

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 councillor or the office.

Matters arising from the Council Meeting of 15 March 2025

Trout Tagging Project – Dr Daniel has conducted a training day with Oillie Basset and subsequently tagged 35 trout in the Whakapapa catchment to date. Temperature measurements were taken at the time of tagging.

MPDC Consent – Several further meetings with consultants have been completed. Process has been complicated by the newly proposed national WWTP standards. The consultants in this case have taken the interpretation that total loads are therefore not of concern and improvements in non-toxicants such as TN, TP and TSS are not required. We do not believe that this is what the legislation suggests.

Tag Returns - The Chair suggested that there are several potential explanations for higher tag returns for fish caught earlier in the season that may not be related to temperature related mortality at the time of first capture. For example, fish caught early in the season may simply have a greater chance of being recaptured due to being subjected to more angler days.

Prosecution Budget - The CE updated the council on various prosecutions being undertaken and highlighted that the council is likely to exceed its budget this year. This is due to delays in processing some of the prosecutions due to their complexity. The CE also explained that there had been a concerted effort to increase ranger presence in the past 12 months which had led to increased detections of non-compliance.

Draft budget and operational work plan – The change to Zero-based system was unable to be implemented as deadlines being missed by NZC and budget templates not being made available to regions. The CE took councillors through the draft budget. In formulating the budget, projects had been re-evaluated according to the organisational strategy and our regional priorities looking for cost savings and efficiencies. Almost all the budget increases relate to fixed overheads, which are unavoidable and unable to be funded through restricted reserves. Overall the draft budget was lower than two years ago, despite operating in a hyperinflation environment, highlighting the sustainability of the regions

Contractors on council owned wetlands – Issue of contractors complying with relevant H&S and consent requirements when working on council lands was discussed. The council passed a motion that requires staff to authorise and organise any works done by contractors on F&G land prior to it being undertaken.

Matters Arising from the Chief Executive's Report

Drift Diving

Drift diving has been completed on the Waihou, Kauaeranga, and Mangatutu. All rivers had low flows and were impacted by heavy periphyton cover with the Kauaeranga reduced to a series of pools. The Awakino River had over 80 fish over 40 cm per kilometre, the highest drift dive count on record.

Banding

This year's banding was completed across 6 sites. In total, 2316 birds were banded, and 77 birds were recaptured. This number is down from last year but reasonably consistent with the previous 7 years. All first schedules have been entered into the database and imported into Falcon ready for the upcoming season.

Harvest survey

Wild and hatchery tag returns - An additional 1000 tags were ordered for the Whanganui and Whakapapa in an attempt to collect species composition, length and growth data. Taggers have also been asked to record the time they fish and temperature data when tagging to help elucidate the effects of temperature on survival rates of tagged fish.

RMA

Sand Quarry Resource Consent - We made a submission on a notified resource consent application for a sand quarry, specifically in regard to discharging water to the Karapiro Stream. We opposed the application based on the applicant providing limited information about the extent and nature of the discharge, and as such it is difficult to assess its effects.

Matamata-Piako combined WWTP consents - We made a submission opposing a district wide application to replace the resource consents associated with the wastewater treatment plants for Matamata, Morrinsville, Tahuna and Te Aroha, in the Matamata Piako District. Our main concerns are that, requested increases in volumes and consent limits would leave headroom for further degradation of an already degraded receiving environment

Matamata-Piako District Council - A full breakdown of current vs. proposed discharge parameters was provided for the Matamata-Piako combined WWTP discharge consents after a year of requesting the data.

Whangamarino Working Group - Dani been attending the Whangamarino Working Group meetings and workshops. The purpose of the group is to collaborate and contribute to the development and delivery a Whangamarino Action Plan.

Council land

Stone Jug Road easement - The proposed easement that is to be placed on the Stone Jug Road property is still in negotiation with the Ruapehu District Council and local iwi.

Te Aroha Wetland - Te Aroha wetland: as a part of the comprehensive restoration plan for the Howarth Memorial wetland some upgrades were completed on the weir that was installed last year.

Access negotiation

Hamilton Anglers Club request - The Hamilton Zoo, Hamilton City Park, and Waipā District Council have been contacted to request meetings to propose signage for kids fishing.

Whakapapa River Access - The Brown family have asked for two signs for their home farm at Owhango to instruct anglers to use the DOC track rather than their farm to access the Whakapapa River.

Access Database - We have started to ground truth and update the access database for fishing in the region.

Liaison Advocacy

Maritime exemptions for lake Arapuni - The Lake Arapuni Fishing Competition has now been moved to the 22nd – 23rd of March because of Harbourmaster granted a navigation safety bylaw exemption (NSBE) for a waterski race effectively closing the lake during the Lake Arapuni Fishing Competition without consultation with lake users or posting the event to their event calendar. Going forward staff will work with DOC to make sure the lake management plan excludes future events.

Ranging/training

Ranging effort - 16 contacts, 6 licence checks, and 1 citation. Ranging occurred during drift dives on the Mangatutu, Awakino, Kauaeranga, Waikato and Whakapapa Rivers. One verbal warning and one citation for fishing without a licence was issued.

National liaison

Review of firearms legislation – We provided comment on the review of firearms legislation highlighting the lack of options in the current act for renters and transient residents that cannot install safes in their homes or are not homeowners.