

**CONFIRMED MINUTES OF THE 205th MEETING OF THE EASTERN FISH AND
GAME COUNCIL, HELD AT THE ROTORUA OFFICES OF FISH & GAME NEW
ZEALAND ON THURSDAY 7 DECEMBER 2023 AT 11.00 AM**

Present

Crs. Ngahi Bidois, Debbie Oakley, Lindsay Lyons, Mike Jarvie, Kevin Coutts, Alan Simmonds Jay Tapsell, Scott Nicol, and Murray Ferris.

In attendance

Arash Alaeinia, Kate Thompson, Matt McDougall, Eben Herbert, (Eastern Fish & Game); and Barry Roderick.

1.0 WELCOME AND KARAKIA

1.1 Cr Ngahi Bidois opened the meeting at 11 am welcoming all present and inviting Cr Jay Tapsell to perform the opening karakia.

1.2 Arash Alaeinia acknowledged and thanked Councillors for their time and effort over the past year, Arash also extended thanks to Barry Roderick for his contribution.

2.0 APOLOGIES

2.1 Apologies were received from Cr Mark Sceats.

2.2 *Agreed (Murray Ferris/Kevin Coutts) that the apologies for the 205th meeting of the Eastern Region Fish and Game Council be sustained. [23/12/2.2]*

3.0 MINUTES OF THE PREVIOUS MEETING (12 OCTOBER 2023)

3.1 *Agreed (Ngahi Bidois/Mike Jarvie) that the minutes of the meeting held on 12 October 2023 be confirmed as a true and correct record subject to a correction to apologies, Cr Alan Simmonds had sent apologies for the October 12 meeting via email. [23/12/3.1]*

3.2 IDENTIFICATION OF RESOLUTIONS FOR INCLUSION IN COUNCIL POLICY

No items were identified for inclusion in Council policy from the minutes of the meeting held 12 October 2023.

3.3 MATTERS ARISING

Cr Lindsay Lyons queried item 15.2, he understood that the Eastern Fish & Game Council had a Conflict-of-Interest Policy and that this would need to be updated. Arash Alaeinia agreed there is a current Conflict of Interest Policy for the Eastern Council and that this would be updated to reflect reviewed NZC Policy once adopted.

4.0 NOTIFICATION OF ITEMS FOR GENERAL BUSINESS

Nil

5.0 CONFLICT OF INTEREST REGISTER

5.1 Councillors were asked to inform the chair of any conflicts of interest. No conflicts of interest were recorded.

6.0 OPERATIONAL REPORTS

6.1 Health and Safety Report – Arash Alaeinia spoke briefly on Health & Safety processes undertaken by staff on a weekly basis and added that there was nothing of importance which had arisen since the last meeting. Kate Thompson informed Council of a

correction to the report under section five, information was repeated here from the August meeting and this should have read Nil for the December meeting.

6.2 Council received the Health and Safety report.

7.0 BIO SECURITY THREAT UPDATE

7.1 Arash Alaeinia provided an update on the current situation surrounding the Golden Clam biosecurity threat as follows;

- Current CAN (Controlled Area Notice) order by MPI 10 November for Okataina and the rest of the Te Arawa lakes.
- CAN states - All boats coming from the Waikato that have been in the water in the past 30 days within the specified area need to go through the Te Ngae Road wash station. Applies to any lake and includes kayaks, paddle boards and fishing gear.
- In addition, all users from any area wishing to go into Lake Okataina must be certified through the wash station on the day they are going there.
- Current access to Lake Okataina is Friday, Saturday, and Sundays 6.30am – 7pm
- Overnight stays are ok, if you come off and leave your boat there you do not need to go back to the wash station.
- Ngati Pikiao meeting regarding closure of Rotoiti, Rotoma, Rotoehu over the summer period. No ability for MPI or Regional Council to close.
- MPI put new CAN in Waikato – boats with internal ballasts that have been in that section of the Waikato are restricted to using that section of the Waikato only.

7.2 Cr Alan Simmonds questioned whether there had been any thought given to the financial implications over the Christmas period? Arash agreed there is a financial impact to Fish & Game but also to the Rotorua business community who have also been involved with the stakeholder meetings and are being kept up to date. Arash advised that licence sales had improved since opening and hoped that they would continue to do so.

7.3 In response to Cr Kevin Coutts query regarding actions being taken by MPI at source, Arash Alaeinia advised that further wash stations had been installed and an order had been made to 10 mobile wash stations of which he understood three would be gifted to Te Arawa Lakes Trust.

7.4 Cr Lindsay Lyons questioned whether communications had occurred with the Minister for Hunting & Fishing and Fish & Game, regarding the recent meeting on the other lakes. Arash advised that the Ministers were aware of the meeting.

7.5 Cr Alan Simmonds queried whether any studies had been done on the long-term impacts of the clam, commenting that many pests have come and gone in the past. Cr Ngahi Bidois confirmed there are multiple organisations working on this now including Te Arawa Lakes Trust.

8.0 WAIKAREMOANA SPORTS FISH HABITAT ENHANCEMENT FUND

8.1 Arash Alaeinia provided an overview of the proposed application to the Waikaremoana Sports Fish Habitat Enhancement Fund which would enable staff to carry out investigations into the Wairoa River tributaries in the wake of Cyclones Hale and Gabrielle.

8.2 Cr Kevin Coutts queried the costings as the sum sought seemed low for helicopter hire. Arash Alaeinia advised that the take off point was Murupara and this meant the flying time was minimal, and staff would overnight in the area.

8.3 *Agreed (Murray Ferris/Mike Jarvie) that Council approved the application to the Waikaremoana Sports Fish Habitat Enhancement Fund for additional funding in this financial year of \$2,000 for purposes of river investigations. [23/12/8.3]*

9.0 2022-2023 PERFORMANCE REPORT

9.1 Cr Ngahi Bidois congratulated the team on the outstanding report.

9.2 Arash Alaeinia acknowledged the work of staff team who operate within the correct processes and policies, and Kate Thompson who ensures that correct procedures are followed and engages with the auditor throughout the audit process.

9.3 Cr Mike Jarvie asked who was involved with the development of the R3 strategy. Arash Alaeinia confirm that he was responsible for the R3 output.

9.4 *Agreed (Murray Ferris/Jay Tapsell) that Council adopts the Performance Report for the 2022-2023 year. [23/12/9.4]*

10.0 PRESENTATION “REVIEW OF GAME SEASON CONDITIONS”

10.1 Matt McDougall presented via power point providing Council with a detailed overview of the various waterfowl monitoring projects that are undertaken each year to estimate waterfowl populations. He highlights that the monitoring is completed with the banding projects in January and regulations for the upcoming season are set dependant on where the estimated populations sit on completion of this summer monitoring. Matt advised that the current threshold approach to setting season conditions has been used for the past 5 seasons and he believed while not perfect it seemed to be working. He said that the staff recommendation would be to go with the status quo unless there was good reason to change it.

10.2 Council adjourned for lunch at 11.45am, reconvening at 12.05pm.

11.0 GAME SEASON CONDITIONS

11.1 Council had put various questions to Matt McDougall during and following his presentation and proceeded to confirm the Game Season Condition recommendations.

11.2 *Agreed (Mike Jarvey/Murray Ferris) that the mallard and grey duck population thresholds and associated regulations currently used i.e the status quo shown in table 1 of the agenda item remain until further evidence points to an alternative approach. [23/12/11.2]*

11.3 *Agreed (Scott Nicol/Jay Tapsell) that there is a special black swan season in Management Area A1 coinciding with the same period for a proposed special pukeko season i.e. 1 February – 9 February 2025 (one week and two weekends). [23/12/11.3]*

11.4 Cr Kevin Coutts questioned whether the limit on pukeko could be doubled for the special season? Matt McDougall’s advice was not to increase the limit. He understood iwi in the South Island had been concerned about harvesting pukeko, at all, unless monitoring is undertaken. He said there is currently no monitoring being undertaken in the Eastern Region. Cr Kevin Coutts asked if we could look to increase the limits next year.

11.5 *Agreed (Kevin Coutts/Mike Jarvie) that there is a special pukeko season 1 February – 9 February 2025 (i.e. one week and two weekends) for the Eastern Region. [23/12/11.5]*

11.6 *Agreed (Kevin Coutts/Murray Ferris) that the season for brown quail in the Eastern Region remains closed for the 2024 season. [23/12/11.6]*

12.0 OPERATIONAL REPORTS

Finance Report

12.1 Arash Alaeinia called for questions on the finance report. There were no questions, Council proceeded with confirming the recommendations.

12.2 *Agreed (Ngahi Bidois/Debbie Oakley) that Council received the Finance Report and approves payments for September and October 2023 totalling \$290,088.82. [23/12/12.2]*

12.3 *Agreed (Debbie Oakley/Mike Jarvie) that Council approves the proposed budget figures for the Statement of Financial Position, Statement of Financial Performance, and Cash flow for the 2023-2024 financial year. [23/12/12.3]*
Management Report

12.4 Arash Alaeinia informed Council that the preceding two months had been busy and challenging particularly with the Golden Clam situation. He was pleased to be able to sit at the same table and consult with iwi to find a pathway which works for our licence holders and with mana whenua.

Licence Sales Report

12.5 Kate Thompson advised that the Region's sales are continuing to improve from the downturn seen over the opening period, noting that Eastern's results are not dissimilar to trends of several regions. She commented on recent communications through the Reel Life newsletter and a pre-Christmas reminder which had been sent to lapsed participants from the last two seasons.

12.6 Cr Kevin Coutts asked if we could send a reminder to Agents to ensure that they are asking if licence holders wish to register for the election. Cr Debbie Oakley advised that the Fish & Game review identified low voter numbers as an issue and therefore one of the recommended changes to the legislation will be to enrol all adult season licence holders for Fish & Game Council elections.

12.7 Cr Mike Jarvie expressed concern that there was no option for people buying a licence through an agent in one F & G Region to join the electoral roll of another Region. Kate Thompson confirmed that this was correct and, although not an issue through the Public Online facility, if purchased through an agent this person would need to contact their region of choice to join their electoral roll.

12.8 Arash Alaeinia spoke about Fish & Game's social media coverage and the recent launch of the Rewild campaign. He encouraged all of our councillors to become friends with Eastern Fish & Game and New Zealand Fish & Game, and to like, and share the information, and add the #rewild to any relevant posts they may have.

13.0 LIAISON OFFICERS REPORTS

13.1 *Report from Bay of Plenty Conservation Board*

Arash Alaeinia advised that the board was newly elected and that they would look to engage with stakeholders in the new year.

13.2 *Report from New Zealand Council*

Cr Debbie Oakley advised that Council should have received an email outlining discussion from the most recent NZC meeting. Arash Alaeinia asked that all check for receipt of this email to ensure recipients receive it in the future. Debbie provided a summary of the email which included.

- Review and approval of policies which had been sent to Regional Councils for consultation
- Dame Linda Topp - Patron of Fish & Game
- Strategy & strategy priorities
- RMA decisions
- Processes around consultation and approval of policies
- Ranger and Maritime compliance
- Review of magazine and production costs

13.3 Cr Lindsay Lyons expressed his concerns over loss of licence sales and where Fish & Game is heading into the future. Lindsay believed licence revenue needed to be an absolute priority for the New Zealand Council and for Eastern Fish & Game Council. Cr Debbie Oakley responded providing examples of the work currently underway with promotions to increase revenue but also looking at cost optimisation. Debbie

- commented on the current working groups set up by the NZ Council to review financial processes.
- 13.4 Cr Kevin Coutts commented on the falling sales across the country and highlighted the current economic crisis which is likely to be contributing to the downturn.
- 13.5 Arash Alaeinia agreed this is a very important topic however did not believe F&G should be compared to profit making business organisations as mentioned. Fish & Game is an organisation that has a statutory responsibility for managing, maintaining, and enhancing species and habitat and the primary thing we can do to provide opportunities is our job. Arash added that there are things out of our control that can negatively impact licence sales such as weather and economics, but people are time poor as well with so many other competing past times now available.
- 13.6 Cr Lindsay Lyons said we can't keep increasing licence fees. He strongly believed Fish & Game needs to look at what we don't need, what's good to have, and what's not essential rather than increasing licence fees. Arash Alaeinia advised that in 2023-24 Eastern Fish & Game Council returned a small profit despite the downturn in licences sales. He said expenses were well managed and additional income gained from other sources to support the work we do. Arash also highlighted that being 'not for profit', everything we do is for the benefit of the environment and of licence holders, it is a balancing act between commercial, statutory, and our responsibilities.
- 13.7 Cr Ngahi Bidois asked that Council consider and comment on approaches that would be worthwhile to increase revenue for 2023-24. Discussion covered.
- Social licence
 - Mental Health Awareness – Rural Support Trust, Farmstrong
 - Teach people to fish in children's fishing pond
 - Corporate fishing days
 - More media and promotion to general public, not just anglers and hunters
 - Target youth, and young women (biggest growth sport for women in USA)
 - Utilise free publications more particularly around opening
 - Support charity organisations (they will market Fish & Game)
 - Social media
 - Price freeze on licences
 - Fish & Game competition on Lake Rotorua
 - Direct debit for licence fees
 - Merchandise – national
 - Continue to target lapsed participants
 - No one person is responsible for increasing revenue, let's all take that responsibility, block out 30 minutes of every meeting for all to contribute to increasing revenue.
- 13.8 Council adjourned for a short break at 2.08pm before entering the Public Excluded session at 2.15pm.

14.0 PUBLIC EXCLUDED SESSION

14.1 *Agreed (Ngahi Bidois/Murray Ferris) that pursuant to Section 48 (1) of the Local Government Official Information and Meetings Act 1987, the public be excluded at 2.15pm from the following parts of the proceedings of this meeting, namely:*

- *Chief Executives annual performance review. [23/12/14.1]*

14.2 *Agreed (Ngahi Bidois/Murray Ferris) that the public be re-admitted to the meeting at 2.50pm. [23/12/14.2]*

15.0 Prior to closing Cr Mike Jarvie wished to congratulate Anthony van Dorp on his promotion to Senior Fish & Game Officer and his contributions nationally for CLE. Murray Ferris also acknowledged the team's national contributions and support of other Fish & Game regions.

16.0 MEETING CLOSED

16.1 Cr Ngahi Bidois closed the meeting with a karakia at 3.00pm.



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Ngahi Bidois
Chairman

SUMMARY OF RESOLUTIONS

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