

Minutes of the Fish & Game NZ, Southland Region Council meeting held at the Council Office, 17 Eye Street, Invercargill on Tuesday 4th February 2020.

Present: Lindsay Withington (Chair) Craig Horrell Lyndon
Norman (by Zoom) Dave Harris.
Paul Stenning Bevan McNaughton
Mike Hartstonge Cyril Gilroy (Te Rūnanga o Ngaī Tahu Rep).
David MacGregor
Corey Carston

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

Members of the Public:

Len Prentice
Lloyd Smith 6.30pm
Alan Leitch 6.30pm

Welcome:

Graeme Watson, Chairman, had an apology in for this meeting.

Resolved Hartstonge/Stenning that Lindsay Withington, Vice Chairman, chair the meeting tonight.
Carried.

Cr Withington took the Chair and opened the meeting at 6.00pm and welcomed those present.

Additions to the agenda:

The Chairman advised additions to the agenda as follows:

Public Forum – Len Prentice to speak.

General Business – Waituna breakout camera.

_ Whitebait regulations submission.

Apologies:

Resolved Harris/Stenning that apologies be received & accepted from Graeme Watson, Ken Cochrane & Chris Owen 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 December 2019 to 31st January 2020 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 an advanced driving course had been scheduled for staff in March.

Resolved Withington/McNaughton that the Health & Safety Report to 31st January 2020 be received. Carried.

Minutes of the meeting held 12th December 2019

Resolved Stenning/Hartstonge that the minutes of the meeting held 12th December 2019 were circulated & taken as read and were a true and correct record. Carried.

Matters arising from Minutes:

There were no matters arising from the minutes.

Administration Reports:

The accounts paid, direct credit/debit payments list & automatic payments since the last meeting, licence sales progress to 16th January 2020, budget to actual expenditure to 22nd January 2020 and the correspondence list were attached to the agenda for Councillors consideration. (All correspondence had been emailed to Councillors prior to the meeting).

Cr Harris noted the increased mileage costs of the present Council but was pleased to see that we had more Councillors spread out from around the province.

Licence sales were currently down 4.9% on last year's sales at the same time. This had been mainly attributed to the bad weather at opening & since. Our social media posts were trying to encourage people out fishing, however the present high flow conditions made this challenging.

In respect to social media posts the Chairman asked staff if there was much interest. Cohen replied that all the posts, without exception, are seen/liked by at least 1,000 people with numbers varying between 1,000 – 4,000. Posts were getting good numbers of audience.

Budget to Actual progress:

The Manager referred to the budget to actual costs and the approved budget for accommodation improvements at the Te Anau Wildlife Park. We had consulted a builder over the likely costs of turning the double garage at the back of the office into basic accommodation and proposed to do so based on that advice. However, following a more detailed investigation by another builder it has become apparent that this is not a viable option. The future and opportunities at the Park would be discussed with DOC next week who were very interested in being involved in developing the Park. F&G were also interested in development with DOC, without reducing our own opportunities at the site. Other partners could also be involved, particularly Iwi. At the DOC meeting we would be pushing for an improvement in facilities for Staff/Rangers to stay at the Park when required. An existing building was potentially suitable for this but was occasionally used by DOC for blue duck rearing. This would be discussed further with them at the meeting.

Correspondence Reports:

Item 2 – Not Releasing surplus salmon stock from hatcheries.

Cr Stenning asked if this would impact the Southland region in any way.

The Manager said a potential issue could be the sourcing of juvenile salmon for our Fish in Schools programme, however there were other options available.

The stocking of McGregor's pond would hopefully continue, as this was an enclosed space and would not endanger wild stock.

Staff Report:

The staff report was attached to the agenda.

The Manager briefly went over aspects of the report.

Swan Counts:

Black Swan numbers were still at the high end of the range but down slightly on last year's figures.

Draft Diving:

Good numbers of trout were seen during drift dives, with trout in good condition and some unusually large trout seen in the Mataura.

Proposed Southland Water & Land Plan.

The Manager was meeting with DOC, Forest & Bird, Iwi & our lawyers to encourage DOC to contribute to the sharing of professional witnesses in the Appeal, to help in the reduction of our own costs. Once the direction from the Court came with the pre-hearing conference around Topic A, that should clarify the scale of investment required for Topic B matters. Topic B would confirm rules around existing practices and ensure more requirements around good management practices in the Plan, once it came into effect. It was also tied into the next stage of limit setting, which we would be drawn into, and if those issues could be resolved in this Hearing, it should streamline costs for the next stage.

Operational Work Plan 2020/2021: (OWP)

The manager noted that most of the OWP was based on our Statutory functions and requirements, so there is not a lot of flexibility there. At previous meetings Council had identified four key priorities to address through the OWP as being:

- a) Pressure sensitive fisheries.
- b) R3 (recruitment, retention, reactivation).
- c) Positive solutions to water quality issues.
- d) Public awareness.

Management had now developed goals that they thought encapsulated the Council's expectations to these priorities. The Manager asked for Council feedback in respect to those goals.

Measurable objectives would be produced from those goals that would be addressed in the annual report, with some case studies and examples of how we were achieving those goals. This was for the other 15% of our OWP, besides the statutory functions. (85%).

Cyril Gilroy queried what staff meant by *kiwi values*, under the *Public awareness goal*. The Manager replied that we were trying to highlight to the general public work that Fish & Game does, that they may not recognise us for. E.g. advocates for water quality, involving families in outdoor recreation, indigenous biodiversity focus (eels, galaxids etc) with our wetland creations, while highlighting the values that introduced species also have to contribute, identifying that we were a positive organisation who contributed to the fabric of Kiwi society, more than just looking out for trout and the hunting of ducks.

The Manager explained the *Positive solutions to water quality issues goal*.

Councillors had previously talked about the water quality issues and how they did not want to be seen as another bureaucracy and that we were not anti-farming per se. We would like landowners and the rural community to recognise that Fish & Game appreciated land management, the challenges associated with different farming systems, the environment that farmers were farming in, and try to contribute positively so farmers were more comfortable with us and recognised we were only trying

to improve water quality generally through appropriate good management practises, to the benefit of both the agricultural community and the values of Fish & Game.

The R3 goal was to try and increase participation without adding issues to pressure sensitive fisheries. To help direct novices and others to the many opportunities of the lowland fisheries, which were more accessible fisheries and provided very good fishing opportunity.

The *Pressure sensitive fisheries* goal was to try and maximise satisfaction and avoid existing anglers being displaced because of perceptions around the nature of those fisheries.

Cr MacGregor suggested the Waimumu Field Days might be useful to show F&G's work and target positive stories to the rural community. Cr Horrell added that we could show the good work with wetlands and the practical research work that Erin & Cohen were doing at present, which would appeal to farmers.

The Manager said that we had attended the Field days in the past, which had not been very successful in engaging with people to talk about our issues, as there were so many other attractions & competitions for people's time there. However, we could look at that again but suggested that highlighting positive stories in the rural media may be a better forum to get our message across. Staff would look at all options further to better communicate the positive stories which we were involved in.

The Manager noted that one area to progress further was more detailed work around the benefits of wetland creation in respect to sediment & nutrient attenuation. Nationally, no one was highlighting well the water quality benefits of creating wetlands. With more research on that, even involving an external research partner, we could step up in the media with positive results on water quality issues.

Public Forum - Anglers Notice submissions 2020/2022

The Chairman welcomed the public members present and reminded those around the table that we were here to listen to the public submitters tonight and ask questions for clarification. He asked Councillors to not engage in any debate with submitters, and at all times treat them with respect.

To the submitters he thanked them for attending tonight and assured them Council were here to listen.

All submissions received had been circulated and read by Councillors prior to the meeting.

Alan Leitch – Wyndham Angling Club:

Mr Leitch said the Wyndham Angling Club were concerned at the lack of science behind the proposed changes. Fish & Game were a science-based organisation, but the Club did not see any science to justify the proposed changes. The Wyndham Angling Club would like to return to the old days of the rapport they held with Fish & Game, where they fought with Fish & Game on the Maitua Conservation Order, and Around the Mountain Cycle Trail. They were sorry to see that rapport diminishing.

Lloyd Smith – NZPFGA:

Mr Smith introduced himself to the meeting.

He said the NZPFGA were against all methods of fishing permitted in all Southland waterbodies.

He said the Eglinton should stay fly only as it did not have the fish numbers to open to all fishing methods and was the only fly-fishing only water. Other waterways that had spin & fly and a one bag limit, if open to bait and a 2-bag limit, it would degrade those waterways as more fish would be taken out of the system with less catch and release occurring.

As far as the Windon Burn change of opening to 1st November, that did not make sense & would only cause more confusion in respect to the regulations, as it was a tributary of the Mararoa which opened on the 1st October. The Mararoa should be changed at the same time if that was to be the case.

The NZPFGA were against a booking system in the Worsley & Clinton. If that was to occur, they saw it as open to abuse by the general public, we have all heard of anglers getting other licence holders they know to book days in advance to rest waters before their own booking. Fishing those rivers was very weather dependent, with only boat access, they were remote, therefore they didn't get as much pressure requiring a booking system. They would prefer to see a beat system operating, similar to the current Upper Oreti, with restrictions on the number of angler days.

Cr Hartstonge noted that the Mararoa change of opening was probably overlooked this year but if both opening dates were the same it would save some confusion for anglers.

Cr Harris queried that with a beat system, what did the NZPFGA suggest in controlling the non-resident anglers? The Manager added did he think that anglers dropped off at the Worsley Hutt for seven days would abide by the beat system rules. Mr Smith replied that restrictions on the number of angler days was the suggestion, and that most anglers abide by the rules, not all, but most do if they understand those rules.

The Manager said that at present a booking or ballot system was the preferred way to manage overseas anglers who wanted to fish the rivers for a week or more. If only allowed two days at a time it would be self-regulated to a degree. The Council concern also was that the interest in fishing those rivers may not have plateaued and interest by overseas anglers could increase more.

Lloyd Smith said that the success of a booking system really depended on how the booking system would work and how many angler days and booking in advance days it entailed.

With a booking system, whoever dropped them off, (water taxis etc) it was hoped would also have a responsibility of who was in there and how long.

Lloyd Smith on behalf of Dean Bell:

Mr Bell was passionate about the Fiordland rivers and had a lot of experience there. He was totally opposed to any booking or ballot system on the Worsley & Clinton and believed the better alternative was to restrict usage in both time and amount of fishable water. If a time restriction and beat system was implemented on both rivers the desired results would be achieved. He saw a booking/ballot system as the very last resort for wilderness fisheries management.

He would be happy to provide F&G with further information to help with a workable solution and asked the Council to take his submission into serious consideration.

Mr Bell was also opposed to the one bag limit areas being open to bait fishing and 2 x bag limits.

He was also opposed to the Eglinton being open to spin & bait fishing.

Len Prentice:

Mr Prentice referred to the Upper Maitai which he was very familiar with. He was an Honorary Ranger in the area as well. He had accompanied staff during a recent drift dive of the river and referred to the stretch from Hume's Road bridge downstream and the numbers of big fish seen this year in that stretch, which was less than last year's count. He reported that one particular angler he knew of had been fishing there for 25 years and had boasted about taking 37 fish from one pool of that stretch with a worm. He would like to see a change from the Black Bridge upstream to a drop in bag limit to two fish only and have no bait fishing there.

Cr Stenning noted that with other good methods of fishing now, besides a worm, would changing the rules fix the problem?. Mr Prentice said that with fish numbers seen now, it was time to change the rules there.

The meeting then went “In Committee” and all members of the public left the meeting. (7.00pm)

Time 7.02pm

Resolved (Dave Harris/Paul Stenning)

To move into a Public Excluded session of the meeting and that staff remain.

Section 48, Local Government Official Information and Meetings Act 1987.

That the public be excluded from the following parts of the proceedings of this meeting, to discuss:

a. NZ Council Comms Strategy

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

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	WHEN REPORT CAN BE RELEASED
a	Protect information which is subject to an obligation of confidence ... where the making available of the information would be likely to prejudice the supply of similar information, or information from the same source, and it is in the public interest that such information should continue to be supplied	Sec 9(2)(be)(i)	Disclosing the information would jeopardise the relationship with the supplier because the supplier may no longer trust the Council to hold its information in confidence.	Not unless there is a public interest in disclosure of the specific information.

Note

Section 48(4) of the Local Government Official Information and Meetings Act 1987 provides as follows:

“(4) Every resolution to exclude the public shall be put at a time when the meeting is open to the public, and the text of that resolution (or copies thereof):

- (a) Shall be available to any member of the public who is present; and
- (b) Shall form part of the minutes of the Council.”

Time 7.25pm Resolved: (Michael Hartstonge/Paul Stenning)

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

General Business:

Alan Strong Presentation to Chairs:

The Council were comfortable that their concerns on that presentation had been addressed by the letter from the South Island Chairs to NZC after the Chairman's Forum and did not require further discussion.

Response to NZC letter from Wellington Fish & Game Council.

The Southland Council asked to be circulated the response from NZC to the Wellington Fish & Game Council re their concerns as advised by their letter to NZC, & the response from Wellington F&G to that response, as Councillors had not seen the response. That would be circulated to Council for their information.

Southland Council re-appointments.

At the last meeting Council identified they wished to consider re-appointing Council positions on an annual basis.

The Chairman (Cr Watson) had checked with other Chairs and it seemed it was quite common practise in other regions.

The rationale for having appointments on an annual basis was that with shorter terms it would encourage more nominees for the positions.

Views around the table were generally in agreement with a shorter term & some comments made were as follows:

- Good idea as people may be more prepared to commit if on an annual basis.
- With new term Councillors it gave them a lead in time to learn the process and system and then have the confidence to carry out those positions after a year of learning. If they stayed three-year terms those Councillors could be gone at the next election and not have a chance to contribute to the positions.
- In respect to NZC rep a year may not be long enough to learn the role & understand fully the issues.
- As far as the NZC goes the standing rep should be asked if they wish to continue for the whole three-year term, and if not, then open it up to an annual basis.
- It was very important to keep the Council fully informed, in those positions all the time.
- Most committees have annual re-appointments.

After discussion:

Resolved Stenning /Horrell that Council adopt to re-appoint the positions of Chairman, Vice Chairman, Executive Committee and NZ Council rep on an annual basis. Carried.

At the last meeting it was resolved that if a resolution was carried for the adoption of annual re-appointments the Council would appoint the new positions at the same meeting. Nominees were then called for the positions.

Chairman -Stenning/Harris nominated Graeme Watson

There were no further nominations and Graeme Watson was declared Chairman.

Vice Chairman: - Hartstonge/McNaughton nominated Lindsay Withington

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

Executive Committee: Stenning /Harris nominated Chris Owen & Mike Hartstonge.

The Chairman, Graeme Watson was an automatic member.

There were no further nominations and Chris Owen, Mike Hartstonge & Graeme Watson were declared the Executive Committee.

NZ Council representative:

Carston/McNaughton nominated Chris Owen.

Hartstonge/Horrell nominated Dave Harris.

With two nominations for NZC Rep. it was agreed to conduct a secret ballot and Councillors were asked to write their vote on a piece of paper to be counted by the Secretary. The Secretary rang Cr Norman (who was attending the meeting via Zoom) for his vote.

After the votes were counted Dave Harris was declared the NZC rep. for the next 12 months. (Dave Harris 7, Chris Owen 2).

The Council passed on a vote of thanks to Cr Owen for his dedication to the NZC position and the amount of time he had put into it. Council could not dispute his commitment to the role and thanked him for his work.

Boardroom - large screen TV.

It was suggested that for any Councillors that could not attend a meeting physically, for whatever reason, but were able to participate digitally (e.g via zoom or skype etc) rather than using the data projector, a large screen TV (75") for the Boardroom wall, providing a better resolution & a better system to attend, be purchased. A TV had built in speakers which would enable better sound and would provide a better image. The Council were all in agreement that the manager talk to the Executive Committee & discuss purchase of a TV for the boardroom wall.

Transition to non-plastic wads:

Cr Stenning said that the transition to non-plastic wads was a national issue and required NZC to lead it. The Government in its December 2019 report have said they would phase out single-use plastics in favour of recyclable materials in 2021 and F&G would be leaving themselves out on a limb by ignoring the issue of plastic wads. The government would be looking for businesses and organisations to use plastics more sustainably or shift away from plastic altogether.

Cr Stenning suggested that Southland resolve to give NZC our reasoning and asking them to give the matter importance. He would like our NZC rep to make it a reporting subject back to Southland Council each meeting on the progress NZC were making on the matter.

There were other options available, e.g. fully dissolvable wads. There were no performance issues with dissolvable wads. Retailers were onside, he had spoken to Hunting and Fishing who were going to target the matter. There were already several ammo manufacturers making dissolvable wads, which were a cheap component of a shotgun shell, so increased cost should not be an issue. The technology was available and only needed the will of the organisation to lead it. There was a risk of highlighting this issue to the Minister, but there was a greater risk if we were enforced to do something in an unreasonable time frame. By being proactive and advising the Minister with a policy and time frame to transition to biodegradable wads would have a better outcome for F&G than the Government bringing it in cold.

Other Councillors knew of a local manufacturer who was well aware of the issue and it would be good to get them on board. Also, that a national distributor had discussed the issue as well.

As far as Clubs were concerned Cr Norman suggested that most Clubs were more socially minded now, and particularly younger members would accept that change.

The Manager said there was going to be an article in the next magazine about it. He noted that Hunting and Fishing had suggested that the North American manufacturers were not interested in the issue, but that the European manufacturers were. NZ was a small country and the large North American manufacturers wouldn't want to change for our relatively small distribution.

Resolved Stenning /McNaughton that Southland Council write to NZ Council to formulate a Plan & develop a timeframe for Fish and Game to transition to biodegradable wads. Carried.

Whitebait - Proposed management changes submission.

Cr McNaughton referred to the discussion document from DOC that detailed proposed management changes for whitebait in NZ. Submissions on the document closed on the 2nd March 2020.

As many Whitebaiters were also licensed anglers he wondered if Fish & Game would like to be involved in the submission process.

The Manager said that we had given support to DOC with whitebait compliance in the past. Some anglers had suggested that F&G get involved and make a submission, as it would influence some of our licence holders who trout fished while whitebaiting. If the rules proposed came in it would make whitebaiting in Southland quite difficult with some rivers spelled from whitebaiting, which would have an impact on the use of our lower reach rivers. With that in mind Fish & Game could legitimately make a submission around aspects of it, that could affect the experiences of our anglers.

Council were in two minds on whether to make a submission or not with the general consensus being that it was a short time frame to make submissions and Council did not have enough knowledge on the issues and that being the case they were happy to leave it to staff to see if they could make a submission, and if so to do so. If Councillors wanted to make their own private submissions, they should do so. Staff would look into it further.

Waituna Camera:

Cr Carston reported there was currently a camera on a hut at Waituna showing the breakout. However, the picture quality was quite poor. Using the Council's Waituna money held in reserves did Council think it would be worthwhile to upgrade the breakout camera and place another camera at Moffat Road where the boats were launched. Also using that money to tidy up the carpark and clean out the overgrown and heavily silted area where the boats were launched, as vehicles were currently getting bogged down trying to launch. A small culvert also needed to be replaced. It was timely now while the breakout was open to do any work.

The Manager asked if a consent was required last time the clean-up was done there.

Cr McNaughton said that they presumed DOC had issued a permit and ES paid for a digger to do the work. It was unknown if a consent was needed for the work or not.

The Manager said in the first instance he would talk to Cr Owen to get a better background on the last work done there. He would also encourage ES to make a contribution for the clean-up. If needed money from the Angler's Access fund could be used as the Waituna reserve was for habitat enhancement.

The Manager would look into the clean out further.

In relation to upgrading the breakout camera Council thought generally it was a good idea as we were trying to promote access and the use of resources. A link on our face book page would be a great opportunity for anglers to view this access area. Other accesses could be considered as well.

Resolved Stenning/ MacGregor that Council approve the purchase of a new camera showing the breakout at Waituna Lagoon with funding from the Angler Access reparation fund. Carried with Cr McNaughton & Cr Carston abstaining from voting, due to a conflict of Interest.

Staff would liaise with Cr McNaughton on which camera option to buy.

Monowai Jetty:

The Manager reported he had met this morning with Gary Tong and George Harpur, SDC, who were both encouraged about the establishment of the Monowai Jetty. They had made further enquiries about funding and were quite optimistic about getting funding. Fish & Game would advance the R/C application on the basis that funding was likely.

The Community Trust had indicated they would probably fund 25% of the building costs. A builder had agreed to supervise construction with volunteers. Borland Lodge would provide accommodation for the build. Construction was hoped to start next summer. Fish & Game had \$17,000 budgeted towards costs and would use that to contribute towards materials once consent was received.

Budget 2020/2021 addition.

An addition to the Budget circulated was a new project for next summer for a student, who would require accommodation, to gather information on the Waikaia catchment with a view to establishing how pressure sensitive the Waikaia River was. The work would include identifying the pressure from non-residents and guides as there had been a lot of negative comment this year from that catchment. The work would also include work on other fisheries such as the Waimea and Mataura. Staff would like to develop further differentiation of our fisheries, so access controls were not just booking /balloting, by creating a tier where non-residents only had a certain number of days to fish and a special licence would have to be purchased for it. This work would be good information for differentiating fisheries in the future. Councillors agreed that the work was a good idea and approved the addition.

Items for the next agenda.

- Other access areas for cameras.

There were no other items of business and the meeting closed at 8.37pm

Chairman _____ Date _____