

North Canterbury Fish and Game Council

Statement of Purpose and Priorities for the period 2019-2021

This is the framework prepared by the Council that is intended to give direction to the preparation and implementation of a 3-year operational plan and other plans (e.g. the Statutory Fish and Game management Plan). It was originally developed and adopted in February 2019 and reviewed and revised in February 2020.

The Council will continue to monitor organisational performance and progress and, as necessary, refine this document over the planning period to ensure, in particular, that its intentions are clearly defined, and that the priorities remain relevant to the Council's operating environment and the availability of resources.

Even in the 12 months since this Statement was adopted it is apparent there have been changes to the organisation's operating environment which the Council needs to take account of. These include:

- An apparent shift in angler pressure from salmon fishing to high country fishing which has a range of implications for the trout fishery (including the stocking of lakes).
- Dropping licence sales – which is placing pressure on the recruitment of new licence holders. More finely grained information is needed where the loss of licence sales is occurring.
- Pressures on habitat relevant to both sports fish and game birds continue to increase, and the Council is intending to elevate its attention to achieving its 'habitat' outcome. Among other things, the NCFGC will need to find a way to increase its staffing capability in relation to participation in local authority resource planning and consenting processes.

Organisational purpose

Consistent with the requirements of the Conservation Act 1987 the Council has determined that:

The North Canterbury Fish and Game Council exists so that anglers and hunters have access to sustainable sports fish and game resources in the North Canterbury Region

Priority Outcomes

1. Priority habitats have been protected from further degradation

Habitat is defined in this context as 'the living environment of sports fish and game birds'. The Council will focus on protecting the habitat of fish and game resources that are valuable to licence holders. The focus will be on recruitment areas.

The immediate success indicator in relation to the headline outcome will be:

- that Priority Habitats are identified
- that plans are in place to protect those priority habitats from further degradation

The baseline is the condition of those habitats described in relevant staff reports up to and including 9 February 2019.

2. Key stakeholders are more engaged

Social, economic and environmental changes that affect, or potentially affect, our licence holders' ability to enjoy the activities that are central to our organisation's purpose, constitute a growing threat to the principles and values that we promote. This underlines the importance of the organisation (at national as well as regional levels) developing channels of communication and relationships that will maintain stakeholders knowledge and acceptance of our sport and engender trust and confidence in the organisation.

The Council will focus on two priorities within this outcome.

1. That stakeholders (particularly licensed and active anglers and hunters) receive communications from NCFGC that keep them connected in a positive way to the organisation and its aims and meet their information needs and expectations.

The means adopted to achieve this priority will recognise that some categories of stakeholder (particularly older age groups) are more difficult to reach than others.

2. That NCFGC has collaborative and respectful relationships with organisations that have interests in common and pursue objectives that confer mutual benefit.

We recognise that stakeholder organisations with these characteristics must deal with their own pressures and resource constraints. Strong, mutually respectful relationships are needed to steer through situations when full alignment is not possible to achieve.

Our limited resources mean that operationalising these two priorities will require further prioritisation between different categories of stakeholder.

Key stakeholders are defined as:

- Licence holders
- Those entitled to fish and hunt who are not required to be licenced holders (landowners or occupiers)
- The Department of Conservation
- Local authorities (particularly in respect of their environmental regulatory responsibilities)
- Future anglers and hunters
- Next generation farmers
- Members of the general public interested in the values promoted by NCFGC

3. The Council has achieved a positive, sustainable financial position

The historical pattern of financial resource allocation between the 12 regional councils and one national council that constitute Fish and Game NZ has been detrimental to the financial viability of NCFGC. This detriment has been compounded by previous Councils' conduct of unfunded activities. As a consequence, NCFGC reserves have been exhausted and it is no longer possible to maintain activities which are necessary to fulfil our statutory responsibility. NCFGC is now dependent on periodic one-off funding infusions by the NZ Council. This is welcome but by not addressing the underlying misallocation of resources within the organisation as a whole, keeps NCFGC in a vulnerable and unsustainable state financially.

Consequently, the Council seeks the following outcomes:

- The distribution of financial resources between regional councils (and between regional councils and the New Zealand Council) enables the pattern of licence holder activity and their wider interests to be properly reflected in the NZ-wide operational activities of the organisation
- The NCFGC is cashflow positive and sustainable on an annual basis.
- Such financial reserves as remain (including the McIntyre Estate account) are fully funded and only drawn down in response to a formal Council resolution.

4. The North Canterbury salmon fishery has demonstrated credible signs of recovery

Traditionally, salmon fishing has been a key attraction for anglers in this region and we recognise that salmon anglers are extremely concerned about the deterioration of the salmon fishery and are highly motivated to influence the Council's decisions in respect of its recovery. Recognising this Council's primary focus in 2019 was the need to address salmon-related fishery management issues.

Gaining an improved understanding and greater acceptance of the science relating to the likely harm to the wild fishery resulted in the Council's decision to close its salmon hatchery operations. While it remains committed to the recovery of the salmon fishery it is apparent this will depend on the health and habits of wild salmon. The Council recognises, therefore, that a significant contributing factor to the recovery of the salmon fishery will be the ocean environment which is the home of salmon for much of its life cycle. That is something over which NCFGC has no influence and it would be realistic to assume that substantive recovery of the fishery may take as long as 10 years.

While the Council's primary focus will shift to the improvement of habitat (particularly spawning streams) which will benefit the sports fishery as a whole the Council will continue to support the recovery of the salmon fishery.

During 2020-21 the Council is committed to the development of a salmon management plan which will explore other steps (including further regulatory intervention) it might take to support the recovery of the salmon fishery.

The success indicator in relation to the headline outcome will continue to include:

- that there has been a verifiable increase in wild spawners

5. The North Canterbury Fish and Game Council has a relationship with iwi in it's region consistent with its obligations to give effect to the principles of the Treaty Of Waitangi.

Council requires to give consideration under North Canterbury Fish and Games Council's obligation under S. 4 of the Conservation Act 1987.

S.4 Act to give effect to Treaty of Waitangi

This Act shall so be interpreted and administered as to give effect to the principles of the [Treaty of Waitangi](#).

Interestingly, in the Purpose section of the Terms of Reference for the Independent Governance Review of Fish and Game, the Minister of Conservation has set as one of the two purposes of the review:

To provide recommendations on how Fish and Game can better implement its responsibilities under section 4 of the Conservation Act to give effect to the principles of the Treaty of Waitangi

There is no guidance within the Conservation Act as to how Fish and Game Councils should interpret and operationalise this obligation.

In practice it does not appear to be a matter which has been actively pursued within the organisation except pragmatically in relation to situations in which Fish and Game interests have intersected with iwi interests. It is likely that at times Fish and Game has given iwi reason to see us as an adversary rather than a partner.

Looking to the future from a North Canterbury perspective, it is clear, however, that we wish to invest in a mutually respectful and advantageous relationship with iwi and hapu in our region.

This will require the Council to commit serious effort to advancing the intention of S.4 of the Conservation Act. An obvious first step is to begin to explore with Ngai Tahu their perceptions of Fish and Game. We need to know where we are starting from in this journey. To begin this process, we also need to ask them how they would want to engage with us. That means investing time up front in 'meeting and greeting' appropriate groups.

This statement and priority 'Outcome' description is necessarily broad to avoid predetermining an outcome from what should be a collaborative approach. As the relationship with mana whenua develops, the priority 'Outcome' we record annually can be more focused to reflect the aspirations that emerge.

Governance and management

The Council has determined that an essential foundation to the achievement of these outcomes is the establishment and continuation of good governance and management. The Council is committed to demonstrating good stewardship of the North Canterbury Fish and Game organisation and to restoring stakeholder confidence in its leadership.

Success will be judged by receipt of an explicit expression of confidence in the governance and management of the organisation by the NZ Fish and Game Council.

Organisation Values

The Council acknowledges responsibility both moral and, in certain respects legal, for the culture of the organisation. To that end the Council has adopted the following expressions of the core values that should characterise the culture of the organisation. Members of the governing body, staff and volunteers will be expected to demonstrate these values both in the conduct of their NCFGC roles and responsibilities and in any other circumstance where their actions might bring the Fish and Game organisation locally and nationwide into disrepute.

Note: Still to be developed

Implementation

All operational activity must, at all times, be justifiable in terms of the fulfilment of this purpose and consistent with the Council's priority outcomes, its stated values, and the spirit and intent of the authority delegated to Council committees and the Chief Executive.

Unless the Council explicitly resolves otherwise, in planning and conducting the Council's operations to fulfil this purpose, the Chief Executive and staff are expected to accord priority to the interests of licence holders.

Status

First adopted as a working document 19 February 2019, and later revised at the 19 August 2020 Council meeting.