

## **AUCKLAND/WAIKATO FISH & GAME NEWSBRIEF**

If you require further elaboration or clarification of items contained herein, or any other matters relating to F&G business, please don't hesitate to contact your local ward councillor or the office.

### **Matters arising from Council Meeting of 29 February 2020**

1. Emails were tabled from Graham Pyatt, Anne and Kevin Julian thanking Adam Daniel for his professionalism in their recent encounters with him while trout fishing. Councillors agreed that this was excellent feedback and great for the image of Fish & Game.
2. Mr Wilson reported that they would be advising licence holders in the preseason newsletter that a special season in the King Country was likely in 2021
3. Mr R. Foster spoke on his considerable concern regarding the ongoing botulism outbreak in the Hauraki Plains. He thanked David Klee for his effort in coordinating a response to the outbreaks, which was the worst Mr Foster had seen in the 66 years he had hunted in this area. He noted that it was also affecting birds in the Kopuatai Peat Dome. Mr Foster had been carrying out weekly sweeps of the Piako River, which he described as an absolute sewer and the carnage was shocking. Mr Foster was thanked by the chairman for his comments. Council has requested staff to report back to council on whether effort should be diverted from the banding programme to controlling botulism outbreaks.
4. Mr Wilson emphasised that the standard of recent submission prepared by the RMA staff was very high, especially due to the efforts and expertise of Jane Shaw and Anna Sintenie. Staff were preparing for several hearings concerning discharges from wastewater treatment plants including the Open Country Dairy factory discharge into the Piako catchment. However, they had been at a disadvantage in recent hearings in not having access to independent experts. Council agreed to apply to the New Zealand Fish & Game Council for up to \$20,000 from the Auckland/Waikato non-resident fund for the funding of water quality experts to assist in RMA advocacy work.
5. The draft NZ Council communications strategy was tabled. Councillors emphasised their lack of confidence in the national office to competently handle regional media issues, especially given the considerable adverse impact of recent media campaigns on the relationship between Fish & Game and the local rural community.
6. Mr Wilson informed that staff were considering options for dealing with the potential coronavirus epidemic.
7. Councillor Kerr asked whether council was controlling hunters on the Lake Waikare property. He expressed his concerns over goat carcasses left by hunters. Mr Wilson replied that they had a booking system for the property. He agreed to inform hunters using the property that they shouldn't leave carcasses.
8. Councillor Kerr inquired whether council had a list of maimai owners on Lake Waikare as it was a good time to remove derelict maimai due to low water levels. Mr Dyer replied that no such list existed that was up to date.
9. Councillor Shaw suggested that the recent changes in the game season regulations be promoted in a press release to the farming media.

## Matters Arising From Chief Executive's Report

- **Drift Diving:** Drift dives were completed at the Awakino, Waihou, Waimac and Mangatutu rivers. All were running low but had normal amount of fish numbers. The Waihou river had plenty of large fish for this time of the year. The only concern was significant algal growth and very high-water temperatures.
- **Banding:** It has been a mixed bag at banding sites but overall the results are disappointing. We were at a new site on the Hauraki Plains, as the farm we have banded on previously has been sold. The botulism outbreak occurring in the area may also have reduced numbers as the banding site is not far from the drain where we picked up 800 or so carcasses early in the New Year. Catches at Te Awamutu and Helensville were good but the Opuatia site was below average.
- **Long flight:** A juvenile female mallard banded at Pipiroa on 13 January this year was recovered 1,970km away, exhausted but otherwise OK just over 3 weeks later in Lifou Island. This is part of the Loyalty group of islands to the immediate east of New Caledonia.
- **Northern trend flight:** The Northern shelduck trend count, completed by Northland F&G manager Rudi Hoetjes and his new staff member Graham Gallagher was well up; 4,846 this year compares with 3,370 last year.
- **Wetland Site Visits and funding applications:** David conducted another 3 wetland site visits and helping 2 landowners prepare funding applications to WCEET, due at the end of March.
- **Botulism:** David Klee has been involved in organising and coordinating clean-up operations. At the time of writing this report we have now found dead birds all over the Hauraki plains, with the Piako river system impacted from the mouth right up to and including the Kopuatai wetland and surrounds. At this point of time it appears to be one of the worst years we have had.
- **Waikato District Plan:** Key hearing dates are likely to be June (Rural, Ohinewai Proposals) and August (Significant Natural Areas). We are currently working towards allocating evidence to support our submission, particularly for the rural hearing. Mr Wilson spoke at the hearing on Definitions and our submission on this issue was accepted in full.
- **Cambridge WWTP:** We filed a submission opposing the Waipā District Council's applications to renew the Cambridge Wastewater Treatment Plant Consents on the basis that the conditions of the consents were not to the required standard. The application was disappointing, seeking a bare minimum of actions in the term of consent, with no clear direction for long term improvements or for development of a plan, high limits for nutrients, and relaxed limits for suspended sediment and biological oxygen demand. The plant has been performing poorly. Issues of projected population increases and the plant's ability to handle both existing flows and significantly increased loads were drivers for the consent application for a long-term solution lodged (and then shelved) in 2011. Since then, little observable progress has cumulated in significant non-compliance in 2018. The existing consents expired on 1 December 2016 (operating under s124 RMA since that time). The current application, notified 3 years later and seeking a term of 6 years, brings the period between expiry and the upgrades now signalled to at least 9 years. We raised our concerns with the delay, consent conditions, poor performance of the plant in the submission.