

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 8 August 2021

1. The Chairman reported that a Merit Certificate had been given to Mr Gary Fraser, who expressed his appreciation to Councillors for this honour.
2. Councillors discussed the Governance Review with concerns expressed over the lack of licence-holder representation and especially the reduced governance that would occur with any reduction in the number of councillors from 12.
3. The Section 128 Review of the Whangamarino Weir consents were discussed. Mr Klee advised that he had recently attended a 2-day workshop to review the latest technical documents and provide feedback. A draft report had been prepared on the environmental and hydrological impacts of the weir, and when finalised this report would be sent to Councillors.
4. The Chairman spoke on the recent passing of Murray Fisher, who was a strong supporter of Fish & Game, and a great loss to the hunting community on the Hauraki Plains.
5. Mr Wilson introduced his financial report emphasising that licence sales had been much higher than predicted and that a balance budget was likely despite the forecast deficit of \$101,619.
6. Mr Wilson reported that the High Court Judge, P.J. Andrew, had agreed to Ward Ranch discontinuing proceedings against Council.
7. Ms Davis's report on the legal aspects of drift shooting was discussed with staff emphasizing that they were concerned with the current situation where motorised vessels were often used for drift shooting and the difficulties in enforcing the regulations. Ms Davis's report had clearly shown that drift shooting should be restricted to rowboats. It was agreed that there be an extensive PR campaign about the regulations for drift shooting with rangers taking an educational role in the 2022 game season.
8. The reports from Mr Wilson and Mr Dyer on livestock grazing on Council's wetlands were tabled. It was noted that the Council's wetlands most affected by the new legislation would be the Central and North Shepherd where grazing was currently prohibited.
9. Mr Wilson introduced his report on the advocacy efforts that Fish & Game had been involved with at a regional level for the restoration of Lake Waikare and the Whangamarino Wetland. Councillor Williamson expressed his frustration that despite Council's efforts it would be unlikely that he would see any appreciable change in Lake Waikare water quality in his lifetime. Mr Klee agreed with Councillor Williamson that only an increase in water level could possibly have an immediate impact. Staff had tried to get the consent for the Lake Waikare water level reviewed as part of the recent (2014 - 2020) Section 128 review of the discharge from Lake Waikare to the Whangamarino Wetland but were unsuccessful. The current water level consents did not expire until 2037. However, there was a legal requirement under the Vision and Strategy for the lake to be swimmable and fishable within 80 years.
10. Councillors discussed the decision by the NZF&G Council to allow for the continuation of commercial pheasant preserves by allowing pheasants in designated properties to continue to be on Schedule 3 of the Wildlife Act. Councillors expressed their disappointment with the decision and especially the lack of consultation with regions despite the long-standing opposition of the Auckland/Waikato Council to commercialisation of pheasant hunting. Councillors agree to write to both the NZ Council and the Minister of Conservation expressing these concerns.

Matters arising from the Chief Executive's Report

- **Harvest Surveys and Band Returns:** As anticipated, total harvest and average harvest of ducks were low this year. Number of ducks shot per hour of hunting was also one of the lowest recorded (similar to 2009-2012).
- **Lake Arapuni trout fishery:** Dr Daniel completed his Arapuni report with data collected from the annual Arapuni Fishing Competition compared to water quality data from the regional council. There has been a steady increase in nitrogen in Arapuni and although alarming the current level is about 1/3 of where a direct impact would be expected on aquatic life. The water quality data also indicates increased fish size is correlated to improved water clarity.
- **Lake Whatihua:** One-year-old rainbow trout were released into Lake Whatihua. Drive up access was granted by the landowner and it may be possible to release 2-year-old fish in the future.
- **Waikato Coastal Plan Review:** We made submissions on water quality, access and the rules related recreational hunting.
- **Healthy Rivers:** The Waikato Regional Council came back to us mid-May with their response on our Environment Court appeals to the proposed Plan Change 1 (Healthy Rivers) for the Waikato River catchment. The WRC stated whether they supported or opposed each of our 121 appeals and the reasons for this.
- **Paeroa Wastewater Treatment Plant (WWTP):** We submitted on the Paeroa WWTP application for 5-year temporary consent. After consultation, the consent conditions were altered to address our concerns with nutrient reductions, a Botulism Management Plan was added, and a condition outlining the intent for the long-term.
- **Waikato Regional Pest Management Plan:** We submitted on the Waikato Regional Councils Regional Pest Management Plan. We're concerned that the proposed plan will make it much more difficult to control pest plants in wetlands.
- **Comprehensive consent for wetland maintenance:** A comprehensive consent application for the routine maintenance of council's wetlands was completed and sent to both WRC and WDC in July.
- **Game Bird Habitat Trust:** Mr Klee has undertaken 7 site visits with landowners in order to assist them with developing plans to enhance game bird habitat on their properties. Projects range from wetland creation and enhancement to predator control. The Gamebird Habitat Trust has partnered with Billion trees and Mr Klee has managed to secure \$26,000 for further planting on existing gamebird habitat projects. He is also assisting with and acting as a referee on a further 5 projects that lodged applications at the end of June.
- **Waimiha Stream access:** The Whenuatupu-Ohinemoa Trust has accepted an access agreement that Dr Daniel will action prior to the beginning of the 2021/22 season. The agreement will allow drive up access to the Waimiha Stream when the station is open and a poled route. Once the agreement has been tested further negotiations will take place to hopefully open more of the river to anglers.
- **Kopuatai Wetland:** There have been some issues with members of the public accessing parts of Kopuatai wetland with vehicles and creating damage. Several maimas have also been broken into with punts, decoys, bbqs and other equipment stolen. DOC have agreed to install a locked pipe gate in one of the key problem areas with the UPWMA to manage keys for hunters and other legitimate recreational users.
- **Game season prosecutions:** Staff and honorary rangers were again active and we're currently processing 10 prosecutions.