

AUCKLAND/WAIKATO FISH & GAME

Minutes of a Meeting of Council
held on Zoom
on Saturday 13th November 2021 commencing at 10:00am.

PRESENT:

Chairman: N. Juby

Councillors: E. Williamson, D. Cocks, P. Shaw, C. Sherrard, G. Annan, G. Ralph, D. du Preez,
G. Dickey, M. Barker, T. Clark, B. Barnes

Staff: B. Wilson, J. Dyer, D. Klee, A. Daniel, C. Robertson, M. Davis

1. APOLOGIES:

There were no apologies.

2. POSSIBLE CONFLICTS OF INTEREST ARISING FROM MEETING AGENDA:

None declared.

3. APPOINTMENT OF CHAIRMAN:

Mr Wilson assumed the Chair and called for nominations for the position of Chairman.

Councillor Annan was nominated by Councillor Sherrard and seconded by Councillor Shaw.

Councillor Juby was nominated by Councillor Barnes and seconded by Councillor du Preez.

A secret ballot was held, and Mr Wilson declared Councillor Juby as Chairman and vacated the Chair.

4. GENERAL EXPLANATION OF VARIOUS LAWS AFFECTING COUNCILLORS /COUNCIL:

In accordance with Standing Orders Mr Wilson briefed the Councillors on the relevant sections of:

- Local Authorities (Members' Interests) Act 1968 – regarding the corrupt use of official information and bribery of officials.

- Local Government Official Information and Meetings Act 1987 – regarding the access of the public to official information.
- Secret Commission Act 1910 – Councillors acting for the Council cannot take secret commissions.

5. APPOINTMENT OF THE TWO VICE CHAIRMAN:

The Chairman called for nominations for the two Vice Chairmen.

Councillor Cocks was nominated by Councillor Williamson and seconded by Councillor Sherrard.

Councillor Annan was nominated by Councillor Shaw and seconded by Councillor Sherrard.

The Chairman asked if there were any further nominations, there being none Councillors Cocks and Annan were declared Vice Chairmen.

6. APPOINTMENT OF COUNCIL'S NOMINEE FOR NZF&G COUNCIL:

The Chairman called for nominations for the position of Auckland/Waikato representative on the NZF&GC.

Councillor Williamson was nominated by Councillor Cocks and seconded by Councillor Sherrard.

Councillor Barnes was nominated by Councillor Ralph and seconded by Councillor Annan.

Both candidates gave a brief synopsis of their aspirations for the role.

A secret ballot was held, and Councillor Barnes was declared Auckland/Waikato's representative to the NZF&GC.

7. APPOINTMENT OF TRUSTEE ON LAND & WATER HABITAT TRUST:

Councillor Sherrard was nominated by Councillor Annan and seconded by Councillor Shaw.

Councillor Williams was nominated by Councillor Cocks and seconded by Councillor Sherrard.

Both candidates gave a brief synopsis of their aspirations for the role.

A secret ballot was held, and Councillors Sherrard was declared a trustee on the Land & Water Habitat Trust.

8. MINUTES OF PREVIOUS MEETING OF 14th August 2021:

Nigel Juby noted that he had left the meeting only briefly and had returned for the discussion on the NZ Council.

It was moved;

that the minutes of the previous meeting of 16th October 2021 as amended be accepted as true and correct records.

Annan/Cocks – CARRIED

9. MATTERS ARISING FROM PREVIOUS MINUTES:

Nil

10. COUNCIL CORRESPONDENCE:

The following letters were tabled:

- Letter from the Auckland/Waikato Chairman to the Regional Chairs regarding the Structure Review Project.
- Letter in reply from Ray Grubb, Chair of the Implementation Committee for the Structure Review Project.

Considerable discussion ensued with Councillors expressing concerns that they were being asked to make decisions without adequate understanding of the operational and financial implications of the proposed changes, including the liabilities of the Northland Council. Concern was also expressed at the lack of consultation with licence holders.

The Chairman considered it crucial that Council retained control over those waters where Auckland/Waikato licence holders hunted and fished. For example, the majority of anglers fishing the Whakapapa River came from the northern urban centres. Furthermore, Council had been successful in obtaining external funding to manage these fisheries and these income resources could be jeopardized by any boundary changes.

Councillor Williamson emphasised that Northland licence holders would effectively be disenfranchised as they would represent less than 20% of total licence holders in any amalgamation of Northland and Auckland/Waikato regions.

Councillor Cocks agreed and noted that there was no guarantee that the high level of financial support received by Northland from the NZ Council would continue.

The Chairman asked Councillors whether he should meet with the Northland Chair later in the month.

It was moved;

That Council supports the Chairman meeting with the Chair of the Northland Fish & Game Council.

Sherrard/Cocks – CARRIED

Councillor Ralph express his view that the relationship of Council with licence holders could always be improved, and he recommended the report “A Sense of Belonging” prepared by the previous Chief Executive, Doug Emmett, on this issue.

It was moved;

That Mr Wilson is asked to prepare a report on the financial and operational implications of potential amalgamations and boundary changes for the February meeting of Council.

Barnes/Cocks – CARRIED

11. CHIEF EXECUTIVE’S BI-MONTHLY REPORT AND FINANCIAL STATEMENTS:

Mr Wilson gave a brief update on Council’s application for comprehensive maintenance consents for its wetlands. He noted that the process had been delayed due to the NES – Freshwater and that Council lacked a good understanding of the values of the vegetation and habitats of the wetlands. He recommended that they contract an ecologist to carry out such a survey.

Councillor Cocks noted that a vegetation survey had been carried out for the consent application for the Cocks and Williamson Wetlands.

It was moved;

That a wetland ecologist be employed on a temporary contract to survey Council’s properties.

Williamson/Barker – CARRIED

Funding for this project to come from restricted reserves.

Councillor Barnes asked if staff could reconsider trout stocking the north Auckland lakes, especially Lake Ototoa.

Dr Daniel replied that there were issues with stocking Ototoa including:

- Access to the lake for the Eastern fish tanker was poor.
- Perch were still present in large numbers.
- The Auckland City Council was about to commence an extensive netting programme in the lake to reduce the fish population.

Mr Wilson noted that Ototoa had been stocked for some years with 2yr rainbow trout after perch had become established, but angler usage remained low.

It was agreed that Council should budget for an additional 1,000 2yr rainbow trout in 2022/23. The actual locations for the release of these fish to be determined at a later date. Dr Daniel to liaise with Councillor Barnes regarding obtaining external funding for this project.

The Chairman expressed his appreciation for the efforts of Mr Klee in obtaining just over \$140,000 from the Game Bird habitat Trust for wetland restoration projects.

In a reply to a question Mr Klee gave feedback on the WRC proposed annual work programme for the Piako and 3 zones. The WRC report indicated that only small portions of the Waipa system lend themselves to the type of interventions currently being done. He remains concerned about the potential effects of drainage activities on lakes and wetlands and has requested further information on how the WRC are measuring drain invert levels which is a requirement under these consents. In general, it is difficult to determine whether these consents are being appropriately implemented.

Councillor Williamson expressed his concern that the current management regime for Lake Waikare of keeping levels high and thus reducing flows downstream to the Whangamarino Wetland may be reducing sediment outflows, but it was also locking more nitrogen in the lake.

Mr Klee agreed that the lake was being held at or near its maximum permitted level to reduce outflows. But that multiple studies had shown that the impact of inflows from the Te Onetea Stream on water quality in the lake was minimal. He also noted that for much of the summer, the Waikato River was running lower than Waikare and thus it was only during flood events that river water could flow into Waikare via the Te Onetea Stream.

Councillor Clark requested an update on the Waikato District Council's consent to discharge treated wastewater from Te Kauwhata to Lake Waikere. Mr Klee replied that the district council had not been compliant for some years, and he was disappointed at the lack of enforcement action by the Waikato Regional Council on this issue. He noted that both himself and Councillor Williamson were on the advisory committee for the Te Kauwhata WWTP consents.

Mr Wilson introduced his financial report emphasizing that fish licence sales continued to be down some 28% due to the Auckland and Waikato lockdowns. He also informed that the Auditor had recently expressed his opinion that a donation from the WWW Foundation should be transferred from the LWHT to a restricted reserve held by Council. It was moved;

That the Chief Executive's bimonthly report be accepted.

Barnes/Cocks – CARRIED

12. GAMEBIRD MANAGEMENT:

The Chairman thanked Mr Klee for his comprehensive report.

Councillor Barnes shared his observations on the killing of ducklings on Lake Pupuke by black beaked gulls.

Mr Klee invited Councillors to contact him if they had questions or required more details on the report. Discussion ensued about the potential of sexed based limits. Mr Klee agreed that given the sex imbalance in our juvenile population favouring drakes and lower survival rates of hens, it is entirely sensible to try and move harvest pressure to focus more on drakes. Currently harvest rates for both sexes are similar so there does not appear to be any harvest selectivity occurring.

Councillors discussed the need to consider changes to the regulations for the 2022 game season regarding season length and bag limits in response to the current low duck population. Options to consider should include different limits for drakes and hens. Mr Klee noted that drakes outnumbered hens 56% to 44% for juveniles and given their lower survival rates, this imbalance grows as a cohort ages. However, efforts in the Eastern region to have different limits for hens and drakes had reported enforcement issues due to grey/mallard hybridisation. Hunters also had problems distinguishing between mallard hens and grey ducks and mallards in eclipse plumage.

Mr. Klee reiterated that the harvest dynamics that exist in this region means that reducing the number of ducks shot would mean very restrictive regulations which would likely have negative consequences on hunter satisfaction and potentially participation. Therefore, changing harvest regulations need to consider both biological and social factors.

Councillor Dicky agreed that hunter buy-in was essential and that a publicity campaign would be required. However, it was noted that previous publicity on “go for green” had not been successful.

It was moved;

That staff prepare a report giving the options for potential changes to the season length and limits for 2022 season.

Williamson/Cocks – CARRIED

It was agreed that a special meeting of Council would be held by Zoom in December to consider the report.

Councillor Barker cautioned that regulation changes alone would not significantly boost the duck population, and that the Council should also look at ways of increasing duckling

survival. Mr Klee agreed that duckling survival is the most influential variable governing population growth or decline, and that decreasing harvest may not necessarily increase the subsequent seasons population depending on other factors such as breeding success. He noted that hen survival is the second most important variable and that we do currently harvest a relatively high proportion of juvenile hens. It was agreed that staff be asked to prepare a report on boosting the regions duck population. Mr. Wilson emphasised that this report for the available until mid-2022 due to staff commitment

13. LEGALITY OF COMMERCIAL UPLAND GAMEBIRD PRESERVES:

Ms. Davis report was tabled. The Chairman thanked Ms. Davies for her report which clearly shows the actions of the Minister of Conservation on this issue were within her responsibilities.

14. 2022 MEETING SCHEDULE:

Councilors considered the recommendations of Carmel Veitch (CFO-NZC) regarding the proposed NZ Council meetings and had no disagreements with the proposed dates.

Councilors then discussed the proposed 2022 meeting schedule for the Auckland Waikato Council.

It was moved;

that the meeting schedule for 2022 be approved with the addition of a field trip in conjunction with the February meeting.

Annan/Shaw – CARRIED

Mr. Wilson recommended that the field trip visit the Lake Waikare/Whangamarino system including Council's weir on the Whangamarino River given that this was an area where much of Council's efforts and expenditure was occurring.

Councillor Sherrard suggested that the Huntly Gun Club would be a suitable venue for the February meeting.

15. OSH UPDATE:

It was moved;

that the OSH Report for November 2021 be accepted.

Cocks/Dickey – CARRIED

16. GENERAL BUSINESS:

Councillor Cocks recommended that Council considers establishing a policy regarding COVID vaccination for volunteers working on Council's wetlands. He emphasized that many of the volunteers were in the highly vulnerable age group.

Mr. Wilson agreed to write to pondholders with the strong recommendation that they:

- use the QR codes, which will be placed at the entrance to each wetland.
- are fully vaccinated.
- or take appropriate measures such as social distancing.

It was moved;

That COVID-19 Guidelines be prepared for Council's properties.

Cocks/Annan – CARRIED

Councillor Dickey recommended that the Auckland/Waikato Councillors consider having their own Facebook page to increase engagement with licence holders.

Mr. Wilson agreed that Fish & Game's social media presence was very poor and noted that the website was currently being replaced and updated by the NZ Council.

Mr. Klee informed that an Auckland/Waikato page had recently been established by Ms. Simmonds.

It was moved;

That Mr Dickey be asked to liaise with Ms. Simmonds in regard to the Auckland/Waikato Facebook page.

Cocks/Barnes – CARRIED

Councillor Ralph informed that he has surplus pheasant eggs (or one-day chicks) that were available for local breeders. Mr Dyer replied that he knew of someone who could be interested.

There being no further business the meeting concluded at 1:28am.