

# NORTH CANTERBURY FISH AND GAME COUNCIL

## Minutes of the Council Meeting Held on Tuesday 20 March 2019 At 595 Johns Road, Harewood Commencing at 6.35 pm

### 1. Present:

**Councillors:** Dave Coll, Rex Gibson, Stu Henderson, Trevor Isitt, Roy Knight, Ken Lee, Phillip Musson, Richard O'Keefe, Alan Strong (Chair), Bill Southward, Dave O'Neil, Graeme Nahkies

**Staff:** Debbie Ambler, Richard Cosgrove

**In Attendance:** Lyndsay Lyons (NZC Chairman), Martin Taylor (CEO F&G NZ), Carmel Veitch (NZC Accountant), Steve Doughty, Jack Kos (NZ Policy & Planning Manager) Larry Burke, Mike Bate, Ron Stuart, Mervyn Griffin

### 2. Apologies:

**Councillors:** Daniel Maxwell (Federated Farmers Rep), Christopher Brankin (Ngai Tahu Rep)  
**"That the apologies be accepted."**

**Moved: Cr Strong**

**Seconded:**

Cr Strong welcomed Cr O'Neill back after illness, the NZC representatives and introduced C Veitch and J Kos and members of the public to the meeting. A minute's silence was observed in memory of those who lost their lives in the Christchurch Mosque shootings.

### 3. Conflict of Interest:

Cr Musson - Shareholder in Fonterra

### 4. Public Forum

R Stuart stated he was concerned with the low river flows being experienced in the lower Waimakariri River and asked what steps were being taken to address the issue. He asked what staff would be doing about this going forward. Cr Strong replied that a letter had been written to Ecan with their response being that their hydrologist was looking into the problem. L Burke explained he had been in contact with Ecan as well and they are saying it is a software problem.

Discussion moved to smolt releases near the Waimakariri River mouth and the review of the breeding/domestication programme. L Burke stated that staff should investigate the increase in spawning numbers of salmon in the Kaiapoi river. This is even when the nitrate levels were high.

Cr O'Neill stated the NZSAA fishing competition was coming up over weekend and there has been no mention in any correspondence of low river flows. After discussion it was decided there was a need to get stakeholders on board with this issue. R Cosgrove reported a phone application called "Snap, Send, Solve" is a direct way of reporting river flow or any other issues to Ecan and this be communicated in the next Weekly Report.

Cr Southward stated he would check the Rakaia flow metres to see if they were still working.

M Bates stated that fish screens and river flows were the biggest problems affecting fishermen and that anglers just need more information.

M Griffin stated he was surprised at the proposed regulation changes and asked if members were able to vote on changes. Cr Isitt outlined the process for setting new and/or any changes in fishing regulations and that a specific meeting would be held for stakeholders in May to discuss. R Cosgrove to check the Constitution to see if public are able to vote on regulation changes.

## **5. Presentation**

S Dougherty presented on the R3 Programme (Retain, Re-activate, Recruit) which was a programme designed to enhance participation through customer satisfaction to achieve revenue objectives. He outlined the steps that were required to be taken and the road map required to reach the R3 programme objectives.

### **6. a. Fulfilling the Council's Agreement with the NZC**

G Nahkies stated there would be a governance audit to strengthen governance of Council and will give the framework for this at the April 19 meeting.

### **6. b. Salmon Committee Response**

#### **Proposed changes to be considered at the request of the SRSC**

#### **1. Reduce daily bag limit to 1 salmon**

Support; CSI dairy records show this would reduce harvest in the Rangitata River by 10% in poor seasons such as seen in recent years, and by around 15% in years with good returns. The percentage reduction achieved by anglers reducing their catch from 2 to 1 salmon would likely allow some of those salmon "saved" from harvest, to then be available for harvest by other anglers and therefore the reduction would likely be a maximum of 10%, rather than 15%. This is also assuming only a small proportion of anglers have seasonal harvest targets and reducing their daily harvest has no impact on their total catch for the season. However, this regulation should not be controversial and the reduction in harvest is worthwhile.

A positive licence sales incentive is that historic harvest surveys show that the majority of salmon anglers catch 0 salmon a season, reducing numerically, and distributing the catch saved by introducing a season limit bag would encourage anglers who are considered "lapsed" anglers, that do not buy their licence until anecdotal and or/media reports that their perceived or favoured run has started, or the favoured river is consistently yielding salmon In a positive return phase, anglers will again buy a licence in the season when perceived run size is improved.

#### **Points raised in discussion:**

**Concern raised that there was no specific data available on North Canterbury rivers and that data was being used from a CSI report on the Rangitata River that was presented at the Salmon Symposium. The reply was that this data set was seen as consistent up and down the east coast of the South Island and was the reason why it was used. R Cosgrove to provide the Rangitata**

Report to Councillors. The upshot of discussion was that it was seen that there needed to be something done now and not wait.

A show of hands was made – proposal 1 to reduce the daily bag limit to 1 salmon was carried.

## **2. Close salmon fishing above SH1 bridges**

Not Support: North Canterbury harvest surveys do not show breakdown of harvest above and below SH1. Closing a section of river would restrict access for some anglers who prefer that area over others. The aim of reducing harvest should spread the burden across anglers equitably, rather than severely affect some anglers and others not at all. This is particularly true of severe restrictions, such as proposing SH1 becoming the upstream restriction on the Waimakariri River. This would reduce fishing opportunity significantly, from approximately 75 kilometres (below the gorge) to just over 5. Additionally, anglers displaced from above SH1 may simply fish below the bridge as an alternative. This could potentially cause significant crowding issues on this stretch of already-heavily-fished river and by not necessarily significantly reducing harvest. Such a significant change without robust scientific justification could leave us open to significant political opposition, with staff unable to justify such a decision.

Most anglers prefer certain sections of river and do not fish the full river. For example, CSI data shows only 3% of the salmon caught in the Rangitata River are caught above the gorge and it is likely to be a similarly small proportion in North Canterbury rivers. Closing the rivers at the gorge bridges would limit the opportunity to fish for salmon in the remote wilderness experience of the back country.

Points raised in discussion:

That North Canterbury had poor data sets and even without data a decision needed to be made. That the point of closure required to be at a specific location and if this change was not supported that it be on the Waimakariri River only.

A show of hands was made – the proposal not to support the closure of salmon fishing above SH1 bridges was carried.

## **3. Close salmon fishing above the gorge bridges**

Conditional Support: While we do not have data on the proportion of salmon harvested about the gorges, it is likely to be relatively low. However such a decision would also influence a lower proportion of anglers and is therefore less likely to cause significant opposition. A middle-ground alternative maybe to allow early season fishing opportunities above the gorge, before the majority of salmon are in that zone of the river, which would still provide opportunity to those anglers.

Suggest 1<sup>st</sup> of March closing.

A show of hands was made with 9 for and 2 against for the conditional support to close the salmon fishery above the gorge bridges.

#### **4. Shorten the salmon fishing season to the end of March**

Support: We know that timing of salmon runs vary between the Waimakariri and the Rakaia rivers, with the Waimakariri generally experiencing a later run. Therefore, this regulation would more-significantly influence the numbers of fish harvested in the Waimakariri. However, we know that harvest in the Waimakariri is nearly 20% higher than that of the Rakaia, so needs greater reduction. Closing the season earlier also ensures all anglers have had an opportunity to fish for salmon and will relatively fairly reduce harvest across all users equitably.

A show of hands was made 9 for and 2 against shortening the salmon fishing season to the end of March.

#### **5. Close October and November**

Not Support: Once the season opens in December, any salmon that have entered the rivers in the previous two months are unlikely to be above the White Posts and be protected from anglers. This would likely only save a very small proportion of the salmon harvest. The first salmon do not arrive at the spawning grounds in the Rakaia until March, and the Waimakariri in April. CSI data does not show early entering salmon travel to the headwaters any quicker than the rest of the run and this is likely to be true in this region also.

Points raised in discussion;

Discussion on when to open the rivers and the influence of the unknown variables that have an effect on salmon runs on particular rivers. It was noted CSI supported this recommendation. It was suggested that there be three opening days; Oct – general opening – Nov high country opening – Dec – salmon season opening.

A show of hands was made with 4 for and 6 against the proposal to not support the closing of the salmon season in October and November. E.g. support for December opening.

#### **6. New Regulation - Introduce a seasonal bag limit of 4 salmon**

Support: Both CSI & NC have data showing the reduction in harvest such a regulation would achieve, around 20 – 25%, while still providing reasonable opportunity for those expert anglers that regularly catch more than 4 salmon each year. Council needs to progressively change the attitude of salmon anglers to get them to recognize that it is a very finite resource and that we are at a point of needing to take significant steps to reduce harvest. Some keen anglers that staff have talked to have made the decision not to fish for salmon at all this season, because they do not wish to add further harvest pressure. If expert salmon anglers really care about the sustainability of the resource they should have no problem limiting their seasonal harvest to 4 salmon. One often raised barrier to the imposition of such a regulation is that it is unenforceable. While it would be challenging, North American fishery managers use this method to reduce harvest and it should not be used as a barrier to the adoption of this regulation. Salmon anglers are often quite social and in places such as McIntosh's Rocks for example, many locals would be able to name which angler has caught how many fish. In such circumstances, and with social media, voluntary adoption of such a seasonal bag limit would be relatively high. It would also send a very strong message that anglers need to take steps to reduce harvest in an effort to rebuild the fishery rather than manage it around a potentially dangerously low level.

Points raised in discussion;

On the various ways how to enforce the bag limit e.g. provide 4 cable ties to tie on tail, a card system where an endorsement would be required to fish the lowland rivers. Compliance was seen

as a potential issue. Costings would be required but would not be able to be completed in time for the 2019/20 season.

“That more investigation on bag limit numbers in increments of two from 4 to 12 and the % that would have on seasonal bag limits along with details on costings and impacts on staff time and compliance. “

Moved Cr Knight                      Seconded: Cr Musson      9 For 1 abstained (Cr O’Neill)

It was noted that there would be a public consultation meeting for stakeholders in May 2019 where recommendations would be discussed at the June 19 Council meeting.

R Cosgrove provide all background data/reports supplied to the NSRSC on breeding and production strategies to Council as part of the Strategy Report.

Cr O’Neill left the meeting at 8.17pm

Cr Strong stated the Financial Report would be discussed within the Public Excluded session and the meeting moved into this at 8.26pm.

That the public and staff (other than may be necessary to assist and advise Council) be excluded from the following part of the proceedings of this meeting, namely:

1. **Financial Position / Executive Summary / Cashflow Forecast (tabled on the night)**
2. **Staff Reviews (template attached) and Feedback (tabled on the night)**
3. The general subject of the matters to be considered while the public is excluded, the reason for passing the resolution and the specific grounds under section 48(1) of the Local Government Official Information and Meetings Act 1987 for the passing of this resolution are as follows:
- 4.

<b>General Subject of each section/matter to be considered of this</b>	<b>Reason for passing this resolution in relation to each</b>	<b>Ground(s) under 48(1) for the passing resolution</b>
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1. & 2.	That good reason exists for not discussing the matter with the public present and is not outweighed by the public interest.	Section 48(1)(d)
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This resolution is made in reliance of section 48(1) of the Local Government Official Information and Meetings Act 1987 and the particular interest or interests protected by section 6 or section 7 of that Act which would be prejudiced by the holding of the whole or relevant part of the proceeding of the meeting in public are as follows:

1. & 2.            *Subject to sections 6, 8 and 17, this section applies if, and only if, the withholding of the information is necessary to protect the privacy of natural persons, including that of deceased natural persons – Section 7 (2) (a).*

That appropriate officers remain to provide advice to the Council.

**“That the meeting move into a public excluded session and that non-Council attendees M Taylor, L Lyons, C Veitch, S Dougherty and J Kos be invited to stay for this part of the meeting.”**

**Moved: Cr Isitt**

**Seconded: Cr Musson**

**CARRIED**

There being no further business, the meeting was closed at 11pm

\_\_\_\_\_ (Chairman)

\_\_\_\_\_ (Date)

**Next Meeting:**

Wednesday 17<sup>th</sup> April 2019  
595 Johns Road  
Harewood  
Commencing at 6.30pm