

Minutes of the Fish & Game NZ, Southland Region Council meeting held at the Southland Fish & Game Office, 17 Eye Street, Invercargill on Thursday 12th December 2019.

Present: Graeme Watson (Chair) Craig Horrell
Chris Owen Lindsay Withington
Lyndon Norman Dave Harris.
Paul Stenning
Ken Cochrane
Mike Hartstonge
David MacGregor
Corey Carston

In attendance: Zane Moss (Manager)
J Smyth (Resource Management Officer – 6.30pm),
C Stewart, E Garrick, (F&G Officers)
C Mason (Minutes).

Members of the Public:

Len Prentice

Welcome:

The Chairman opened the meeting at 6.00pm, welcomed those present and pointed out all exits from the building should an emergency occur.

The Chairman said he had spoken to Cyril Gilroy who was unable to attend tonight. Cyril wished everyone a Merry Xmas.

An addition was made to the agenda, being Len Prentice to speak on the AGM.

Apologies:

Resolved Harris/Hartstonge that apologies be received & accepted from Bevan McNaughton, Cyril Gilroy, Gavin Roy, Bill Jarvie, & Jacob Smyth for lateness. (6.30pm) Carried.

Conflicts of Interest with items on the agenda:

The individual member declaration of conflicts of interest with any item on the agenda had been circulated to members for signature before the start of the meeting.

Any conflicts were noted by the Chairman.

Health & Safety Report:

The Council health & safety report for the period 1st October 2019 – 30th November 2019 was attached to the agenda for consideration. The report showed a nil return for the period.

All known hazards were listed in the Southland Health & Safety Plan.

The Manager advised that Council had purchased an Inreach GPS unit for staff & Contractors working alone, particularly in the Te Anau/Fiordland area. This was a safety initiative for those working alone to give them peace of mind and alert the Office should a problem occur.

Resolved Harris/Withington that the Health & Safety Report to 30th November 2019 be received.
Carried.

Minutes of the meeting held 10th October 2019

Resolved Owen/McGregor that the minutes of the meeting held 10th October 2019 were circulated & taken as read and were a true and correct record. Carried.

Matters arising from Minutes:

Governance:

The Chairman reported that at the recent national F&G Chairman's meeting, another presentation was given by Bruce Robertson, who had highlighted key issues of governance and used very good examples from the Southland governance workshop and our Councillors contribution to it. He gave some examples of those. The Chairman would like to see Southland hold a governance workshop every two years, as it was a very valuable exercise. He said a key focus of governance was the big picture outcomes, as we were Governors, we should not be getting involved in management issues.

Administration Reports:

The accounts paid, direct credit/debit payments list & automatic payments since the last meeting, licence sales progress to 2nd December 2019, budget to actual expenditure to 30th November and the correspondence list were attached to the agenda for Councillors consideration.

Licence sales were currently down 4.2% on last year's sales at the same time. This had been mainly attributed to the bad weather experienced in Southland since the season opening.

The budget to actual non-specific income was questioned. It was explained that most of it was for summer work which was just starting. However, some of the summer work had also been affected by high flows (e.g. periphyton surveys etc.) and so income could be slightly less than budget this year.

Correspondence:

The letter in the correspondence list from Dr Michael Turner was referred to by Councillor Hartstonge. The Chairman reported that he had replied to that letter.

Cr Hartstonge asked Councillor Cochrane if he wished to make an apology regarding the manner in which he addressed the public at the last meeting.

Cr Cochrane replied that he had the opportunity to check the tapes and had discussed the matter with the Chairman and did not think that his behaviour was inappropriate. He was offering his point of view and that no apology was necessary as no Standing Orders were breached. However, he referred to Councillor Hartstonge's comments at the last meeting and suggested he apologise. Councillor Hartstonge responded that he had been following Standing Orders by raising a point of order, and spoke under privilege, which he was entitled to do.

Cr Owen had reviewed the tapes and said that Cr Cochrane was only offering a different point of view and it was unfortunate that some members of the public present did not like that view.

At this point the Chairman said the matter had been aired and it was time to move on in the meeting.

Staff Report:

The staff report was attached to the agenda.

The Manager went over aspects of the report.

Feral cat habitat movement:

Animal ethics approval through DoC to use collars on feral cats around the Wreys Bush area had been received. On the 9th November staff attached collars to five captured feral cats (3 for F&G and 2 for DoC). There was one more collar to go on shortly.

In the New Year staff would try to recapture F&G cats and analyse the data. F&G's cat collars received data by satellite, while the DoC collars were VHF collars.

As suspected our feral cats have been travelling the fence lines and shelterbelts heavily, spending time in thicker habitat with overhead cover. Some positive feedback of the study, from our Facebook page, was included in the staff report.

Simulated Mallard nest study

102 simulated Mallard nests had been deployed across two Southland sites during the peak nesting period. Motion detection cameras were paired with each nest. All photos obtained from 100 of those nests had now been processed by Cohen and preliminary results of predator visitation of the nests were shown in the staff report. A lot of predators, especially cats, visited the simulated nests with interestingly avian predators actively preying on them. However, any predator disturbance of a nest was not ideal, as it could cause a hen to abandon that nest. Next year at one of the sites (control site) we will trap at a level a farmer or hunter would be able to do, then we will put the simulated nests out again in the control site and in an uncontrolled site, to see whether the number of visits and predation decreases at the control site versus the uncontrolled site. That information will be useful for our hunters to see if a bit of effort in the lead up to or during the breeding season will see a reduction in the number of predators that could be visiting mallard nests on their property.

The Manager said that Cohen and Erin's stoat diet study paper had now been published in the NZ Journal of Zoology. This was great work, as it highlighted Fish & Game's scientific credibility.

Proposed Southland Water & Land Plan: (pSWALP).

Dr Adam Canning, Wgtn Fish & Game, had been acting for Southland at the Court directed science caucusing, which has helped with cost savings. An interim decision from the Environment Court on Topic A had not been received as yet, but once that decision was received Staff would analyse it and discuss with the Council if they wished to proceed with the Hearing to Topic B & to what degree if they do. It was hoped that the interim decision from the Court would be received early in the New Year or before.

R3 programmes:

Staff had been working with Steve Doughty (NZ Council) to develop a Southland R3 Plan.

Our R3 Plan was focussed on upskilling anglers, as research suggested that lack of success was a key barrier to participation. From the database we had identified those who had bought whole season licences in the past but didn't buy one last season. We had emailed those people directly looking to support them with access & how-to information videos. We have also scheduled more instruction videos to be made. We are tracking results to see if we can influence the behaviour of those we have emailed. Unfortunately, this fishing season has given poor weather, so results may not be as we hoped, but we will do the same again next year.

New Zealand Council Issues:

Cr Owen reported that a NZC meeting was held on the 22nd - 24th November 2019, with the Chairman's joint meeting held on the 23rd November.

- Discussed was the licensing system with the decision being made that Eyede would continue managing the licence system for the next term, (3 years) with their own support staff. However, some of the Eyede support services were discussed, with NZC looking at an option of doing the support services inhouse in the future to save costs. It was suggested that Eyede's

change to the Xero accounting system should see the support services fees drop. From now on the Eyede support services was to be reviewed by F&G on an annual basis.

- A Communications Strategy presentation was given to NZC by Mike Jaspers, media & communications consultant.

The resulting draft NZC Strategic Communications Plan would now go out to the Regions for their feedback. A Comms Strategy was very overdue from the organisation and was an important document to have.

- In-house legal support was considered by the meeting. NZC agreed in principle to engage an in-house lawyer. Cr Owen said there was financial gain to be made in having that position filled, particularly in respect to RMA work.

A significant concern of the Southland Council was the NZC prioritisation of what region used the in-house lawyer and when. With NZC prioritising cases Regions could lose their ability to decide what they wanted to defend e.g. the Cycle Trail. A strength of F&G was that Regions were passionate about their resources and to lose the ability to fight for those passions would be a huge concern. Funding was queried as well. Cr Harris noted the savings presented, seemed minimal to him, taking into account the salary suggested & other costs and where would funding for the Regional services come from? Cr Owen said we were already spending money on legal fees and that would cover that position.

- Cr Harris referred also to the NZC minutes and queried the recommendation for a position in the Council Office of a National Compliance Co-Ordinator for the infringement system. With a new inhouse lawyer, a national infringement co-ordinator, a new Policy Manager etc the cost was possibly at least 5% of our Southland budget. What was the justification for that extra expense?

Cr Hartstonge commented that with more staff being added to NZC in a national role, information on the Audits being publicly reported, the lack of defence of the regions in terms of the Audits, and the misrepresentations of the organisation through the media, there was a general concern that there seemed to be a disconnect between the regions and NZC, which made some Councillors very uncomfortable. What was NZC's view on the current structure of the organisation? Were we heading for centralisation out of Wellington? Cr Owen said that there was no plan to centralise and he did not know where that view came from.

- With the current hunting Code of Practice reviewed by Otago F&G & circulated to regions for consultation, the resulting revised Code had now been adopted as national policy, and would be printed in the Game Bird Hunting Guide 2020, with the additional point, to encourage the use of biodegradable products where possible.
- The revised *National Prosecutions Policy* after consultation with Regions was adopted as national policy, replacing the July 2014 document.
- The NZ Jet Boat Association had requested a memorandum of understanding (MOU) with NZ Council. NZC saw this as a partnership with another group that shared the same waterways and many of whom were our licence holders. The Manager asked if that would create an expectation that F&G would be more lenient in allowing uplifting of speed restrictions. Cr Owen said that would be a Regional decision on a case by case basis. The Manager said that historically we had a good relationship with the Southland branch of the Assn.
- The Strategic Financial Review questionnaire had been sent to Regional Councillors mid November 2019, for their input & feedback by 18th November. Cr Stenning asked why we did not get it earlier so that it could be tabled as part of the meeting and be discussed around the table. The way it was done did not show the collective feeling of the Council as a whole. Cr Owen replied that it was a matter of timing and had missed our November meeting agenda.
- In relation to the sub-committee appointees, Cr Owen clarified that the NZC Chairman had made it clear that he wanted everyone to have the opportunity to be on sub-committees, rather than regions cherry picking candidates for the roles. He noted that sub-committee people in their roles were not representing their regions. It was for independent volunteers doing afterhours extra-curricular activity for Fish & Game.

Governor's Forum:

The Chairman spoke of the Governors forum held in Christchurch on the 23rd November 2019, and the consensus of the Regional Chairs that they were unhappy with the anti-farming sentiment coming through the media from NZC. He gave examples of that. The meeting agreed that NZC should cease all negative statements about farmers through the media. It was hoped we could work with farmers more.

In relation to Alan Strong's presentation at the meeting on the North Canterbury Audit the Chairman agreed that some of his comments in the presentation had raised a few eyebrows around the table. Several F&G regions were concerned at the whole organisation's portrayal in that presentation, Cr Stenning agreed.

The Chairman referred to an email sent from the NZC CE in Wellington on 29th November 2019 which stated the following:

*"Fish and Game as an organisation needs to ensure it is in the best possible position for the next generation of anglers and hunters. To achieve this outcome regional chairs support an independent strategic review to be undertaken.
The NZC will consult on the Terms of Reference".*

The Chairman, for clarification, said that the unanimous view expressed by the Chairs across the organisation was that if a strategic review of the organisation was undertaken it had to be led from the ground up by the Regions. There was also a view expressed, at the meeting, that we should not embark on a strategic review until both the financial review and remuneration committees had completed their work.

The Chairman stressed that at the Governors meeting there was no mandate from the Governors on a strategic review, no vote was taken. There was only an expression of interest show of hands and the NZC should recognise that. The email from the CE was different to what the view at the Governor's meeting was on the matter of a strategic review, particularly the view that it must be led by the Regions.

Cr Hartstonge & Cr Stenning both noted instances that caused some mistrust amongst the Regions with the NZC. Over the last six months there was deteriorating communication between the regions and NZC. It needed to be improved on with more open information given. There was a real concern at the direction NZC appeared to be going in.

Cr Owen referred to the Wellington F&G letters in the correspondence list and reported that NZC was sending a detailed reply to Wellington F&G.

In reply to Council's concerns re media reports, he noted that NZC had media experts with a lot of experience to handle media situations. The decision to say nothing can sometimes be the best response and in the case of the Audits that was the best response in that instance.

Cr Hartstonge said that the impression from the media reports was that there was organisational failure, which was not the case, making the organisation seem worse than it actually was. Cr Stenning added that he had read the full audits and there was nothing actionable in them.

Cr Owen referred to the Governors forum and said that on the Sunday after the Governors Forum NZC spent a lot of time talking about the agricultural discussion held with the Governors with a view to doing it in a better light, mindful that the NPS work etc had already been done on where F&G stood and we probably would have to defend that in the media from time to time.

We had to be careful with our messaging. However, the message had been received clearly from the Governors re any anti- farmer sentiment.

In respect to the concerns of Alan Strong's presentation it was suggested that time be spent at the next meeting to discuss that so Southland could send a letter of their concerns to NZC.

As far as a strategic review was concerned the general consensus of the meeting was that it should not occur until the sub-committee reviews were completed.

Resolved Withington/Stenning that the Chairman write to the NZC expressing the concerns of the Southland Council that NZC should not embark on a strategic review until both the financial review & remuneration committees completed their work. Carried.

The letter from the Chairman would also express the Chairman's thinking regarding the CE's interpretation in respect to a strategic review.

Jacob noted that from a staff morale point of view there needed to be better communication about what was happening nationally and why. It was demoralising for staff to hear what was being discussed without clarity around that. Councillors may be informed but staff were not. The Chairman said it was a good point and had been raised at the Governors forum also.

Cr Owen reiterated that nothing was happening at present and the next step was that at the next NZC meeting the NZC would discuss issues from the Governors forum. Cr Owen said he was always happy to clarify any questions Council had on the NZC.

Public Forum.

Len Prentice – AGM:

Len reported he had spoken to several people after the AGM was held and was concerned at the lack of attendance by the public at the AGM's. Those he had spoken to either forgot it was on or did not know it was on. He suggested that the reel life email list should be used to send out a reminder of the meeting a few days before it occurred to help jog memories.

How it was advertised would be discussed further at the October meeting when the venue was decided.

Len Prentice left the meeting (7.42pm).

The meeting then went In Committee to discuss an employment issue and all staff left the meeting.

Time 7.43 pm

Resolved Hartstonge/ Stenning that the Council move In Committee.

Section 48, Local Government Official Information & meetings Act 1987.

That public and staff be excluded from the following part of the proceedings of this meeting to discuss
a) An Employment Issue.

The general subject of the matter to be considered while the public is excluded, the reason for passing this resolution in relation to the matter 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:

GENERAL SUBJECT OF EACH MATTER TO BE CONSIDERED	REASON FOR PASSING THIS RESOLUTION IN RELATION TO EACH MATTER	GROUND(S) UNDER SECTION 48(1) FOR THE PASSING OF THIS RESOLUTION
Information provided in confidence	Good reason to withhold exists under section 9 of the Official Information Act 1982	Section 48(1)(a)(i)

This resolution is made in reliance on Section 48(1)(a) of the Local Government Official Information and Meetings Act 1987 and the particular interest or interests protected by Section 9 of the Official Information Act 1982 which would be prejudiced by the holding of the whole or relevant part of the proceedings of the meeting in public are as follows:

ITEM	REASON UNDER THE OFFICIAL INFORMATION ACT 1982	SECTION	PLAIN ENGLISH REASON
	To protect the privacy of natural persons	Sec 9(2)(a)	Information provided identifies particular persons and can easily be connected with a particular person.

Time: 8.10pm

Resolved: (Hartstonge/Stenning)

To move out of Public Excluded session and back into a Public meeting

Staff re-joined the meeting.

General Business:

Vice Chairman:

The Chairman called for nominations for a Vice Chairman as he was expected to be away for the February meeting. There were no objections from the meeting to having a Vice Chairman in place.

Stenning/Harris nominated Lindsay Withington.

Cr Cochrane nominated Paul Stenning, who declined the nomination.

There were no further nominations and Lindsay Withington was declared Vice Chairman.

Cr Withington was congratulated by the Council.

Game Season 2020 regulations:

The Game Season 2020 recommendations from staff were attached to the agenda.

Erin's point system indicated a productive breeding season, and numbers would be confirmed at the March population count.

Staff recommendations for 2020 regulations were:

- A 2.5 month season length.
- Mallards 20 birds per day for O/W and 10 birds per day for rest of season.
- Paradise shelduck 10 birds per day for O/W and 6 birds per day for rest of season.

No further changes were recommended.

Southland had written to Otago F&G to try and simplify and align regulations between the two regions. The Otago Council thanked Southland Council for the letter and agreed to shorten their season by two weeks for social reasons & to align with Southland.

A shorter season was to ensure mallards were not harvested or disturbed close to their breeding season, as per hunter satisfaction surveys 2017, and had received mainly positive comments from hunters.

The Chairman referred to the Governance forum and the comments made on governance and staff recommendations.

Cr Cochrane said that with a productive breeding season expected and the alignment with our season length should we not align with Otago for bag limits- mallards 25 per day O/W. This was a good season to accommodate that. However, around the table the consensus was that Southland stay with the staff recommendations.

Resolved Withington/Norman that the staff recommendations for the Game Season 2020 regulations as attached to the agenda be accepted. Carried.

Change of Meeting Date:

The 9th of April 2020 Council meeting date clashed with Easter & it was suggested that meeting date be changed earlier to 19th March, which allowed opportunity to provide feedback on our finalised budget & OWP. The OWP was in limbo at present, while we awaited the requirements of the Auditor General. The Manager said this year he was proposing to have a Project Plan (similar to the old OWP describing what staff were doing) but also having a higher- level Operational Work Plan to report against in the end of year Performance Report, (as per the Auditor General requirements) ,with the project plan being appended to that.

Resolved Stenning/Withington that the Council change their 9th April 2020 meeting date to the 19th March 2020. Carried.

Southland Rowing Assn:

The Southland Rowing Assn, including local rowing clubs had written letters to the Southland F&G Council, ES & ICC concerned about the lower reaches of the Oreti River and the potential for conflict with rowers during the duck hunting season. This had been an ongoing concern for rowers for some time and they would like to see duck hunting banned there.

The Manager had replied to the letters suggesting that shooting from boats be prohibited below the Dunn's Road bridge and that hunting from shore only be permitted during the opening weekend of duck hunting season and for the first two hours of daylight and the last hour of daylight in the evening at all other times, as a compromise. Noting however, those recommendations had to be approved by the F&G Council.

Some Councillors were concerned at it setting a precedent, remembering that the maimais were there long before the rowers & cycle trails etc, also it was unlikely that shotgun fire from maimais opposite the area would cause harm. But this had to be set against the perception of endangering, frightening or annoying members of the public. We had to be aware of the perceptions and the media sensitivities of the matter.

Cr Owen said there had been instances in the past with duck hunters & rowers in conflict. He noted that rowers sit in their boats backwards and cannot see what was in front of them.

After discussions Council agreed to preclude drift boat duck hunting from specific areas that conflict with rowing.

Resolved Cochrane/Owen that we preclude drift boat hunting from below the Dunn's Road bridge on the Oreti River and that we also approach the rowing clubs prior to the opening of duck hunting season advising them of that and encouraging them to be aware of our presence as game bird hunters during the season. Carried.

Council positions:

Cr Withington suggested that the positions of Chairman, Executive Committee, Vice Chairman & NZ Council rep be reviewed annually.

The Chairman said he had checked with other Chairs and it seemed it was a common practice with other Councils and that a shorter term may encourage more nominations.

Resolved Stenning/Withington that at the 4th February 2020 meeting the Council discuss whether the Chairman, Executive Committee, Vice Chairman & NZC rep positions should be reaffirmed or reappointed on an annual basis and if agreed, that we carry out that process following the discussion at the next meeting. Carried.

Drift boating on the Waiau.

Cr Carston queried if the proposal as presented at the last meeting was going ahead.

Jacob Smyth replied that no application for the proposal had been received to date.

Items for the next agenda.

- Cr Stenning wanted discussion at the next meeting on ways to kick start the transition to non-plastic wads. This issue was going to creep up on us and Southland could lead the way on this.
- Council positions – reappointments annually?

There was no further business and the meeting closed at 8.23pm.

Chairman _____ Date _____