

Minutes of the Fish & Game NZ, Southland Region Council meeting held at the Council Office, 17 Eye Street, Invercargill on Thursday 10th June 2021.

Present: Lindsay Withington (Chair) Cory Carston
Dave Harris David MacGregor
Mike Hartstonge Lyndon Norman
Bevan McNaughton Paul Stenning
Richard Crean

In attendance: Zane Moss (Manager) **Members of the public.**
C Mason (Minutes). Len Prentice
David Linklater.

The Country was currently at Alert level 1 of the COVID-19 pandemic restrictions.

Welcome

The Chairman opened the meeting at 6.00pm & welcomed those present.
The Chairman showed where the exits were should an emergency occur and the assembly point, being the car park.

1 Apologies:
Resolved Stenning/Hartstonge that apologies be received and accepted from Ken Cochrane, Chris Owen, Craig Horrell and Stevie Rae Blair. Carried.

The Manager reported that with Cyril Gilroy unable to attend meetings because of ill health, Stevie Rae Blair would replace him as the Te Runanga o Ngai Tahu representative on the Council. Unfortunately, she was unable to make the meeting tonight.

2 Declarations of Interest:

The individual member declaration of conflicts of interest with any item on the agenda had been circulated to members before the start of the meeting.
Any conflicts were noted by the Chairman.

3 Confirmation of Minutes.

The minutes of the public meeting held 13th April 2021 were considered.
Resolved Harris/Crean that the minutes of the Public meeting held 13th April 2021 were a true and correct record. Carried.

4. Notices of Motion

- a) **Health & Safety Report to 31st May 2021.**
The Council health & safety report for the period 1st April to 31st May 2021 was attached to the agenda for consideration.
No incidents were reported.
All known hazards were listed in the Southland Health & Safety Plan.

Resolved MacGregor/Stenning that the Health & Safety Report to 31st May 2021, be received & accepted. Carried.

5. Council Information Reports:

Staff Report:

The staff report was attached to the agenda and taken as read.

Mallard Monitoring:

Mallard flight counts undertaken in March resulted in similar numbers to the 2019 aerial counts which were well above average. The 2020 count did not occur because of the Covid-19 lockdown.

Feral cat tracking project:

This work with DOC was continuing with more trapping to recapture collared cats scheduled for next week. 3 collared cats have been recaptured so far.

Wetland Development:

Wetland development continues. Macpherson's wetland, Waianiwa, was shown in the staff report. This wetland was created with the support of the Game Bird Habitat Trust funding. Work was completed in February 2021 with the completed wetland providing excellent habitat and will also improve water quality, as the catchment drains a very significant proportion of the farm.

Proposed Southland Water & Land Plan mediation:

To date mediation has progressed well. Staff (Jacob & Zane) have been doing the work independent of Legal Counsel and Planners which has saved a significant cost to the Council. A further week of mediation will be occurring next week in relation to Topic B and our Legal Counsel will attend that.

Game Opening weekend Ranging:

Four teams across Southland were used for opening weekend ranging, each team had a police officer attending. Staff were pleased with the results as compliance was very good compared to other years, with only 5 or 6 offences recorded.

Administration Reports

The accounts paid, direct credit/debit list and automatic payments since the last meeting, correspondence reports, licence sale progress to 27th May 2021, Budget to Actual progress to 31 May 2021, were attached to the agenda for Council's consideration.

Both fish and game licence sales were ahead of target.

6. NZ Council update

Cr Harris updated the Council on the two last NZC meetings:

NZC had met in April to consider the 2021/2022 budgets, contestable funding applications & licence fees and had approved the Manager's recommendations.

North Canterbury did not apply for any contestable funding.

The second meeting held was to discuss the Ministerial Review. Not all were happy with the recommendations in the review. NZC would hold a workshop to discuss the review further and it was hoped that the Region's feedback would be received by then for NZC to consider.

NZ Council Consultation Document: Change Freeze.

This document from NZ Council was asked to be ratified by the Regional F&G Councils to be adopted as national policy to be reviewed annually until the Ministerial review had been fully implemented.

With the review and the changes recommended the consultation process had been shorter than the normal policy setting process and timeline. Regional Councils were asked to give this matter some urgency.

Southland Council had received & considered the document prior to the meeting.

Around the table Councillors all agreed the Policy made sense.

Resolved Hartstonge /MacGregor that the Change Freeze Policy presented was ratified by the Southland Council to be adopted as National Policy. Carried.

2021/2022 Licence Fee recommendation.

NZ Council for consultation with regions, had recommended that the 21/22 sports fish licence fee be \$137 for an adult whole season licence and \$100 (inclusive of a \$4 fee for the Game Bird Habitat Stamp) for the game bird 2022 licence, inclusive of GST.

The NZ Council had discussed the differential pricing for non-resident licences and had agreed that the categories and ratios be maintained as in previous years.

Cr Harris noted that during the budget process for the next financial year NZC had been conservative and had worked on the assumption that there would be no non-resident sales and that regions would need to take from reserves any shortfalls in their budget.

The \$100 figure for the game bird licence was seen as a barrier by some and could be the tipping point. Particularly for some North Island regions on the back of poor game seasons.

Most would prefer the non-resident fish licence increased rather than the game licence.

While Councillors around the table were keen and passionate and thought the licence was good value, the reality was most of our game hunters were casual hunters and would be asking what they were getting for the extra cost. Unfortunately, the licence fee was what hunters begrudged paying most, because they did not know what their money was being used for. There needed to be more transparency on what the money was spent on. This had always been the challenge for Fish & Game. Casual hunters who knew the least about Fish and Game were the hardest to get the message across to in terms of communication.

Everyone agreed more effort into getting more hunters out there buying licences and going game bird hunting was needed. The Manager suggested that to build game hunter opportunities we should be encouraging other regions to recruit more as well. E.g. Canterbury and parts of Otago regions which had good opportunities available.

After discussions:

Resolved Harris/Crean that the Southland Council accepts the 2021/2022 licence fee as recommended by NZ Council. Carried.

CSI National Sea-Run Salmon Committee request:

CSI had recommended to NZC that the National Sea-Run Salmon Committee be disbanded, and management of the sea run salmon fishery be undertaken collaboratively by Regional Fish and Game Councils. NZC were now seeking regions feedback on that recommendation.

Council saw no problem with the Committee being disbanded and did not see any value in having a separate committee to run the management of salmon.

Resolved Norman/Hartstonge that the Southland Council accepted the recommendation of CSI to disband the National Sea Run Salmon Committee. Carried.

‘Saturday-ising’ the Opening of the Fishing Season

Eastern F&G had recently sent a letter to NZC on the concept of ‘Saturday-ising’ the opening of the fishing season to help create more of an event-based opening, to help increase participation by maximising opportunity. NZC were asking if Regional Councils saw merit in exploring the idea of a nationally standard fishing season opening on the 1st Saturday in October rather than the 1st of October.

Council considered this and there were mixed views from Council on this concept, with some quite conflicted. Comments were:

- For the average angler it would provide more opportunity to go fishing without having to take time off work and would create more atmosphere & enthusiasm towards the opening of the fishing season.
- It may cause more crowding on opening.
- Long history of 1st October opening, leave it as it is. Do we want to lose that tradition?
- Eastern fisheries were in lakes rather than rivers which gave more festival opportunities. Southland was more a spread-out river fishery as well as lake fisheries.
- It could mean a shortening of the fishing season in some locations with no real reason, which doesn’t help when licence fees have gone up.
- If we want to grow our sport this is what we need to do. We have to make it more attractive to people to participate in, for whatever reason. We should also be looking at opening more waters in September to give more opportunity. We need to change with the times and make the opportunities better.
- Opportunities were more weather dependent rather than date dependent, particularly in Southland.
- Retailers pushing for a Saturday opening as it increased their sales with more anglers going out. But it gave more chance of conflict on the riverbank with more people out.
- If it does increase licence sales isn’t that what we want?
- Depends how its marketed. Could be great for the first few years but enthusiasm may peter out.
- It would have little effect on non-resident sales.
- Would add costs to budgets to change e.g. signage, compliance etc.
- Good comms would be vital to make the change.
- Adds to the pressure on our pressure sensitive fisheries.

Members of the public present were asked for their views on the matter:

They saw it as tradition with no gain in changing it. They saw some areas e.g Upper Oreti being targeted leading to conflict. River fishing was not a party type sport it was far better for anglers to be well spread out.

After consideration:

Resolved Hartstonge /Norman that the Southland Council did not support exploring further the concept of Saturday-ising the opening of the fishing season. Carried with Cr Stenning against.

7. Fish & Game Ministerial Review Recommendations:

The Chair recommended that the discussion on the Ministerial Review which had been on the agenda under Public Excluded session, be the next item and brought into the public meeting.

Resolved Withington/Hartstonge that Council agrees to move the discussion on the Ministerial review recommendations to the public meeting as the next item of business.
Carried.

Cr Owen had emailed the Chair agreeing with all the 36 recommendations.

Council agreed that the Southland Council comments on the review recommendations should go via the NZ Council, with a request to add them to the NZC submission to the Minister and the review implementation panel. This would be better than the Minister receiving 13 different submissions. Council then went over each of the 36 recommendations with the following results.

Recommendations:

- 1) This is currently the case and Council agreed with the recommendation.
- 2) Council thought a Ministerial mandatory power of direction was a step too far in terms of process. Council suggested that the Minister could request an amendment and send the draft Management Plan back to the region, which would then still go through a public consultation process, which was more transparent.
Council believed they were working for anglers & hunters & should not be directed by the Minister.
- 3) Council did not agree that the NZFGC Chair should be a Ministerial appointed position. Council agreed that the NZFGC Chair should be an elected position by the NZC Councillors themselves from their members, which still allowed any Ministerial appointee to be included as a candidate. Some thought the Chairs role was a demanding role with many responsibilities and was one role where a paid professional person with all the experience required could have a good influence on all Councils. But others thought that this role was the most powerful position on the NZ Council, who had control of the meetings. If they were a Ministerial appointee, they could influence things the Ministers way. The Chairman was the only contact between the Minister and the NZC. The Chair needed to be independent.
- 4) Council agreed that the Chair of NZFGC should be a paid position but paid by Fish & Game not the Minister.
- 5) Council agreed that the size of the NZFGC could be reduced. But it was important that there was an elected regional rep from each region plus the Ministerial appointees. (10) members.
- 6) Council did not want a 50/50 split on the Council of elected and appointed members. The Council agreed that a 60/40 split of members, with the majority (60%) being elected gave licence holders democracy but still allowed appointees (40%) diversity and skill sets.
- 7) Council agreed that all appointees and elected members should be paid, or no one gets paid.
- 8) Regional Councils had the experience of working with the members who they appointed to NZC. How can national interest be discussed if you do not have a regional interest also?
If it was a general licence holder election voted on how well known you were and your popularity, there was a risk of someone getting on for the wrong reasons. (e.g. Trump). There were some positives as it would give licence holders more knowledge & understanding of the NZC, currently lacking.
Most concerning to the Council was that elected members to the NZC could all come from the same place. There would be no regional representation and no link back to the Regional Councils, causing a disconnect in the organization. Council suggested that NZC reps should be elected from each Region or Ward and the elected NZC member should attend regional meetings as observers to be a conduit between the NZC & the Regional Council.

9) Council agreed we needed to retain the regional structure and supported some regional amalgamations for efficiencies. However, Council did not agree with all those amalgamations suggested & believed we needed to consider the amalgamations further to give a better balance so there was less disparity between the larger regions and the rest of the organization. The 6 region amalgamations meant that 2 of the new regions had 60% of NZ Fish & Game's income.

Amalgamations needed to include the resource allocation project issues that had not been part of the review and had not been addressed. It may include some realignment of boundaries as well.

Southland suggested the following for amalgamation to 8 regions instead of six for a better balance.

Southland

Otago

CSI

North Canterbury

Nelson Marlborough/ West Coast

Wellington, Hawkes Bay, & Taranaki.

Eastern

AW & Northland.

10) Council suggested that each Regional Fish & Game Council should have 6 members elected, 2 members appointed, and 1 Iwi rep and the Chair to be appointed by the sitting Council members.

6 elected members retains democracy for anglers & hunters.

Any ward base system needed to be on a pro rata basis so stronger regions did not dominate.

A NZ Councillor should be required to attend each regional meeting as an observer and a conduit between the Councils.

11) Council agreed with that recommendation. Rotation healthy brings in fresh ideas.

12) Council agreed with the recommendation, but with criteria.

13) Council agreed with the recommendation.

14) Council agreed with the recommendation.

15) Council agreed with this with the regional proviso to represent NZFGC.

16) Council agreed with this recommendation. Should have been doing it anyway.

17) Council agreed with this recommendation subject to consultation with the regions. Not just dictated.

18) Council agreed with this recommendation.

19) Council agreed with this recommendation but pointed out that any Audits needed to be constructive and proactive in their comments.

20) Council agreed with this recommendation

21) Council agreed with this recommendation

22) Council agreed with this recommendation.

23) Council agreed with this recommendation.

24) Council believed that the Iwi representative appointee for Councils should be from nominations directly from Iwi only. DOC should not be involved.

25) Council agreed with this recommendation.

26) Council agreed with this recommendation.

27) Council agreed with this recommendation but would like to see the purpose of the Hui defined and the outcomes sought from the engagement.

28) Council agreed with this recommendation.

29) Council agreed with this recommendation but believed that day licences should not be included in voting. Needs to be decided after consultation with regions.

30) Council agreed with this recommendation with strict conditions. E.g. any breaches of Code of Conduct.

31) Council agreed with this recommendation.

32) Council agreed with this recommendation.

33) Council agreed with this recommendation.

34) Council agreed with this recommendation.

35) Council agreed with this recommendation.

36) Council agreed with this recommendation.

Time 8.25pm Resolved:(Hartstonge/Harris)

To move into Public Excluded meeting.

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:

- a) **Confirm Public Excluded minutes of the meeting held 13th April 2021.**
- b) **Executive Committee update.**
- c) **Pressure Sensitive Fisheries interim research results.**

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
A) Public Excluded Minutes	Good reason to withhold exists under section 9(2)(I) of	Section 48(1)(a)(ii)

- the Official Information Act 1982
- B) Executive Committee update. Good reason to withhold Section 48(1)(a)(ii) exists under section 9(2)(a) of the Official Information Act 1982
- c) Pressure Sensitive Fisheries interim research results. Good reason to withhold Section 48(1)(d) exists under section 9(2)(d) of the Official Information Act 1982

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
A) Confirmation of Public Excluded Minutes	Section 9(2)(i) OIA The withholding of information is necessary to enable a Minister of the Crown or any department or organisation holding the information to carry out, without prejudice or disadvantage commercial activities.	Sec 9(2)(i)	Section 48(1)(a)(ii) That the public conduct of the whole or the relevant part of the proceedings of the meeting would be likely to result in the disclosure of information for which good reason for withholding would exist.
B) Executive Committee Update	Section 9 (2) a Protect the Privacy of natural persons.	Section 9(2)(a)	Information provided identifies a particular person or can easily be connected with a particular person.
C) Pressure Sensitive Fisheries interim research results.	Section 9(2)(i) OIA The withholding of information is necessary to enable a Minister of the Crown or any department or organisation holding the information to carry out, without prejudice or	Sec 9(2)(i)	Section 48(1)(a)(ii) That the public conduct of the whole or the relevant part of the proceedings of the meeting would be likely to result in the disclosure of information for which good reason for withholding would exist.

Note Section 48(4) of the Local Government Official Information & 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 8.450pm Resolved Stenning/McNaughton

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

8. General Business

Fish and Game Magazine:

Cr Carston declared his conflict of interest in respect to the Fish and Game Magazine, as he wrote articles for the magazine occasionally. This was noted on the Conflict-of-Interest Register.

He said the magazine was good value at present, but in recent discussions with the Editor he reported that NZ Fish & Game apparently wanted to have more control over the magazine & the articles. There were proposals for the magazine to be changed and he wanted the Council to be aware of that.

Absence of Staff at meetings.

Cr Carston commented on the fact that Staff no longer attended Council meetings. He was disappointed with that as Council enjoyed the interaction with Staff and the knowledge they provided to the Council added value to the meetings. He did not know if they had been directed not to come, or if they just did not want to attend.

The Manager replied that he had professional staff that he did not want to be exposed to some of the behaviours of some Councillors in the past, as it was disheartening for them, and he was not going to ask them to attend. He discussed all items with Staff before the Council meetings, so their views were considered. Staff attendance would be reconsidered after the next election.

Iwi Representative on Council.

The Manager gave a brief background of Stevie Rae Blair the new Iwi rep on Council. She was from a strong hunting & fishing family background and knew F&G issues well. Staff already worked with Stevie through Te Ao Marama on resource management & other matters.

Nationally we were looking at how Fish and Game could build better relations with Iwi. The NPS for Freshwater prioritised Te Mana o te Wai, and much of our values are shared with Iwi.

Hunting Guides Licence:

Cr Harris reported that from the NZC meeting it was agreed that NZ Fish and Game once the fishing guides licence was actioned, we should follow it up with the game hunting guides licence.

New CE

Cr Harris reported that the new CE selected had signed the contract but then withdrew. NZC would go back to the market in 6 months' time and may look at an interim CE in the meantime.

Next meeting Agenda items.

- Sanctuary - east end of Waituna.

There was no further business, and the meeting was closed at 9.05pm

Chairman _____ Date _____

