



AGENDA

AUCKLAND/WAIKATO FISH AND GAME COUNCIL

20th AUGUST 2022



AUCKLAND/WAIKATO FISH & GAME

**A Meeting of Council will be held at the Waikato Deer Stalkers Hall,
Wairere Drive, Hamilton on Saturday 20 August 2022 commencing at 11 a.m.**

AGENDA

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**N Juby
Chairman**

25/08/22



AUCKLAND/WAIKATO FISH & GAME

Minutes of a Meeting of Council
held at the NZ Deerstalkers Hall, Wairere Dr, Hamilton
on Saturday 11th June 2022 commencing at 11:00am.

PRESENT:

Chairman: N. Juby.

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

Staff: B. Wilson, D. Klee, A. Daniel.

1. **APOLOGIES:**

T. Clark, J. Dyer.

It was moved;

that apologies be accepted.

Annan/Sherrard – CARRIED

The Chairman spoke on the recent passing due to a tragic accident of Councillor Guy Ralph and called for a minute silence.

2. **POSSIBLE CONFLICTS OF INTEREST ARISING FROM MEETING AGENDA:**

Councillor Barnes tabled a list of his possible conflict of interests due to his commercial activities (attached).

3. **MINUTES OF PREVIOUS MEETINGS OF 19th March 2022:**

It was moved;

that the minutes of the previous meetings of 19th March 2022 be accepted as true and correct records.

Sherrard/Barker – CARRIED

4. **MATTERS ARISING FROM PREVIOUS MINUTES:**

The Chairman informed that he had attended a meeting of the Eastern Council and discussed joint publicity efforts and the proposed structural review.

Dr Daniel left the meeting at 11:16am.

Councillors discussed Mr Dyer's audit of buildings on Fish & Game land in the Waikato

Delta. Concerns were expressed at the potential liability of Council ownership. It was agreed that further discussion would be deferred until the audit report was tabled at the next meeting.

5. COUNCIL CORRESPONDENCE:

Nil

6. CHIEF EXECUTIVE'S BI-MONTHLY REPORT AND FINANCIAL STATEMENTS:

6.1 Bi-monthly Chief Executives Report

Councillor Annan reported on the Arapuni fishing day. He noted that there was no significant difference yet between the growth rates of sterile and non-sterile trout, which was to be expected. Any difference in growth rate should become apparent in the next 12 months.

The Whangamarino weir consent review was discussed. Mr Klee explained that:

- There were issues with the latest Lidar dataset and thus a new survey was planned for August this year.
- Consultants were looking at the potential issues with the option of using the flood gates for water level control, including whether to retrofit one gate to allow fish passage or construct a fish bypass around the gates.
- There was five years left on the existing consents for the weir.

The Chairman acknowledged the significant work on wetland restoration carried out by Mr Klee.

Councillors also spoke in appreciation of the considerable efforts by the Office Manager Roslyn Simmonds with the band returns, especially the return form on the website.

6.2 Financial Statements

In reply to a question Mr Wilson acknowledged the high overall cost of prosecutions this financial year. Unfortunately, due to Covid delays, prosecutions from the 2021 game season were still progressing through the court system.

It was moved;

that the Chief Executive's bimonthly report and Financial Statements be accepted.

Annan/Sherrard – CARRIED

7. PIGGOTT WETLAND:

The report from Mr Dyer was tabled.

Dr Daniel returned to the meeting at 12:23pm.

8. FEEDBACK FROM WETLAND ASSOCIATIONS:

Councillors discussed the current situation where two ponds on the Piggott wetland were balloted out every 5-years by the Frankland Acclimatisation Society. This situation was considered to be undesirable because in the final year of the tenancy the ponds were not adequately maintained.

It was moved;

that control of the Franklin ponds on the Piggott wetland be taken back by Council.

Dickey/Cocks – CARRIED

Mr Klee spoke on his concerns that some ponds in the Fish & Game wetlands were not utilized on Opening Weekend. He also emphasized that in the week prior to Opening, many hunters were looking for somewhere to shoot.

It was agreed that pondholders would be informed in 2023 before Opening (sometime around pegging day) that if they were not going to use their pond on Opening that they should inform the office so that the pond could be used by other hunters.

Councillor de Preez informed the meeting that regretfully he had to resign from Council due to his acceptance of a job offer in South Africa. He enjoyed his time on Council and regretted that his contribution had been for only a short duration.

The meeting rose for lunch at 12.45pm and resumed at 1:30pm.

Councillor du Preez left the meeting at 1:30pm.

9. NEW ZEALAND COUNCIL MEETING:

The Chairman expressed his concern that the NZ Council was delegating too much decision making to an executive committee. This practice might suggest poor governance practice with too many late papers and inadequate information for the full council to make a decision.

Councillor Barnes disagreed and stated that the executive committee was generally only used when a final decision had to be made on an issue once additional information became available.

Councillor Williamson expressed his concern that the Wildlife Act review had been delegated to a working group of NZ Councillors who were finalizing approval of a staff paper to the Department of Conservation. Councillor Williamson considered that the paper should be circulated to the regions for review and comments.

Mr Wilson noted that staff often provided advice to Government departments on proposed legislation, but this was not usually considered a governance issue.

Councillor Williamson emphasized that the review of the Wildlife Act was a sensitive issue, and if the NZ Council considered it to be a governance issue then the paper should have been circulated to the regions for comments.

It was agreed that the Chairman write to the NZ Council with Council's concerns over the Wildlife Act review.

10. LICENCE FEE RECOMMENDATION:

The licence fee recommendations were discussed

It was moved;

- **That the 2022/23 adult whole season sports fish licence fee is set at \$145.**
- **That the 2023 adult whole season game licence fee is set at \$107 (inclusive of a \$5 fee for the Game Bird Habitat Stamp).**
- **That the non-resident adult whole season sports fish licence is set at \$250.**

Annan/Sherrard – CARRIED

11. DESIGNATED WATER LICENCE CATEGORY:

The designated water licence category was discussed with Councillors considering whether the Whakapapa River was suitable for this classification.

It was moved;

that Council supported a \$50 day licence for non-resident anglers and a free endorsement for resident anglers on designated waters.

Cocks/Sherrard – CARRIED

It was agreed that staff prepare a paper on whether the Whakapapa River should be a designated water.

Brief discussion ensued on a "rod licence", allowing up to three rods in certain waters. Dr Daniel was requested to prepare a paper for Council.

12. STRUCTURAL REVIEW AND RESOURCE ALLOCATION PROJECT:

It was agreed that consultation with the Northland Fish & Game Council should take place regarding amalgamation.

It was moved;

that Councillors Matt Barker and Nigel Juby represent Council in discussions with the Northland Council regarding any potential amalgamation of the two councils.

Dickey/Cocks – CARRIED

13. GOVERNANCE TRAINING:

The Chairman updated Councillors on governance training that would be funded by the NZ Council in the 2022/23 financial year.

14. OSH REPORT:

It was moved;

That the OSH report be accepted.

Sherrard/Shaw – CARRIED

15. GENERAL BUSINESS:

The following questions from Councillor Clark were tabled;

1. Season length to stay as this season:

Councillors agreed that the game regulations would be reviewed at the November meeting of Council.

2. Whangamarino weir can come up another approx. 700mm:

Mr Wilson circulated to Councillors a graph showing the cross-section levels of the weir from surveys undertaken in 2014, 2016, 2018 and 2020.

Mr Klee informed that another survey would be carried out this year.

Councillor Williamson observed that while the V notch was some 7cm below the consented level, the overall weir profile was flat so that the actual reduction was some 15cm.

Mr Klee noted the weir consent also had a condition based on the “Burke curve” which impacted on the weir profile. The Department of Conservation would be carrying out extensive repairs to the weir later in the year, including raising the weir to the consented height.

3. Look at how we can get water from the Waikato River into the Te Onetea to Waikare then into the Whangamarino:

Mr Klee reminded Councillors that for most of the year the Waikato River was at a significantly lower level than Lake Waikare and thus there could be no natural flow from the river to the lake.

Councillor Cocks considered that the only viable solution was to pump water from the river to the lake using solar power.

4. How do we get more rangers on deck to help out?

The Chairman requested that this question be placed on the agenda for the August meeting of Council.

The Chairman informed Councillors that both he and Councillor Barnes had approached two local anglers who had successful Youtube channels on trout fishing. They had agreed to carry the logo of Auckland/Waikato Fish & Game and we would provide links to these channels on the Fish and Game website.

There was general agreement by Councillors to proceed.

The Chairman raised his concern that there was little awareness within the current NZ Council of the catastrophic decline in waterfowl habitat in the lower Waikato River catchment.

It was moved;

That the new NZC CE, Corina Jordan and NZC Chairman Ray Grubb be invited to a meeting of Council.

Sherrard/Williamson – CARRIED

There being no further business the meeting concluded at 3:20pm.

Councillor Dickey invited Councillors and staff to partake in a glass of 20-year-old port, provided by pondholder Craig Sapich to celebrate 20 years since the establishment of the Blythen Wetland.

CONFLICTS of INTEREST for B. Barnes 'ILOVEFLYFISHING.KIWI (ILFF)

Dated 11JUN22

YOUTUBE - active

Wild Images.Com, Kohan Kok, publishes 'paid content' Youtube videos under the name of Crazy About Fly Fishing wherein I LOVE FLY FISHING is represented as the exclusive product sponsor. Johan is an ambassador for I Love Fly Fishing and has paid affiliate status. Further Wild Images.Com is contracted to I LOVE FLY FISHING for ongoing services and promotion activities.

YOUTUBE - non active

Chris Beattie – Loose Loops Productions

Dylan Booth - Fly Fishing Forever.

APPS

Nicefish by Bradley Rogerson is a published smartphone app that represents I LOVE FLY FISHING as the major sponsor and support. Bradley is an ambassador for I Love Fly Fishing and has paid affiliate status with I Love Fly Fishing.

NZ Trout App by Geoff Gorringe, whilst not a true smartphone app represents, I LOVE FLY FISHING as the major sponsor and support. Geoff Gorringe has a paid affiliate status with I Love Fly Fishing.

ONLINE STORE

Website: www.iloveflyfishing.kiwi

SHOP / STORE

FAGTL, Brian Willson, (Fishing and Guiding Turangi Ltd). Shop in Turangi that is a 'partner store' which exclusively (supplied) retails I LOVE FISHING Products. Through FAGTL it is represented on the ILFF website through fishing reports and blog posts.

13 July 2022

Mr R Grubb
Chairman
New Zealand Fish and Game Council

By email

Dear Ray

Wildlife Act Review

The minutes of the 157 meeting of the NZ Council were tabled at the June meeting of the Auckland/Waikato Council.

My Councillors were concerned at the decision of the NZ Council to set up a committee to vet the staff submission on the Wildlife Act review. We appreciate that staff often provide advice to Government departments on proposed legislative reform. Indeed Auckland/Waikato staff contributed extensively to the submission on the Wildlife Act. However, we do not understand why this staff submission is subject to a governance review. If a governance review is considered desirable and given the importance of the Wildlife Act this may be true, then the paper should have been circulated around the regions for comment.

Treating the issue as management regionally and governance nationally is difficult to reconcile.

Increasingly the NZ Council is delegating decision making to committees. Some councillors are concerned that this practice may suggest poor governance with too many late agenda papers and inadequate information for the full council to make decisions.

Yours sincerely



Nigel Juby
Chairman

Hon Poto Williams
Minister of Conservation
(via email)

SUBJECT: Resignation as Auckland / Waikato Fish and Game Councillor

Dear Minister Williams

Please herewith accept my formal resignation as a Councillor of Auckland / Waikato Fish and Game. I have separately informed my intentions to resign to the Council Chairman Nigel Juby and Chief Executive Officer Ben Wilson. This was further communicated to the rest of the councillors at the 11 June 2022 council meeting.

For personal family reasons, my family and I are relocating back to South Africa, and I can therefore not further commit to undertake any Fish and Game Council duties.

I am a very keen trout angler and passionate about protecting natural waterways. I decided to run for council as I wanted to be more influential and involved in protecting and enhancing the amazing natural resources in New Zealand, particularly in the Waikato where I have resided for the last five years.

Since becoming a Councillor in October 2021 it has become even more apparent to me the important role Fish and Game play in conservation and advocacy for better environmental protection efforts.

My experience with Fish and Game, especially through this period of uncertainty with the restructure of the organisation, has taught me a lot about the intricacies of political governance. I have been very impressed with the way the Councillors, many of whom have been around for several years, have thought through and articulated multi-faceted issues.

Even more so, I have been overly impressed by the work the Fish and Game Auckland / Waikato Staff have been doing around habitat protection and enhancement and the advocacy to regional and district government for better practises and enforcement.

As permanent New Zealand residents, we intend to return at some time in the future – the beautiful natural setting, and trout fishing in New Zealand is world class and just too good to give up permanently. This is a direct result of the amazing work that Fish and Game does and will hopefully continue to do.

Yours sincerely

A handwritten signature in blue ink, appearing to read 'Dirk du Preez', written over a horizontal line.

Dirk du Preez

August 2022

OUTPUT 1: SPECIES MANAGEMENT

Project 1111: Drift Diving

Adam collated the drift dive data in advance of completing the reports at the request of the Auckland Anglers Club for the presentation Adam gave to the Club on the 13th of June.

Project 1112: Banding/Shoveler Counts

David and Roslyn attended a 3-day workshop attend by key staff from each of the Nth Island regions. David had to join via Zoom due to catching covid the week of the workshop. All areas of game bird management were covered with particular focus on streamlining data entry, analysis and reporting. Whilst all forms of monitoring were discussed banding was the primary focus due to the size of datasets being collected and complexities associated with data analysis.

During the workshop staff in other regions expressed interest in botulism after recent large-scale outbreaks in Northland and Horowhenua. David has subsequently organised another half day online meeting where he will present on the lessons we have learned in this region, especially early detection and mitigation of outbreaks. There will also be time for general discussion around the increased threat botulism outbreaks are having on the viability of our duck populations.

DOC Banding office had a 2-day training for entry level banders at Wingspan, the raptor, (hawks, falcons and even a barn owl), centre just outside Rotorua. Mr Dyer assisted.



Photo: where did that sneaky falcon go?

Project 1112: Population Monitoring

The following graphs give show the data trends for the Trend Flights carried out earlier in the year. I have concerns over the way that the data has been analysed in the past but it does show long-term trends.

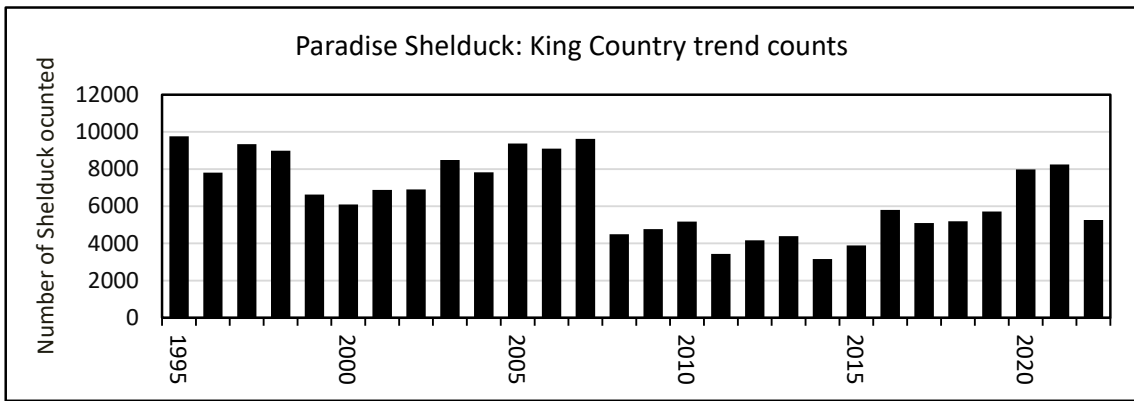


Figure 1: Paradise Shelduck, trend count data, King Country.

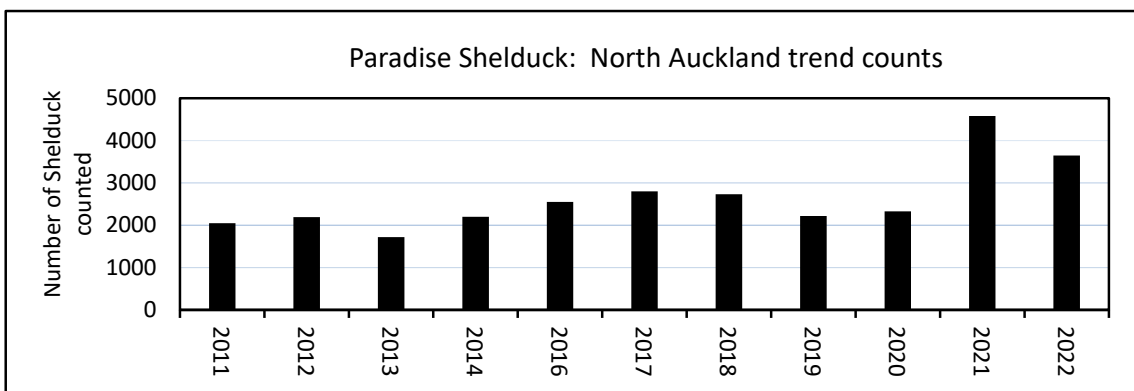


Figure 2: Paradise Shelduck, trend count data, North Auckland.

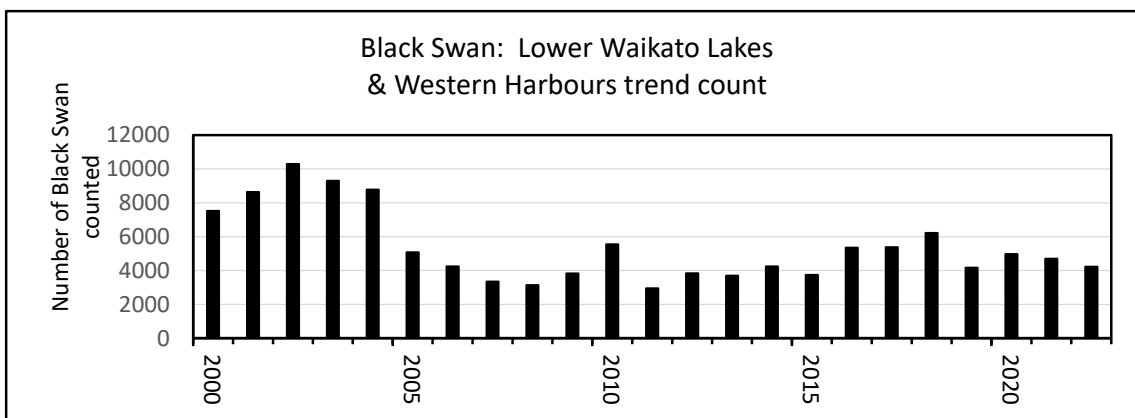


Figure 3: Swan trend counts in the lower Waikato lakes and western harbours combined.

Project 1117: Gamebird Research

***Toxoplasma gondii* Study:** David was approached by DOC researchers prior to the game bird season to see if we could assist in the collection of duck heads for a study focused on toxoplasmosis, a parasite that is lethal to the critically threatened Maui's dolphin. The definitive host of the parasite is the cat; the parasite reproduces sexually in their guts and is released in faeces as oocysts. These oocysts are very hardy and remain infectious in soil and water for months and are transported in waterways to the sea. They can infect any warm-blooded host, including waterfowl, livestock, and humans. From studies elsewhere in the world it is suggested that ducks can become infected with the parasite in waterways where they feed and may therefore be a useful sentinel species. Researchers want to investigate through a feasibility study the prevalence of the *T. gondii* parasite in ducks and determine if they can prove useful for parasite genotyping.

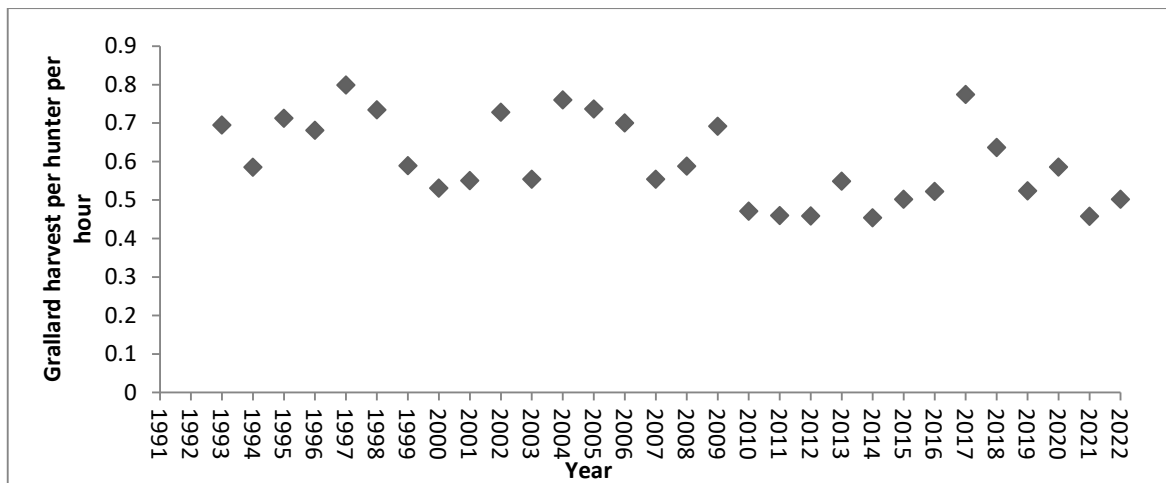
Staff put the call out to hunters who collected heads during the season, and they responded collecting over and above the 500 required. Staff subsequently dropped these at DOC in Te Rapa for later pick up by researchers from Massey University. A large thanks goes out to those who participated in the collection.

Project 1121: Harvest Assessment: Fish

The online tag reporting system set up by Roslyn has attracted anglers to the A/W page from around the nation. Adam forwards the tag return information to the appropriate region, but we are exploring a way for this to be done automatically.

Project 1122: Harvest Assessment: Game

Harvest surveys for dabbling ducks have been completed but not all regions have entered licence sales figures, therefore at the time of writing total harvest figures (including out of season hunters) are not yet available. Preliminary figures indicate that total and average harvest were low again this year. The number of ducks shot per hour of 0.5 is below the 30-year average of 0.58 and the 10 year average of 0.52. We again canvassed hunters at the end of the dabbling duck season whether there were more, the same or fewer mallard and grey ducks in their hunting area this year. Out of the 131 randomly selected hunters, 121 felt they could answer the question of whom 39% felt there were more, 18% the same and 43% fewer.



Project 1161: Fish Releases

Adam released 200 1-year-old trout in Lake Whatihua using the newly leveled track leading down to the lake. Adam also released 200 2-year-old rainbow trout in Parkinson Lake with the permission from the Waiuku Pistol Club. There was a delay in releasing fish into Lake Moanna-nui to allow for the annual draining of the lake scheduled for early July. Winter maintenance at the lake was canceled and a full dredging is planned for January of 2023.

Project 1173: Fish Regulations

The sports fish regulations for the 2022/23 season were gazetted, including the changes recommended by Council and approved by the Minister of Conservation.

Project 1181: Control

Hawks: David has been contacted by Dr Jenn Sheppard who is consulting for DOC regarding a situation where a Harrier Hawk reputedly snaffled some bittern chicks from the nest. DOC are now looking at options to control Hawks in this area to avoid a similar situation occurring this year. Staff in this region believe that there is a lack of monitoring when it comes to Harrier population levels and their impact on other species, and this is something we would like to work with DOC on.

Manukau Harbour: These are difficult financial times for airlines and related industries, so it was a relief when funding for the black swan study on Manukau Harbour that we are assisting with was recently approved.

Permits: A steady stream of people are after pukeko control permits to protect newly planted native trees especially, but also ducklings, various native birds, (such as dotterels and their eggs), fruit and vegetables.

Central Shepherd Wetland: Staff assisted a keen pondholder to obtain traps for this site via the Waikato Regional Council's Small Scale Initiatives Fund. This should help keep rats out of maimais as well as assisting wildlife.

OUTPUT 2: HABITAT PROTECTION/MANAGEMENT

Project 1211 RMA

National Environmental Standards for Freshwater / National Policy Statement for Freshwater: David and I contributed extensively to the national F&G submission on the proposed changes to the NES and NPS Freshwater, with particular emphasis on proposed changes to natural wetland provisions.

In response to our previous submission (coordinated by Mischa) the maintenance of maimai and vegetation clearance for wetland restoration (500m²) are now permitted activities, but with extensive conditions including lodging a workplan with the relevant regional council. The construction of new maimai in Natural Wetlands still require a discretionary resource consent.

Although the latest draft has attempted to address some of the issues raised in our previous submission, in our opinion it still falls well short of the mark in terms of facilitating recreational use, routine wetland maintenance and restoration activities. We are particularly concerned about some of the ambiguity in the new legislation that has already led to significant inter-regional variability of interpretation. Some of these issues were further highlighted in a recent high court case in the greater Wellington Region where a case of wetland drainage was dismissed in part due to the council's inability to show that the site could be considered a wetland prior to the activity based on the criteria in the legislation. We are also concerned that the latest draft opens consenting pathways that will allow for wetland destruction for activities such as mining, urban development, quarrying and landfills even when these are not considered regionally significant. There is also a push to exempt the impacts of wetland drainage associated with existing flood schemes and make

these permitted. It is our interpretation that in many instances we will be required to go through the same consenting process to restore wetlands as those who plan degrade or destroy them.

Waikato Coastal Plan Submission: David and I have prepared a submission on the draft Waikato Coastal Plan, which was based on previous feedback presented by Mischa on prior consultation documents.

The glaring issue of concern was the proposed banning of existing maimai in the RAMSAR Wetland area of the Firth of Thames, which includes the lower reaches of inflowing rivers (Waihou, Piako, Waitakaruru) – a very popular area for gamebird hunting. In reply to our request for clarification, it appears that this rule will be deleted. However, the draft Plan still contains rules that will make the building of new maimai either prohibited or requiring a consent in almost all areas of the Waikato coastal zone where recreational game bird hunting currently occurs.

We strongly support the inclusion of numeric trigger values for water quality in estuaries but feel that some of those values lack scientific validation and the effects of overall contributions from wider catchment sources are not adequately explained or tied back into other planning provisions. There is a lack of certainty of what meaningful actions will be taken if trigger values are not achieved. One positive is that the noise emitted from recreational game bird hunting is permitted under the draft Plan.

Appeals on the Waikato District Plan: We have agreed to the proposal put forward by legal counsel representing the Waikato District Council that the following procedures will be followed in dealing with our appeals to the proposed Waikato District Plan:

1. Direct negotiations with the various parties on each topic.
2. Court assisted mediation,
3. Court hearing if mediation does not result in settlement.

We have also agreed to their proposal that all the appeals on the same topic are considered together, and have agreed that our appeals have been allocated to the correct topics.

We're currently one of the few parties who are negotiating without legal counsel, I envisage that Mischa will take over this role in September.

Feedback on the pre-notification draft of the Waitomo District Plan: Feedback was provided on key issues affecting hunters and anglers, habitat, and AWFG operations in the Waitomo District:

1. Avoiding unintended consequences for maimai used for gamebird hunting;
2. Protecting sports fish and gamebird habitat, and encouraging habitat restoration;
3. Avoiding conflicts relating to noise from gamebird hunting;
4. Ensuring hunting and angling related values and activities on water are recognised;
5. Enabling signage necessary for AWFG operations.

We also requested that where exceptional environmental gains are made, or new public access is offered, to significant natural areas in the coastal environment or to significant trout fisheries, that benefit lots additional to those prescribed in the proposed rules may be considered.

Healthy Rivers – alternatives to Overseer: The various parties to the appeals have agreed to a list of questions that should be considered by a group of technical experts regarding the role of Overseer in implementing Healthy Rivers (Plan Change 1). The experts will be looking at alternatives to Overseer for measuring nitrogen leaching on pastoral farmland and whether these alternatives can be used instead of Overseer in the Plan Change.

We're also considering what appeal points we should "not pursue". All appeal parties are carrying out a similar exercise because many of the appeal points have been made redundant by the NPS for Freshwater. However, we're not officially withdrawing any appeal at this stage as we wish to reserve standing until we understand the intentions of the other parties.

Healthy Rivers is currently taking up much of my time but hopefully Clare will be back onboard in September.

The Waikato Regional Council has admitted that the Healthy Rivers process has cost ratepayers \$23 million to date.

Waihi WWTP: An objection was lodged on the consent application for a 7 year consent for the Waihi wastewater treatment plant. Our objection covers the following issues:

- Lack of investment and planning
- Uncertainty long term
- Previous non-compliance
- Degrades the receiving environment
- Deferring water quality improvements
- Avian botulism management plan should be implemented

Wildlife Act Review: As mentioned at the last council meeting staff from this region have been involved in providing substantial feedback to national office on preliminary aspects the Wildlife Act Review.

Whangamarino Weir Section 128 Review; A draft feasibility assessment looking at the Whangamarino gates as the primary water control structure for the wetland has been completed. Once finalised the review team plan to hold a meeting with WRC staff to go over the findings and discuss how to progress from here. As soon as the report is finalised and ready for further dissemination it will be sent to councillors.

Max Birt and Lumbercorp discharge consents: David has had further dialogue with consultants acting on behalf of these companies. He is largely satisfied with where the conditions have landed. Rogue unexplained boron levels exceeding proposed thresholds remain an issue which needs to be worked through.

Cambridge WWTP: David received confirmation from Waipa DC that the Iwi liaison group has supported our application of \$50,000 from the mitigation fund for the Pokaiwhenua Project. This project is being conducted in concert with RiverCare and we now plan to augment the funding by lodging a WRA application. The total project value is \$215,000.00 over five years.

Te Kauwhata WWTP: David attended the last virtual meeting. The plant is still non-complaint and although works are underway it appears that the solutions will still require some time to come online. Further options assessments for the 'long term solution' were presented, although they appear to be light on detail at this stage.

David has on multiple occasions requested that audited detailed account pertaining to the mitigation fund be made available as per the requirements stipulated in the submitter agreement we signed with Waikato DC. We finally received these prior to the previous meeting. The agreement sets out how and on what the mitigation money can be spent. Having reviewed the financials David remains concerned that a significant amount of money has been spent that was never approved through the correct process and without the submitter's knowledge. Some of the invoices do not appear to meet the purpose of the fund. For example, there are multiple invoices from Beca, Opus and Jacobs, that pertain to consenting, professional services and also some looking at details for Meremere and Huntly wastewater treatment plants. David requested that WDC conduct an internal investigation and produce a report prior to the next meeting that addresses the points raised.

Swan Deaths on Huntly WWTP: We received notification of dozens of dead and sick swan on Huntly WWTP at the start of June. The timing and fact that it only appeared swan were being impacted seemed odd, so David met contractors on site to check on some sick live swan that had been collected from the pond. The symptomology resembled botulism although mucus excretion was evident from the nasal cavity which is atypical. There was enough doubt so that David contacted

MPI who organised testing on two euthanised swan. The main concern was that the swan could have a form of avian influenza or some other highly virulent disease. Lab results were negative for botulism, but inconclusive for other sources of mortality. The major disease process discovered was intestinal parasitism – in particular with a tapeworm species that was causing inflammation of the intestines, enough to cause diarrhoea and dehydration, and to allow bacteria in through the gut (which then causes inflammation in the liver).

The pathologist wondered whether there's any possibility of a "reverse zoonosis" e.g. where a human parasite had gotten into the birds. Contractors enacted botulism protocols before results came back and removed sick and dead swans from the pond. A proportion did recover when released into other environments. At this stage there are no conclusive results which explain the deaths.

Project 1221: Council Wetlands

Consent Application for maintenance activities on F&G Wetlands: David has been out with our consultants and aerially mapped most of the required area for the habitat assessment study, with just half of the AkaAka wetland left to do. This area needs to be done from the boat as the flight distances are too far to feasibly do them from accessible locations on the ground. The drone had a software issue which required it to be sent away, so we have had to delay this final survey. At any rate, it seems prudent to wait until the end of the dabbling duck season as we would hate for someone to have an identification issue whilst shooting in the wetland.

Te Aroha Wetland: David completed a funding application to the GBHT which was previously circulated to councillors. The total project budget currently sits at \$106,900 with \$19,500 being sought from the GBHT and another \$7000 from the GBHT/billion trees partnership.

Piggott/McKenzie Wetlands: Ponds 1 and 5 in the Piggott Wetland and Pond 6 in the McKenzie Wetland are being assessed for re-balloting by Mr Dyer. All 3 ponds are in moderate order with maimais on site. The McKenzie pond is only accessible by boat but old creek willow logs made this a bit of a mission. These and new willow growth beside the entry canal have been chainsawed to assist with future entry. A F&G boat will be available for onsite inspection on a nominated day prior to the pond 6 ballot. This is so people won't waste everyone's time by entering the ballot, but then walking away when they later find out they need a boat and can't just walk or wade in.

MPI advise that *Tradescantia*, (Wandering Willy), biological control on the Piggott Wetland is working well with plants "munched back to their stems".

Waikato Delta Islands: An investigation into structures on F&G land has been completed and a report for Council generated. A bittern and bat recorder found in here at the same time has since been returned to the Landcare group who misplaced it.

Stone Jug Road property: The battery at the Stone Jug property was upgraded to run the electric fence and stock were run on the property to keep the grass down. Due to the increased power demand a second solar panel (\$200) will be necessary to keep the battery bank charged. The new fence has survived a minor flood but needed clearing of logs and plant material. The fence was designed for flooding, so the cleanup was relatively minor. Adam submitted paperwork for reimbursement of fencing materials from Horizons Regional Council and received \$1250.



Fence damage at Stone Jug Road.

Project 1231: Other Land

Wetland Projects on Private Land: Planting has been completed at one of the project sites but has had to be delayed at another adjacent to the Waikato River due to inundation.

F&G covenants: Two requests for information about F&G covenants for land answered. QE2 is perhaps the better choice should there be future issues, given the likely costs of any enforcement required and also the uncertainty about future F&G structure arising from the review.

Raeo Arm: DOC in fluorescent vests were spraying well out into the Raeo Arm of the Whangamarino immediately before opening weekend and so managed to upset some hunters more than others. Staff helped calm this situation and suggested better timing in future would have a lot better local support.

Elbow boat ramp: A recent inspection of the Elbow boat ramp improvement project shows it is still a job in progress. The temporary ramp just upstream was becoming a mud quagmire even before recent flooding. Someone dumped their ducks in the small stream just beside this reserve, raising the ire of local hunters who reported it to their local Council.

Staff obtained a signed agreement along with suitable maps for DOC to allow the delivery, also by F&G staff, of 10 DoC-200, Timms traps and dried bait all from DOC, (plus a spare DOC-200 safety bar), to several keen hunters in the Rangiriri area for use beside Lake Waikare. The proposed site of this trapping activity was recently the home of spotless crake and numerous dabchicks, royal spoonbills and even a white heron. The crake pair have since gone silent, but a large feral cat was shot instead in this very same location this year.

Peafowl on the permit: Peafowl are something of a pest in some areas. Following up a request by one of our hunters with a forestry permit, these can now be shot on Rayonier land. Next year's permit will spell this out.

Mangatutu Stream: Adam has been assisting DOC enforcement staff on investigating illegal grazing and stock access on the Mangatutu River. Adam sent a report documenting the water quality degradation of the Mangatutu and the prolonged use of an illegal race that discharges into the river. A recommendation was given to replant the marginal reserve to restore the property and improve water quality.

Project 1235: Trees

Certain trees have potential to play a key role in F&G tree planting and the Auckland Acclimatisation Society has imported specialised tree seeds in the past. For instance, several species are both flood tolerant and have large numbers of acorns or similar fruit that gamebirds love. An example is water oak, (*Quercus nigra*), whose choice of habitat is self-explanatory. Seed from one of the very few water oaks in NZ was collected from Gladstone Road in Parnell this year for growing-on. Another similar rare in NZ species is willow oak, *Quercus phellos*, (so-called because its leaves are eel-like). A large tree of this species grew in Lake Domain Drive, Hamilton but seems to have since been cut down to subdivide the section. Another was also identified growing in the Paeroa Domain and will be confirmed next time passing. If such trees can be established on F&G land, we should have an ongoing useful seed source well into the future.

OUTPUT 3: PARTICIPATION

Project 1311: Access negotiation

Adam visited Whangaiepeke X station to discuss access to the Whanganui River via Hohotaka Road. The trustees present agreed anglers could walk up the river from the road.

Project 1331: F&G Newspapers

Adam completed the 2022/23 pre-season magazine articles and began preparation for the spring flyer. Adam has also contributed a feature article on drift diving highlighting how F&G use monitoring data.

Before every 20th of the month, (in April, May, June and July), this region has produced a Both Barrels Ezine for email distribution to all subscribed gamebird hunters.

Project 1341: Other publications

Adam took two reporters from the Associated Press into the upper Whanganui and introduced them to locals for a story on the world's most precious rivers.

An article by Mr Dyer on the legal status of various waterbirds, for instance, Cape Barren geese, was produced for and since published in the Ducks Unlimited 'Flight' magazine.

OUTPUT 4: PUBLIC PROMOTIONS

Project 1431: Liaison Advocacy

Adam gave a talk to Teuku School on wetlands and water quality. He also gave a talk to the Hamilton Anglers Club in late June.

OUTPUT 5: LAW ENFORCEMENT

Project 1511 Ranging

Adam has been ranging and made two contacts at Stone Jug Road and has received reports of bait fishing on the Whakapapa that will be followed up with one of the local accommodation operators.

Mr Dyer followed up reports of 2 speeding boatloads of hunters, 2 shooters up front in each, in the Tuakau/Mercer area after the dabbling duck season. One boat load of hunters checked had 25 pukeko, 2 pheasants and a plover, (an unprotected species). Nothing to suggest these were the suspects, but hopefully word gets around that rangers are still about even in July. A lot of flotsam

Project 1531 Compliance

Prosecutions: Adam and David have reviewed charging documents for an offence from the 2021 hunting season that is finally going to court. Preparing evidence for court cases from the 2021 season is still consuming much of my time.

Wildlife Refuges: 413 hectares of land was declared a Wildlife Refuge around Lake Kopuera/Rangiriri in 1961 by Internal Affairs which replaced an earlier larger refuge on the same site. This includes the lake, willows and extensive areas of farmland around it. The same lake and those willows to the south of it, (but not the north), were also declared a Wildlife Refuge of 83.45 hectares in 1981 by Lands and Survey. It's tempting to think that neither department consulted with the other, yet alone with the landowners involved. Decades ago some of this land was swamp but it is now all just grassy paddock. Some of it is even Lakeside subdivision. Farmers tell us they have to stand with their backs to certain fences inside their own properties to shoot gamebirds. Also that DOC were going to sort this out "9 years ago". Mr Dyer has since been asked by DOC to suggest how this boundary issue could be rectified and also whether any other Wildlife Refuges could also be reviewed at the same time. Three others come to mind; 2 near Tuakau (13-ha and 537-ha) and 1 near Te Awamutu, (220-ha.). This should potentially free up quite a bit of private land for legal hunting that has no further merit as Wildlife Refuges.

OUTPUT 8: PLANNING REPORTING

Project 1841: National liaison

David has been asked to contribute to the Wildlife Act Review by National Office Staff. There are significant risks but also some opportunities for Fish and Game to consider. It should be noted that this will be a 'first principles'-based review meaning it will be an entirely new iteration rather than a rejig of the existing Act. Some big picture items that we need to consider is the potential for co-management of native species, possible conflict between native and introduced species and the potential privatisation of hunting and fishing rights.

B. Wilson
Chief Executive