

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 14 February 2026

Crop Depredation Policy – Council noted concerns that the draft policy conflates governance and operational matters, does not adequately reflect regional scale and species differences, and proposes mandatory site visits and follow up requirements that may be disproportionate in high volume regions.

Statistical Considerations for Game Bird Monitoring at a National Scale - Council discussed the Statistical Monitoring Report prepared by Proteus. Council reiterated its view that it is not appropriate to work through highly technical monitoring reports at a governance level.

R3 Regional Implementation - Council affirmed its reservations regarding the current R3 programme being run by Fish and Game. Councillors expressed concern that the programme, in its present form, does not clearly articulate measurable objectives or provide tangible outcomes by which its effectiveness can be evaluated.

National H&S Audit - Council received the national Health and Safety audit report. The Chief Executive advised that a number of the findings were useful and that he and Danielle Lelievre were updating the Auckland Waikato Health and Safety Plan to incorporate relevant recommendations.

Matters Arising from the Chief Executive's Report

SPECIES MANAGEMENT

Drift diving

Drift Diving Review - The Conservation Act 1987 requires Fish & Game councils to assess and monitor fish and game populations. Drift dives are used to monitor A/W fish populations in addition to spawning surveys when deemed necessary. A review of the drift diving program was conducted to determine what improvements could be made to increase the accuracy of data being collected.

Drift Diving - Poor weather has prevented any drift dives from being completed to date.

Banding/Shovler Study

The Parakai banding weekend - completed on the 17th and 18th January. A good number of ducks were banded, with 625 total (425 day 1 and 200 day 2). There were 40 recaptures.

Hauraki Plains banding has been moved to the 4th and 5th of February due to continued adverse weather conditions, and too much water and alternative food sources available for the ducks.

Aka Aka and Opuatia are going ahead 31st and 1st of January and at this stage both sites are reporting good numbers of ducks.

Trend Counts

Dani carried out the swan and geese trend count mid-January. Total black swan numbers were looking healthy and slightly up on last year, and the 20 years prior to 2024. A large proportion of the swan numbers were once again seen in the western harbours, Kawhia (2649) and Aotea (1473), and the Taharoa lakes (910).

Population Surveys

Lake Arapuni Fishing Competition - A permit was issued for the Annual Arapuni Fishing Competition and staff will be attending the Sunday weigh in.

Fish Harvest Survey

Wild Tag Returns - Wild tag returns have ramped up with the additional tagging effort on the Whakapapa River by Ollie Bassett in addition to the efforts of George Brocklhurst and Paul Fuller on the Mangatutu. Unfortunately, many reported returns lack adequate data.

Trout Releases

Potential Kids Fishing Lake - Adam visited the new Te Awa Lakes development that will feature multiple constructed wetlands and lakes. The site is under development but has potential to provide a fish out pond or lake.

Regulations

Regulation Change Feedback - To date staff have only received a small amount of feedback on the significant regulation changes that came into effect October 1st.

Game Bird Control

Dani and Beau provided summary feedback to council regarding the draft national policy for gamebird depredation.

HABITAT PROTECTION/MANAGEMENT

RMA

Island Block Pump Station Replacement Consent Application - Clare and David reviewed the Island Block Pump Station Replacement consent application and identified a number of technical, ecological, and statutory concerns. They provided feedback of these concerns which have not been addressed and was lodged on the 6th of December 2025.

Waihi North Project (Fast-Track Consent) - Clare and Adam prepared and lodged a submission on the Waihi North Gold Mine Fast-Track consent application. AWFG was subsequently invited to comment on the proposed consent conditions with a short delivery, due on the 5th of December.

RM Reform – Natural Environment and Planning Bills - National office staff and KAHU Environmental, are leading a submission on the proposed Natural Environment Bill and Planning Bill, which aim to replace the Resource Management Act. While Fish & Game supports reform in principle, there are significant concerns that the draft legislation does not adequately protect freshwater ecosystems, wetlands, or the habitats that support trout, salmon, and game birds, nor does it recognise recreation and public access values.

Whangamarino - The Whangamarino Working Group that David and Dani have continued to be a part of is reaching the pointy end of things, with the Whangamarino Action Plan Report having been drafted up. David was part of a subgroup which carried out an Options Assessment to narrow down around 200 options to around 20 which are outlined in the Draft Whangamarino Action Plan.

Assessment and Monitoring

Mangatutu and Puniu Temperature Monitoring - Temperature loggers were installed in the Puniu River and Mangatutu Stream to compare the water temperature where anglers fish to the Mangatutu Stream monitoring station at Waikeria. The results showed that the Waikeria gauge was about 2°C warmer than the upper Mangatutu and the gauge could be used to predict water temperatures that are dangerous for catch and release.

Gamebird Monitoring - Beau is in early stages of developing a monitoring programme for pukeko in our region.

PARTICIPATION

Access Negotiation

Stone Jug Road - The easement and wording for the Stone Jug Road access has been completed and submitted to a solicitor to be registered on the property title. The process should take a couple of weeks.

Upper Waipa River Access - Adam met with the new owners of the Templeton Farm who were not thrilled about the access across their property. After explaining their legal obligations for access and the safety of anglers around dangerous stock the owners were happy to allow anglers to use their private tracks if they were called in advance.

Flow and Temperature data Added - Live water flow and temperature data, sourced from the Waikato Regional Council has been added to the access map. The hope is that flow data will help anglers make good decisions about where to go fishing.

Magazine

Beau and Dani have contributed to the regional supplement of the F&G Gamebird magazine.

User Group

Lake Arapuni Fishing Competition Burnsco Donation - Adam was able to secure a \$500 prize donation from Burnsco for the Lake Arapuni Fishing Competition.

LAW ENFORCEMENT

Ranging

Sports Fish Ranging - Sports fish ranging was conducted during routine work and when anglers were encountered. In total 22 contacts were made and no citations were issued.

PLANNING REPORTING

National Liaison

Gold Clam Compliance - The spread of gold clams to Taranaki and the increasing density of gold clams at Lake Karapiro (1000/m²) has resulted in access restrictions to Rotorua Lakes. Te Arawa Lakes Trust Board staff stated there would be lake closures if MPI did not fund decontamination or enforcement in the Waikato.