

AUCKLAND/WAIKATO FISH & GAME NEWSBRIEF

If you require further elaboration or clarification of items contained herein, or any other matters relating to F&G business, please don't hesitate to contact your local councillor or the office.

Matters arising from the Council Meeting of 19th August 2023

1. **Sterile trout releases:** Dr Daniel provided an update of the sterile rainbow trout releases into Lake Arapuni. To date there had been no evidence that the releases had been successful. Catch rates were generally lower for sterile fish, and there was no evidence of extended longevity or greater size.
2. **Healthy Rivers:** Mr Wilson provided an update on the Environment Court Hearing for Healthy Rivers. Fish and Game would be represented by our lawyer throughout the six weeks of the Hearing with expert evidence given on F&G's behalf by David Klee, Dr Adam Daniel, Dr Adam Canning (Queensland University) and Helen Marr (Kahu Environmental).
3. **Golden Clam:** Dr Daniel updated the meeting on the golden clam incursion, informing Councillors that clams had recently been found in Lake Maraetai.
4. **Performance Management Policy:** The draft Performance Management Policy prepared by NZ Council staff was discussed. Councillors agreed that NZ Council could not make personnel policies that are binding on the regions.
5. **Duck Strategy:** Councillor Williamson presented his views on a Duck Strategy for the Auckland/Waikato Region. He emphasised that:
 - We need a target for the duck population.
 - That the number of licences sold was determined by the duck population.
 - That loss of habitat was not a major factor in the decline of the duck population.
 - That an 8-week season would result in over harvest and thus a rapidly declining duck population.
 - That a 2-week season was ideal as it would result in reduced harvest and thus an increasing duck population.
 - That a 4-week season was the balance point.

Councillor Williamson recommended that the season length be reduced to 2 weeks.

In reply, Councillors Sherrard and Annan stressed that the decline in game licences had occurred during the early 1980's during a period of massive habitat loss which had unfortunately continued. However, licence sales during the Fish and Game era had been comparably stable. Mr Klee also emphasised that population harvest was just one factor in determining season length. Hunter expectations also had to be considered with most hunters opposed to a 2-week season.

6. **Paper Claim Tag Replacements:** Mr Dyer's report on the proposal *that papers tags should have an expiry date* was discussed. Mr Wilson emphasised that it was the act of marking up that was critical under the legislation and whether a maimai had a valid tag attached was somewhat irrelevant in determining maimai disputes. There had been documented cases where individuals had maliciously removed tags from maimai before the game season commenced. Councillor Cocks strongly recommended that all licence holders are reminded that they should take photos or a video (time dated) when they mark-up.
7. **Age of Eligibility for Mark-up:** Mr Dyer's report was tabled. It was agreed that junior hunters could mark-up a maimai by purchasing an adult licence.

Matters Arising from the Chief Executive's Report

Fish Releases: Two-year-old rainbows were released in Lake Whatihua using the new track. The second of three planned releases to Lake Pupuke/Quarry Lake was completed just prior to the July school holidays, when trout were also released into Moanana-nui.

Comprehensive consent application for maintenance of F&G wetlands: We've finally near the end of this process, which has taken two years. A consent has been received from the WRC allowing F&G to undertake activities to maintain Council's wetlands in the Waikato District. The consent allows us to undertake earthworks for maintenance at each wetland of up to 1500m³ per calendar year, except once every 7-10 years the maximum volume of earthworks at each wetland can be up to 3500m³. Under the consent we must lodge a plan showing our intentions by 31st November each year.

National – NES-REG submission: Misha and Clare prepared a submission on behalf of Fish and Game nationally on proposed changes to legalisation to make the consenting process for renewable electricity generation (REG) projects easier.

Cambridge Wastewater Treatment Plant: We have agreed in principle to a final set of conditions for this resource consent. The applicants willingly accepted several proposed amendments, and this has generally been a good collaborative process that has achieves a mutually agreeable outcome.

Whangamarino Fish Kill and Botulism Outbreak: David attended a recent meeting of the response group for Whangamarino and has authored the botulism section of the anoxic response plan. The plan is in draft, and due to be finalised by the end of September.

Wildlife Refuges: John has written 2 documents on Wildlife Refuges in this region, a 15-page one thoroughly detailing all the current refuges and their legal designations, and a 12-page one listing all the revoked refuges, (some of which people still assume to be current, such as the now revoked Woodhill Forest refuge).

Tree order: The annual tree order was received and distributed to F&G clubs, committees and individuals for specified projects. We try to give everyone as close to what they had on their wish list as possible, although we didn't receive all species and quantities ordered from some of the nurseries due to a lack of availability.

Facebook: Our digital posts are performing well with fishing Facebook posts reaching nearly 19,000 users in May and June alone. The plan going forward is to produce some YouTube videos on fishing our local waterways.

Morrinsville shooting range: John has been assisting Morrinsville Fish & Game and also EPCM with their Police range approvals. Morrinsville seem to have missed the deadline, largely due to not being able to get a range inspection officer to assess the private land they have access to.

Ranger Training: Adam and John are preparing for a ranger training course in October. There will also be a course in September for OSH training carried out by CERT.

Golden Clam: Adam is participating on the technical advisory group for the golden clam invasion (*Corbicula fluminea*). The clam is one of the world's most invasive species and is already abundant in a 45km stretch of the Waikato River from Horahora Domain (Lake Karāpiro) down-stream. At this point we are telling anglers and hunters to do their part to make sure the clam is contained to the Waikato River using existing Check Clean Dry procedures until MPI announces additional guidance.

Petition to ban gamebird hunting: David Klee (AWFG), Matt McDougall (Eastern), Matt Garrick (Nth Canterbury) and Heather Garrick (New National Office staff member) responded to a parliamentary petition questioning our ongoing ability to harvest indigenous game birds.