

Unconfirmed Minutes of the Fish & Game NZ, Southland Region Council meeting held at the Council Office, 159 North Road, Invercargill on Thursday 11th August 2016.

Present	Graeme Watson (Chair)	Chris Owen
	Dave Harris	Chris Frisby
	Fred Inder	Ken Cochrane
	Michael Hartstonge	Paul Stenning
	Ray Waghorn	Cyril Gilroy (Te Runanga o Ngai Tahu)
	Kevin Fiveash	

Staff in attendance:

Z Moss, C Stewart, W Jarvie, E Garrick, Jacob Smyth
A Heffernan (Minutes).

Members of the Public: 13 x members of the public attended.

Welcome:

The Chairman opened the meeting at 6.30pm and welcomed the attending public and guests Don Rood and Richard Cosgrove, from NZ Fish & Game Council. Don Rood is the Communications Manager based in Wellington. Richard Cosgrove is the South Island Communications Advisor based in Christchurch.

Apologies:

Resolved Inder/Hartstonge that apologies be received and sustained from Corey Carston, Russel Graham, Cheryl Mason & Jacob Smyth for lateness. Carried.

Conflicts of Interest with items on the agenda:

There were no conflicts of interest advised.

If any conflicts should arise during the meeting Councillors were to let the Chairman know before discussions.

Health & Safety:

The health & safety accident report for the period 1st June to 31st July 2016 was attached to the agenda and showed a nil return.

All known hazards were listed in the Southland Health & Safety Plan.

Minutes of the meeting held 9th June 2016.

Resolved Inder/Hartstonge that the minutes of the meeting held 9th June 2016 were taken as read and were confirmed as a true and correct record. Carried.

Matters arising from the Council Workshop Minutes:

The Chairman acknowledged that the minutes for the Council workshop held on the 23rd June 2016 were circulated to Council and asked if there were any matters arising from those minutes.

There were no matters arising from the workshop minutes.

Administration Reports:

The accounts paid, direct credit/debit list, automatic payments, licence sales progress to date, & correspondence reports were attached to the agenda for Council's consideration. Also tabled at the meeting was the budget to actual progress to 31st August 2016.

Councillor Waghorn noted that we were insured with AON and asked who else had quoted for our insurance package. Our insurance premium had increased since we purchased the new premises. The Office Manager was on leave and would respond to Councillor Waghorn's enquiry at the next meeting.

Licence sales progress:

Southland fish licence sales had dropped 2% over the last season and in part reflected the changes to the licence categories, for example the loyal senior licence. Nationally the sales were down 3.5% compared to last year's sales. Last season was Southland's highest licence sales for a number of seasons. It was hoped as people became more aware of the different licence categories a better uptake would occur.

Game Licence LEQ's were currently 100% of target.

Staff Reports:

The staff report was attached to the agenda.

Otapiri Stream Study:

Cohen Stewart reported on the Otapiri Stream invertebrate study. The Otapiri was historically a very important productive fishery. Over the years the angler numbers had reduced. The study of the Otapiri was part of the Cawthron cumulative effects program. A benthic invertebrate survey was considered to be of benefit as there was concern with the level of sediment and condition of the stream. We looked at the macroinvertebrate structure today and compared that to some historical surveys in the 1960's. We repeated the studies in February this year and found the community structure had definitely changed. Historically it was generally made up of mayflies and caddis fly but now the community structure had shifted away from pollution sensitive taxa to pollution tolerant taxa, eg worms, snails & chironomids that were poor trout food.

Cohen explained that we used the Macroinvertebrate Community Index (MCI) and the Semi-Quantitative Macroinvertebrate Community Index (SQMCI) and that these measures indicated low water quality, both in the riffles and pools sampled. The pools in particular were very affected by sediment and the invertebrates in the pools indicated very poor water quality. This research would provide a useful case study to advocate for improving the health in Southland lowland streams.

The Otapiri used to get around 1000 anglers in the early 90's but was not really fished at all now. The deterioration since the 90's with the reduction in the good trout food, e.g. mayflies and caddis, was the likely reason for reduced angling pressure.

Mallard research:

Erin Garrick reported that 24 game cameras had been erected over a 2 ½ km square area. They had been up for about 5 months and results showed many photos of feral cats, one ferret and stoats. On 9th August line trapping was started. So far this has not been very successful and minor alterations to the traps had been made. Fenn traps were due to be laid 12th Aug for stoats.

What had been surprising was the number of cats in the study area, including strays. Erin had spent quite some time identifying pet cats with the assistance of the owners and this included owners up to 2 kms outside the study area. Cats trapped were mainly feral and strays.

Around the Mountain Cycle Trail:

Jacob Smyth reported that the hearing concluded on 15th July 2016 after four weeks of continuous proceedings. Fish and Game were well presented legally by Maree Baker-Galloway and with the expert evidence that was presented by witnesses on behalf of Fish and Game. The judge indicated that if consent was granted it would be an interim decision with an opportunity for the parties to provide feedback on any consent conditions.

The judge had noted that in terms of the decision there were three decisions in advance of this matter and that one of them was of national significance. The message was we were unlikely to receive a written decision before the end of the year.

Water and Land Plan:

Jacob had worked on a thorough submission on behalf of Fish & Game for the Water and Land Plan. It would take Environment Southland some time to get through all the submissions received. There would be opportunities to submit on specific points before it went to a hearing next year.

Cr Owen asked if the Otapiri study would be useful for the Water and Land Plan.

Fish & Game were looking to further develop the Otapiri study as more information was becoming available that suggested fine sediment was a challenge for fresh water ecosystems rather than nutrients necessarily. We would like to contribute to more work in that area again to help inform farmers and the general public of the rules and regulations around appropriate land use activities to avoid or mitigate losses of sediment.

NZ Council Issues:

Cr Stenning went over some of the issues discussed at the last NZ Council held on 22nd & 23rd July.

- The Guides Licence was progressing.
- Nelson/Marlborough Fish and Game Council were utilising recent research findings to reduce didymo through use of phosphorus to stop it proliferating in rivers.
- NZ Council spent some time on Standing Orders. Policy revision was being developed for Conflict of Interest for approval along with the Standing Orders at the next meeting.
- A presentation was made from David Haines, Federation of Freshwater Anglers. They would like to commission a study of the economic contribution of trout fishing to the NZ economy. This had never been done nationally before. NZ Council were seeking the views of Regional Managers on the merits of such a study and whether Fish & Game requirements would be satisfied. Eg methodology and the use of results.
- Cr Stenning tabled photos of the Hakataramea river works. It appeared a consent was issued without public notification or thoughts to the impact on river morphology. The criticism was that ECan was ignoring its statutory responsibility, and raised concerns of national precedence where river works occurred without proper consent criteria being applied. NZ Council would write to ECan expressing their concerns.
- The Gamebird Habitat Trust had quite a few nominations around the country. Nominations have gone to the Minister for approval.
- Director of Conservation, Lou Sanson advised that the Department were putting money into fresh water and associated consent processes including mining privileges. The Te Anau Wildlife Park was also discussed briefly but the proposal appeared to have fallen over.

Zane Moss reported he had met with Gary Tong to discuss the Te Anau Wildlife Park proposal further and had also met with Alan Munn, Southern South Island Conservation Manager on the issue. Discussions would be ongoing.

Hunting and Harvest Ethics:

Attached to the Agenda was the Managers draft reply to the NZ Council memo on hunting and harvest ethics. Council had all read the draft letter, which stated that the Southland Council identified the need to differentiate between “sportsman like” conduct as it related to the traditions of the sport, and ease of harvest as it may relate to animal welfare and environmental considerations. In the interests of the organisation as a whole to address such ethics consistently, the Southland Council supported the formulation of a national policy to address such ethical considerations that related to animal welfare or environmental concerns.

Resolved Owen/Hartstonge that the draft letter attached to the agenda on Hunting and Harvest Ethics be sent to NZ Council. Carried.

Changes to the First Schedule of the Anglers Notice:

Staff had discussed the recommendations from the working party and supported the intent of the work and recognised some excellent progress had been made. However Council felt that the group should have been given greater scope to start afresh with regulations, rather than being constrained to modifying the existing regulations. The Council supported a fresh approach starting from the ground up. This included formatting changes to the reg book itself and looking into the use of apps for each regions fishing accesses and fishing tips for that area. There will also be formatting changes to the regulation book as well. Looking into the use of apps for each region for fishing accesses and fishing tips for that area. The usage of QR codes on access signage to highlight where the angler was and other information may also be helpful to the angler.

Council said the First Schedule should be simplified and universal for all regions. The Second Schedule was for individual regional regulations.

Resolved Hartstonge/Harris that:

- ***Recommendation from council that the working party is commended for their work so far.***
- ***The group should have been able to start afresh with the regulations rather than being constrained to modifying existing regulations.***
- ***Southland Council supported a fresh start and fresh approach, starting from the ground up. Carried.***

Non-toxic shot exemption – subgauges, re Minister’s letter, reply to NZC memo.

The Chairman presented a powerpoint on the issue and went over it with the meeting. He acknowledged this was a controversial topic and Southland’s previous approach had caused concern. NZ Council had asked for feedback on the Minister’s letter. The Chairman referred to the use of Standing Orders and explained there was an opportunity for members of the attending public to express their views on the matter, if they wished to do so, to Council for consideration.

The Chairman presented the Minister’s letter to the meeting and because of its controversial topic proposed that the Minister’s letter be broken down into four constituent topics to focus response.

The Chairman explained that the Minister had written to the NZ Council, who received the letter at their July meeting and then forwarded the letter to the regions, “*noting the Ministers request to bring forward the review of the sub-gauge exemption...*”. For the members of the public present the Chairman explained that Fish & Game reported to the Minister who approved or declined our game regulations, licence fees and Sports Fish and Game Management Plan.

To go against her stated preference would require some strong justification.

Question 1 *“Can you please provide me with any evidence or survey results that might show me what is happening in regard to changes in the use of lead shot in sub-gauge guns for game bird hunting over the past 10 years?”*

Result - Changes in the use of lead shot

- In 2009 the average reported use of 20ga shotguns was 4%
- In 2013 the average reported use was 8%
- The powerpoint showed changes in the use of lead shot per region through phone surveys and field surveys.

Question 2 *“Can you please advise why lead shot should not be phased out for all waterfowl hunting in NZ given that many other countries are already doing so?”*

Result - Research suggested the same lead shot ingestion issues here as internationally. Of 1077 mallards there was an average lead shot ingestion rate of 8.1% (2001)

Question 3 *“I understand you have been planning to revisit the issue in 2017. I would, however, like you to bring this forward, reassess the phasing out of lead shot in all waterfowl hunting and provide me with your advice on this.”*

Question 4 *“If there is evidence that alternatives are available and that the lead shot ban can be extended to sub-gauge shotguns used over water, I would welcome any initiative Fish & Game might take to proceed with this.”*

Cr Fiveash called a Point of Order.

Cr Fiveash asked the Chairman for Cr Stenning to leave the room, as he considered Cr Stenning had a conflict of interest and was predetermined on the matter. Discussion ensued between Cr Fiveash and Stenning and a further accusation was made by Cr Fiveash that Cr Stenning had telephoned an Otago Councillor regarding the issue. Cr Stenning firmly denied the accusation, stating he had never telephoned the Otago Councillor named. Cr Stenning told the Chair he was happy to leave the room so Council could openly discuss the issue further, however, he did not accept that he had a conflict of interest and he challenged Cr Fiveash to retract his accusation, stating that it was absolutely untrue.

Cr Stenning voluntarily left the room at 7:10pm.

Cr Hartstonge asked the Chair how Cr Stenning was conflicted and asked for evidence or an example. Cr Hartstonge could not see how Cr Stenning would personally benefit if sub gauge lead use was removed. He asked Cr Fiveash for his view on that and to clarify how Cr Stenning would or could potentially have a pecuniary gain and what was the nature of the conflict he was accusing Cr Stenning of.

Cr Fiveash did not reply.

Cr Hartstonge then referred to the predetermination accusation stating that if Cr Stenning had a predetermination then equally would that not apply to Cr Fiveash, considering that at the first Council meeting he attended he stated he was there to ensure lead could still be used in sub gauges over water. His nomination bio also inferred this. Cr Fiveash denied that he was predetermined.

Following this the Chairman asked the Council, if based on Cr Hartstonge's comments, should Cr Stenning be called back to the meeting? Discussion took place on the Point of Order and Council agreed Cr Stenning did not have a conflict of interest and that predetermination was not an issue.

The Chairman declared that the conflict of interest and predetermination held no standing and was denied. Cr Stenning was invited back to the meeting at 7:15pm.

Four members of the public gallery spoke raising concerns against steel shot in sub gauges.

Their concerns were for the elderly and youth being unable to manage steel shot in sub gauges, birds being wounded more, land owners not being able to have a say and licenced game hunters not able to have their say. One member of the public gallery was supportive of steel shot.

Council discussed each question and came to the following conclusions:-

Q1 - There was survey information available to provide to the Minister showing the changes in the use of lead shot in sub-gauges for game bird hunting over the past 10 years.

Q2 - No other developed country was using lead over water. Most young hunters used 410'gs and steel shot was not available for 410'gs.

Q3 – It was too late now to do anything for 2017 season. A lead in time frame was important for suppliers.

Q4 – Alternatives were available for sub-gauges except for 410's. Council would like a longer timeframe to work with suppliers to manage the transition. Council did not want to penalise younger shooters and it should not affect waterfowl hunting over land.

After discussions.

Resolved Hartstonge/Inder that should the NZ Council choose to bring forward the review that the Southland Council would recommend the following:"

- *That an exemption be requested for 410'gs.*
- *That there was a lead in timeframe to allow suppliers time to changeover.*
- *It should not affect waterfowl hunting over land.*
- *That a lead in timeframe be requested, being 2017 to educate, 2018 optional, 2019 hunting over public land and 2020 hunting on private land.*

Carried: with Cr Fiveash against the motion.

Rationale:

A 410g exemption was requested as non-toxic shot was not available internationally for this calibre and was used exclusively by junior hunters who did not fire much ammunition.

A 4-year transition period would allow importers and retailers time to obtain new stock and for hunters to utilise existing ammunition.

In proposing a four year transition the 1st year would be to educate hunters in the use of steel shot, 2nd year optional, 3rd year public land & 4th year private land.

The Chairman informed the public gallery that the Southland Fish & Game Council hoped our licence holders appreciated the directive which had been given to us from the Minister. The Council had discussed accordingly and any suggestions made, may not necessarily have a great influence on the outcome.

The Manager would write to the NZ Council in response to the Minister's letter.

Angling Ethics – Catch & Release – reply to NZC by 25th November 2016.

Bryce Johnson would be communicating with the National Animal Advisory Committee, outlining how F&G minimised the suffering of animals that were the subject of our sport.

Following discussion Council recognized that Southland was a rural hunting and fishing community and as such may look at animal welfare a little differently than other regions which had become progressively more urbanised.

Council recognised the need to ensure anglers behaved ethically in their treatment of sports fish and supported the development of a policy on Catch and Release.

The Manager would respond to NZ Council that the “Southland Council encourages and supports the development of a Catch and Release Policy. Such a policy should take the form of a voluntary code of conduct.

Land occupier Licence – free licence to fish & hunt – reply to NZC by 25th November 2016.

The Manager noted that with waterfowl hunting in particular, and also changes in land ownership and the nature of the ownership, it was becoming difficult defining the definition of owner/occupier. Southland staff dealt with a number of instances over opening weekend of the game season where people assumed they were covered by the occupier privilege, but in fact weren't.

If this licence was available there would be benefits to both parties. Owner/occupiers' would have clarity that they would have the occupier privilege and we would be able to directly communicate with our hunters on issues, such as the recent changes in Health and Safety reforms. We could survey them throughout the harvest and also advocate on their behalf for issues of interest like recreational access in the latest Water Plan 2020. Being able to reassure farmers and provide information could only be of benefit to both parties.

We currently do not know the percentage of landowners who were waterfowl hunters.

The Manager would reply to NZ Council that the Southland Council supported the free licence for land occupier's to hunt and fish.

Rationale: We could advocate on their behalf and also collect survey information on this significant portion of our hunters and directly communicate on issues of interest e.g. Health & Safety law changes.

Preparation of a Resource Management strategy – reply to NZC by 23rd September 2016.

Brought about by the amount of licence holders monies being spent on resource management.

There was a need to have structures in place to assess applications against and to support the Managers with decisions. More clarity wanted on funding issues and priorities. Council agreed more independence was needed

Council agreed that a draft strategy was required and agreed to support it to the next stage.

The Manager would respond to NZ Council that “The Southland Council recognised the need to develop an approach that allowed more independent consideration of the appropriateness of RM expenditure. The Southland Council see the draft RM Strategy as a significant step toward achieving this and they support NZ Council's adoption of a finalized version”.

Functions for Standard Operation Procedure treatment – reply to NZC memo by 25th November 2016

Raised at the Governors forum 2 years ago. Councils were not giving staff clear & concise messages across the country to carry out functions. Now at next stage where staff undertake tasks in accordance with SOP. Staff were to advise council what tasks would benefit from SOP's. Staff to prioritise their top five to assist Council. Further discussion to develop this at the October meeting.

The Manager noted that when preparing budgets we don't have a process to measure the appropriateness of certain expenditure against. If we had better SOP's and started targeting specific areas, we would be able to sort out inappropriate expenditure in some regions. When a region asked for monies from the fund, the managers would be able to ask about other budget items and get clarity and explanations to justify expenditure. There would be financial implications too. For example, some Councils spend plenty on accounting fees and some spend very little. There were discrepancies which need to be addressed and this would help.

Outcome - Staff to work on priorities & report for discussion at next meeting in October.

2015 Regional F & G Council Elections – feedback to NZC by 23rd September 2016

Council discussed the report from the Returning Officer. Licence holders should have a majority say in the electing of councils. It had been noted that social media had become very important for candidates standing last election as it allowed them to connect with the licence holders.

Concerns raised about the postal system being very slow now and this was an issue that needed to be rectified.

Outcome – Zane was to respond to NZ Council that “Southland Council considered the report from the Returning Officer and supported his recommendations”.

General Business:

Don Rood (NZ Council, Communications Manager) spoke on:-

Fish & Games public awareness strategy

Changes in public awareness & perceptions of Fish & Game

Development of ‘partnership programs’, local vs national

Don gave an overview of his role and what it encompassed. He informed Council about the redevelopment of the website and how it was used by the public and licence holders. The analytics on the website told us a lot about who were using our website and what they were looking for on it. For example women were looking at our website regarding environmental issues. This was very positive for F&G, as we were seen as fighting for the good of the environment in the eyes of the public.

Social media was being used more. Richard Cosgrove put up the Montrose Hatchery video and there were 28,000 views within days. Facebook could be targeted with no extra cost. Twitter was used by a lot of the dairy farmers and by environmentalists. We have been reaching 60-70 thousand people per month using Facebook and Twitter.

The Gamebird Food Festival is good publicity through Fairfax media. Seven Sharp had a story on Pukeko and this reached 40 thousand people through this channel. There was a broader message of why do we hunt and fish, which was to put food on the table.

Targeting rural media and Farmers weekly, was helpful for the work safe campaign and helped with Federated Farmers coming on board regarding access through private land.

The website could have links for the F & G magazine online and social media.

Partnership with Local Government NZ for upcoming elections. Fish & Game was recognised as a creditable and powerful organisation with good reach. What was wanted was a higher voter turnout which last election was approx. 30% of our eligible voters. As a comparison local bodies had an approx. turnout of 42% and national elections of approx. 78%.

Fish & Game have been encouraging people to stand for local body elections and there could be a positive spinoff for the environment along with water quality.

Engaging licence holders by emailing electronic Xmas cards had provided positive feedback.

Getting the message across to licence holders about what we do can be difficult. This could be done through the magazine each year with some licence holders getting one for the fish season and one for the game season. Gradually changing the design and style of the magazine would enhance the content for licence holders.

Support for clean water in our lakes and rivers was now becoming mainstream and accepted in everyday society. Fish & Game have been working with the Tourism industry to get them to embrace our clean water and environment message. Tourism was becoming a bigger income earner than dairy and other farming sectors and there was no reason why we couldn't have both.

Cr Stenning asked when a person clicked on the link on our website for the newsletter ‘Both Barrel’s and Reel Life’ could Fish and Game monitor how many people accessed them.

Don responded by informing the council that figures could be provided and broken down in region etc. These newsletter communications were available to all licence holders if they wished to provide F&G with their email address and opt to receive them.

Cr Owen asked how Sthld F & G could best identify to our licence holders what we were about. People see so many different sides of F&G. He suggested that if we picked a couple of things to focus on and promoted that, would people understand better what we did.

Don replied that encouraging people to take part in fishing and hunting was a message we were pushing and along with the current trends of hunting, foraging and gathering (paleo diet) there was more of an interest in wild caught foods and how to cook them.

Other businesses/companies wanted to work with us because they supported what we do and wanted to be associated with us. The shotgun patterning posters were a really good Fish & Game initiative sponsored by Remington. Our Fish & Game magazine comes out with the Hunting and Fishing catalogue included.

Our website can assist getting information of what we do out to people and we can have new content added to keep it fresh and interesting.

Cr Owen commented that licence holders wanted to know what we did with the money they paid for their licence. We want them to be happy and wanting to pay their licence fee, because we were doing a good job.

We don't do a good job of promoting our science. We have very good scientists working for us and we do a lot of good research. Showing the public where and what we are spending on for example, the mallard research, water quality and drift diving are all good interesting topics.

Each region has its own speciality. Central SI had canals, Southland had ducks, Otago F&G had a large backcountry fishery and quails. This was being promoted by the Red Stags Hunters Club TV series. One of their episodes was on fly fishing and Southland featured with sea trout fishing so we were sponsoring part of that. In return we get a spot in the middle of it to push a message like how to land a fish properly and how to release it.

Partnerships – DOC had done partnerships, not always successfully. For Fish & Game it could be very labour intensive and very costly, not 100% successful. Being a statutory organisation Fish & Game had to be careful with associations. Would Fish & Game get the credit it deserved from partnerships?

The Chairman asked if the Southland Council was approached, should we look at it from a more national approach depending on what it was.

The reply was that advice would be available from NZ Council on that.

A predator programme was really good for publicity. Could also use Battle for the birds, not in the bush but in wetlands. Could look at partnering with other regions.

The Chairman questioned how quickly the website was being revamped?

The developers had been working on the website with F & G now for 3 months.

2017/18 Second Schedule Angler Notice Review – Any Council & staff recommendations to advertise and call for submissions. (Report on singlehooks v treble hooks attached)

Zane said at the last meeting it was suggested that we look at banning treble hooks. Cohen had since completed a literature review of all the studies that have been done on the subject including international studies. All the literature noted that treble hooks did not have a significant effect on the subsequent survival of trout. A much bigger influence was how the fish were handled before and during release, how warm the water was and the depth of water the fish were caught in. Treble versus single hooks was not a significant issue in the studies, with the recommendation being to focus on educating anglers around the appropriate treatment of fish.

Staff had received a couple of comments from anglers concerned with the Upper Oreti River regulations. Staff had started recording changes in habitat in the Upper Oreti. Pool sizes had reduced in size, quality and depth. Drift diving had shown changes in habitat, those changes in habitat rather than angler harvest was having effects on populations. Stu Sutherland in a previous survey found 90% of the fish caught on the Upper Oreti were released.

Cr Cochrane asked for a possible bag reduction on the Aparima between the Hamilton Burn down to the Wreys Bush bridge.

However staff were not proposing any changes but things could change on the Upper Oreti, depending on the cycleway decision.

Items for the next Council meeting discussion:

- Executive committee tabled for next meeting. The Chairman had been in contact with Robert Sowman.
- Next meeting to be in the location of 17 Eye Street Invercargill.

The Chairman thanked Richard Cosgrove and Don Rood for coming down South and giving an informative talk about social media.

There was no further discussion and the meeting was closed at 10.02pm.

Chairman _____ Date _____