

WELLINGTON FISH & GAME COUNCIL

MINUTES OF MEETING OF THE WELLINGTON FISH & GAME COUNCIL, HELD ON TUESDAY 11 FEBRUARY 2020 AT 3.00PM AT HOTEL COACHMAN, 140 FITZHERBERT AVENUE, PALMERSTON NORTH.

1. Present:

Chairman Strato Cotsilinis, Councillors Malcolm Francis, Jim Cook, Colin Shore, Chris O'Meara, John Hancock, Aaron Passey, Don Scott, Paul Shortis.

2. In Attendance:

Staff: Phil Teal (Regional Manager), Dr Matt Kavermann, Hamish Carnachan, Dr David Pontin.

Licenceholders: Lee Cook, Roger Smaile, Marc Flaws, John Davenport, Mike Patterson, Daniel Merritt (part: from 7:05pm), Jennifer Yanko (part: from 7:05pm), Scott Jamieson (part: from 5:30pm) Dan Wyman (part: from 7:05pm)

Horizons Regional Council (part: from 5:30pm to 6:10pm): Chairman Rachel Keedwell, Councillors David Cotton, Allan Bowman, Sam Furgeson, Michael McCartney (Chief Executive), Dr Nic Peet (Group Manager Strategy and Regulation)

3. Apologies:

Councillors Andy Tannock, Andrew McGregor, Richard McIntyre

It was moved

that apologies be accepted

Malcolm Francis/Chris O'Meara

Carried

Welcome to Public and Confirmation of Agenda

Chairman Cotsilinis welcomed members of the public and invited them to discuss any specific issues during the public forum item of the agenda.

4. Conflict of Interest

There were no additional conflicts of interest that were identified specific to the agenda.

5. **Minutes of Previous Meeting of 3 December 2019:**

Chairman Cotsilinis acknowledged Councillor Francis for chairing the meeting of 3 December 2019. After brief discussion it was moved that

the Minutes of the meeting of the Wellington Fish & Game Council of 3 December 2019 be approved as a true and correct record of the proceedings of that meeting.

Aaron Passey/Jim Cook

Carried

6. **Matters Arising:**

Mr Teal provided a brief overview of the consenting process for *Zealandia* to remove sports fish using rotenone from the lower reservoir at Karori Wildlife Centre and had been progressed by Greater Wellington Regional Council. Mr Teal noted that several suggested conditions were added to the draft consent application and that several recommendations were also made for *Zealandia* to follow up (but was at their discretion as to whether they would act on those). Wellington Fish and Game Council had focused on the process having considered the special characteristics of the site. It was concluded that a better understanding and working relationship with the GWRC Consenting Group was required to ensure Fish and Game were considered an affected party when sports fish are affected.

Dr David Pontin provided an overview of a sabbatical programme offered to secondary school science teachers by the Royal Society, whereby there is a six-month placement with an organisation to look at application of science in practical situations.

Discussion ensued on the interchange of letters from NZ Council chairman with Chairman Cotsilinis regarding interpretation of the three regional Fish and Game Council audits. Councillor Passey reaffirmed that the most recent letter sent by Chairman Cotsilinis did a better job in encapsulating the findings of the auditor(s) than the NZC interpretation provided.

Councillor Scott reassessed the issues investigated in the audits and that they had been known for some time but there was no internal action undertaken by NZC (and needed DOC intervention on two audits). The findings for all three audits found:

- North Canterbury - no illegal practices but a potentially unethical practice – major changes made to rectify any issues (ten actions fully or part completed).
- Hawke's Bay – no illegal practices but could have done better in managing employment culture.
- Central South Island – conflicts of interest managed adequately – minor governance improvements recommended.

Discussion ensued that NZC, by inference, considered that these three regions have significant governance issues warranting a wider organisational review. This led to councillors questioning what NZ Council's intentions for the form of the organisation were, particularly in overlapping spheres of operation and control. It was concluded that many regional Fish and Game Councils have misgivings about how the NZ Council's tactics and actions are influencing how the organisation's direction and composition is being defined.

Councillor Passey noted that it was vital that the audits were undertaken independently to avoid personal agendas, and that being 13 separate entities it would require legislative changes to make significant change to the organisation's structure. It was noted that NZ Council had an audit function specifically noted in legislation which can be used to investigate specific issues or undertake operational audits covering aspects in functional areas. It was noted that from the public perception that three external audits had been undertaken in one year, two of which could have been conducted internally.

The meeting schedule was confirmed.

Chairman Cotsilinis noted that there would be a delegation from Horizons Regional Council to meet with Wellington Fish and Game Council to re-establish links for an improved working relationship – on a governance and staff level. Mr Teal noted that Councillor McIntyre had been instrumental in seeking interest from Horizons Regional Council to engage in such a meeting.

7. Public Forum

Marc Flaws noted that the numbers of black swan in the Wairarapa lake area, and in Porirua Harbour were locally high, and requested that this be considered in the following year's game season condition deliberations.

There were no other items brought forward by the public.

8. New Zealand Fish and Game Council Business

Councillor Shortis noted that a cost benefit analysis had been done on legal support but this would likely be confidential to NZ Council councillors.

Councillor McIntyre had confirmed following the NZ Council/Regional governors meeting that the agenda for the Governors meeting had changed, as was dominated by a presentation from North Canterbury F&GC Chairman

and subsequent discussions on the need for wider review of the Fish and Game organisation.

Dr Kavermann noted that the Game Bird Habitat Trust appointees had been confirmed.

9. Health and Safety Reporting

After brief discussion it was moved that

Council receive the Health and Safety Report for December and January 2019

Malcolm Francis/Colin Shore

Carried

10. Game Regulation Recommendations

Dr Kavermann provided an overview of the aerial surveys completed in January – the results and interpretations had already been distributed to councillors for email feedback for early February deadline to advise the Minister of recommendations. He noted that the black swan population in the Wellington region was stable at about 5000 birds – although slightly down on the western side of the range, there were more birds in the Whanganui area that compensated for such. There were also high numbers in Porirua Harbour (not included in the trend counts) and in the Nelson/Marlborough area. Numbers were stable in the Lake Wairarapa area.

Marc Flaws requested that Council consider some more liberal options for hunters – as he considered most hunters don't target swan so those that do could do so sustainably with more liberal options. Dr Kavermann noted that Wellington Fish and Game had not received many complaints of swan being of nuisance value. He further noted that Fish and Game could promote swan hunting in the weekly hunting newsletters and other information to licence holders, as had been done in the past with pukeko. It was agreed that promoting of hunting of black swan in specific areas be promoted.

It was moved

Council reaffirms their previous recommendations for black swan season conditions to Minister for the 2020 game season

Chris O'Meara/Malcolm Francis

Carried

Dr Kavermann gave a brief overview of the trend counts for paradise shelduck in the region –being slightly down in number but still a predominant component of disturbance permits due to their aggregating nature.

The seven-year trends for both for the eastern and western sites indicate a slight decline.

It was moved

Council reaffirms their previous recommendations for regulation conditions for paradise shelduck being 10 bird daily limit and 8 week duration of season

Chris O'Meara/Jim Cook

Carried

11. Strategic Overview

Mr Teal gave an overview of strategic discussions summaries of previous years and several issues that have arisen or are current from the last year.

Dr Kavermann noted that Dr Pontin may be able to assist Wellington Fish and Game Council in further developing a youth engagement programme and fitting into the school curriculum.

Roger Smaile considered that a softer approach to communications in dealing with farmers was preferable. He also thought a communications outcome should be focused on being able to demonstrate to the public what positive things Fish and Game do - for the public good and for licenceholders.

Councillor Francis noted that habitat management issues remain critically important such as concerns on habitat loss on the Waikanae River with gravel build up which as in-filled several pools. He gave further details of this example noting that GWRC had consent to remove gravel but hadn't exercised it for the last ten years. He requested that Fish and Game take a proactive response to river managers to make positive actions for trout habitat management. It was noted that control of the river management activities per se were often out of Fish & Game's control, but proactive advocacy was worth pursuing.

Councillor Scott considered that access for a range of participants with disabilities (including older participants) – and finding waters with easy access a reasonable chance of catching success (potentially stocking a reservoir site). He cited the examples of enhancing novice fishing opportunities at Hokowhitu Lagoon, Henley Lake, Otaki lake, and Duddings Lake – and concluded “nothing breeds success like success”.

Councillor Shortis noted that we should remove the option of investigating salmon population increase in the Rangitikei River system – as it was considered that salmon opportunistically entered the catchment system but

had not generated a self-sustaining population. This was not a strategic outcome but was from the strategic scan undertaken previously.

Discussion ensued on Lake Wairarapa lake management – regarding contestable funds and making sure that monitoring by external agencies is fit for purpose.

12. Draft Communications Strategy – NZ Council

Chairman Cotsilinis noted that Wellington Fish and Game Council had received a copy of the confidential draft Communications Strategy but the reporting date was 2 April 2020. He requested that this item be considered in detail at the next Council meeting in March and for issues and ideas to be defined for meaningful discuss. After brief discussion it was also considered useful for Wellington Council to provide alternative ways of looking at the Communications Strategy from a wider organisational perspective including from a regional perspective.

13. R3 – Marketing Update

Mr Teal provided an overview of regional initiatives undertaken including emailing in late December those that had not yet purchased a licence with information (reactivation), and those that had already purchased a licence with information links on access and ‘how to tutorials’ etc.

Mr Teal noted that there was no longer any generic radio advertising over the summer period which NZC had previously initiated.

He further noted that Mr Carnachan had produced newsletter and magazine articles with R3 aspects in mind, but we are unsure of how the R3 perspectives will be included in the pre-game season Fish and Game magazine for other content.

Councillor Francis considered that there could be an allocation in the budget process to promote Fish and Game. Concerns were expressed that little progress appeared to have been made on R3 programme given that NZC had a dedicated position to undertake R3 programme development, co-ordination, and provide guidance. It was agreed that any constructive comments would be assembled to potentially send to a NZ Council meeting for discussion.

After further discussion it was moved that

Council receive the report on the R3 Programme for February 2020

Jim Cook/Malcolm Francis

Carried

14. Zealandia – Consent Application to Remove Sports Fish with Rotenone

Mr Teal briefly reiterated the summary of actions since the meeting on 3 December 2019, with Fish and Game giving approval after several conditions were included in the consent application. He drew to the attention of Council that the key element for this project was establishing a consistent process. The establishment of a memorandum of understanding with the regional council consents group was seen as important so that Fish and Game were seen as an affected party in any dealings with sports fish and/or game birds. In this case it appeared that Fish and Game were being actively excluded. It was further agreed that NZ Fish and Game Council being informed that this could easily arise in other regions and that co-ordination of MOUs with Fish and Game regions and regional councils warranted proactive policy development.

It was then moved that

the report on the consenting process for perch report from Karori Reservoir (lower) and subsequent approval be received, and that NZ F&GC be advised that there are concerns on how regional councils are determining affected party status and development of MOUs with regional councils would be worth pursuing.

Aaron Passey/John Hancock

Carried

15. Policy Review Update

Council reviewed the timetable for policy review and noted that the Governance General Policy would be deferred and that the latest version of Central South Island Fish and Game Council's Governance Policy would be reviewed.

It is also anticipated that North Canterbury F&GC may also submit a post - review summary after one year of audit report's release – which outlined the learnings and implementation of changes.

16. Action Plan for Healthy Rivers

Mr Teal gave a brief overview of the proposed timetable for consideration of the release of the NPS and NES in June. Mr Teal noted that exceptional work undertaken by Dr Canning prior to moving to Australia, in completing a summary document of information tabled at various stages of the STAG group for the working parties on the Healthy Rivers process.

It was moved

Council receive the report on Action Plan for Healthy Rivers - February 2020

Jim Cook/Chris O'Meara

Carried

17. Draft Sports fish Game Management Plan

It was noted that some additional details suggested by councillors would be incorporated for consideration at the next meeting. It was clarified that there are two meetings per year between the NZ Council governors and the regional Fish and Game Council Chairmen – known as the Governors Meeting.

18. Western Region Resource Consent Applications

Mr Teal confirmed that Wellington Fish and Game Council had withdrawn its right to be heard for the Hutt and Wainuiomata river aspects of the consent, but the Otaki and Waikanae river sections were still being actively discussed. He also noted that he had not been advised of the final outcome of the need for a hearing and/or whether all parties had withdrawn their right to be heard to allow for easier processing.

It was moved that

Council receive the report on Western Region Resource Consent Applications- February 2020

Malcolm Francis/Aaron Passey

Carried

19. One Plan - Plan Change 2 - Update

Mr Teal provided a brief update noting that the submissions and further submissions had been received and that hearing was proposed for April or May this year – with pre-hearing meetings anticipated. He noted that some funding had been made available from the regional legal fund pool.

It was moved that

Council receive the report on One Plan – Plan Change 2: February 2020

Jim Cook/Chris O’Meara

Carried

20. Informal Forum with Horizons Regional Council

At 5:30pm Chairman Cotsilinis welcomed the delegation from Horizons Regional Council : Chairman Rachel Keedwell, Councillors David Cotton, Allan Bowman, Sam Furgeson, Michael McCartney (Chief Executive), Dr Nic Peet (Group Manager Strategy and Regulation).

After introductions from governors and staff, various topics were canvassed to seek situations where both organisations can work together better and collaboratively.

The meeting was suspended at 6:10 pm for dinner, and most of the Horizons Regional Council delegation joined the Fish and Game Council.

The meeting reconvened at 7.05pm.

The Horizons Regional Council councillors and staff left the meeting.

Dr Dave Pontin left the meeting.

Daniel Merritt, Dan Wyman, Scott Jamieson, and Jennifer Yanko joined the meeting.

21. Wairarapa Water Irrigation Project Update

Councillor Shortis provided a brief update on the Wairarapa Water Ltd who are continuing to advance the dam proposal with an injection \$7 million for preparation work. The Wairarapa Regional Development Group has been working on a Water Resilience Council Strategy with a decision by August expected to support the dam concept. This would be used to garner full support by the district councils. It was pointed out that there have been:

- No environmental impact assessments
- Not a done deal – as iwi are still considering the options
- The entire water scheme might need a lift of 70m so further energy requirements needed to be determined.

These issues were recognised as being highly political in the Wairarapa but it was noted that \$17 million had already been spent.

It was then moved that

***Council receive the report on Wairarapa Water Irrigation Project:
February 2020***

Jim Cook/Chris O'Meara

Carried

22. Recognition of Contribution Banding Crew

Mr Teal drew to the attention of Council a core group of volunteers that had assisted staff with banding on the western Manawatu sites: Daniel Merritt, Lee Cook, Dan Wyman, Scott Jamieson, and Jennifer Yanko.

Mr Teal then presented Daniel Merritt with a contribution award to Daniel Merritt who had contributed volunteer effort for the last five years which was greatly appreciated by staff and council (acclamation).

23. Lake Wairarapa Update

Mr Teal provided an update on

- Request from GWRC at late notice to use an electric fishing boat in Wairarapa Moana area which might catch sports fish.
- The report prepared by Nathan Field on management requirements for Kilmore Lodge. Paul Browne had recently done some additional work – with the most outstanding need to replace the mattresses.
- Dr Kavermann noted that he attended the Ecological Society conference in December with a rebuttal on the interpretations of fish dynamics in Bartons Lagoon following perch and trout removal.
- Overview of Nathan Field work, seeking aerial shots of maimai examples, and location register.
- Meetings attended by staff (and councillors) – JK Donald Wetland – Water management – willows blocking water courses – and other aspects of weir management
- Walkway proposed by DoC adjacent to Simmonds Wetland boundary has been confirmed that it needs a resource consent – so assume we would be an affected party given we are an adjacent landowner.

It was then moved that

***Council receive the report on Lake Wairarapa Project Updates:
February 2020***

Jim Cook/Chris O’Meara

Carried

24. Research Update

Mr Teal gave a brief overview of the work that Dr Canning had been involved in prior to leaving for Australia, and he confirmed that most of the practical work had been completed. Dr Canning still wished to publish some scientific papers from this work in collaboration with other contributors. Professor Russell Death had offered to oversee any final requirements for completion of the studies in NZ and assist with their completion.

It was then moved that

Council receive the report on Research Updates: February 2020

Malcolm Francis/Paul Shortis

Carried

25. Junior/ Novice Participation

Mr Teal briefly confirmed that a significant number of two year old rainbow trout had been lost at Ngongotaha hatchery following an extreme weather event and that stock at Turangi hatchery was also at low levels due to lower numbers and predation by shags. This had necessitated the cancellation of the Otaki Family Fishing Day and severally curtails operations at the Capital Trout Centre.

Councillor Francis confirmed that the funds for the Otaki promotions had been returned.

Councillor Scott noted that Manawatu Freshwater Anglers had an over expenditure of \$779 from their exercise at Hokowhitu Lagoon, Palmerston North, which would be covered by club funds

It was then moved that

Council receive the report on Junior / Novice Participation: February 2020

Colin Shore/Don Scott

Carried

26. Access Issues

Dr Kavermann provide a summary of boundary ownership near Birchville. The owner had been supportive of angling but was aware of the ownership rights. It was agreed that Fish and Game would request to negotiate semi-formal agreement for access points as a courtesy and goodwill to maintain the access. Dr Kavermann also noted that Te Marua Golf Club continued to allow anglers access along the river edge and it was agreed that Council should write a letter to acknowledge and provide thanks to the golf club for this access continuance.

Mr Teal provided a brief overview of potential forest sites in eastern Wairarapa that might become available on a limited basis to upland game hunters. There was a potential to establish a more sustainable pheasant population by releasing year old birds, but the suitability of the sites, and whether required or not, needs to be assessed this year. It was anticipated that any supplementary birds would be required from 2021 at the earliest.

It was then moved that

Council receive the report on Access Issue: February 2020

Aaron Passey/Colin Shore

Carried

27. Management Report – 1 December 2019 to 31 January 2020

Mr Teal confirmed the diligence of the staff to complete the drift dives on schedule.

Mr Teal undertook to send Councillor Francis any update reports on the river charge frequency for Waikanae River.

Councillor Scott considered that the loss of fish from Ngongotaha hatchery illustrated how exposed we were to one (or two) suppliers of trout, and that it warranted further consideration of producing trout for fish out day and reservoirs. Councillor Shortis reiterated the findings from the Masterton site investigation and confirmed that it was only be viable if there was a good source of water to meet requirements and any funding for a trout hatchery would have to be external in the long term.

Councillor Scott noted that the meial surveys to anglers an dhunters for opinion and satisfaction assessment are useful and can be done regionally. It was agreed that if there were any specific questions that Council may wish to assess licence holder opinion on – then this be defined at a future Council meeting.

It was then moved that

Council receive the Management Report for period 1 December 2019 to 31 January 2020 be received.

Malcolm Francis /Don Scott

Carried

28. Licence Sales report

Mr Teal noted that the fishing licence sales were up slightly compared to the same period last year.

It was then moved that

Fishing Licence Sales Report up until 28 January 2020 be received.

Chris O'Meara /Don Scott

Carried

29. Expenditure Report

Mr Teal noted that the income was slightly above budget and expenditure was just on budget.

It was moved that

Expenditure Reports to 31 December 2019 and Financial Transactions for November and December 2019 be received

Don Scott/Jim Cook

Carried

It was also confirmed

to update the reimbursement rate for use of vehicle be adjusted to 79 cents per kilometre in line with the latest standard vehicle reimbursement rates.

Chris O'Meara/Paul Shortis

Carried

Mr Teal noted that vehicle replacement(s) will be considered in the coming months.

30. Correspondence/Media

After brief discussion it was moved

***Council receive the correspondence and additional media report:
February 2020***

Jim Cook/Colin Shore

Carried

31. Outstanding Recognition Awards

This had been presented earlier and additional names for inclusion sought.

32. Conservation Board

Mr Teal brought to the attention of Council the meeting timetable and potential topics for discussion should a councillor wish to attend. Mr Teal would provide a briefing note to assist if required.

33. General Business

Dr Kavermann noted that he had had discussion with Jason Johnstone on how best to enhance the hunting experiences for novices that attend the Omanu Lake Training programme. Options included Omanu Lake set up prior to season, hunting for 1-2 weekends at Lake Omanu, and then a trip to Wairarapa site(s).

Chairman Cotsilinis alerted those present that the Wellington Flyfishing Club were hosting a visitor from US Trout Unlimited and he was giving a talk on restoring up to 2000 miles of river in New Hampshire – 2nd March at 7.30pm.

Chris O'Meara noted his intended apologies for the meeting on 24 March 2020.

There being no further business the meeting was closed at 8.15pm.

Next Meeting to be held: Club RSA Wairarapa, 20 Essex Street, Masterton on Tuesday 24 March 2020 at 3.00pm

Chairman _____ Date _____