



## AGENDA

AUCKLAND/WAIKATO FISH AND GAME COUNCIL

19<sup>th</sup> August 2023



## AUCKLAND/WAIKATO FISH & GAME

**A Meeting of Council will be held at the Waikato Deer Stalkers Hall, Wairere Drive, Hamilton on Saturday 19 August 2023 commencing at 11 a.m.**

### AGENDA

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\* Denotes attachments

**N Juby**  
**Chairman**

01/08/2023



# AUCKLAND/WAIKATO FISH & GAME



**Minutes of a Meeting of Council**  
**held at the NZ Deerstalkers Hall, Wairere Dr, Hamilton**  
**on Saturday 10<sup>th</sup> June 2023 commencing at 11:00am.**

**PRESENT:**

**Chairman:** N. Juby  
**Councillors:** E. Williamson, D. Cocks, P. Shaw, G. Annan, T. Clark, G. Dickey,  
M. Barker.  
**Staff:** B. Wilson, A. Daniel, D. Klee, J. Dyer.

**1. APOLOGIES:**

C. Sherrard, C. Robertson, B. Barnes.

It was moved;  
**that apologies be accepted.**

**Annan/Shaw – CARRIED**

**2. POSSIBLE CONFLICTS OF INTEREST ARISING FROM MEETING AGENDA:**

Nil.

**3. MINUTES OF PREVIOUS MEETINGS OF 18<sup>th</sup> March 2023:**

It was moved;  
**that the minutes of the previous meetings of the 18<sup>th</sup> of March 2023 be accepted as true and correct records.**

**Annan/Shaw – CARRIED**

**4. MATTERS ARISING FROM PREVIOUS MINUTES:**

Councillor Williamson requested that the preparation of a Duck Strategy be an agenda item at the next meeting of Council.

**5. COUNCIL CORRESPONDENCE:**

Nil.

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

Dr Daniel updated Councillors on the sterile trout programme in Lake Arapuni. He emphasised that no further releases of sterile trout were currently planned but that

monitoring would continue for several years. Initial results indicate that catch rates of sterile trout were only 50% that of non-sterile fish and there was so far no evidence of longer life or greater maximum size.

Councillor Williamson asked regarding Lake Tomarata, how do we get regional councils to put more effort into reversing the declining water quality of lakes? In reply, Dr Daniel reminded Councillors that regional councils had a statutory requirement to prepare management plans for lakes that are in decline (National Policy Statement – Freshwater Management 2020). Auckland Regional Council was making progress on this issue, but the Waikato Regional Council were still procrastinating.

Dr Daniel provided an update on the Golden Clam intrusion. He highlighted the potential role of wake boats in spreading this invasive shellfish from overseas waters to Lake Karapiro, and from Lake Karapiro to other waters in New Zealand. Dr Daniel will be Fish and Game's representative on the Technical Advisory Group set up to advise on the national response to the Golden Clam incursion.

Mr Klee provided a brief update on the recent game season based on the first two hunter telephone surveys. He reported that most hunters were happy with the number of ducks seen and generally it had been a good season. The Whangamarino Wetland had a very good season despite the botulism outbreak.

The Chairman thanked staff and Councillors for their efforts in keeping hunters informed of the Whangamarino rahui and for maintaining our good relationship with local iwi.

The Chairman thanked Roslyn Simmonds for her work on the Fish & Game website, not just for Auckland/Waikato but also for the other regions. The Chairman emphasised that Ms Roslyn's technical skills were outstanding, and the website was much improved.

Mr Wilson stated that he was satisfied with the increase in licence sales, especially junior sales which were the highest for at least ten years. Nevertheless, he believed that the long-term target for fish sales should be around 5,000 LEQ, well above the budgeted sales for next season of 3,700 LEQ.

It was moved;

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

**Cocks/Annan – CARRIED**

## **7. BOTULISM PRESENTATION:**

Mr Klee gave a PowerPoint presentation on recent botulism outbreaks in the Waikato. He believed that botulism outbreaks on ponds in wastewater treatment plants were generally well controlled after the adoption of botulism management plans by district councils and the employment of contractors to disperse birds and appropriately manage initial outbreaks – both Fish and Game initiatives coordinated by Mr Klee. However, Mr Klee warned that botulism outbreaks in the natural environment were much more difficult to manage but that progress was being made with a botulism management plan

in place for the Hauraki Plains. The emphasis was on minimising the environmental conditions required for a major outbreak by reducing water temperatures and maintaining flow. However, there was still much to be done.

Mr Klee was thanked by the Chairman for his presentation.

The meeting rose for lunch at 1:00pm and resumed at 1:30pm. Dr Daniel left meeting.

#### **8. NZ COUNCIL MEETING: 21-22 APRIL 2023:**

The Chairman expressed his disappointment that neither the agenda nor draft minutes from the NZ Council were available.

It was moved;

**that a letter be sent to the Chairman of the NZC requesting that both the agenda and draft minutes of NZ Council meetings be available to regional councils within 2 weeks of the meeting.**

**Williamson/Cocks – CARRIED**

The Chairman emphasised the large discrepancy between regional licence income and budgeted expenditure which is causing conflict within the organisation. He asked Councillors to imagine that they were on another council and highlighted two extremes - Northland and Southland. Northland councillors are justifiably proud of the services that they provide but their license revenue of around \$190k is well below their budget of around \$550k. In comparison, Southland sells 1.6M of licenses and has a budget of \$900k. Southland is also getting huge pressure from anglers who travel to their region to fish and thus councillors are trying to reduce activity on important rivers. Managing these conflicts is difficult for the organisation as a whole but there is general acceptance that changes are required to funding models. The Chairman asked Councillors to consider other region's perspectives as well as their own in upcoming decisions regarding any changes to funding.

Councillor Williamson recommended that budget/levies be allocated on a similar system to that used in national taxation with a sliding scale, increasing levy percentage as income rose.

A letter was tabled from Alan Strong, Chairman North Canterbury Fish & Game, recommending that F&G councils discussed the concept of adjacent regions developing an MOU rather than considering mergers.

Councillors agreed that there was already considerable collaboration between Auckland/Waikato and adjacent regions, and agreed that a MOU would highlight these strong inter-regional relationships.

It was moved;

**that Council supports the concept of an MOU between adjacent Fish & Game regions.**

**Cocks/Barker – CARRIED**

**9. 2023/24 LICENCE FEE CONSULTATION:**

It was moved;

**that the recommendation from the NZ Council for licence fees for the 2023/24 season are accepted.**

**Annan/Clark – CARRIED**

**10. RESIDENCY DEFINITIONS CONSULTATION:**

It was moved;

**that there be no change in the current definition of residency.**

**Williamson/Dickey – CARRIED**

**11. DRAFT NATIONAL RESERVES POLICY:**

After discussion, it was moved;

**that the draft policy is accepted with the following recommendations:**

- **That the Asset Replacement Fund is reviewed with consideration given that it only applies to assets valued at more than \$5,000.**
- **That general reserves for regions should be maintained at 30% of budget.**

**Cocks/Williamson – CARRIED**

**12. REMUNERATION POLICY:**

Mr Wilson explained the potential impacts of the draft remuneration policy on the Auckland/Waikato region. He advised that staff contracts would have to be changed with no adjustments for CPI but rather with salary ranges reviewed annually by Strategic Pay with comparable roles in the market.

Concerns expressed by Councillors and staff were:

- Council supported the concept of bulk funding rather than having NZC involved in determining individual pay rates.
- Salary ranges should be adjusted for the Fish & Game “model”. For example, it was inequitable that the minimum salary for a new field officer should be considerably higher than that for an experienced and skilled office manager.
- Roles should be better defined, especially the demarcation between field officer and senior field officer.
- Manager’s salary range should be based on actual council expenditure rather than budgeted expenditure as the latter didn’t take into consideration external income.
- Concern was expressed that the proposed salary range would widen the *gender pay gap* for Fish and Game employees.
- There should also be transparency with the salary range for national office staff.

It was moved;

**that the concerns of Council on Draft Remuneration Policy be conveyed to the NZ Council.**

**Dickey/Williamson – CARRIED**

**13. OSH REPORT:**

The June 2023 OSH Report was tabled.

It was moved;

***that the OSH report for June 2023 is accepted.***

***Annan/ Shaw – CARRIED***

**14. GENERAL BUSINESS:**

Councillor Dickey requested that the following items be placed on the agenda for the next council meeting:

1. That paper tags should have an expiry date.
2. That 16-year-olds should be able to mark-up a maimai.

There being no further business the meeting concluded at 2:40pm.

UNCONFIRMED



6 June 2023

All Fish & Game Chairs

By email

Dear Chairs,

**April 2023 General Public Survey - undertaken by Primary Purpose consulting:**

During our regional Fish & Game Council meeting on May 30<sup>th</sup> 2023, the general public survey results undertaken by Primary Purpose were discussed. It was noted that the perceived value of a full season game bird licence was attributed by survey respondents to be \$215, or twice the value of the current cost at \$107. It was also noted that the Auckland-Waikato region sells more gamebird licences than any other region in NZ, however the “effective discounting” that FG has implemented over the last few decades around organisation reluctance to increase the cost of an annual gamebird licence, means the relative contribution of gamebird hunting licence revenue to funding the organisation’s needs, has fallen sharply relative to fishing licence sales income. This has no-doubt contributed to some of the past and current tensions between Southern and Northern regions around the allocation of licence sale income.

The Council considered this situation to be unhealthy for both organisational cohesion and the future financial stability of Fish & Game as an organisation. It was therefore resolved that I would write to all Chairs to request you to consider putting before your wider Councils, a decent increase in the gamebird licence fee be considered prior to the next gamebird season. There was one caveat to this request however, and that was to wait until the current firearms licencing fees submissions/hearing process has finished and we know the likely increases in future charges in this area, as the survey indicated these to be a significant potential future barrier to recruiting new gamebird hunters or retaining existing ones. It was agreed it would be imprudent to increase game licence fees concurrently with significant firearms licencing fees if this does come to pass.

In addition to increasing the future price of an annual whole season gamebird licence in NZ, the Nelson-Marlborough Fish & Game Council resolved that I should also raise the concept of exploring a non-resident gamebird licence category for New Zealand with you all, as exists currently within many other countries. Now the designated waters system and price differentials for non-resident angling are in place, there is no reason why this should not also be explored for the non-resident gamebird hunting currently occurring within NZ through the guided hunting industry and the like. I look forward to your consideration and further discussion of these matters prior to the 2024 gamebird season.

Yours Sincerely

A handwritten signature in blue ink that reads "Owen Baigent".

Owen Baigent, Nelson Marlborough Fish & Game Council Chairman

cc: Corina Jordan NZC Ceo.

## **Outward Correspondence**

### **Email to Corina Jordan (CE NZ Council) and Barrie Barnes (NZ Chief Executive) on 13<sup>th</sup> June 2023**

#### **NZ Council meeting of 2-22 April 2023**

The Auckland/Waikato Council is concerned that neither the agenda nor draft minutes of the NZ Council meeting of 22-23 April have been made available to regions. There have been considerable concerns expressed by regions in recent years over the lack of transparency of NZ Council proceedings. Therefore the Auckland/Waikato Council believes that it is good practice that the agenda is sent out to the regional Chairs and Chief Executives prior to each meeting. Furthermore, the draft minutes should be sent out within two weeks after each meeting. Although we understand that there is concern that the unconfirmed minutes should not be made publicly available, albeit they have been for many years, there is still no adequate reason why the unconfirmed minutes cannot be distributed within Fish and Game. Alternatively, to expedite fast decision making, the draft minutes could be approved via a quick zoom meeting by NZC.

The council appreciates the summary as a very good product but needs the minutes to be available for a more in-depth understanding of decisions.

#### **2023/24 Licence Fee Consultation**

The Auckland/Waikato Council supports the recommendation from the NZ Council for the licence fees for the 2023/24 season.

#### **Residency Definitions Consultation**

The Auckland/Waikato Council does not support any change in the current definition of residency. Foreign nationals working on temporary visas are taxpayers in generally low paying employment, they should have similar benefits as residents.

#### **Draft National Policies**

I emphasise that these are the preliminary comments of the Auckland/Waikato Council on the draft remuneration and reserves policies. National Policy (adopted 7 June 2019) states that all draft policy must lie with regional Fish and Game Councils for at *least two meeting cycles*. Therefore we assume that NZ Council will not be adopting these policies until later in the year and that the Auckland/Waikato Council will have further opportunity to consider the proposals.

#### **DRAFT NATIONAL RESERVES POLICY:**

The Auckland/Waikato has the following preliminary comments on the Draft National Reserves Policy:

- ***That the Asset Replacement Fund is reviewed with consideration given that if only applies to assets valued at more than \$5,000.***

Currently all capital expenditure over \$2,000 requires pre-notification, albeit we acknowledge that in practice this is rarely carried out. The limit of \$2,000 has been in place for many years and is no longer practicable, requiring notification for routine purchases such as laptops. We consider that it would be much more practical to have a limit of \$5,000.

- ***That general reserves for regions should be maintained at 30% of budget.***

We note that 20% of budget is considered by the NZC to be adequate to provide security against fluctuations in income and to ensure adequate operational cash flow. However, this is not always true for Auckland/Waikato because:

- Auckland/Waikato receives the majority of its income towards the end of the financial year (e.g. May & June).
- However, the bulk of Auckland/Waikato expenditure, including two levy payments, occurs in the first half of the financial year (September to February).

In some recent years, Auckland/Waikato has had to use restricted reserves to maintain cash flow during the December - February period because of the delay by external funding agencies to reimburse expenditure for habitat restoration work. This is not ideal and thus we suggest that either the reserve policy is changed to require regions to maintain general reserves at 30% or levy payments dates are changed to better reflect actual availability of funds. Potentially, separate sportfish and gamebird levy payment dates would solve this issue.

#### DRAFT REMUNERATION POLICY

The Auckland/Waikato Council has the following preliminary comments on the Draft Remuneration Policy:

- Council supports the concept of bulk funding of budgets based perhaps on a 3-yearly review, rather than having NZC involved in determining individual pay rates on an annual basis.
- Salary ranges should be adjusted for the Fish & Game “model”. For example, it is inequitable that the minimum salary for a new field officer should be considerably higher than that for an experienced and skilled office manager.
- Roles should be better defined, especially the demarcation between field officer and senior field officer.
- The salary range for regional manager’s salary should be based on actual council expenditure rather than budgeted expenditure as the latter didn’t take into consideration or provide incentive for external income.
- Concern was expressed that the proposed salary range would widen the *gender pay gap* for Fish and Game employees.
- There should also be transparency with the salary range for national office staff.
- Many roles don't actually fit within the strict framework of the 4 job descriptions.

The Auckland/Waikato considers that the remuneration policy still requires considerable discussion and regional input.

Please contact me if you require any clarification on the above preliminary comments.

Yours sincerely

Nigel Juby

**Chairman**

**Auckland/Waikato Fish & Game**

# Bi-Monthly Chief Executive's Report

August 2023

## OUTPUT 1: SPECIES MANAGEMENT

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### Project 1112: Banding/Shoveler Counts

One of our swan neck-mounted transmitters was recovered by a hunter shooting on Lake Whangape.

### Project 1122: Harvest Assessment: Game

The second to last round of harvest surveys are currently being undertaken, and once the survey has been closed off staff will provide a report on harvest to council.

### Project 1161: Fish Releases

Two-year-old rainbows were released in Lake Whatihua using the new track. The second of three planned releases to Lake Pupuke/Quarry Lake was completed just prior to the July School Holidays, when trout were also released into Moanana-nui.

## OUTPUT 2: HABITAT PROTECTION/MANAGEMENT

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### Project 1211 RMA

**Healthy Rivers:** Adam and David have dedicated a large portion of the last two months working with our legal and planning team to provide expert evidence for the upcoming Environment Court. Hard copies of the evidence was submitted to the Court and other parties in late July. David's evidence is primarily focused on getting better policies and rules for lakes and wetlands.

**Comprehensive consent application for maintenance of F&G wetlands:** We've finally near the end of this process, which has taken two years. A draft consent has been received from the WRC allowing F&G to undertake activities to maintain Council's wetlands in the Waikato District. The consent allows us to undertake earthworks for maintenance at each wetland of up to 1500m<sup>3</sup> per calendar year, except once every 7-10 years the maximum volume of earthworks at each wetland can be up to 3500m<sup>3</sup>.

The conditions may appear to be somewhat onerous but they're standard on this type of consent, and once we have a template set up it should be relatively simple to comply.

Once the consent is finalised, we'll contact each pond holder to request details on what work they're proposing to carry out this summer. Under the consent we must lodge a plan showing our intentions by 31st November each year.

**Thames Wastewater treatment Plant:** Clare is currently working with Harrison Grierson on strengthening the consent conditions for the Thames WWTP. There is some ambiguity on what constitutes achievable change, who determines that and what we consider achievable compared to what the consent holder considers achievable.

**National – NES-REG submission:** Misha and Clare prepared a submission on behalf of Fish and Game nationally on proposed changes to make the consenting process for renewable electricity generation (REG) projects easier. Of most notable concern are proposed changes to allow for REG projects in areas with significant environmental values, where the benefits of those projects would outweigh adverse effects. We proposed instead that a spatial mapping approach that identifies exactly where significant environmental areas are and what needs to be protected before assessing whether or not those areas should be put at risk. We also made the point that the precautionary approach and adaptive management need to be applied due to REG activities (such as large-scale solar and wind farms) being novel in New Zealand with very limited research on their impacts on wildlife. For example, wind generation is usually required to be in open and prominent places, and this can impact on wildlife such as birds through collision fatalities, habitat loss and disturbance resulting in displacement. Likewise large solar farm operations can adversely affect landscapes and wildlife. Overseas studies have found some birds might collide with solar panels because the bird perceives many closely spaced PV panels as a waterbody onto which they attempt to land.

**Waikato Freshwater Plan Review:** The National Policy Statement for Freshwater Management 2020 (NPS-FM) requires every regional council, in consultation with its community, to develop a plan for improving freshwater quality in the region. The Waikato Regional Council (WRC) is carrying out a Freshwater Policy Review in response to this requirement and are currently seeking feedback from the public with an online survey which includes providing feedback on a number of draft long-term freshwater visions. This consultation will ultimately inform the development of an updated Freshwater Plan for the Waikato Region. David and Clare attended a workshop on Friday 21 July with the Regional Council and other environmental NGO groups such as the Environmental Defence Society and Forest and Bird, to discuss and develop policy and in supporting the aspirations for freshwater improvements across the region. We are concerned however that the outcome from this consultation process will end up in a similar vein as Healthy Rivers (PC1), which has failed in many aspects. This includes failing to recognise the significance of the Whangamarino, and failing to recognise hydrogeomorphic features of individual lakes and specific management requirements of their catchments. The currently drafted long-term visions the Council have prepared are inconsistent and lack clear and directive language. However, it is critical to get the long-term visions for freshwater right as they guide how the Freshwater Plan will be implemented. As such, we have decided to prepare a submission for the council instead as this would better enable us to express our concerns and include more detail than what is provided by way of the online survey. We are also preparing a document to go out to stakeholders with key messages that we encourage those to advocate for when providing feedback to the Waikato Regional Council as part of the Freshwater Policy Review.

**Whangamarino Weir Section 128 Review:** David has provided a final round of feedback on the draft Weir S128 report. This is a very comprehensive piece of work that will be sent to Councillors as soon as it is available for public dissemination.

**Cambridge Wastewater Treatment Plant:** We have agreed in principle to a final set of conditions subject to WRC appraisal. The applicants willingly accepted several proposed

amendments, and this has generally been a good collaborative process that has achieved a mutually agreeable outcome.

### **Project 1231: Council Wetlands**

**Te Aroha Wetland:** The final report for the Te Aroha Wetland (circulated via email) has been completed. The water balance equation for the wetland was used to simulate the water levels, prioritising the last 5 years through 2017 to 2022 where three consecutive dry years resulted in low water levels and minimal waterfowl habitat in the wetland. ~31 years of input data was collected, with ~23 years being utilised in simulations of water levels from 2000 to 2023. Calibration of the model was limited to ~5 months of water level monitoring data from December 2022 to April 2023. A suitable calibration was achieved, although due to the high rainfall experienced over this summer period, the accuracy of the model to represent dry periods is based off anecdotal evidence. Following calibration of the model, nine scenarios were simulated over the 2017 to 2022 period that considered supplementing the wetland with water from the Waihou River by pumping, installing a one-way culvert at an invert of 8.5 mRL, raising the weir height, reducing weir leakage, or a combination of the above. These scenarios showed that a 6 L/s pumping rate could increase levels in the wetland significantly during summer dry seasons experienced from 2020 to 2022. Standing water area and potential habitat would increase from ~1 ha to 10 ha (900%) from the minimum simulated levels. A higher pumping rate would further increase habitat extent. Raising the weir height to 9.8 mRL had counterintuitive results, as at levels between 9.58 and 9.8 mRL, backflow through the culverts into the wetland (from the river) was reduced, which over the dry seasons decreased this additional inflow source to the wetland. However, raising of the weir when coupled with pumping resulted in the greatest increase in water levels over all seasons.

The report and field investigations revealed several mitigation measures which can be implemented. The first steps to be conducted in the coming summer is to bring the walking track up to a uniform level of 10mRL, increase the weir height to 9.8mRL, conduct remedial work on the weir to stop leakage and add a one-way culvert at 8.5mRL to allow water to flow into the wetland at lower levels. Quotes will also be sought for appropriate pumps which could be used to augment water levels in the wetland.

**Murray Young Wetland:** We heard back from the new senior property manager at Waka Kotahi who is progressing with the paperwork to fulfil the requirements of the agreement. Once this has been completed, we will be able to ballot the area to a group of hunters.

### **Project 1231: Other Land**

**Whangamarino Fish Kill and Botulism Outbreak:** David attended a recent meeting of the response group for Whangamarino and has authored the botulism section of the anoxic response plan. The plan is in draft due to be finalised at the end of September.

**Waikato Regional Council Small Scale Community Initiatives Fund:** There is a great fund for our conservation minded licence-buyers to get funding for traps and bait. John has assisted several in this regard with obtaining written DoC authority to trap on DoC administered

land, written authority to trap on F&G land, costings for the materials applied for, testimonial of their previous experience of the applicant/s, justification for their projects, letters of support/endorsement and so on. Checking a well-stocked trapline is often not much more time consuming, for instance the same distance walked, than checking one that is only sparsely trapped. Making these guys more efficient means the wetland birds and habitats they're protecting all have a much better chance at success.

**Wildlife Refuges:** John has written 2 documents on Wildlife Refuges in this region, a 15-page one thoroughly detailing all the current refuges and their legal designations, and a 12-page one listing all the revoked refuges, (some of which people still assume to be current, such as the now revoked Woodhill Forest refuge). This should help with any future questions by staff or indeed, prosecutions. To ensure the locations of the current refuges can be easily accessed by our licence-holders, John, Roslyn and Paul Hardy from DoC are working together to produce a simple online summary complete with maps that anyone can use to keep on the right side of the law.

Also followed up was the designation of the many offshore islands in the Hauraki Gulf. It seems all but Rangitoto Island, (but not the connected and adjoining Motutapu Island), are in our F&G region. So, for instance, this is why we issue annual Game Notices that all dabbling ducks are protected on Great Barrier Island, which has been done to protect brown teal there from 1951 onwards.

John has also asked that 2 Wildlife Refuges now be revoked. They are a 532-hectare refuge near Tuakau and a 231-hectare refuge near Te Awamutu, both on private farmland. Both were created around 100 years ago under legislation such as the Animals Protection and Game Act that preceded the current Wildlife Act. They were intended then as sanctuaries for newly released pheasants. These do not appear on the current landowner's titles and it's a moot legal point whether this legal status carries over when the original owner sells up and/or dies and especially when the new landowner/s don't now want such an encumbrance. In fact, the existing landowners in most cases had no idea the old status still exists over their land, there being no current signage, (probably not since the 1960's), or any personal contact by the authorities. However, DoC files say, "no end date", which presumably means that anyone shooting there is still subject to very punitive fines, be that for gamebirds or even for rabbits or possums. Also, for bringing on explosives or even allowing domestic stock onto these commercial farms. That is, unless they're specifically exempted by the Conservation Minister in writing. This latter exemption seems to have last happened at the Te Awamutu working farm for the then owner in 1955! In 1983 Tony Roxburgh, then with the Wildlife Service, later DoC, and Peter Howard from the Auckland Acclimatisation Society both agreed that the Tuakau refuge no longer served any purpose and should be revoked. However, this was never done at that time.

There is also a request from John to DoC to review the 2 overlapping wildlife refuges both centred on Lake Kopuera near Rangiriri. The smaller of these, 83-hectares including the lake but only some of the wetland, seems to have been in Crown hands since 1865.

The larger refuge, at 413-hectares, includes the lake but also a large area of farmland, was separately created more than 100 years ago with the intention of raising mallard and paradise ducks from eggs put in grey duck nests and Canada goose eggs put in Black Swan nests on this lake. At that time this surrounding land was largely scrub or swamp but is now

mostly farmland. Three of these larger farm titles are now in the process of being made into urban housing developments. The first off the line, Winton's Lakeside, will put around 660 new houses inside the old refuge's boundaries near Te Kauwhata. Clearly, the Conservation Minister is going to be very busy writing exemptions for everyone to allow on their domestic animals such as cats and dogs. To put this problem in perspective, the maximum fine for any offence inside a refuge, unless specifically authorised otherwise, is \$100,000 and/or 1 year in jail - or both.

What John has suggested is that the more distant farmland and urban land that plays no role in helping wildlife or wetland at the lake should now have this status removed from it. Once again, most owners had no idea it was even over their land, there being no signage since the 1960's and nothing on their title. If there had been any recent DoC contact, it was only to assure them the status no longer served any purpose and that it would be revoked. However, that never happened.

In the mid-1980's Wildlife Officer John Cheyne recommended that the original refuge boundaries be reviewed then to take into account the loss of a large area of wetland drained on the flats behind the Rangiriri Hotel when nearby Lake Waikare was lowered 1-meter. Lake Kopuera water levels are directly linked by a drain to the larger lake. A substantial area of the remaining wetland adjoining Lake Kopuera was then, and still is now, outside the boundaries of the smaller 83-hectare refuge that Lands and Survey around the 1980's handed over to the Wildlife Service, (now DoC). Our recommendation is that, with the current owner's agreement, (a job for the Crown), this additional wetland should now be added to this smaller refuge designation over the lake. Also, that the existing Queen's Chain be realigned to better reflect the current lake margin and provide a practical buffer for the wetland and it's wildlife. This would protect the lake and all the wetland habitat surrounding it. Removing the larger refuge imposed over the top of all this would free up more distant farmland and urban land that no longer plays a part in helping this lake's wetlands and wildlife. If the decision is made to purchase this extra wetland outside the old Lands and Survey designation, this has been fully costed in John's document.

Finding the current multiple landowners at home at these 3 refuge sites and getting their many signatures has been a lengthy process, however, it's also been a great opportunity to meet many "salt of the Earth" rural kiwis.

Several hunters have complained about the neglected and even dangerous state of Whangape Domain, where the lake outlet is. This domain has long been popular with both gamebird hunters and coarse fishers. When John first phoned the Waikato District Council they argued it belongs to the Regional Council, and visa-versa when he contacted them. More recently, WDC argued that it now belongs to Ministry for the Environment. Ministry for the Environment in Wellington when asked by John then contacted LINZ who have decided it is "squarely" in the Waikato District Council's court. So back to where we started. This is a Local Purpose Reserve for Soil Conservation and River Control and has been since 1976. But it should be obvious now why this reserve has been so neglected for 30-years that it is now dangerous for people to drive along the track there, if they can get past the blackberry jungles.

## **Project 1235: Trees**

**Tree order:** The annual tree order was received and distributed to F&G clubs, committees and individuals for specified projects. We try to give everyone as close to what they had on their wish list as possible, although we didn't receive all species and quantities ordered from some of the nurseries due to a lack of availability.

Certain trees have been very useful sources of seeds for our tree program. We imported Water tupelo seeds, (*Nyssa aquatica*), around 1975 from the USA. Seed in turn from these well-grown trees can now be collected from both the McKenzie and Dean Wetlands around June and even July. A small quantity was recently sent to green-fingered Keith Smith in Hamilton to grow on. A document detailing where all these various trees have been prepared by John to assist future field staff to locate them.

## **OUTPUT 3: PARTICIPATION**

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### **Project 1311: Access negotiation**

**Waione Stream:** The landowner at Waione Station has requested that his farm is removed from our fishing map as he is putting it into pines and wants it closed. He previously requested we close the river and regulations were altered to have a 0 limit as a compromise. This is a good example of where anglers are slowly losing access on private land. An access fund is needed to purchase access for future generation when it becomes available to reverse this trend.

Adam has written outdoorhq.com to request they remove fishing properties from their site. The site sells hunting experiences like AirBnB. The company has removed all the sites that do not have accommodation but are still offering "fishing" for sale at locations with cabins. The site is nationwide so I would like NZ Council to follow this up with a letter to the directors indicating selling fishing is not legal.

### **Project 1331: F&G Newspapers**

**Both Barrels:** June and July issues of Both Barrels were prepared by John.

**Preseason fish magazine:** Adam completed the magazine articles for 2023 and produced a feature article on gold clams. Adam is advocating to transition the magazine to a digital format to better engage with our users on digital formats.

### **Project 1341: Other publications**

**Facebook:** Our digital posts are performing well with fishing Facebook posts reaching nearly 19,000 users in May and June alone. The plan going forward is to produce some YouTube videos on fishing our local waterways.

## **Project 1361: User Group Costs**

**Morrinsville shooting range:** John has been assisting Morrinsville Fish & Game and also EPCM with their Police range approvals. Morrinsville seem to have missed the deadline, largely due to not being able to get a range inspection officer to assess the private land they have access to.

## **OUTPUT 4: PUBLIC INTERFACE**

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### **Project 1410 Liaison**

**Conservation Board:** I met with the Waikato Conservation Board by Zoom to discuss the issues of concern in the Waikato for F&G.

## **OUTPUT 5: LAW ENFORCEMENT**

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### **Project 1521 Ranger Training**

**Ranger Training:** Adam and John are preparing for a ranger training course in October. There will also be course in September for OSH training for rangers carried out by CERT.

## **OUTPUT 8: PLANNING REPORTING**

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### **Project 1840: National liaison**

**F&G Manager's Meeting:** These are now held every two weeks online. The New Zealand Council has an ambitious agenda for policy and governance review.

I also attended a manager's meeting at the North Canterbury F&G office, which was joined by a wide range of individuals from kindred organisations. The objective is to pursue objectives and advocacy that will benefit hunting and fishing at a national level.

**National Office:** The National Office staff have several new appointments:

Chief executive:	Corina Jordan
Chief financial officer:	Carmel Veitch
Senior policy advisor:	Helen Brosnam
Accounts/ administrator:	Sophie Andrews
HR business partner:	Jane Hutchings
Executive assistant:	Maryse Ropiha
Contract project planner:	Lisa Bennetts

There are also staff in the regions who are funded to carry out contract work for the New Zealand Council up to 3 days a week, including Roslyn Simmonds (website development) and Adam Daniel (Maritime NZ).

**Golden Clam:** The Lake Arapuni gold clam invasion (*Corbicula fluminea*) is still evolving, and Adam is participating on the technical advisory group and has produced an article to inform anglers of the new pest. The clam is one of the world's most invasive species and is already abundant in a 45km stretch of the Waikato River from Horahora Domain (Lake

Karāpiro) down-stream. The clam is well established and highly invasive, reaching densities of over 16,000 per m<sup>2</sup>, producing up to 70,000 offspring annually, and has the ability to fertilise itself so a single individual can start a new population. No such population has been eradicated before. Fortunately, up-stream migration is slow, but microscopic juvenile clams can literally sail downstream by creating a mucus string to catch the current. It is unlikely the clam will affect trout populations, but bottom-feeders like catfish and koi carp will eat the invader.

Freshwater gold clams do eat algae, filtering up to 1.3 litres of water per hour, and have improved water clarity in colonised waterways allowing aquatic plants (including weed species) to thrive. But die offs of clams in anoxic lakes could exacerbate existing botulism issues. At this point we are telling anglers and hunters to do their part to make sure the clam is contained to the Waikato River using existing Check Clean Dry procedures until MPI announces additional guidance.

**Petition to ban gamebird hunting:** David Klee (AWFG), Matt McDougall (Eastern), Matt Garrick (Nth Canterbury) and Heather Garrick (New National Office staff member) responded to a parliamentary petition questioning our ongoing ability to harvest indigenous game birds. The report and appendices which focused on national trend analysis for all indigenous game species was presented to parliament. It is envisaged that this will provide a template for an annual high-level report that will provide a national overview on the state of gamebird populations across the country. Further work is being conducted on the individual species reports and the group plus any other interested staff across the country are also looking to revise SOPS for monitoring projects to try and provide a consistent framework of data collection, analysis, and presentation.

## **OUTPUT 9: ADMINISTRATION**

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### **Project 1912: Administration**

**Maritime NZ audit:** John's boat was issued a *notice of imposition* because when inspected the boat had an expired survey and fire extinguisher in addition to an inoperable bilge pump. The boat issues were repaired, and the notice of imposition was lifted. The Maritime NZ audit is ongoing.

**B. Wilson**  
**Chief Executive**