Project

Massey University researchers have completed a manuscript outlining the protocols for sampling ready for field trials and use for sampling river water samples to sample environmental DNA (eDNA) and nuclearDNA for brown and rainbow trout in spawning streams.

B. Native Fish – Trout Interaction –

Ami Coughlan to present findings to socialise issues and influence perceptions for Fish & Game magazine and other publications.

Manuscript has been prepared for publication but not yet submitted

C. Effects of Climate Change on Trout Fisheries in NZ

Re- engaged with Dr Canning to complete this assessment which uses NIWA hydrological modelling to assess effects of climate change (rainfall events intensity and frequency) and its effect on trout and native fish in New Zealand.

23. Licence Holder Engagement

Mr Teal provided a brief overview of initiatives to engage with licence holders including event management for:

Brief Report Summaries Provided for Each of These Events:

A. Junior Novice Fishing Days

Brief summary of fishing events to engage with licence holders

Fishing Events

- Wellington: Capital Trout Centre – Children’s Open Days
- Marton: Marton Reservoir – Family Fishing Event – NZDF family open day
- Otaki: Otaki Lake – Family Fishing Event – Children’s family fishing weekend
- Palmerston North: Hokowhitu Lagoon – Family Fishing Weekend, NZDF Family Fishing Day –

Councillor Brown noted that there had been some issues with fish survival in the previous year (nothing else material in over 15 years). Councillor Scott noted that the exact cause of the mortalities last year were indeterminate but were likely to be a oxygen starvation resulting from a combination of temperature, weed growth was high leading to low oxygen levels at night, with it recognised that the fish survived for over ten days following release. He acknowledged that the success rate was not as high as previous years so other options for temporary containment will be looked at should the event continue next year.

- Confirmed that staff were investigating additional sites – Carterton, Kakariki, Palmerston North, Kapiti

A. Woman on The Fly Programme

- Regular casting days planned and/or completed.
- Covered cost of base level website to enable bookings to be made. Event held at Turangi in November but supported by Fish and Game – fully subscribed weekend event.

It was moved to

Receive report and send letters to clubs acknowledging the efforts of the volunteers

Paul Dewar/Malcolm Francis

Carried

24. Access Issues – Update

Mr Teal noted that the relationship developed with the new Forest Managers Recreational Staff member had seen access to Santoft Forest (Hunting) extended for two months – to cover the upland game hunting season.

It was moved to

Receive the report on active access issues

Steve Brown / John Hancock

Carried

25. 24. Management Report – 1 October – 30 November 2023

Mr Teal clarified the following specific points in report:

- Implementation of the recommendations of the GWRC Whaitua – Porirua, Ruamahanga, Wellington
- Resource Management processing of submissions to regional plan changes.
- Development of template and consultation guidelines for Sports Fish and Game Bird Management Plans
- Habitat Mapping Project – Dr Adam Canning to provide service to map trout fish habitat and spawning sites for use in advocacy
- Treaty Settlement Process – Multiple – Western area from Porirua to Rangitikei

It was then moved that

Council receive the Management Report for period 1 October to 30 November 2023

Malcolm Francis /Aaron Passey

Carried

Mr Teal noted that he was in the process of changing the style of report to provide a more concise overview of work undertaken during each two month period.

26. Fishing Licence And Game Licence Sales

Mr Teal provided a brief overview of licence sales (up to 30 November 2023) with the end of the Financial Year reporting approaching:

Fishing Licence Sales

Key Point – 2023/2024 fish licence sales LEQs down 180 LEQ compared to previous year [1835 v 2017]

It was then moved

That the Fish Licence Sales Report for 2023/2024 to 30 November 2023 be received

Colin Shore/Jim Cook

Carried

27. Expenditure Report / Financial Transactions

Mr Teal provided an overview of the new dashboard.

Councillor Scott noted the current surplus although it was early in the financial year.

Councillor Passey noted the interest gained from term deposits hadn't matured yet providing a variance in expected revenue.

It was then moved that

Council Receive and Accept the Expenditure Reports to 31 October 2023 and Financial Transactions for September and October 2023.

Don Scott/Jim Cook

Carried

28. Correspondence / Media

The following items were briefly consider:

- Repeal of legislation anticipated as result of coalition agreement of new Government.

It was moved to

receive the correspondence and media items

Malcolm Francis/Don Scott

Carried

29. Recognition And Contribution Awards

None presented and no further nominations received.

30. Wellington Conservation Board Liaison

It was further noted that there had been a change in the composition of Conservation Board (as a routine refreshing of members) and that Councillor Cook had been not reappointed. Council thanked Councillor Cook for these contributions to Conservation Board and his efforts to reinvigorate the relationship between Fish and Game and the Conservation Board.

Councillor Cook noted that the Taranaki Conservation Board was keen to engage with Fish and Game to meet the responsibilities of working with Fish and Game noted in the Conservation Act.

31. General Business

Manawatu Freshwater Anglers were seeking clarification and update on the Court case in Canterbury to clarify the responsibilities of the Regional Council (ECAN) to implement and protect the Water Conservation Order of the Rangitata River. It was noted in the media that ECAN had pulled out of proceedings – supposedly content with a legal opinion rather than a judicial ruling and legal precedent – leaving the case largely unresolved. Their interpretation was to provide protection for the waterbody when considering resource consent applications – rather than a wider proactive responsibility to protect outstanding water bodies. ECAN has largely accepted responsibilities for protecting the water body but has no ‘legal precedent to follow. EDS and North Canterbury Fish and Game are considering whether to continue pursuing the case as a legal precedent if it is seen as prudent.

Discussion ensued on the aggregations of Canada geese with Fish and Game largely restricted to linking hunters to specific farmers as required.

Discussion briefly occurred on whether maimai safety distance should be increased from 90m to 120m apart for new maimais.

There being no further business the meeting closed at 8.10pm

Next Meeting to be held: Meeting on Tuesday, 13 February 2024 at Coachman Hotel and Conference Centre, Fitzherbert Ave, Palmerston North at 3pm.

Chairman _____ Date _____