



AGENDA

AUCKLAND/WAIKATO FISH AND GAME COUNCIL

10th December 2022



AUCKLAND/WAIKATO FISH & GAME

**A Meeting of Council will be held at the Waikato Deer Stalkers Hall,
Wairere Drive, Hamilton on Saturday 10 December 2022 commencing
after the completion of the AGM (11.00am)**

AGENDA

	<u>Page</u>
1. Apologies	
2. Possible conflicts of interest arising from meeting agenda	
3. Minutes of the previous meeting held on 15 th October 2022 *	2
4. Matters arising from previous minutes	
5. Game Regulation Review (no earlier than 11.30 am)	
6. Council correspondence *	8
7. Chief Executive's bi-monthly report & financial statements	
6.1 Bi-monthly Chief Executives Report *	9
6.2 Financial Statements *	18
8 Council meeting timetable 2022*	28
9 Wildlife Act Review *	31
1 NZ Council meeting November 2022	
11 Governance Review	34
12 OSH Report *	35
13 General Business	

* Denotes attachments

**N Juby
Chairman**

18/11/22

AUCKLAND/WAIKATO FISH & GAME



Minutes of a Meeting of Council
held at the NZ Deerstalkers Hall, Wairere Dr, Hamilton
on Saturday 15th October 2022 commencing at 11:00am.

PRESENT:

Chairman: G. Annan.

Councillors: N. Juby (by Zoom), C. Sherrard, B. Barnes, D. Cocks,
E. Williamson, M. Barker, G. Dickey.

Staff: B. Wilson, A. Daniel, J. Dyer.

Visitors: P. Hardy (DOC)

1. APOLOGIES:

P. Shaw, T. Clark, D. Klee

It was moved;

that apologies be accepted.

Cocks/Sherrard – CARRIED

2. POSSIBLE CONFLICTS OF INTEREST ARISING FROM MEETING AGENDA:

Nil.

3. MINUTES OF PREVIOUS MEETINGS OF 20th August 2022:

Councillor Barnes stated that his explanation on the role of NZ Council committees should be amended with the addition that “Individual committees have no authority and must report back to the NZ Council”

It was moved;

that the minutes of the previous meetings of 20th August 2022 as amended be accepted as true and correct records.

Cocks/Dickey – CARRIED

4. MATTERS ARISING FROM PREVIOUS MINUTES:

Councillor Williamson raised his concern that the NZ Council letter to DOC on the review of the Wildlife Act didn't fully articulate or promote that there were differing positions between Fish & Game councils on game preserves. Councillor Williamson considered it crucial that changes to the Act did not restrict Council's ability to refuse consent for

preserves. Councillor Cocks agreed and reminded Councillors that once the new Act had been drafted it would be difficult to impose changes.

Mr Wilson emphasised that the process was not a review of the existing Act but the creation of a new Act from scratch. This would be a long process with plenty of opportunity for public input.

It was agreed that the review of the Wildlife Act would be placed on the agenda for the December meeting.

In reply to a question, Mr Wilson stated that he had received only two enquires from licence holders who were interested in becoming rangers. Councillor Barnes asked whether the North Shore Fly Fishers Club had been notified. Mr Wilson replied that he was unsure but would check. Councillor Dickey advised that Council's wetland groups should also be asked for potential applicants.

Councillor Williamson said that Mr Klee's report on the 2023 game regulations should be a simple report that provided clear statements on the impacts of potential changes without any regression analysis.

5. COUNCIL CORRESPONDENCE:

The letter from the Franklin Acclimatisation Society was tabled. Mr Wilson updated Councillors on the ballot for the ponds in the McKenzie and Piggott wetlands that had been carried out the previous week by a Justice of Peace.

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

6.1 Bi-monthly Chief Executives Report

Councillor Williamson congratulated Mr Klee on his excellent project on the Pungapunga Wetland, which the Councillor considered to be a good use of F&G resources.

Mr Wilson updated Councillors on the issues with the ABCD Flax Block.

In reply to a question, Mr Dyer stated that he had assisted in the capture of 3-4 fernbirds in mist nets near Council's Bethell's wetland.

Dr Daniel provided further elucidation on conservation lots for access, noting that it was already Council policy that in proposed district plan proceedings, and where possible elsewhere, Council advocates for the right of landowners to receive an additional title for placing covenants across private land to allow public access to rivers, lakes and wetlands.

Dr Daniel updated Councillors on issues with the Mangatutu Stream. The adjacent landowner had requested a meeting with DOC over their refusal to lease out riparian land for farming. Dr Daniel had asked to attend the meeting.

6.2 Financial Statements

Mr Wilson noted that Genesis Energy had not yet paid their mitigation payment for the 2021/22 year.

It was moved;

that the Chief Executive's Bimonthly Report and Financial Statements be accepted.

Cocks/Williamson – CARRIED

7. **NON RESIDENT LEVY:**

After discussion, it was moved;

- **That NZ Council be informed that Council supports the status quo.**
- **That NZ Council be informed that Council recommends that prior notification of expenditure from the regional non-resident reserves is no longer desirable.**

Cocks/Barker – CARRIED

8. **NZ COUNCIL MEETING TIMETABLE:**

Councillor Williamson observed that the 9th of March was a comparatively early date for the game licences to go on sale.

It was moved;

that Council approves the proposed meeting schedule.

Cocks/Williamson – CARRIED

9. **NZ COUNCIL MEETING AUGUST 2022:**

Mr Wilson expressed his disappointment that he had not yet received a copy of the NZ Council minutes for the August meeting. Councillor Barnes reported that he also had not received a copy of the minutes, despite being a NZ Councillor. He emphasised that NZ Councillors were also concerned at the delay in distributing the minutes.

Councillor Barnes updated Councillors on issues discussed at the NZ Council meeting including the Governance Review, where the consultative report was now with DOC, and the REM strategy that was underway. Councillor Juby congratulated Councillor Barnes for his election to the NZ Council Executive Committee.

Councillor Juby informed Councillors on the recent Chair's meeting to discuss the Governance Review. He had subsequently talked to the Northland Chair about the potential for amalgamating the two regions. Councillor Cocks stressed the importance of Northland licence holders having Council representation. Councillor Juby agreed to prepare a draft MOU on principles for amalgamation.

The meeting rose for lunch at 1:10pm and resumed at 1:40pm.

10. POLICY REVIEW:

It was agreed that reference to Canada Geese in policy dated 5/8/06 could be deleted as the policy had been superseded by the policy dated 5/5/2020.

It was moved;

that Council reaffirms existing policies with amendment to policy dated 5/8/06.

Cocks/Barnes – CARRIED

11. STERILE TROUT STOCKING REPORT:

In reply to a question, Dr Danial stated that it should be known by March 2023 whether the sterile trout stocking programme was successful. At that time, he expected that sterile fish would be larger and more numerous than their non-sterile counterparts.

12. 2022 DRIFT DIVE SURVEYS:

The report on the 2022 Drift Dive Surveys was tabled. Councillor Williamson recommended that a plan should be developed to manage and enhance individual priority fisheries. Such a plan would consider threats and opportunities. Councillor Barnes recommended that staff should identify priority fisheries. Mr Wilson reminded Councillors that significant fisheries had been identified in the Sports Fish and Game Management Plan.

It was moved;

that staff develop a management plan for one river fishery.

Cocks/Williamson – CARRIED

The Chairman thanked Dr Daniel for his report.

13. OSH REPORT:

It was moved;

that the OSH report for October 2022 is accepted.

Barnes/Sherrard – CARRIED

14. GENERAL BUSINESS:

Councillor Dickey tabled a list of three questions.

1. *What was the procedure for ponds being balloted?*

Mr Wilson replied that licence holders could request to be added to a list held at the office of those interested in future ballots. This request could be made, either by contacting the office, or using the on-line form on the Fish and Game website. However, Mr Wilson agreed that more publicity about ballots would be desirable and thus an article would be prepared for the next pre-season game magazine on the ballot process.

2. *Could correspondence sent out to licence holders also be sent to councillors.*

Mr Wilson agreed that this should be standard procedure.

3. *Sense of belonging – could research be carried out on the number of years licence holders have purchased a licence and maybe a 10, 20, 30-year fish and game band sent out.*

Mr Wilson regretfully reported that the licence database only went back seven years. He was however happy to produce a statistical report for a future Council meeting on licence holder churn.

Councillor Barker expressed his concern over the imposition of new national regulations and requirements for clay bird ranges. These shoots were the very important “glue” that held game hunter associations together. He noted that while the NZCTA was assisting its clubs, nothing was being done to assist Fish & Game clubs.

It was suggested that the number of clubs that still held formal shoots on non-NZCTA ranges were small. Mr Wilson also noted that the NZ Council staff had no expertise in this area. Mr Wilson agreed to discuss with staff whether this was an issue with our clubs and how we could provide assistance.

Councillor Williamson reported on the success that Shaun Everett was having using 2-door cage traps catching 3 ferrets, 1 cat, 1 possum and a hedgehog in just one week. It was agreed that this would be a good article for next year’s pre-season game magazine.

Councillor Juby provided an update on the recent Chair’s Meeting. He emphasised that most Chairs were pushing for Fish & Game to move more quickly on the Governance Review, especially in regard to amalgamations. He asked Councillors whether they were happy for him to continue attending these meetings and emphasised that his position was not to make decisions on behalf of Council.

Councillors agreed that they had no objection to Councillor Juby attending the chair meetings.

P. Hardy, A. Daniel and J. Dyer left the meeting at 2.40pm.

15. COUNCIL GOVERNANCE REPORTS:

It was moved;

That further to section 48 of the Local Government Official Information and Meetings Act 1987 the public be excluded from the following parts of the proceedings of this meeting, namely discussions on the annual Governance Report.

Cocks/Dickey – CARRIED

2.40 pm

It was moved;

That Council move out of committee

Dickey/Williamson – CARRIED

3.10 pm

There being no further business the meeting concluded at 3:10pm.

From: Ian Hazlewood <gadgetsnz@xtra.co.nz>
Sent: Thursday, 27 October 2022 12:04 pm
To: Roslyn Simmonds <rsimmonds@fishandgame.org.nz>
Subject: RE: working bee

Hi Roslyn,

Thanks for the general authority.

I would like the council to consider changing clause 2 off the general authority.

We are wanting to try limiting the numbers of others coming to Piggott block in the first 2 weeks as we feel it is unfair that we do all the work, pay our money to support our society that pays for pest control weed spraying and lawn mowing, and others enter at your approval.

However if we are all in our Mai Mai's there is no fixed stands available for others to shoot from under F&G rules.

We seem to get others walking around making it dangerous when we do not see them while shooting, also they create a disturbance just standing or walking in the access ways.

Regards Ian

Bi-Monthly Chief Executive's Report December 2022

Zoom meetings:

The Government has announced that the Epidemic Preparedness Notice is being revoked. This Notice amended the Local Government Official Information and Meetings Act to permit online meetings of local government and other entities (incl. F&G Councils). Once revoked we will revert to the prior legislation, which requires in person Council meetings for any decisions to be made. Effectively we return to pre-Covid status quo.

OUTPUT 1: SPECIES MANAGEMENT

Project 1112: Banding/Shoveler Counts

Shoveler Survey: Recommendations and a summary of this year's Shoveler Survey are given in the report *Game Bird Hunting Regulation Review 2022*.

Auckland Airport swan research: A black swan with a neck collar, shot in Canterbury, was displayed on the NZ Waterfowler closed Facebook page. This caused questions to be asked within F&G. John Dyer's investigation uncovered that it was part of a Canterbury University study. There are plans to track and also neck collar black swans in this region. This report points to the sort of problems that high visibility neck collars can cause. The ones to be used here will be most likely be black with white writing.

At his own expense John recently imported a Bal Chatri trap from the USA. This small light trap was originally used by falconers in East India where this now widely known and used trap style was first named. It has a cage within the trap to protect the sparrow/s or mice being used as bait. The technique is to drive around until a bird of prey is seen at roost, the truck door is quickly opened, and the trap smartly placed next to it where it can be easily seen. The trapper then retreats to a nearby vantage point with their binoculars at ready. Response is usually quick. The trap has a series of fine nylon nooses all over it and the hawk trying to get in quickly tangles their feet. However, it can then be released by the trapper who quickly intercedes. A heavy attached weight ensures the hawk doesn't fly off with the expensive trap. John is qualified to band hawks and Mangere airport are working with him to do so, incidental to some joint gamebird research.

How does one restrain 10 swans until they can be banded and fitted with radio-trackers. Why, with swan jackets of course. 10 of these canvas Velcro closed jackets are ready for collection, to be used in the Mangere swan study. Dr Murray Williams used these in years past and an example was sent to John by the Banding Department in Wellington as a sample to copy. The photo is direct from Murray. Swan numbers vary considerably throughout the year in Manukau Harbour, but recently peaked at 15,000. People hunting then need to completely avoid the restricted entry zone around the airport.



Photo: Historic photo of swan in restraining jacket waiting to be banded. 10 more of these jackets have just been commissioned as part of the Mangere swan research.

Project 1121: Harvest Assessment: Fish

Trout tagging: Mangatutu fish tags are rolling in but unfortunately there is a low number due to many anglers not measuring fish. A reminder on how to measure fish was sent out to anglers.

Project 1122: Harvest Assessment: Game

Game Bird Hunting Regulation Review: David Klee has prepared the game regulations review which was sent as a separate document (*Game Bird Hunting Regulation Review 2022*).

Pheasant hunter survey: In the past we have not phoned surveyed hunters in August. This year John Dyer surveyed 121 gamebird hunters in August with the following results:

- 7 hunted pheasants only.
- 4 hunted pheasants and pukeko.
- 8 hunted pukeko only.
- 1 hunted quail (travelling to Eastern) and pheasants.

Because we have never asked this question about the whole of the gamebird season, we did not until now have a total percentage number of pheasant hunters, just monthly percentages for May-July. John asked all 121 hunters about the whole 2022 gamebird season. Keep in mind a few were sick with Covid or other medical issues, so the total might otherwise have been slightly higher. 40% is quite a lot more than we had anticipated.

- 45 hunted pheasants this year = 37%.
- 2 hunted pheasants only on preserves, brings the total to 39%.

Asked also about firearms licences 49% of them commented, (often at great length and detail!), about processing delays to themselves or to friends and/or family. By far the commonest comment was that the process was taking 1-2 years and that no number of follow-ups about urgency made any difference.

- 23, (19%) of the 121 hunters surveyed had been directly affected by the police delays.
- 10, (8%), said family or friends were affected.
- 16 (13%), made other comments.

These comments were about roughly 2 years of the 10-year relicensing period. Meaning that, at that rate, most shooters were on track to get caught up by these gratuitous delays. That is until the

new Police Minister's Bill before Parliament has potentially reset the playing field. In respect of that, John's report on this firearms licence survey has been frozen.

Project 1161: Fish Releases

Fish releases: Triploid trout were released in Lake Arapuni on 14 October.

Project 1181: Control

Swan counts: Earlier this year John informed Council about 450 black swans that he saw at season's end off Te Onetea Road, Rangiriri. These were divided between 2 properties there which traditionally have always had waterfowl problems requiring Zon-guns and repeated cull permits. This October a helicopter flew over and put up 600 black swans in front of John and the landowner's grandson. This was only part of the total flock using these 2 farms at that time. The reduced game season for swan locally, brought back to Queen's Birthday weekend starting in the 2020 season, (i.e. reduced 3 weeks), has not helped this situation. One of the problems with our trend count is that we count all the birds on the lakes and their immediate riparian margins. But if those flocks are feeding 1km or more away from the lake at the time the plane passes over, they are out of line-of-sight. If, however, they are disturbed, as they are several times a day year-round, they immediately fly back to the lake. So counts of them in this zone are "hit or miss". This coming count it's hoped that Rangiriri can be flown over when crossing from Lake Waikare to Lake Kopuera to get a handle on this.

OUTPUT 2: HABITAT PROTECTION/MANAGEMENT

Project 1211 RMA

Healthy Rivers: Environment Court assisted mediation on Healthy Rivers (Plan Change 1) is well in progress. The mediation process is confidential to allow for full and frank discussions without prejudice. The first mediation session was on alternatives to Overseer – which took 4 intensive days and did not arrive at consensus. Our consultants, Sarah Ongley and Helen Marr are excellent, and we are the main (indeed usually only) opposition to those parties seeking much less stringent conditions for wetlands and lakes. However, we are often supported by the *Waikato River Authority* and *Waikato River Iwi*. This process is currently consuming most of my time.

Whangamarino Weir Section 128 Review: The process has stalled somewhat whilst we await updated and accurate LIDAR data to complete the technical assessment. As soon as this report has been signed off we will send it out to Councillors and interested parties.

Pokaiwhenua River: Adam has begun preparing a restoration and access plan for the Pokaiwhenua River. Adam attended a catchment group meeting at the Orakei Community Centre to discuss potential monitoring options for these waters.

Matarangi Wastewater Treatment Plant (WWTP): Clare Robertson submitted on the Matarangi WWTP consent application. We are concerned that the District Council intends to continue operating the Matarangi WWTP with no upgrades to the plant for the next five years. They then plan to install a Biological Nutrient Removal (BNR) plant at the existing site in 2026. The progression and performance of the future WWTP is therefore unknown. The effects of the existing WWTP, in regard to freshwater and coastal environments and associated ecosystems, are our main concerns. The other key submission point was for the inclusion of a Botulism Management Plan.

Waihi Wastewater Treatment Plant: At the end of last year, we lodged an objection to the consent application for Waihi's WWTP for a temporary 7 year consent. We advised them that botulism is a concern in this area and there is also a concern for trout habitat in some of the tributaries. Clare has recently been in contact with district council who advised that they are currently underway with iwi consultation who were the only other submitters and will consult with us after.

Solar Farm: We were contacted by Glenergy to consult on their proposal to establish an Energy Farm on the shores of Lake Whangape. The Energy Farm will comprise of a 200+ MVh solar farm comprising more than 350,000 individual panels, battery storage, hydrogen gas production and vertical farming, set amongst a more traditional operational sheep and cattle farm. The solar farm itself is of a similar size to the recently approved solar farm at Tauhei Farms near Te Aroha. This is the first solar farm application we have been consulted on and no doubt the start of more to come. The main concerns at this stage will be any impact the proposal might have on Lake Whangape which is a significant waterfowl hunting area. For example, birds have been known to confuse solar panels with water resulting in bird mortality.

Waikato District Plan: So far we've only had limited consultation on our Environment Court appeals on the District Plan. I expect mediation to start in the new year.

National RMA Officers: The National RMA Environmental Officers meet once a fortnight to work more closely together on national matters. The idea is that national submissions will be worked on together by the RMA staff and then the final document will be completed by Kahu Environmental with the intention of consistency on national and/or larger cases. Current submission and consultation includes:

- *National Policy Statement on Plantation Forests:* where the government is consulting on 4 topics relating to afforestation and management of plantation and exotic carbon forests. The proposals seek to:
 - i. manage the environmental effects of all exotic carbon forests
 - ii. control the location of afforestation (plantation and exotic carbon) to manage social, cultural, and economic effects
 - iii. improve wildfire management in all plantation and exotic carbon forests
- *National Environmental Standards for Plantation Forestry:* To encourage more climate-friendly agriculture, the government is proposing:
 - i. a farm-level, split-gas levy for pricing agricultural emissions
 - ii. two options for pricing synthetic nitrogen fertiliser emissions
 - iii. an interim processor-level levy as a transitional step if the farm-level levy cannot be implemented by 2025
 - iv. recognition for some types of sequestration in an adjacent contractual system from 2025, with a long-term goal of integration of new vegetation categories into the NZ ETS.

Project 1231: Council Wetlands

Fish and Game Comprehensive consent application; David, Clare and I have put in a significant amount of time and effort addressing requirements of a Waikato Regional Council request for further information on our comprehensive consent application. An updated consent application, including management plans for fish, birds and bats has been submitted alongside some suggested conditions. A further meeting is planned prior to the next council meeting and staff will be able to provide a verbal update.

Te Aroha Wetland Restoration Project: We were granted the full request of \$19,500 funding by the Game Bird Habitat and \$7,000 for plants from the 1BT fund. David has secured a total budget of \$91,000 of funding and in-kind contributions from a variety of sources for the project to date. We have engaged consultants *Collaborations* to complete the first part of the project which entails;

- Collation and analysis of data for building a GoldSim Model, including GIS analysis of stage/storage curves, incorporation of weir overflows.
- Development of a GoldSim Model to simulate 10 years of climate (from 1 January 2012 to 1 January 2022)
- Calibration of model to qualitative data (photos, field observations)
- Once suitably calibrated, assessment of surface water take scenarios (either gradient fed or pumped to recharge the wetland and prevent it drying out)
- Produce a short memorandum detailing results, primarily focussing on scenario pumping assessments.

Once this workstream has been completed we will be able to determine what type of infrastructure will be required to prevent the issues that led to the large-scale fish kill and botulism outbreak during last year's drought event.

Project 1231: Other Land

Whangamarino Weir Survey and Repair: An attempt was made to re-survey the weir at the start of November but water levels made it challenging.

Pungapunga Wetland Consent Application: David had a further meeting with processing officers regarding consent application to install two weirs on sections of a drain that is dewatering the Pungapunga wetland.

ABCD Flax Block: David had a meeting with Ken Brown (DOC) and Kenny Growden (WRC) to discuss the situation at the Flax Block Wetland and surrounding environments. It was a production meeting and we managed to find agreement on many points. The following outcomes were noted.

- **Flax Block -short term:** Interim measures have been implemented to rectify the adverse effects associated with drainage activities conducted post the 2017/18 flood events. This involved reinstating invert levels to facilitate the eastern part of the block reaching its design level of 1.4RL.
- **Flax Block-long term:** WRC are currently finalising the hydrological assessment for the area, this should be completed in the next month. Part of the scheme review is to investigate stop bank upgrades which could allow for higher water levels to be maintained in the wetland. Both WRC and DOC support in principle the raising of water levels in the wetland for the benefit of wetland ecosystem health.

Site Visits to potential wetland restoration sites: David has had 2 meetings with landowners wishing to restore wetland habitat on their properties. He has started developing project plans for one of the sites which would encompass approximately 20ha of stream, remnant forest fragments and 11ha of wetland restoration. The total project cost is estimated to be close to \$500,000 and multiple funding applications are planned for next year. Apart from the wetland work there are large areas of riparian planting and weed control proposed and we will look to team up with other agencies such

as Waikato Regional Council and Waikato RiverCare in order to leverage as much support as possible.

Predator control: Several people have asked John for traps to assist with vermin control. Unfortunately, these requests arrived just after the usual funding sources had closed-off and these deadlines were not negotiable. In the case of Lake Kimihia residents wanting traps John has since applied for and received help from DoC who have come to the rescue with Timms and Trappinator traps to capitalise on that enthusiasm “while the iron is hot”. John will seek extra funding from the Small-Scale Community Initiatives Fund in June next year to expand on this good work. Lake Kimihia was on a terrible state only a few years ago but is now a success story to celebrate:

Previous beneficiaries of these trap funding sources are in the North and Central Shepherd as well as at Lake A in Horsham Downs. The latter report their excellent results to date: 56 rats, 33 hedgehogs, 23 possums, and 8 mustelids (probably all weasels), as well as 18 mice and 6 feral cats.



Photo: Only a few years ago hunters were drawing attention to the appalling state of Lake Kimihia. They can take pride that this publicity subsequently saw a \$1.85 million investment in this lake’s restoration.

Wildlife Refuges: John has prepared an application to DoC review the boundaries of the 413-hectare 1961 Gazetted Rangiriri Wildlife Refuge, (near Te Kauwhata). 80% of this is on private land with just 20%, (83.45-ha), Crown land, namely Lake Kopuera and only some of its fringe wetland. A wildlife refuge on private land can only be legally proclaimed by the Governor-General with the consent of the occupier. It’s a moot legal point whether the signature of a past owner is binding on future owners when the refuge status is not shown on their title. When John contacted these owners, many had no idea their land was included, there being no signage or any contact by DoC, for instance. Yet refuge status prevents them, unless specifically exempted by the Conservation Minister, from bringing domestic stock such as cows and dogs onto their working farms and even their homes and curtilage or sections. If they do, they potentially face a \$100,000 fine and/or a year in jail. Yet many of these properties have been farmed since the 1930’s. Those that did know about the refuge have previously asked DoC for it be removed from their private land but despite positive assurances were all then ignored.

The “unalienated” lake and the willows to the south of it have been Crown land since the 1860’s and were made into a Recreation Reserve, since given back to Iwi in settlement. However, the refuge status remains. Ironically 44 hectares of fringe wetland was left out and John’s report

suggests that, in consultation with the various affected parties, this should now be acquired and added to the reserve, as was recommended in the early 1980's.

When Lake Waikare, which is hydrologically connected to Lake Kopuera, was drained in the 1960's, 88 hectares, (2/3rds), of the wetland inside the refuge, mostly that behind the Rangiriri Hotel, was permanently lost. A 17th century rhyme encapsulates this quite well:

The law locks up the man or woman
Who steals the goose off the common
But leaves the greater villain loose
Who steals the common from the goose.

That 1980's Wildlife Service report by John Cheyne, consequently also called for the now redundant refuge boundaries to be reviewed "within 6 months". That obviously never happened. Where people once rowed, and swans nested is now all dry farmland and the ongoing refuge status there is now simply nonsense. Everyone affected has signed John's petition to have this status removed from their private land, though they are equally supportive for the refuge to remain over the actual lake and wetland where it matters.

What brings this all into sharp focus is the construction of 560 new houses inside this refuge with a second new subdivision just approved by Waikato District Council. This matter can no longer sit in the "not now" basket.

Project 1331: F&G Newspapers

Adam completed the 2022/23 fishing season newsletter with editing help from Roslyn and I. The newsletter was emailed to 12,009 current and former licence holder (going back 5 years). The newsletter has had a 43% open rate and included links to purchase a licence online. Open rates above 27% for Fish and Game publications are considered good.

Project 1341: Other publications

Fish and Game Website: Auckland is the most popular region for people browsing the F&G website, followed by CSI and Eastern. The most popular regions by visitors location are Auckland (29%), Christchurch (25%) then Wellington (8%).

Project 1361: User Group Costs

Adam gave a talk at the North Shore Fly Fishers monthly meeting about season prospects and drift dive results October 18th.

David attended the Hamilton F&G AGM and UPWM meeting. Topics discussed were the F&G structural review, amendments to the Wildlife and Conservation Acts, the weir, and the 2023 game bird hunting regulations review.

OUTPUT 4: PUBLIC PROMOTIONS

Project 1431: Liaison Advocacy

Waikato Regional Pest Management Plan 2022-2032: We consulted extensively with the Waikato Regional Council over the preparation of their latest regional pest management plan. The completed plan has included "wetlands" as one of only two areas for *site-led pest programmes* (the

only other area specified is the Hunua Ranges). This should make it easier to get WRC support for weed clearance on wetlands in the Waikato.

Botulism: David gave a presentation on botulism prevent and management plans for Waipa DC WWTP and parks/rec teams.

Bird Care Aotearoa: John works in closely with Green Bay based Bird Care Aotearoa who are overrun with mallards each year. These come in as botulism birds that are nursed back to recovery. A number of other gamebird species come in to: swans, grey ducks, shoveler and grey teal, for example. So-called “orphan” mallard ducklings are also brought to the centre. Often, if the ducklings had been left alone, their mother would have quietly returned, gathered them up and “rescued” them all by herself. Try convincing the public of that! However, in some cases the hen-mallard was itself killed, so the ducklings really did need assistance. John was asked to arrange for a volunteer to meet the Waiheke ferry at the Downtown Auckland Ferry Terminal. Someone assisting Bird Care’s Waiheke Island helper, Inga Muller, brought over a small box of mallard ducklings, and also a pair of orphaned thrushes, for the Green Bay centre. If anyone reading this is keen to raise future orphan ducklings from Waiheke or Green Bay, contact John as Bird Care need all the help they can get in terms of volunteers and especially financial donations.

OUTPUT 5: LAW ENFORCEMENT

Project 1511 Ranging

Adam conducted ranging on the Whakapapa/Whanganui and 6 anglers were contacted and were all licenced.

Project 1521 Ranger Training

Rangers Andrew Kerr and Matthew Peverley completed their OSH refresher course held at the Eastern F&G Headquarters at Rotorua.

OUTPUT 8: PLANNING REPORTING

Project 1831: Annual Report/Audit

Audit: The annual audit of our accounts and operational work plans were carried out by Owen McLeod and Co Ltd. The auditor was in the office for much of 2-weeks. This is not just a financial audit but also an operational audit with the Auditor requesting copies of the raw data for the banding programme, fish surveys, and copies of RMA submissions etc.

Project 1841: National liaison

Manager meetings: Meetings of the regional managers are held every second Friday morning. I also attended a 2-day *Strategy and Implementation* workshop in Wellington, which was similar to the workshop held by the NZ Councillors and Chairs.

Weatherhead scholarship: Adam has been selected to sit on the Weatherhead scholarship panel which funds trout and trout habitat related PhD scholarships. The 2023 selection is ongoing but received only two applications from applicants that currently live in New Zealand.

Firearms licensing bill: John made a submission on the new firearms licensing bill before Select Committee. Parliament had only allowed 1 day for submissions, so there cannot have been many. Our F&G National Office submitted supporting John’s submission and all feedback within F&G

about John's submission has been positive. The Gamebird Harvest Survey beforehand in August that John did provided very useful figures and examples to quote. These would have given much context to the debate about the scale of the hugely excessive delays in firearms licensing renewal and new licences. This new Bill is intended by the new Police Minister to substantially improve the existing situation, for instance, extending a firearms licence past its expiry if police delays go overtime. Also, ensuring the new licence starts at the time of police approval, not when applied for. Some details are still to be sorted out that might affect any one of us are, for instance, can we buy ammunition with an expired licence when we have applied to renew it on time? There is no doubt, from what the 121 hunters told John in August, that because many could not go hunting due to all these firearms licence processing delays, they also did not buy a gamebird licence as a result.

**B. Wilson,
Chief Executive**