



AGENDA

AUCKLAND/WAIKATO FISH AND GAME COUNCIL

26th FEBRUARY 2022

AUCKLAND/WAIKATO FISH & GAME

**A Meeting of Council will be held at the Huntly Gun Club, Huntly
on Saturday 26 February 2022 commencing at 10 a.m.,
followed by a field trip to Lake Waikare and the Whangamarino Weir**

AGENDA

	<u>Page</u>
1. Apologies	
2. Possible conflicts of interest arising from meeting agenda	
3. Minutes of previous meetings held on 13 th November and 16 th December 2021*	1
4. Matters arising from previous minutes	
5. Council correspondence *	13
6. Chief Executive's bi-monthly report & financial statements	
6.1 Bi-monthly Chief Executives Report *	14
6.2 Financial Statements *	22
7. NZ Council Meeting of 4 th December 2021 *	34
8. Land and Water Habitat Trust *	48
9. Sports fish Regulations *	62
10. Ohinemuri River Report *	69
11. Access to trout rivers	
12. OSH Update *	77
13. General Business	

* Denotes attachments

**N Juby
Chairman**

15/02/22

AUCKLAND/WAIKATO FISH & GAME

Minutes of a Meeting of Council
held on Zoom
on Saturday 13th November 2021 commencing at 10:00am.

PRESENT:

Chairman: N. Juby

Councillors: E. Williamson, D. Cocks, P. Shaw, C. Sherrard, G. Annan, G. Ralph, D. du Preez,
G. Dickey, M. Barker, T. Clark, B. Barnes

Staff: B. Wilson, J. Dyer, D. Klee, A. Daniel, C. Robertson, M. Davis

1. APOLOGIES:

There were no apologies.

2. POSSIBLE CONFLICTS OF INTEREST ARISING FROM MEETING AGENDA:

None declared.

3. APPOINTMENT OF CHAIRMAN:

Mr Wilson assumed the Chair and called for nominations for the position of Chairman.

Councillor Annan was nominated by Councillor Sherrard and seconded by Councillor Shaw.

Councillor Juby was nominated by Councillor Barnes and seconded by Councillor du Preez.

A secret ballot was held, and Mr Wilson declared Councillor Juby as Chairman and vacated the Chair.

4. GENERAL EXPLANATION OF VARIOUS LAWS AFFECTING COUNCILLORS /COUNCIL:

In accordance with Standing Orders Mr Wilson briefed the Councillors on the relevant sections of:

- Local Authorities (Members' Interests) Act 1968 – regarding the corrupt use of official information and bribery of officials.

- Local Government Official Information and Meetings Act 1987 – regarding the access of the public to official information.
- Secret Commission Act 1910 – Councillors acting for the Council cannot take secret commissions.

5. APPOINTMENT OF THE TWO VICE CHAIRMAN:

The Chairman called for nominations for the two Vice Chairmen.

Councillor Cocks was nominated by Councillor Williamson and seconded by Councillor Sherrard.

Councillor Annan was nominated by Councillor Shaw and seconded by Councillor Sherrard.

The Chairman asked if there were any further nominations, there being none Councillors Cocks and Annan were declared Vice Chairmen.

6. APPOINTMENT OF COUNCIL'S NOMINEE FOR NZF&G COUNCIL:

The Chairman called for nominations for the position of Auckland/Waikato representative on the NZF&GC.

Councillor Williamson was nominated by Councillor Cocks and seconded by Councillor Sherrard.

Councillor Barnes was nominated by Councillor Ralph and seconded by Councillor Annan.

Both candidates gave a brief synopsis of their aspirations for the role.

A secret ballot was held, and Councillor Barnes was declared Auckland/Waikato's representative to the NZF&GC.

7. APPOINTMENT OF TRUSTEE ON LAND & WATER HABITAT TRUST:

Councillor Sherrard was nominated by Councillor Annan and seconded by Councillor Shaw.

Councillor Williams was nominated by Councillor Cocks and seconded by Councillor Sherrard.

Both candidates gave a brief synopsis of their aspirations for the role.

A secret ballot was held, and Councillors Sherrard was declared a trustee on the Land & Water Habitat Trust.

8. MINUTES OF PREVIOUS MEETING OF 14th August 2021:

Nigel Juby noted that he had left the meeting only briefly and had returned for the discussion on the NZ Council.

It was moved;

that the minutes of the previous meeting of 16th October 2021 as amended be accepted as true and correct records.

Annan/Cocks – CARRIED

9. MATTERS ARISING FROM PREVIOUS MINUTES:

Nil

10. COUNCIL CORRESPONDENCE:

The following letters were tabled:

- Letter from the Auckland/Waikato Chairman to the Regional Chairs regarding the Structure Review Project.
- Letter in reply from Ray Grubb, Chair of the Implementation Committee for the Structure Review Project.

Considerable discussion ensued with Councillors expressing concerns that they were being asked to make decisions without adequate understanding of the operational and financial implications of the proposed changes, including the liabilities of the Northland Council. Concern was also expressed at the lack of consultation with licence holders.

The Chairman considered it crucial that Council retained control over those waters where Auckland/Waikato licence holders hunted and fished. For example, the majority of anglers fishing the Whakapapa River came from the northern urban centres. Furthermore, Council had been successful in obtaining external funding to manage these fisheries and these income resources could be jeopardized by any boundary changes.

Councillor Williamson emphasised that Northland licence holders would effectively be disenfranchised as they would represent less than 20% of total licence holders in any amalgamation of Northland and Auckland/Waikato regions.

Councillor Cocks agreed and noted that there was no guarantee that the high level of financial support received by Northland from the NZ Council would continue.

The Chairman asked Councillors whether he should meet with the Northland Chair later in the month.

It was moved;

That Council supports the Chairman meeting with the Chair of the Northland Fish & Game Council.

Sherrard/Cocks – CARRIED

Councillor Ralph express his view that the relationship of Council with licence holders could always be improved, and he recommended the report “A Sense of Belonging” prepared by the previous Chief Executive, Doug Emmett, on this issue.

It was moved;

That Mr Wilson is asked to prepare a report on the financial and operational implications of potential amalgamations and boundary changes for the February meeting of Council.

Barnes/Cocks – CARRIED

11. CHIEF EXECUTIVE’S BI-MONTHLY REPORT AND FINANCIAL STATEMENTS:

Mr Wilson gave a brief update on Council’s application for comprehensive maintenance consents for its wetlands. He noted that the process had been delayed due to the NES – Freshwater and that Council lacked a good understanding of the values of the vegetation and habitats of the wetlands. He recommended that they contract an ecologist to carry out such a survey.

Councillor Cocks noted that a vegetation survey had been carried out for the consent application for the Cocks and Williamson Wetlands.

It was moved;

That a wetland ecologist be employed on a temporary contract to survey Council’s properties.

Williamson/Barker – CARRIED

Funding for this project to come from restricted reserves.

Councillor Barnes asked if staff could reconsider trout stocking the north Auckland lakes, especially Lake Ototoa.

Dr Daniel replied that there were issues with stocking Ototoa including:

- Access to the lake for the Eastern fish tanker was poor.
- Perch were still present in large numbers.
- The Auckland City Council was about to commence an extensive netting programme in the lake to reduce the fish population.

Mr Wilson noted that Ototoa had been stocked for some years with 2yr rainbow trout after perch had become established, but angler usage remained low.

It was agreed that Council should budget for an additional 1,000 2yr rainbow trout in 2022/23. The actual locations for the release of these fish to be determined at a later date. Dr Daniel to liaise with Councillor Barnes regarding obtaining external funding for this project.

The Chairman expressed his appreciation for the efforts of Mr Klee in obtaining just over \$140,000 from the Game Bird habitat Trust for wetland restoration projects.

In a reply to a question Mr Klee gave feedback on the WRC proposed annual work programme for the Piako and 3 zones. The WRC report indicated that only small portions of the Waipa system lend themselves to the type of interventions currently being done. He remains concerned about the potential effects of drainage activities on lakes and wetlands and has requested further information on how the WRC are measuring drain invert levels which is a requirement under these consents. In general, it is difficult to determine whether these consents are being appropriately implemented.

Councillor Williamson expressed his concern that the current management regime for Lake Waikare of keeping levels high and thus reducing flows downstream to the Whangamarino Wetland may be reducing sediment outflows, but it was also locking more nitrogen in the lake.

Mr Klee agreed that the lake was being held at or near its maximum permitted level to reduce outflows. But that multiple studies had shown that the impact of inflows from the Te Onetea Stream on water quality in the lake was minimal. He also noted that for much of the summer, the Waikato River was running lower than Waikare and thus it was only during flood events that river water could flow into Waikare via the Te Onetea Stream.

Councillor Clark requested an update on the Waikato District Council's consent to discharge treated wastewater from Te Kauwhata to Lake Waikere. Mr Klee replied that the district council had not been compliant for some years, and he was disappointed at the lack of enforcement action by the Waikato Regional Council on this issue. He noted that both himself and Councillor Williamson were on the advisory committee for the Te Kauwhata WWTP consents.

Mr Wilson introduced his financial report emphasizing that fish licence sales continued to be down some 28% due to the Auckland and Waikato lockdowns. He also informed that the Auditor had recently expressed his opinion that a donation from the WWW Foundation should be transferred from the LWHT to a restricted reserve held by Council. It was moved;

That the Chief Executive's bimonthly report be accepted.

Barnes/Cocks – CARRIED

12. **GAMEBIRD MANAGEMENT:**

The Chairman thanked Mr Klee for his comprehensive report.

Councillor Barnes shared his observations on the killing of ducklings on Lake Pupuke by black beaked gulls.

Mr Klee invited Councillors to contact him if they had questions or required more details on the report. Discussion ensued about the potential of sexed based limits. Mr Klee agreed that given the sex imbalance in our juvenile population favouring drakes and lower survival rates of hens, it is entirely sensible to try and move harvest pressure to focus more on drakes. Currently harvest rates for both sexes are similar so there does not appear to be any harvest selectivity occurring.

Councillors discussed the need to consider changes to the regulations for the 2022 game season regarding season length and bag limits in response to the current low duck population. Options to consider should include different limits for drakes and hens. Mr Klee noted that drakes outnumbered hens 56% to 44% for juveniles and given their lower survival rates, this imbalance grows as a cohort ages. However, efforts in the Eastern region to have different limits for hens and drakes had reported enforcement issues due to grey/mallard hybridisation. Hunters also had problems distinguishing between mallard hens and grey ducks and mallards in eclipse plumage.

Mr. Klee reiterated that the harvest dynamics that exist in this region means that reducing the number of ducks shot would mean very restrictive regulations which would likely have negative consequences on hunter satisfaction and potentially participation. Therefore, changing harvest regulations need to consider both biological and social factors.

Councillor Dicky agreed that hunter buy-in was essential and that a publicity campaign would be required. However, it was noted that previous publicity on “go for green” had not been successful.

It was moved;

That staff prepare a report giving the options for potential changes to the season length and limits for 2022 season.

Williamson/Cocks – CARRIED

It was agreed that a special meeting of Council would be held by Zoom in December to consider the report.

Councillor Barker cautioned that regulation changes alone would not significantly boost the duck population, and that the Council should also look at ways of increasing duckling

survival. Mr Klee agreed that duckling survival is the most influential variable governing population growth or decline, and that decreasing harvest may not necessarily increase the subsequent seasons population depending on other factors such as breeding success. He noted that hen survival is the second most important variable and that we do currently harvest a relatively high proportion of juvenile hens. It was agreed that staff be asked to prepare a report on boosting the regions duck population. -Mr. Wilson emphasised that this report for the available until mid-2022 due to staff commitment

13. LEGALITY OF COMMERCIAL UPLAND GAMEBIRD PRESERVES:

Ms. Davis report was tabled. The Chairman thanked Ms. Davies for her report which clearly shows the actions of the Minister of Conservation on this issue were within her responsibilities.

14. 2022 MEETING SCHEDULE:

Councilors considered the recommendations of Carmel Veitch (CFO-NZC) regarding the proposed NZ Council meetings and had no disagreements with the proposed dates.

Councilors then discussed the proposed 2022 meeting schedule for the Auckland Waikato Council.

It was moved;

that the meeting schedule for 2022 be approved with the addition of a field trip in conjunction with the February meeting.

Annan/Shaw – CARRIED

Mr. Wilson recommended that the field trip visit the Lake Waikare/Whangamarino system including Council's weir on the Whangamarino River given that this was an area where much of Council's efforts and expenditure was occurring.

Councillor Sherrard suggested that the Huntly Gun Club would be a suitable venue for the February meeting.

15. OSH UPDATE:

It was moved;

that the OSH Report for November 2021 be accepted.

Cocks/Dickey – CARRIED

16. GENERAL BUSINESS:

Councillor Cocks recommended that Council considers establishing a policy regarding COVID vaccination for volunteers working on Council's wetlands. He emphasized that many of the volunteers were in the highly vulnerable age group.

Mr. Wilson agreed to write to pondholders with the strong recommendation that they:

- use the QR codes, which will be placed at the entrance to each wetland.
- are fully vaccinated.
- or take appropriate measures such as social distancing.

It was moved;

That COVID-19 Guidelines be prepared for Council's properties.

Cocks/Annan – CARRIED

Councillor Dickey recommended that the Auckland/Waikato Councillors consider having their own Facebook page to increase engagement with licence holders.

Mr. Wilson agreed that Fish & Game's social media presence was very poor and noted that the website was currently being replaced and updated by the NZ Council.

Mr. Klee informed that an Auckland/Waikato page had recently been established by Ms. Simmonds.

It was moved;

That Mr Dickey be asked to liaise with Ms. Simmonds in regard to the Auckland/Waikato Facebook page.

Cocks/Barnes – CARRIED

Councillor Ralph informed that he has surplus pheasant eggs (or one-day chicks) that were available for local breeders. Mr Dyer replied that he knew of someone who could be interested.

There being no further business the meeting concluded at 1:28am.

AUCKLAND/WAIKATO FISH & GAME

Minutes of a Special Meeting of Council
held on Zoom
on Thursday 16th December 2021 commencing at 7p.m.

PRESENT:

Chairman: N. Juby

Councillors: E. Williamson, D. Cocks, P. Shaw, C. Sherrard, G. Annan, G. Ralph, D. du Preez,
G. Dickey, M. Barker, B. Barnes

Staff: B. Wilson, J. Dyer, D. Klee

1. APOLOGIES:

Nil

2. REGIONAL STRUCTURE REVIEW:

Councillors discussed the Progress Report produced by the Structure Review Project Team. Mr Wilson advised that the Project Team was seeking feedback on the suggested options for regional structure and on the criteria that should be used to assess these options.

Councillors did not support the proposed boundary changes to the Auckland/Waikato region as it was considered that the existing boundaries reflected the communities of interest and engagement. For example, it was noted that the great majority of licence holders who fished the Whanganui headwaters were from Hamilton and Auckland.

The option of amalgamating with the Eastern Region was discussed given that many Auckland anglers fish the Rotorua lakes.

Amalgamating with Northland Region was considered but Councillors were concerned over the financial implications especially with zero-based budgets likely. Concern was expressed that the level of serving currently received in Northland was not sustainable without substantial external funding.

The Chairman advised that he would soon be meeting with the Chair of the Northland Region and he had also made a similar offer to meet with the Chair of Eastern. He recommended that Council should consider a joint submission with Eastern Region that there should be no boundary changes without the mutual consent of the regions concerned.

It was moved that;

- **Boundaries should be determined by communities of interest/engagement. Licence holders should ideally vote in and manage those areas where they hunt and fish.**
- **Any boundary change should be by the mutual consent of the affected regions.**
- **Council was open to the concept of amalgamation with Northland, with Northland's agreement, but were concerned over the financial implications.**

Annan/Barker - CARRIED

3. GAME REGULATIONS:

The Chairman asked each Councillor to provide their views on the regulations for the 2022 game season.

Concern was expressed that an increase in the season length to 8 weeks would impact on mallard recruitment. However, Councillor Dickey supported a return to an 8-week season as the more inclement weather in June would offer increased opportunities to hunt. Furthermore an 8-week season allowed for more opportunities for junior hunters to be involved especially as many were still playing organised sport in May.

Other Councillors agreed that there were advantages to an 8-week season in terms of hunter recruitment but increasing duck numbers had to be the first priority.

Councillor Williamson emphasised that management should be aimed at increasing the bird population. He recommended a 2-week season and more flexible regulations to reduce hen harvest. He believed that continuation of a 4-week season would reduce the population especially if habitat/environmental conditions were unfavourable for recruitment.

However, it was noted that the current 4-week season was already restrictive for many hunters, especially hunter's dependent on high tides to access hunting areas. The view was also expressed that hunters would be much more active in a 2-week season and that a reduction in harvest would not necessarily occur.

Councillors discussed having separate limits for mallard hens and drakes ("green heads") as it was recognised that the crucial issue was the number of hens breeding, and drakes could sustain a much greater level of harvest due to the sex imbalance that exists in our population. However, concern was expressed by several Councillors over distinguishing

between hens and drakes in the field especially with hybrids. Nevertheless, this was an option that should be considered.

Councillor Barker observed that most hunters do not shoot the bag limit and that the regulations were a blunt tool for controlling harvest. He viewed changing harvest regulation as a “top down” management approach that has relatively minor influence compared to other factors such as recruitment. He noted that we may be better served focusing our management actions on a bottom up approach by trying to influence factors that will increase productivity.

Several Councillors emphasised that the current spring and summer appeared to be “normal” in terms of rainfall compared to the drought experienced in recent summers that had produced conditions unfavourable for duck recruitment.

It was suggested that licence holders should be surveyed, via a Facebook poll. Mr Klee replied that approximately 15% of licence holders were surveyed each year by telephone surveys and this data was statistically robust and canvassed a random selection of hunters and would therefore be more representative of hunter opinion than social media polls. Over the past 10 years hunters have routinely been asked questions relating to preferences regarding changes to harvest regulations which were summarised in recent reports. Councillors were welcome to suggest potential questions for next year’s survey. Mr Klee reported that the surveys had shown that most hunters supported a 4–6 week season.

Councillor Ralph suggested that licence holders should be encouraged to be active gamebird managers, especially “backyard” duck breeding. Mr Wilson agreed to give publicly for these endeavours.

It was agreed that staff should consider Councillor’s comments and set the regulations for the 2022 game season in accordance with Council policy. Also in accordance with policy, an extensive review of the regulations would occur in 2022 with licence holder involvement encouraged.

4. GENERAL BUSINESS:

Councillor Barnes expressed his concerns over the use of treble hooks for trout fishing due to the damage they caused trout.

It was moved;

that staff are asked to produce a report on the effects of treble hooks on trout fisheries.

Barnes/Ralph - CARRIED

Mr Wilson reported that the Annual Report would be completed by the Auditor later in the week. He expected no significant changes and emphasised that it had been a long process involving vertical auditing of operational procedures and fieldwork.

Councillor Dickey advised that Predator Free Franklin was offering free predator traps and bait stations Mr Dyer agreed to publicise this initiative in the newsletter that would soon be going out to pondholders.

There being no further business the meeting concluded at 9.05pm

UNCONFIRMED

Ref: 21-B-0449

Nigel Juby
Chair
Auckland/Waikato Fish and Game Council
aucklandwaikato@fishandgame.org.nz

Dear Mr Juby

Approval of Auckland/Waikato Sports Fish and Game Management Plan

On 10 June 2021 the Auckland/Waikato Fish and Game Council provided me with its draft Sports Fish and Game Management Plan for my approval.

While the initial draft had a number of deficiencies, these have been addressed in consultation with New Zealand Fish and Game Council officials and your staff.

I am pleased to advise I have now approved the plan, which is attached.

Yours sincerely

A handwritten signature in blue ink, appearing to read 'Kiri Allan', with a long horizontal flourish extending to the right.

Hon Kiri Allan
Minister of Conservation

Bi-Monthly Chief Executive's Report

Auckland/Waikato Fish & Game Meeting February 2022

OUTPUT 1: SPECIES MANAGEMENT

Project 1111: Drift Diving

The Awakino and Waitawheta drift dives were completed. An attempt was made to complete the Whakapapa River drift dive, but the water clarity was far too low. Prolonged low flow conditions had resulted in significant algal growth in all rivers visited. The Waihou and Mangatutu were surveyed on 29 January. Full reports on the drift dive surveys will be prepared later in the year.

Project 1112: Banding/Shoveler Counts

A huge thanks to Councillors Shaw, Annan and the other volunteers that did such a sterling job fixing up our duck banding cages. Banding has also been helped considerably this year by members of the Ornithological Society of NZ, now known as Birds NZ, students and DOC staff who attended several of the sites. The call went out and enough members responded that the 5 sets of banding pliers were never idle. Our thanks also goes out to all of the F&G associations and individual licence holders who participated. Quite simply without your help we couldn't run the banding programme.

In general numbers were relatively healthy across most of the sites, with excellent catches on the Haurakai Plains, Hellensville and Aka Aka. A full season's breakdown will be presented in the next CE report.

Project 1116: Trend Counts

The trend counts have been completed in both the north Auckland and King Country areas. There were issues with both counts, the way the data is processed and the reporting. I believe that we can do it a lot better. I'll be reviewing the data and our procedures later in the year.

Project 1121: Harvest Assessment: Fish

The online reporting system set up by Roslyn has been very popular with tags from Rotorua coming in almost daily. Mangatutu and Arapuni tags have been reported but not at a rate that will provide meaningful comparison data between sterile/non-sterile fish. The annual Arapuni competition will be critical for collecting data on sterile fish growth.

Project 1161: Fish Releases

Adam altered the fish order to add more fish for Auckland anglers. He also hired a digger to improve the track to Lake Whatihua in mid-February. Releases will include 2-year-old fish for Whatihua, two releases for Quarry Lake, and continued 2-year-old releases for Parkinson.

Project 1181: Control

Botulism Outbreaks: We are dealing with about a dozen outbreaks on WWTPS in the Waikato, Waipa and Hauraki areas. Most of the plants have botulism management plans required under the conditions of consent, and David has been actively working with plant operators for around a decade now to try and implement good management practice. We have also assisted 3 separate pest control contractors to ensure that they have the specific tools and skills to manage outbreaks. These contractors also liaise directly with councils and ourselves by giving regular updates. Most of the plants, particularly those with a history of outbreaks have been employing contractors to

conduct hazing activities from early December, prior to the moult. Lasers, pyrotechnics, drones, remote controlled boats, and shooting have all been used. In places such as Thames WWTP where we lost close to 3000 birds a few years ago, the deaths to date have been reduced to less than 100. We can also now prove that pre-emptive measures are more cost effective than conducting mass clean-up operations and councils appear to be happy with the outcomes. Mr Dyer is working on establishing similar process for WWTPs in the Auckland area to ensure the emphasis is on preventing bird deaths rather than cleaning up the mess.

The northern hotspots have nearly all been checked with Watercare, Auckland Council and BirdCare Aotearoa staff all spoken to. The Omaha Watercare wastewater treatment ponds had an outbreak, the first known in all the years current staff have worked there. Staff were picking up 50 birds every 2 days at the peak, this then dropped down to just 5 every 2 days with just 1 sick bird on the main pond when Mr Dyer last visited. Watercare have an “ecological team” on standby if things get worse than this.

On the plus side, birds that have recovered from botulism at Bird Care Aotearoa are available for release again in safer places. Mr Dyer took 3 grey duck and a shoveler hen for release at our Bethell’s Wetland with the assistance of the very supportive adjoining landowner there. These birds were banded by one of our regular helpers at F&G banding sites, under Mr Dyer’s supervision, (this being the DoC protocol). So, increasing his experience is an advantage to us. The remaining grey teal, shelduck and mallards were banded and released at Awhitu along with 4 white-faced herons that were rescued and raised by BirdCare after the tree their nest was in was cut down. Our man helped band those too.

Lake Ngaroto Outbreak: David has been out to the lake to assist with the clean-up and onboard contractors hired by Waipa DC to mitigate the outbreak. The response at staff level has been great but some of rhetoric coming from the council is disconcerting. In particular, that these types of events are normal and part of a natural cycle. We put out a media release that contained some basic facts, namely that lakes do not naturally have nutrient levels that are off the charts and get cyanobacterial blooms with cell counts high enough that if a dog were to take a drink it would likely die. These lakes do not naturally go anoxic (without oxygen) for days causing even the hardiest fish species such as koi carp, goldfish and eels to die on mass. These lakes do not naturally get botulism outbreaks that will likely end up killing many of the birds that inhabit them. Instead these are symptoms of severely degraded environments.

Permit Requests: We have had a busy few months with a lot of requests for permits and hiring of zon guns. We have tried our best to minimise any lethal control measures particularly of mallards. In some cases, persistent paradise shelduck flocks have required permits to cull but generally for dabbling ducks, providing consistent disturbance techniques are employed lethal measures are not required.

OUTPUT 2: HABITAT PROTECTION/MANAGEMENT

Project 1211 RMA

Watercare decision: A majority decision has been made by the Board of Inquiry appointed to hear and decide a resource consent application by Watercare Services Limited to double their water take from the lower Waikato River. We didn’t object to the consent because the ecological impact was low (1-2mm decline in water levels downstream). Objectors were the river iwi who considered the application was inconsistent with the *Vision and Strategy* for the Waikato River. The application was granted, with Watercare agreeing to fund \$2 Million annually on ecological enhancement activities. The Board propose a condition that require Watercare to invite taanga whenua to join a committee or board to investigate ways to reduce the volume of water taken and Auckland’s

reliance on the waters of the Waikato River. The duration of the consent has been set at 20 years, to start after construction of the new facilities have been completed. One of the 3 board members was Nick Manukau, who we employed one summer as student-labour on our brown trout research in the Waikato River.

NES-Freshwater: We met with the Ministry of the Environment to discuss the proposed changes to the National Environmental Standards for wetlands. They were of the view that maintenance and restoration activities had to be tightly controlled since they could be used as an excuse for wetland drainage. But we argued that they were actually putting in place barriers for landowners wanting to restore wetlands. We expect a decision on the proposed changes by mid-year.

Waipa District Plan: The Waikato District Council has released the report of the Independent Hearings Panel on its decisions on the submissions made by submitters, including F&G.

Most of our submissions were either fully accepted or accepted in part, including:

- Hunting and freshwater fishing accepted as rural activities, including noise provisions.
- Earthworks for conservation activities accepted as a permitted activity in the rural zone (but not in SNA's).
- Maimai accepted as permitted structures for waterfowl hunting in the rural zone.
- F&G information signs permitted.

Lake Waikare and Whangamarino section 128: The minutes from the latest consultation meeting have been sent as a separate attachment alongside the agenda. Should anyone have any specific questions or wish to see any of the reports detailed, please email David before the meeting and he will try to get you the relevant information.

Tatua Dairy Company Consent Application: Clare and David have been consulting with the Tatua Dairy Company since December 2020 regarding a renewal of the Tatua dairy factory discharge consent. Tatua submitted their consent application last August, and we lodged an objection. After extensive consultation with Tatua, we agreed to a revised set of conditions. Although there were still uncertainties associated with the net nutrient reduction and mitigation; we are satisfied that the revised conditions will meet the outcomes we desire.

Paeroa Wastewater Treatment Plant (WWTP) Consent Application: Clare made a submission on the application by the Hauraki District Council for a 5-year temporary consent to operate the Paeroa WWTP. Further meetings were held between HDC, WRC, Clare, David, and Adam to try to work through the consent conditions. Our main concern was the high nutrient level applied for, and we believed that significant reductions are necessary. Our other concern was to ensure that they have in place a long-term Strategy, which includes a development plan for what happens at the end of the 5-year consent. We also made sure that a co-developed Botulism Management Plan was taken on board. After consultation, the consent conditions were altered to address our concerns with nutrient reductions, a Botulism Management Plan added, and a condition outlining the intent for the Strategic Plan. We're happy with the agreed conditions and nutrient reductions.

Matarangi Wastewater Treatment Plant (WWTP) Consent Application: Clare made a submission on the Matarangi WWTP consent proposal. We are concerned that the Thames Coromandel District Council (TCDC) intend continue operating their 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 and the effects of the existing WWTP, in regard to freshwater and coastal environments and associated ecosystems, are our main concern. The other key submission point was for TCDC to include a Botulism Management Plan.

Waihi Wastewater Treatment Plant Consent Application: At the end of last year, David and Clare were contacted about the upcoming consent application for Waihi's three WWTP's. Clare and David advised them that botulism is a concern in this area and would like to be informed when the application and AEE are ready to be reviewed. This is also a concern for trout in some of the tributaries.

Healthy Rivers: In summary the Healthy Rivers process, which has taken some 7 years and cost the WRC at least \$20 million has been overtaken by national legislation.

At the direction of the Environment Court, the Waikato Regional Council (WRC) has assessed the impact of the National Policy Statement Freshwater Management 2020 (NPSFM) on resolving the appeals against the Proposed Plan Change 1 to the Waikato Regional Plan. The parties to the appeals were invited to comment, including ourselves (which we did in a joint memo with DOC and RFBPS).

The Waikato Regional Council (WRC) has proposed that:

Farm plans/Overseer: The WRC are unlikely to be able to progress the parts of PC 1 that relate to OVERSEER or Farm Plans until the Government's regulations/proposals etc on these are known. There appears to be little point in having expert workshops when WRC doesn't think the parties can usefully comment until Govt policy is known.

Stock Exclusion provisions: The WRC believe they can progress some of appeals issues on stock exclusion, but there is not scope to clearly align PC 1 with the proposed national Stock Exclusion Regulations. This just means that plan users won't be able to easily compare the 2 sets of stock exclusion provisions. That's okay because at least more stringent stock exclusion provisions would apply. This is important (obviously) for improving Water quality and should be progressed asap.

The WRC have emphasised that additional changes will have to be made to the Waikato Regional Plan by 2024 to implement the full effect of NPSFM, including:

1. Giving effect to Te Mana o te Wai
2. Identifying attributes, targets and monitoring sites for clearly identified Māori freshwater values.
3. Location of threatened species identified, and relevant attributes and target attribute states addressed.
4. Identifying and providing targets/outcomes for a wide range of contaminants in addition to the 4 considered in PC1.
5. Once the target/outcomes have been set, then rules and schedules need to be reviewed and amended to provide appropriate limits of resource use to achieve these new targets.
6. Outstanding water bodies need to be identified, and an assessment made as to how these water bodies will be protected and what changes to PC1 are required.
7. The NPSFM contains a new wetland policy that has now been added to the Waikato Regional Plan, and which requires that the loss of extent of natural wetlands is avoided, their values protected, and restoration promoted, except in stated circumstances. Natural inland wetlands greater than 500 m² are to be identified and mapped. The PC1 provisions need to be reviewed to ensure that the provisions align with the new wetland policy and NPS requirements.

Project 1221: Council Land

Predator-free Franklin: Councillor Geoff Dickey has taken the initiative in looking at how our pond-holders can take advantage of the *Predator-free Franklin* programme.

PFF has recently secured additional funding for pest control in the North Waikato. They can supply expert advice on pest control network planning, density, and control method selection. They can also supply landowners and volunteer groups with a variety of either free or subsidised equipment and training in how to use it effectively.

Comprehensive Consent for Wetland Maintenance (Waikato District Council): We received notification from the Waikato District Council that they have approved our consent application for maintenance earthworks on our wetlands, including work in significant natural areas. The consent is for:

- *The maximum volume of earthworks at each site shall not exceed 1500m³ per*
- *calendar year except once every 7-10 years the maximum volume at each site shall not exceed 3500m³.*

From our discussions with the Council there is no expiry date. We still have to obtain consent from the Waikato Regional Council for work in the wetlands, which will be more difficult (we already have consents for the Cocks Wetland). But at least we're making progress. Thanks to Clare and the field staff for their considerable effort on this application. And also the input from Councillors Cocks and Williamson.

Comprehensive Consent for Wetland Maintenance (Waikato Regional Council): The peer review of our application to the WRC by Bluewattle Ecology (Gerry Kessels) was received, along with a request for further information.

We acknowledge that there is further information that we need to provide, however we also outlined our concerns that the level of detail requested is excessive and out of scope for the activities applied for, especially considering that:

- the activities proposed constitute routine maintenance.
- are infrequent.
- will only occur in small portions of each wetland at any given time.
- have already been occurring for long periods of time.

We have requested that the consent is put on hold while we review our application, provide additional information, and wait for the outcome of the current review of the NES-freshwater and any resulting changes relating to wetland restoration and maintenance activities.

Since then, we've been working on the consent application and preparing the information requested as part of the s92(1) request. This is to include employing a wetland vegetation survey carried out by ecologist Britta Deichmann to provide and identify wetland habitat type and what plant species are present within our wetlands, and what mitigation methods in accordance with the EclA will be carried out. Britta has undertaken the Department of Conservation's (DoC) habitat valuation survey within the Whangamarino Wetland; therefore, we are using the same approach that was used for DoC, however instead of using a helicopter to capture arial imagery, using drone imagery. This has been discussed with Gerry Kessel which he agrees is an appropriate method. In addition to the habitat valuation, GIS mapping will be used to provide the vegetation classifications within our wetlands.

Clare Wrote a letter to WRC to clarify some topics and ensure that we all have a shared understanding regarding the information required to progress the application. However, Ryan Morrison from WRC who was working on our consent application has now left and WRC have yet to appoint a new staff member to take his place.

North Shepherd Wetland: Someone smashed down the gate at the North Shepherd, even taking out the steel post. Councillor David Cocks is fixing it in a way that will certainly test anyone silly enough to do this again.

With the ban on grazing near wetlands, Mr Dyer used the opportunity to heavily spray some gorse in the north end of this block before the grass gets so tall that taking a 4WD vehicle through it would be damaging. Fingers crossed this won't now need any long-term follow-ups.

Dean Wetland: The Auckland L3 lockdown precluded doing work on F&G wetlands. However, when the boundary was placed at Mercer, this meant the Mangatawhiri Wetlands were again accessible. The gorse, which has been gaining ground along with woolly nightshade, got hammered as a result by Mr Dyer's efforts.

Williamson Wetland: Several issues with the Ford 3000 tractor have finally come to a head. It was recovered on a trailer by Graeme Garchow and taken to his workplace at Drury to investigate the loss of the Power Take-Off function. A crucial part had sheared off. The PTO is necessary to drive the mower to mow the 1-meter-tall grass growing between the 20 ponds. Obviously, doing work on the ponds is slowed down somewhat by all the grass and the access issues this creates. The tractor's ignition leads were also stolen by someone presumably after the copper and have since been replaced by one of the keener pond-holders there. The tractor is also receiving a new second-hand radiator and is getting a complete service of new oils, filters and so on. Obviously, lockdown has been a real problem at this and all other F&G wetlands with planned summer-maintenance work largely prevented.

David went through the Williamson Wetland prior to Christmas and logged all the traps he could find, sprayed around them, and set up the trap NZ app for pond holders to use. It is requirement of the predator control plan, lodged under the resource consent, to keep track of the control activities occurring and record the catches. The app is straight forward to use and has an interactive mapping system which should make it much easier to re-locate traps. Catches, the types of bait used, state of the traps and photos can be saved easily to the site. The data is stored and can be disseminated to WRC to ensure we remain compliant with the consent. The app also has several data analysis functions and features that can show 'hot zones' where we are achieving high kill rates or highlighting traps that are not catching for some reason. It is also easy to analyse which baits work best e.t.c.

Stone Jug Road Property: Adam has cleared some brush for planned fencing at Stone Jug Road. The river frontage is unfenced and the neighbor has moved taking his horses with him. We hope to have another neighbor graze stock to keep the grass and weeds down. Funding has been granted by the Regional Council for fencing. The contractor is scheduled to start the fencing in early February.

Project 1231: Other Land:

Wetland Consent Application Opuatia Project: David got a wetland consent for a wetland enhancement project on private land after completing a comprehensive application. No further information was required, and the process ran about as smoothly as consent process can. In this instance the WRC processing officer was pragmatic and could see the overall benefits we are creating.

Game Bird Habitat Trust Projects: One of the recently funded projects was completed before Christmas and the ponds were immediately filled with the heavy rain we received. We have ordered the 5000 plants funded by billion trees for this winter and they will go in the ground in June, groundwater levels permitting.

Project 1241: Assessment and Monitoring

Adam has completed a draft report on the water quality of the Ohinemuri River that has concluded the river is far too hot to support a viable trout population during most years. However, the Waitawheta has ample spawning habitat and age 0 fish providing opportunities in the area.

OUTPUT 3: PARTICIPATION

Project 1311: Access negotiation

Adam has worked with landowners to improve access on the Waihou at HW5 to provide off-street parking and improved visibility of the track upstream that was partially blocked by a tree. Adam also met with the new farm manager on the upper Awakino and hopes to deliver some do “*not block gates*” signs and will add an educational note on the subject to the Reel Life.

Project 1331: F&G Newspapers

David is contributing to a feature article on wetland loss in the national magazine.

Project 1341: Other publications

The F&G National Office are in the process of publishing a game recipe book and called on John Dyer to assist with historical info as to how the various acclimatised species were introduced. The Alexander Turnbull Library in Wellington were a great help in tracking down historic archive accounts by those, here in NZ and also our suppliers overseas, (mallards from San Francisco in the USA and also Kirkcudbright in Scotland, for instance), who actually did the various collections and introductions. A retired Auckland chef and keen hunter was also able to assist Mr Dyer as to how professionals get the best from gamebird meats, what pitfalls to avoid, (how to know when the bird is undercooked or not, for instance), and so on.

Project 1361: User Group Costs

Mr Max Hook, (assisted by his wife Joan), was a stalwart for the Waitemata Fish & Game Sub-Society for many decades, especially growing pheasants in their backyard for the club. He recently passed on and Mr Dyer attended the funeral on behalf of F&G where some of Max's familiar old shooter mates also saw him off. He was a unique character, and his quirky humour and astute observations will definitely be missed.

OUTPUT 5: LAW ENFORCEMENT

Project 1511 Ranging

Adam has been ranging when drift diving and when working on the Stone Jug Property with six contacts resulting in 3 warnings.

Project 1531 Legal

A review of the submitted remits for rule changes for the upcoming fishing season was completed including a literature review of catch and release mortality. The review indicated catch and release fly fishing is likely to have a far greater impact on A/W fish populations than spin fishing with treble hooks during the summer months.

OUTPUT 9: ADMINISTRATION

Project 1900: Admin/Overheads

Congratulations to Clare Robertson who completed her *Master of Integrated Water Management* degree from Griffith University, Queensland.

B. Wilson,

Chief Executive