



AGENDA

AUCKLAND/WAIKATO FISH AND GAME COUNCIL

14th OCTOBER 2023

AUCKLAND/WAIKATO FISH & GAME

A Meeting of Council will be held at the Waikato Deer Stalkers Hall, Wairere Drive, Hamilton on Saturday 14 October 2023 commencing at 11 a.m.

AGENDA

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N Juby
Chairman

25/09/2023

AUCKLAND/WAIKATO FISH & GAME



Minutes of a Meeting of Council
held at the NZ Deerstalkers Hall, Wairere Dr, Hamilton
on Saturday 19th August 2023 commencing at 11:00am.

PRESENT:

Chairman: N. Juby
Councillors: E. Williamson, D. Cocks, P. Shaw, G. Annan, C. Sherrard.
Staff: B. Wilson, A. Daniel, D. Klee, J. Dyer.
Visitor: M. Daniel, P. Hardy (DoC).

1. APOLOGIES:

G. Dickey, M. Barker, T. Clark, B. Barnes, D Klee (lateness).

It was moved;
that apologies be accepted.

Annan/Shaw – CARRIED

2. POSSIBLE CONFLICTS OF INTEREST ARISING FROM MEETING AGENDA:

Nil.

3. MINUTES OF PREVIOUS MEETINGS OF 10th JUNE 2023:

It was moved;
that the minutes of the previous meeting of the 10th of June 2023 be accepted as true and correct records.

Cocks/Annan – CARRIED

4. MATTERS ARISING FROM PREVIOUS MINUTES:

Councillor Annan enquired as to whether there had been any further progress regarding the concept of an MOU between adjacent regions. The Chairman replied that there had been no further discussion on this topic with his fellow chairs.

Brief discussion about the Governance Review with it noted that Council had not yet been approached by Northland Fish and Game regarding any potential amalgamation.

Councillor Annan requested an update on the sterile trout programme. Dr Daniel replied that he would be producing a report on the programme this year but to date there had been no evidence that the sterile releases had been successful. Catch rates were generally lower for sterile fish, and there was no evidence of extended longevity or greater size.

Dr Daniel updated the meeting on the golden clam incursion, informing Councillors that clams had recently been found in Lake Maratea.

5. COUNCIL CORRESPONDENCE:

Inward correspondence

A letter was tabled from Owen Baigent, Nelson/Marlborough F&G Chair raising the concept of a non-resident game licence and a comparative increase in the full season game licence.

A letter was tabled from Sia Aston, Deputy Director General Public Affairs about conduct and integrity in the public section with the General Election approaching. Mr Wilson stated that he had written to Councillors and staff reminding them of their obligations regarding the General Election.

Outward correspondence to NZ Council

The email from the Chairman to Corina Jordan (CE NZ Council) and Bernie Barnes (NZ Chair) was tabled. No reply had been received.

It was moved;

that the correspondence be accepted.

Annan/Shaw – CARRIED

6. CHIEF EXECUTIVE'S BI-MONTHLY REPORT AND FINANCIAL STATEMENTS:

Mr Wilson provided an update on the Heathly Rivers Hearing. Fish and Game would be represented by our lawyer throughout the six weeks of the Hearing with expert evidence given on F&G's behalf by David Klee, Dr Adam Daniel, Dr Adam Canning (Queensland University) and Helen Marr (Kahu Environmental).

Dr Daniel provided an update on the access issue with the Waione Stream emphasising that there was no public access to these waters.

Councillor Williamson recommended that there should be considerable publicity on Facebook and other media once it was decided to ballot the Murray Young Wetland.

Mr Wilson provided an update on the Genesis Energy issue. He was optimistic of a positive resolution by the end of the year.

Mr Dyer's report on wildlife refuges was discussed.

It was moved;

that Mr Dyer's recommendations on the status of historical wildlife refuges be supported.

Annan/Sherrard – CARRIED

It was moved;

that the Chief Executive's Bimonthly Report and Financial Statements be accepted.

Annan/Cocks – CARRIED

M. Daniel left the meeting at 11.40 am.

7. NZ COUNCIL UPDATE:

Councillor Barnes couldn't attend the meeting due to a conflict with a rescheduled NZ Council meeting. NZ Council had recently changed the date for their August meeting, which was originally scheduled to be a one day Zoom meeting on the 18th of August but was changed to a two-day meeting in Wellington (18 & 19 August).

8. PERFORMANCE MANAGEMENT POLICY:

The draft Performance Management Policy prepared by NZ Council staff was tabled.

Councillors agreed that NZ Council could not make personnel policies that are binding on the regions. The draft policy refers to "Clause 26G of the Conservation Act"; however, this clause only applies to NZ Council staff. Regional Fish and Game Councils are covered by an identical paragraph in Clause 26T.

The draft policy states that it is designed to meet the requirements of Clause 26G. Both Clause 26G & 26T state that the personnel policy should follow as close as possible the provisions of section 73 and section 74 of the Public Service Act (see attached, 2nd page). However, the draft policy doesn't come close to covering the minimum requirements of either section.

Concern was also expressed that a formal 6 monthly performance management review structure was not necessary given the small number of staff.

It was moved;

That the concerns of Council with the draft Performance Management Review be conveyed to NZ Council.

Cocks/Williamson – CARRIED

9. 2023/24 CONFIRMATION OF BUDGET AND OPERATIONAL WORK PLAN:

Mr Wilson reminded Councillors that they had already reviewed the budget and OWP at the March 2023 meeting.

The Chair informed Councillors of his concern over the increase in levy for the 2023/24 year due to a predicted large increase in fish licence sales. He noted that the prediction was based on fish licence sales as of January 2023, with a multiplier applied based on the percentage increase in sales that had occurred the previous season from January 2022 onwards. However, January 2022 was also when much of the Auckland/Waikato region came out of Covid lockdown and thus sales for January onwards were far higher

than usual (and coming off a period of unusually low early season sales due to the lockdown).

It was moved:

That NZ Council be asked to reconsider their levy calculations for 2023/24 as it was clear that the licence sales estimate for 2022/23 were far too optimistic.

Cocks/Williamson – CARRIED

It was also agreed that the NZ Council be asked for a copy of the Licencing Working Committee terms of reference.

It was moved;

that Council approves the 2023/24 Operational Work Plan and Budget for \$947,234.

Cocks/Annan – CARRIED

The meeting rose for lunch at 12:20pm and resumed at 1:00pm.

10. DUCK STRATEGY:

Councillor Williamson presented his views on a Duck Strategy for the Auckland/Waikato Region.

He emphasised that:

- We need a target for the duck population.
- That the number of licences sold was determined by the duck population.
- That loss of habitat was not a major factor in the decline of the duck population.
- That an 8-week season would result in over harvest and thus a rapidly declining duck population.
- That a 2-week season was ideal as it would result in reduced harvest and thus an increasing duck population.
- That a 4-week season was the balance point.
- That previous regression analysis of the duck population had been grossly misleading.

Councillor Williamson recommended that the season length be reduced to 2 weeks.

In reply, Councillors Sherrard and Annan stressed that the decline in game licence had occurred in the early 1980's during a period of massive habitat loss which had unfortunately continued. However, licence sales during the Fish and Game era had been comparably stable.

Mr Klee observed that Councillor Williamson theories had been previously discussed by Council who had requested a peer review from external experts, which was not favourable. Mr Klee also emphasised that population harvest was just one factor in determining season length. Hunter expectations also had to be considered with most hunters opposed to a 2-week season. He also noted that staff didn't support an 8-week

season due to the potential impact on breeding as shown by the mallard productivity study.

11. PAPER CLAIM TAG REPLACEMENT:

Councillor Dickey had requested that Council considers his proposal *“that paper tags should have an expiry date”*.

Mr Dyer’s report on this proposal was discussed. Mr Wilson emphasised that it was the act of marking up that was critical under the legislation and whether a maimai had a valid tag attached was somewhat irrelevant in determining maimai disputes. There had been documented cases where individuals had maliciously removed tags from maimai before the game season commenced.

Councillor Cocks strongly recommended that all licence holders are reminded that they should take photos or a video (time dated) when they mark-up.

It was agreed that a letter be sent to Mr Dickey summarises the current legal issues with markup.

12. AGE OF ELIGIBILITY FOR MARK-UP:

Councillors discussed Councillor Dickey’s request *“that 16-year-olds should be able to mark-up a maimai”*. Mr Dyer’s report was tabled. It was agreed that junior hunters could mark-up a maimai by purchasing an adult licence.

It was moved;

that regulations regarding mark-up are not changed but that it is publicised that junior hunters can purchase adult licences for marking up maimai.

Cock/Shaw – CARRIED

13. OSH REPORT:

Dr Daniel gave a brief presentation of the current uncertainties regarding Maritime NZ certification of Fish & Game vessels, and especially who had liability for any accident. A legal opinion was currently being obtained by NZ Council.

It was moved;

that the OSH report for August 2023 is accepted.

Shaw/Cocks – CARRIED

14. GENERAL BUSINESS:

Nil

There being no further business the meeting concluded at 2:25pm.



23 August 2023

Mr B Barnes
Chairman
New Zealand Fish and Game Council

By email

Dear Barrie

2023/24 Auckland/Waikato Levy

At the meeting of the Auckland/Waikato Council on the 19th August 2023, concern was expressed at the large increase in levy for our region based on a predicted increase in fish licence sales. I explained to the Council that I have communicated my concerns to yourself and Corina, and that Ben has done the same to Managers and the Licencing Working Group, but that nothing has changed. With actual sales for the 2022/23 season now available, these concerns are validated and Auckland/Waikato Council has asked that I put our concerns in writing.

The estimate for 2023/24 Auckland/Waikato licence sales is based on predicted sales for 2022/23, plus an increase due to the return of non-resident anglers.

However now that the main angling season is finished, it is clear that the actual sales for 2022/23 will be well short of that predicted by the Licencing Working Group.

The prediction was based on fish licence sales as of January 2023, with a multiplier applied based on the increase in sales that had occurred the previous season from January 2022 onwards. However, January 2022 was also when much of the Auckland/Waikato region came out of Covid lockdown and thus sales for January onwards were far higher than usual (and coming off a period of unusually low early season sales due to the lockdown).

This is a marked change from previously established methodology. When the changes were explained to managers at an informal (no agenda) managers meeting, Northland and Taranaki pointed out the unrealistic forecasts for their regions and these were altered immediately. Unfortunately, Ben was not present at the meeting and, as a result, A/W forecasts were unchallenged and remain unchanged - even though the failures of the projections in the upper North Island had been accepted.

Several of our Auckland-based Councillors who attended our council meeting expressed shock that the region should be placed at a disadvantage due to the extended Covid lockdown.

Statutory managers of freshwater sports fish, gamebirds and their habitats.

Auckland/Waikato Region

156 Brymer Rd, RD 9, Hamilton 3289, New Zealand. Telephone (07) 849 1666 Facsimile (07) 849 1648
Email: aucklandwaikato@fishandgame.org.nz www.fishandgame.org.nz

We therefore request that our 2023/24 levy is based on the actual fish licence sales for 2022/23 rather than the inflated prediction.

As you are aware from the discussions of the Future Finance Group, significant discrepancies between forecast sales and actual sales represent either:

- unexpected events (eg cyclone)
- a failure in forecasting.

In this case, the failure was entirely foreseen and therefore represents a systemic failure in the revised forecasting procedure - recognised at the time but inequitably applied.

We also request a copy of the Licencing Working Group terms of reference and the minutes from their meeting where the methodology of forecasting was discussed and altered.

Yours sincerely



Nigel Juby
Chairman



23 August 2023

Mr B Barnes
Chairman
New Zealand Fish and Game Council

By email

Dear Barrie

Performance Management Policy

The draft Performance Management Policy was considered by the Auckland/Waikato Council at their scheduled meeting on the 19th August 2023.

Councillors agreed that NZ Council could not make personnel policies that are binding on the regions. The draft policy refers to “Clause 26G of the Conservation Act”; however, this clause only applies to NZ Council staff. Regional Fish and Game Councils are covered by an identical paragraph in Clause 26T.

The draft policy states that it is designed to meet the requirements of Clause 26G. Both Clause 26G & 26T state that the personnel policy should follow as close as possible the provisions of section 73 and section 74 of the Public Service Act. However, the draft policy doesn’t come close to covering the minimum requirements of either section.

Concern was also expressed that a formal 6 monthly performance management review structure was not necessary given the small number of staff in the Auckland/Waikato Region.

Council was happy to accept the draft as “guidelines”, but not as policy.

Yours sincerely

A handwritten signature in blue ink, appearing to read 'Nigel Juby'.

Nigel Juby
Chairman

Statutory managers of freshwater sports fish, gamebirds and their habitats.

Auckland/Waikato Region

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15 September 2023

Fish and Game Regional Councillors
allfishandgamecouncillors@fishandgame.org.nz

Tēnā koutou,

During the last year, Regional Councils and Councillors have raised the subject of the Wildlife Act 1953 review, and voiced a number of concerns, as to its possible content, and Fish and Game's ability to have positive input. What has been of great concern for Fish and Game, is the scale and pace of the proposed reforms leading into an election, along with the fact that Fish and Game has not been party to any draft legislative proposals, nor been provided with the opportunity to work side by side the Ministry through this process.

As you may be aware the Conservation Minister, Willow-Jean Prime, has recently made a policy announcement, of which she provided Corina, NZC CEO, with a heads-up prior to the announcement, on late Friday, 8 September 2023. The following has been prepared by Corina.

Why does this matter to Fish and Game?

Along with the Conservation Act 1987, the Wildlife Act 1953, is Fish and Game's primary governing statute, setting out the sustainable management of valued introduced species as a food source and their place in New Zealand.

What is Fish and Game's position?

- We are concerned at the implications of this reform on Fish and Game, our licence holders, freshwater species, game birds and their habitats.
- What is particularly disappointing, is Fish and Game, has not been given the opportunity to participate in this process to date, and the Labour Party has set a very ambitious timeline for what is an incredibly complex piece of legislation.
- We support the protection of endangered, or threatened species, and agree that a legislative framework needs to provide the tools, to ensure that these species exist now, and into the future. Any reform also needs to ensure that mana whenua rights and obligations are recognised.

What Fish and Game is calling for?

- What we need is a workable alternative, which protects indigenous species, and ensures the sustainable management of valued introduced species for the benefit of all New Zealanders, and recognises and empowers people, communities, and Fish and Game's conservation efforts.
- Sports fish and game birds have an indispensable place in New Zealand's cultural heritage, and ecosystems, existing in tandem with indigenous species. Sports fish and game birds are also a valued food resource for families and communities across New Zealand.
- In crafting a new wildlife framework, it will be important to preserve Fish and Game's statutory mandate, which has been pivotal in managing sports fish, and game bird populations and protecting and enhancing New Zealand's environment.

Statutory managers of freshwater sports fish, game birds and their habitats

- Fish and Game must be at the table during the crafting of any new legislation that replaces the Wildlife Act 1953.

Fish and Game is New Zealand's leading freshwater champion. Without Fish and Game, New Zealand would lose the key advocate for the health of our rivers and lakes that are the habitat of indigenous and valued introduced species.

This announcement of the Minister comes hot on the heels of changes to the Natural and Built Environment Bill (NBE) following a campaign by Fish and Game and our licence holders. The submissions made on Fish and Game's behalf, by Corina, were greatly instrumental for the change regarding trout and salmon as valued introduced species.

In a statement to Parliament about the changes, Environment Minister David Parker applauded the work of Fish and Game. He told Parliament that New Zealand needs to protect the habitat of trout and salmon and praised Fish and Game's environmental advocacy led by the NZC CEO, Corina.

What are Fish and Game's next steps?

It is acknowledged that currently this may be an unsettling time for Fish and Game staff. I would urge you all to be supportive of your Regional Manager/CE and through them, the staff who work diligently, and with loyalty, for Fish and Game and our future.

Through the NZC Office, and CEO Corina, we have been working to strengthen our relationships with all political parties, policymakers, and others organisations over the past 12 months. Whilst this announcement is somewhat confronting, Fish and Game is continuing in rebuilding these relationships. It is comforting to know that our position and relationships are continuing to grow stronger. This will allow us to have an involvement as a valued contributor and partner, and in so, secure positive outcomes for Fish and Game nationally and for our licence holders.

The New Zealand Council has allocated resources, and has authorised Corina, to lead Fish and Game's response and advocacy on this issue. I ask you all to please provide unified support to NZC and Corina as we continue to deal with the challenges that now appear before us. The media release on Monday 11 September will support an update to Fish and Game's licence holders and can be viewed [here](#).

Please feel free to make contact at any time.

Nāku iti noa, nā



Barrie Barnes

New Zealand Fish and Game Council Chair

Tel: 021 925 006

BBarnes@fishandgame.org.nz

15 September 2023

Fish and Game Regional Councillors
allfishandgamecouncillors@fishandgame.org.nz

Tēnā koutou,

You may have heard suggestions, that Fish and Game has been named, as taking money from the Ministry for the Environment, to implement the National Policy Statement for Freshwater Management (NPS-FWM) and embed in the Spatial Planning and Natural and Built Environment (NBEA) Bills.

This has been circulating through farming communities off the back of a media release by Federated Farmers last week, and in coverage on The Country. Federated Farmers claim that the Government is doing “dodgy deals, and wasteful Government spending, in the lead up to the general election”.

Corina, CEO of Fish and Game New Zealand, presented on The Country on Monday, to address these unfounded claims, and also, to talk about Fish & Game’s media release on wetlands. You can listen to the interview [here](#).

For background, on 7 September, Fish and Game NZ received an email from MfE. This email was calling for “expressions of interest” in a Non-Government Organisation (NGO) participation pilot fund, to support Resource Management plan-making.

Fish and Game NZ was one of a number of organisations, including Federated Farmers, and eNGO groups that were approached by MfE, in relation to this fund. Our information has been released as part of a request under the Official Information Act.

The funding pilot aims to support NGO participation in resource management strategy, and plan-making, starting with Freshwater Plans under the Resource Management Act 1991, and continuing to Regional Spatial Plans, and Natural and Built Environment Act plans. The fund was up to \$600,000 over three years (approximately \$200,000 per year).

Whilst Fish and Game NZ recognises the need to consider supplementing licence holder money in relation to the organisation’s functions, and the heavy workload ahead for supporting Regional Planning processes, it was decided to not apply for this money, and instead, to seek a government delay on the application period until after the general election. This would allow Fish and Game NZ to understand more deeply the possible implications, if any, of participation.

In support of the above decision some of the reasons considered were:

1. The timeframes with respect the ‘expression of interest’ did not provide sufficient time to engage with the Fish and Game NZ Council;
2. We are aware that the funding comes with conditions for use that need to be carefully evaluated;
3. The funding excluded the funding for court cases, a major cost for Fish and Game NZ;
4. Refers to NBEA and Spatial Planning Bill implementation which Fish and Game did not support;

Statutory managers of freshwater sports fish, game birds and their habitats

31 August 2023

Fish & Game Regional Chairs & Regional Managers
regionalchairs@fishandgame.org.nz
regionalmanagers@fishandgame.org.nz

Upcoming Cost Optimisation and Resource Allocation Project

Dear Regional Chairs and Regional Managers,

I hope this message finds you well. Following the Regional Managers meeting in Christchurch on 11 July and the New Zealand Council meeting held on 18 and 19 August, we are pleased to inform you that NZC has contracted Gary Crawford to undertake an organisation-wide Cost Optimisation and Resource Allocation project. For a comprehensive understanding, please find attached the project brief for your perusal.

We recognise the ongoing complexities associated with our current budget allocation methods, especially within Fish & Game given our contestable funding application approach. These challenges are affecting the sustainability and efficiency of our financial management and inhibiting our ability to fully achieve our Strategic Objectives. This is particularly concerning in light of rising operational costs and a stable, yet unchanging, revenue stream, despite New Zealand's growing population.

Gary Crawford will focus on several key aspects, including:

- Uncovering avenues for cost reduction and devising actionable plans, with specific attention to regional benchmarking and purchasing practices.
- Assessing the sufficiency of capital expenditure funds across regions (Asset Replacement Fund).
- Evaluating the organisation's financial capacity to execute its Strategic Objectives.
- Identifying further/new revenue streams.
- Offering specialised insights to the Future Finance Working Group (FFWG), including recommendations on resource reallocation and optimisation.

To facilitate this comprehensive review, Gary will need access to view in confidence your financial accounts, including Xero. Kindly instruct your administrative teams to grant him the necessary permissions at garycrawford99@gmail.com. Moreover, Gary may need to consult with your accounts administrators for any additional information or clarification. He intends to meet with representatives from each region in November and will reach out to arrange specific dates and times.

Should you have any questions or require further information, please do not hesitate to contact us.

Nāku iti noa, nā



Barrie Barnes

New Zealand Fish and Game Council Chair

Statutory managers of freshwater sports fish, game birds and their habitats

5. The RM legislative space is, at this time politically uncertain, as opposition parties have openly stated that 'Bills' will be repealed.

At this point in time, we would like you all to take comfort in knowing that Fish and Game NZ, through our CEO, Corina, is taking a determined approach, to ensure that as a statutory entity, our position in the political landscape remains neutral. Added to that, we are well aware, that we must continue to maintain strong, supportive, and open relationships with all organisations, that we consistently engage with, in this space. Yes, it is a period of heightened political activity, and as such, we consider that to pause any engagement activity, especially of this type, is the best position for Fish and Game NZ to hold.

Nāku iti noa, nā



Barrie Barnes
New Zealand Fish and Game Council Chair
Tel: 021 925 006
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Bi-Monthly Chief Executive's Report

October 2023

OUTPUT 1: SPECIES MANAGEMENT

Project 1111: Drift Diving

The comprehensive annual report on drift diving has been attached as a separate document. Most notably, the report highlights that fish stocks remained within normal ranges, except for persistently low trout numbers observed in the Mangatutu Stream.

Project 1112: Banding

Auckland Airport has expressed a keen interest in expanding their swan banding efforts during the upcoming summer moult season. Should their staff be available during the critical moulting period, it is expected that a substantial number of birds can be successfully banded. Interestingly, one of last year's Manukau swan trackers was recently found near Awaiti, and John who was working nearby managed to recover it from its new owner.

Project 1114: Annual Shoveler Survey

David, John, and a team of dedicated volunteers recently conducted the annual shoveler count within our region as part of the national census effort. While there were good aggregations of birds in Whangamarino Wetland, they were widely dispersed due to elevated water levels, which made obtaining accurate counts challenging. The final annual shoveler report is pending, but it appears that shoveler counts in our region have declined this year.

During shoveler counting at Rhyburn's Lagoon, John discovered the feathers of a dead female paradise shelduck, initially mistaken as a "possible royal spoonbill." This unfortunate incident was likely the result of contact with two out of three live power wires connected to a Counties Energy flood-pump. The landowner reported similar fatalities involving two bitterns under similar circumstances. This matter is now under investigation, with potential risk mitigation measures, such as separating the live wires further apart, being considered.

It is worth noting that some regions have implemented sex-based limits for shoveler in the 2023 season, based on reduced counts during the 2022 census. Southland imposed a limit of 2 shoveler drakes, while Otago set a limit of just 1. This regulation change has received positive feedback at the F&G staff conference and could be considered by our region at the next 3-yearly review of the game regulations.

John has compiled a four-page document detailing all pertinent points of contact, entry requirements, and other relevant information to assist the new field officer in gaining access to various shoveler count sites. This includes requirements such as passing an online test for access to certain Watercare sites and providing advance notice to absentee landowners, among other considerations.

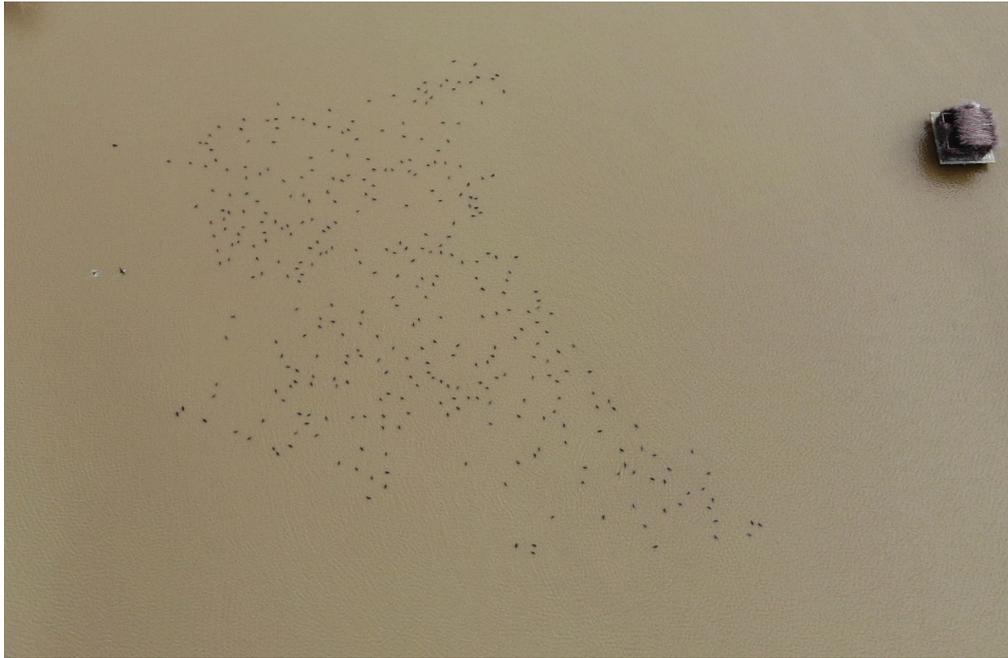


Figure 1: Aerial image of a mob of shoveler in the Reo Arm of the Whangamarino Wetland taken during the 2023 annual census.

Project 1117: Research

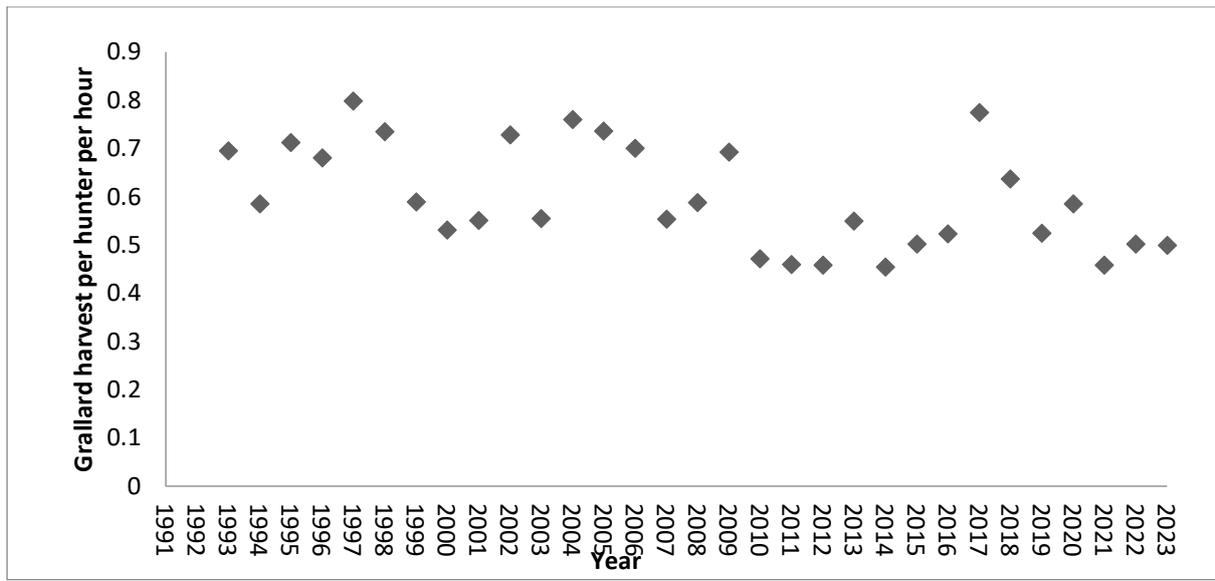
Staff Conference:

Staff recently attended a F&G staff conference in Rotorua, which had 2 days of presentations and workshops. However, the main benefit of the conference was meeting staff from other regions. Both David and Adam hosted workshops.

The conference featured a breakout session hosted by David, which centered on gamebird monitoring and research. The discussions revolved around the ongoing review of our current monitoring programs and species monitoring *Standard Operating Procedures (SOPs)*. The consensus among attending regions was that SOPs need to be revisited and adopted with regional buy-in. There was also recognition of the potential benefits of establishing a centralized database for consistent data recording in standardized formats, managed by a group of experts. This approach aims to facilitate coherent reporting based on appropriate management units rather than arbitrary regional boundaries and will undergo peer review to ensure suitability.

Project 1122: Gamebird Harvest Surveys

The 2023 Game Bird Harvest survey is nearing completion, with some regions finalizing their telephone surveys. The survey will not be officially closed until all regions have completed their respective components. Efforts are underway to compile an annual national harvest report, incorporating regional datasets. Preliminary analysis of the Auckland/Waikato data has revealed interesting trends, as despite many hunters reporting increased bird sightings, the actual harvest per hour of hunting remained relatively low. The abundant floodwater during the season dispersed birds and provided them with numerous options, making decoying and hunting more challenging.



Project 1161: Trout Releases

All planned trout releases have been successfully carried out, with the exception of the final batch of 200, two-year-old rainbow trout scheduled for delivery to Lake Pupuke during the upcoming school holidays. Additionally, the October Lake Arapuni Release is also on the horizon.

Project 1162: Pheasant Releases

John recently visited Lighthouse Station, an Upland Game Property with Special Conditions to release pheasants and partridges near Awhitu. This visit was in response to a request from the Department of Conservation (DoC) to assess the suitability of their facilities for raising and releasing grey ducks. Impressively, Lighthouse Station boasts top-notch incubators, hatchers, and equipment, and its restored original wetlands have transformed what was once a barren landscape. Due to the potential for Salmonella contamination associated with duck eggs, it is considered best practice to keep duck egg incubators separate from those used for pheasant eggs. John also reached out to various zoos and Ducks Unlimited members in search of insights into raising grey ducks, as this has proven challenging in the past. These efforts have already resulted in two birds being provided for a breeding program, both exhibiting characteristics typical of grey ducks.

John has also extended assistance in obtaining two similar DoC consents for holding wildlife.

OUTPUT 2: HABITAT PROTECTION/MANAGEMENT

Project 1211: RMA

Healthy Rivers/Wai Ora: Significant progress has been made in preparing for the Environment Court hearing related to the proposed Waikato Regional Plan Change 1, which encompasses the Healthy Rivers/Wai Ora initiative. This plan change aims to address concerns related to lakes and wetlands, with expert evidence submitted to the court. The hearing will

span several weeks across September, October, and November, with sessions held in Hamilton and Auckland.

Proposed Waikato Regional Coastal Plan: The Waikato Regional Council has notified the Proposed Waikato Regional Coastal Plan for consultation. We are actively preparing a submission expressing concerns about the water quality policies in the plan, which are deemed insufficient to meet the requirements of the NPS-FW (National Policy Statement for Freshwater Management). Additionally, concerns have been raised regarding the absence of rules facilitating wetland restoration and enhancement in the coastal marine area. The submission deadline is November 14th.

NBEA (Natural Built Environment Act): The NBEA has successfully passed its third reading in parliament on August 16th, with the aim of repealing the Resource Management Act 1990 (RMA). The motivation behind this repeal is due to the RMA's extensive history of litigation, cumbersome processes, and its perceived failure in protecting the environment from significant harm. While the NBEA shares similarities with the RMA as a regulatory statute governing environmental activities, the main differences lie in decision-making processes and objectives. It's worth noting that Fish and Game initially had concerns, particularly regarding the protection of trout and salmon habitat, but our intensive advocacy efforts have led to modifications in the bill, reinstating habitat protection.

New Wildlife Act: In response to a comprehensive review conducted by the Department of Conservation, the Minister of Conservation Willow-Jean Prime announced the intention to replace the Wildlife Act with new legislation aimed at better protecting native species and improving biodiversity outcomes. This revision will significantly impact Fish and Game, as the Wildlife Act currently establishes our role in managing game species, issuing hunting licenses, and enforcing regulations. We will actively participate in the consultation process and draft legislation to ensure that introduced species continue to be considered in a manner that allows for the continuation of fish and game activities.

Iwi Engagement: As part of Fish and Game's national strategy moving forward, there is a strong focus on improving relationships with iwi and hapu throughout the country. To achieve this goal, the national Fish and Game office has been conducting workshops for RMA staff on engaging with iwi.

NES - Wetlands Amendments: Mischa, assigned by the national office, has taken on the responsibility of exploring potential amendments to the NES-F. These amendments aim to enhance wetland restoration efforts and streamline processes for constructing maimai, boardwalks, and signs within wetlands without the need for resource consent. Additionally, there is a plan to redefine the term "natural inland wetland" for more precise regulatory interpretation.

Waipā District Council – Cambridge WWTP Upgrade Discharge Consents: The Waipā District Council has submitted an application (APP145312) to the Waikato Regional Council for consent related to the operation of the Cambridge Wastewater Treatment Plant. This application covers the operation of the existing treatment system and discharge to rapid infiltration beds for approximately four years, while a new treatment plant is constructed. Once the new plant is operational, discharge will occur through a constructed rip rap outfall into the Waikato River, featuring improved treatment and discharge parameters. This upgrade aligns with planned growth in the Cambridge township.

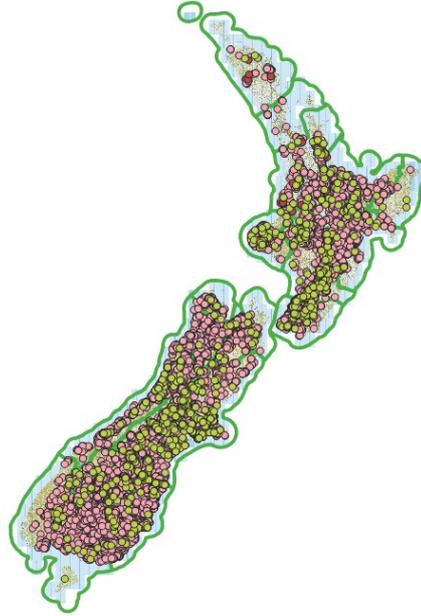
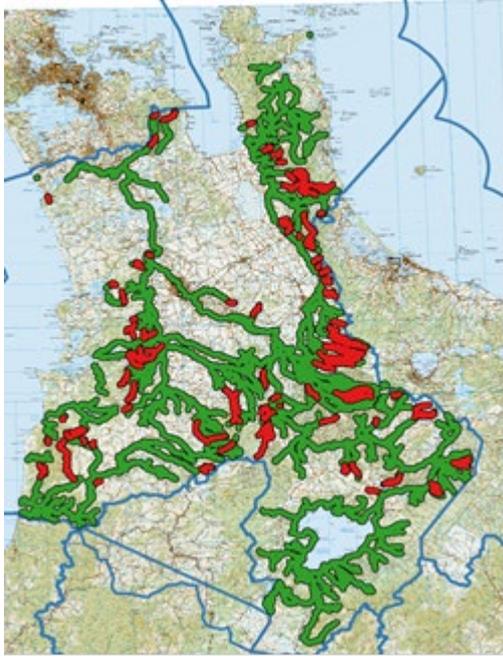
David collaborated closely with the Waipa District Council to address all our concerns with the application. Consequently, we have drafted a letter to formally withdraw our request for a hearing, on the condition that there are no significant alterations to the consent conditions. We will remain engaged in the oversight of the Cambridge WWTP upgrade discharge consents as active members of the Community Liaison Group (CLG), dedicated to ensuring full compliance with these conditions.

Fish and Game Resource Management Strategy: Mischa and Clare collaborated with RMA staff from the other regions, and working alongside the national RMA team to address pressing concerns. Presently, their focus lies on developing a Fish and Game Resource Management Strategy, acknowledging that there will be considerable advocacy work to be funded in the next few years. The primary objectives of this strategy include safeguarding sports fish habitats, promoting native species conservation, and recognizing trout and salmon as valued species. Research efforts encompass aspects like social licensing, Mana Whenua engagement, license sales trends, support for RMA procedures, climate change, and species interactions.

Opuatia Wetland Hydrological Restoration: David convened a meeting with ICM (Waikato Regional Council) staff to discuss an ongoing issue concerning a wetland restoration project required as compensation for wetland loss resulting from a flood scheme implementation. The lower Opuatia has experienced diminished water levels due to anthropogenic influences, such as the hydro scheme and sand dredging, leading to adverse effects on habitat and recreational hunting opportunities. The project initially intended to create a 3.5km bund long the lower Opuatia River at a uniform height of 5mRL to retain water in the wetland. However, it appears the bund has not been adequately maintained and has structural issues. A recent site visit indicated that the bund height fluctuated with multiple low points. LIDAR information indicates that the bund is sitting below 5RL for much of the 3.5km. Further discussions with DOC are planned to determine a way forward.

Whangamarino Weir Section 128 Review: A final planning assessment and technical report for the Whangamarino Weir Section 128 review are expected to be submitted by the end of September. David has played a significant role in this process, attending frequent meetings in recent months. Given that the weir's re consenting is scheduled for 2027, concerns are raised about the current review's potential legal battles and associated costs. It is suggested that efforts and resources should be redirected towards preparing for the re consenting process, including addressing potential opposition from landowners.

Trout Habitat: Adam has completed a substantial multiyear mapping project focusing on trout habitat and trout spawning habitat. The updated GIS shape files are essential to align with resource management reforms, especially the NPS 2020, which will undergo consultation in 2023-24. These maps provide enhanced protection for mapped habitats and prompt consultation with Fish & Game when activities with potential negative impacts are proposed. Adam has also facilitated the sharing of mapping resources with other regions.



Project 1221: Council Land

Fish and Game Comprehensive Consent Application: Our consent application for "*Wetland Maintenance; Auckland Waikato Fish and Game - Lower Waikato Wetland*" was accepted. Conditions mandate the submission of an annual wetland maintenance plan to the Waikato Regional Council by November 31st each year. Minor works are permitted under NESF and require prior notification to the council. We have informed pond holders about these requirements and will develop an annual plan once upcoming work details are available.

Murray Young Wetland: A new metal sign has been installed at the Murray Young wetland, replacing a stolen wooden sign.

A camera has been set up at the Stone Jug access in preparation for opening day.

Project 1231: Other Land

Whangamarino Fish Kill and Botulism Outbreak: David attended a recent meeting involving iwi, DOC, and the WRC, for the preparation of an anoxic response plan set to be finalized by the end of October.

Funding: The Small Scale Community Initiatives Fund by the Waikato Regional Council presents opportunities for conservation-focused hunters to secure funding for traps and bait. While one application was declined due to oversubscription and specific criteria, the Friends of Lake Kimihia Group received approval for their lakeside trapping project. The Gamebird Habitat Trust is also conducting a review of previously funded sites. Investigations into specific sites like "TuxDux" are underway.

Golden Clam: Adam actively participates in the Gold Clam Technical Advisory Group to MPI. Key findings include the clam's presence at wake boat sites and its potential transport in ballast tanks. Concerns regarding fishing gear as a vector for clam transmission have been addressed, with multiple iwi advocating for fishing closures to mitigate risks. Adam is also

working on a report focusing on clam introductions, emphasizing evidence-based assessments to counter unjustified fears associated with fishing.

Project 1235: Trees:

John has prepared an 8-page document outlining the locations of rare tree species suitable for seed sources in Fish & Game's tree program. This resource will aid field staff and volunteers in locating these trees for conservation efforts. Keith Smith is experimenting with some of these seeds.

OUTPUT 3: PARTICIPATION

Project 1311: Access Negotiation:

Adam raised concerns about OutdoorHQ selling fishing access on their website, potentially motivating private landowners to restrict access for exclusive fees.

An email has been sent to the regional director of DOC regarding issues related to the Whakapapa Intake Road closure, seeking mediation for its reopening.

Project 1331: F&G Newspapers:

The Fishing Magazine received positive feedback from license holders. John has prepared an article about old gamekeeper's techniques for catching stoats and weasels, to be featured on the new F&G website.

Project 1341: Other Publications:

Several articles have been written for Ducks Unlimited Flight magazine, covering topics such as mallard gender identification and suitable materials for duck nesting boxes. Collaboration with DoC's Banding Office and the Gamebird Habitat Trust is ongoing.

Project 1361:

User Group Costs Donations: Adam has completed two applications for overseas tax-deductible donation agencies to maintain eligibility for US donations.

OUTPUT 5: LAW ENFORCEMENT

Project 1521 Ranger Training:

A CERT training course in Hamilton was attended by 12 rangers, including Adam and 5 new rangers.

Legal opinions have emphasized the need for rangers to "make safe" unattended firearms in maimais, particularly when unauthorized individuals, including children, might access them. This needs plenty of publicity before next season to hopefully avoid this action ever becoming necessary.

OUTPUT 9: Administration

Project 1912: Administration:

Website: Roslyn has been diligently working on the new website, reviewing and reformatting content, checking links, and adding new images. The website is nearing completion and will coincide with the "Go Wild" campaign launch.

B. Wilson
Chief Executive