

## AUCKLAND/WAIKATO FISH & GAME

**Minutes of a Special Meeting of Council**  
**held on Zoom**  
**on Thursday 16<sup>th</sup> December 2021 commencing at 7p.m.**

**PRESENT:**

**Chairman:** N. Juby

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

**Staff:** B. Wilson, J. Dyer, D. Klee

**1. APOLOGIES:**

Nil

**2. REGIONAL STRUCTURE REVIEW:**

Councillors discussed the Progress Report produced by the Structure Review Project Team. Mr Wilson advised that the Project Team was seeking feedback on the suggested options for regional structure and on the criteria that should be used to assess these options.

Councillors did not support the proposed boundary changes to the Auckland/Waikato region as it was considered that the existing boundaries reflected the communities of interest and engagement. For example, it was noted that the great majority of licence holders who fished the Whanganui headwaters were from Hamilton and Auckland.

The option of amalgamating with the Eastern Region was discussed given that many Auckland anglers fish the Rotorua lakes.

Amalgamating with Northland Region was considered but Councillors were concerned over the financial implications especially with zero-based budgets likely. Concern was expressed that the level of serving currently received in Northland was not sustainable without substantial external funding.

The Chairman advised that he would soon be meeting with the Chair of the Northland Region and he had also made a similar offer to meet with the Chair of Eastern. He recommended that Council should consider a joint submission with Eastern Region that there should be no boundary changes without the mutual consent of the regions concerned.

It was moved that;

- **Boundaries should be determined by communities of interest/engagement. Licence holders should ideally vote in and manage those areas where they hunt and fish.**
- **Any boundary change should be by the mutual consent of the affected regions.**
- **Council was open to the concept of amalgamation with Northland, with Northland's agreement, but were concerned over the financial implications.**

**Annan/Barker - CARRIED**

### **3. GAME REGULATIONS:**

The Chairman asked each Councillor to provide their views on the regulations for the 2022 game season.

Concern was expressed that an increase in the season length to 8 weeks would impact on mallard recruitment. However, Councillor Dickey supported a return to an 8-week season as the more inclement weather in June would offer increased opportunities to hunt. Furthermore an 8-week season allowed for more opportunities for junior hunters to be involved especially as many were still playing organised sport in May.

Other Councillors agreed that there were advantages to an 8-week season in terms of hunter recruitment but increasing duck numbers had to be the first priority.

Councillor Williamson emphasised that management should be aimed at increasing the bird population. He recommended a 2-week season and more flexible regulations to reduce hen harvest. He believed that continuation of a 4-week season would reduce the population especially if habitat/environmental conditions were unfavourable for recruitment.

However, it was noted that the current 4-week season was already restrictive for many hunters, especially hunter's dependent on high tides to access hunting areas. The view was also expressed that hunters would be much more active in a 2-week season and that a reduction in harvest would not necessarily occur.

Councillors discussed having separate limits for mallard hens and drakes ("green heads") as it was recognised that the crucial issue was the number of hens breeding, and drakes could sustain a much greater level of harvest due to the sex imbalance that exists in our population. However, concern was expressed by several Councillors over distinguishing

between hens and drakes in the field especially with hybrids. Nevertheless, this was an option that should be considered.

Councillor Barker observed that most hunters do not shoot the bag limit and that the regulations were a blunt tool for controlling harvest. He viewed changing harvest regulation as a “top down” management approach that has relatively minor influence compared to other factors such as recruitment. He noted that we may be better served focusing our management actions on a bottom up approach by trying to influence factors that will increase productivity.

Several Councillors emphasised that the current spring and summer appeared to be “normal” in terms of rainfall compared to the drought experienced in recent summers that had produced conditions unfavourable for duck recruitment.

It was suggested that licence holders should be surveyed, via a Facebook poll. Mr Klee replied that approximately 15% of licence holders were surveyed each year by telephone surveys and this data was statistically robust and canvassed a random selection of hunters and would therefore be more representative of hunter opinion than social media polls. Over the past 10 years hunters have routinely been asked questions relating to preferences regarding changes to harvest regulations which were summarised in recent reports. Councillors were welcome to suggest potential questions for next year’s survey. Mr Klee reported that the surveys had shown that most hunters supported a 4–6 week season.

Councillor Ralph suggested that licence holders should be encouraged to be active gamebird managers, especially “backyard” duck breeding. Mr Wilson agreed to give publicly for these endeavours.

It was agreed that staff should consider Councillor’s comments and set the regulations for the 2022 game season in accordance with Council policy. Also in accordance with policy, an extensive review of the regulations would occur in 2022 with licence holder involvement encouraged.

#### **4. GENERAL BUSINESS:**

Councillor Barnes expressed his concerns over the use of treble hooks for trout fishing due to the damage they caused trout.

It was moved;

**that staff are asked to produce a report on the effects of treble hooks on trout fisheries.**

**Barnes/Ralph - CARRIED**

Mr Wilson reported that the Annual Report would be completed by the Auditor later in the week. He expected no significant changes and emphasised that it had been a long process involving vertical auditing of operational procedures and fieldwork.

Councillor Dickey advised that Predator Free Franklin was offering free predator traps and bait stations Mr Dyer agreed to publicise this initiative in the newsletter that would soon be going out to pondholders.

There being no further business the meeting concluded at 9.05pm

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