

Minutes:

NATIONAL SEA RUN SALMON COMMITTEE Eighth Meeting, 4th July 2019

10am Start Time, 3.00pm Finish Time
North Canterbury Fish & Game Office, 595 Johns Road

Committee members present: Roy Knight (NZF&G Council), , Rick Boyd (Otago F&GC) , Alan Brooks (South Canterbury Salmon Anglers Association), Phillip Musson (North Canterbury F&G Council), Linn Koevoet (Filling in for Matthew Hall (Central South Island F&GC)), Larry Burks (Filling in for Paul Hodgson(New Zealand Salmon Anglers Association)).

Others present: Steve Terry (North Canterbury F&G), Mark Webb (Central South Island F&G), Dean Kelly (West Coast F&G) and Emily Arthur – Moore (support).

1. **Apologies.**

Ben Sowry (Nelson/Marlborough F&GC), Matthew Hall (Central South Island F&GC), Paul Hodgson (NZ Salmon Anglers Association), Ian Hadland (Otago F&G), Vaughan Lynn (Nelson/ Marlborough F&G), Rob Roney (West Coast F&GC)

2. **Health & Safety.**

Roy Knight went through a safety briefing.

3. **Conflicts of Interest.**

Alan Brooks, Lynn Koevoet and Larry Burke all declared that they were involved with hatchery operations. Phillip Musson declared he was shareholder with Fonterra.

4. **Administration and enforcement of a potential season bag limit for salmon.**

Steve Terry gave a presentation which described how a season bag limit was administered in Canada and Alaska for salmonids. This involved a card system whereby each salmon caught was recorded on the card along with the date and location. In these countries anglers must return their cards before they can obtain a licence the next year. Steve said if you are caught with a fish but have not filled in the card an instant fine was issued. He said there was no need to put a tag on the fish.

Steve Terry said in time an application could be developed to allow anglers to enter this information onto their phone rather than using a physical card. This would mean real time information on salmon harvest could be obtained by Fish & Game.

Dean Kelly asked about a voluntary season bag limit. Mark Webb said that a request for anglers to limit their salmon catch had been printed in the regulations booklet but that it did not work and anglers continued to harvest more than advised.

Alan Brooks said it was now more socially acceptable to catch and release salmon.

Some discussion was had on using a paper card compared with an app to record harvest. There was concern older anglers were not that keen on using such technology. Steve Terry believed, at this stage, we could not get away with just having an app.

Dean Kelly questioned whether it was legal to have a system where you could not buy a licence if you did not return your card; that this needed further investigation. Steve Terry agreed this would most likely not be a requirement in New Zealand should the season bag limit be introduced.

Phillip Musson asked who would pay for the set up costs, all anglers or just salmon anglers? Mark Webb and Steve Terry said the costs should be spread across all anglers.

Rick Boyd put forward the following motion:

“That staff be asked to design a proposal that covered how a season bag limit would be administered. That this proposal included administration and compliance”

Seconded: Alan Brooks. CARRIED

It was agreed that staff would work with Jack Koz from the NZ Fish & Game Council on this.

5. **Discussion/ update on the draft Salmon Management Strategy for Setting Regulation Change.**

Mark Webb’s paper on adaptive management was discussed. This is a method for setting salmon fishing regulations based on a number of factors, such as the number of salmon returning to the spawning streams.

Dean Kelly asked if certain rivers could be left out of a potential season bag limit, should this be required in a given season based on the adaptive management model. Mark Webb said you can’t have a season bag limit that only applied to one river, or one region, as this could shift angler effort with detrimental effects. He said 93% of salmon were caught in the North Canterbury and Central South Island regions.

Dean Kelly said the West Coast would not likely support recommendation two that *“the size of the salmon fisheries of the Waimakariri, Rakaia and Rangitata and the 25 years of consistent and robust monitoring information of these fisheries justifies using them as indicators of fisheries health on which all South Island fisheries harvest management would be based.”* Dean did not think there was necessarily a correlation due to the different factors on the West Coast, such as the fact that the majority of salmon rivers were located on the DOC estate. Dean was mostly concerned with the daily bag limit suggestion, rather than the season bag limit for the West Coast.

Rick Boyd said that the influence of the ocean on the salmon fishery was similar on the West Coast. He questioned whether the West Coast anglers would want to be inundated with East Coast anglers once they had caught their season bag limit?

Dean Kelly said the West Coast Fish & Game Council had not had a chance to consider Mark Webb’s paper.

Phillip Musson asked what happens when the model showed a drop below the red line. Mark Webb said the adaptive management to this scenario would be to shut the fishery so that all spawning fish returned to the spawning grounds. Phillip Musson said that we needed to have something to offer anglers in this scenario, e.g. one week of salmon fishing. Rick Boyd said adaptive management should include closing the fishery if necessary; that we would have no choice.

Phillip Musson wanted to see options other than closing the salmon fishery should the numbers fall below the red line. Mark Webb said he would run that through the model. Phillip Musson said the committee had earlier agreed they would never close the salmon fishery. It was agreed that Emily Arthur – Moore would look back through the minutes to clarify this.

Mark Webb said if we had implemented this system of adaptive management 25 years ago we would not be in the situation we are in today. He said should this system be implemented, over time there would be a recovery and we would reduce our likelihood of going under the red line again.

Larry Burke asked why some of the lower spawning areas were not included in the analysis, such as Silverstream (a tributary of the Kaiapoi River) and the Otukaikino. Steve Terry said there were little pockets of spawning all over the place and there were too many to count. Therefore they just stuck with the major ones.

It was agreed that Mark Webb would make some amendments and produce a final report to be brought back to the Committee. Mark also intended to run the model past John Hayes and Martin Unwin, the two most knowledgeable fisheries scientists in the country.

Mark Webb was also working on an article on the potential adaptive management of the salmon fishery to go in the next Fish & Game magazine.

6. **Biosecurity and salmon hatcheries.**

Niharika Long & John Brightwell from the Ministry of Primary Industries gave a presentation on this topic. There were many questions that came from the presentation that John Brightwell was going to talk with colleagues about get back to the committee. These were;

- Mom and pop fish farms, their regulation and auditing. How often are they audited
- What happens when they go bust
- Ocean ranching - release to the sea hatcheries biosecurity regulations
- Appropriate vets - how do we know if the attending vets are "fish trained?"
- Fish release permits – are they valid for multiple releases?
- Farmed salmon smolt being released to the sea and their interactions with wild salmon
- Who has regulatory oversight over smolt released direct to sea?

7. **Report back from Sub Committee on the Draft National Fish Screen Policy.**

The amended draft policy was discussed. This had been finalised in a sub committee meeting. Steve Terry said that after much discussion it was agreed the main policy should be that all fish remain in the river.

Rick Boyd said Fish & Game have no jurisdiction over native fish so the policy should read 'sportsfish.' Rick also felt that total exclusion of sportsfish from irrigation takes was unreasonable as there were some locations in Otago where good populations of sportsfish existed in irrigation ponds and water races. Rick also said that while a national Fish & Game policy statement on fish screens could be useful; that it would not achieve anything tangible and that it was the relationship of Fish and Game staff working with regional councils etc on fish screens that could achieve something. He believed fish screens were not a salmon committee issue. The opinions of the other committee members generally conflicted with this opinion.

Rick Boyd went on to say that it would be most useful if strong policy on fish screens ended up in the National Policy Statement for Fresh Water Management currently being developed by the government.

Phillip Musson said he believed the policy was important and that our concerns would be more easily ignored without a policy. He also said we should advocate for fish screens to be included in Farm Environment Plans.

Linn Koevoet said the policy was doomed to fail and that it was unachievable.

Rick Boyd said there were situations where you do not want the fish to go back to the river, such as when there is too little water in it. He believed you should never have a policy that did not have flexibility.

Phillip Musson moved that: *"Changes be made to the draft National Fish Screen Policy so that where 'fish' are referred to it instead reads 'sportsfish'; that section 15 be moved into the 'background' section of the policy and that where 'rivers' are referred to in sections 14 A & B it instead reads 'waterways.' That when those changes are made the policy is sent to the New Zealand Fish & Game Council"*

Seconded: Alan Brooks. CARRIED. Rick Boyd abstained.

Rick Boyd moved that that: *"The NSRSC recommend to the NZ Fish & Game Council that it seeks to have effective fish screen policy included in the National Policy Statement for Freshwater Management"*.

Seconded: Phillip Musson. CARRIED.

8. **Discussion on a response to letter from West Coast Fish & Game on the National Stocking Policy.**

Dean Kelly to report back to the West Coast Fish & Game Council that this stocking policy was not from the salmon committee and that feedback instead should go to the NZ Fish & Game Council.

9. **Discussion on how to progress with the National Hatchery Best Practice Guidelines.**

It was agreed that Roy Knight ask Martin Taylor if there was money in the salmon committee budget to pay for the development of these guidelines. Larry Burk also suggested if not then perhaps this money could potentially come from the bequest.

10. **Confirm Minutes of previous meeting.**

Rick Boyd moved that the minutes from the previous meeting be accepted. Seconded: Alan Brooks. CARRIED.

11. **Date and topics for next Committee Meeting**

The next meeting was set for the 12th of September, with a later start time of 10.15 to be set to allow Rick Boyd to arrive from Otago on time.

12. **Further Business:**

Mark Webb produced paper copies of a report estimating the cost of implementing the new draft breeding strategy. Mark to supply an electronic copy to all committee members.