



**EASTERN
FISH AND GAME COUNCIL**

***MEETING
AGENDA***

12 February 2026

AGENDA

The 219th Meeting of the Eastern Fish and Game Council

Venue: Eastern Fish & Game Region Offices
Paradise Valley Road
ROTORUA

Date: Thursday, 12 February 2026

Commences: 11.00 AM

	<u>Page</u>
1 Welcome (11AM)	
2 Apologies	
3 Minutes of the Previous Meeting (11 December 2025) (11.05,10min)	(R) 1
3.1 Identification of Items for Council Policy	(R)
3.2 Matters arising from the meeting of 11 December 2025	
4 Notification of Items for General Business	
5 Conflict of Interest Register	9
6 Health and Safety Report (11.20, 15 min)	(R) 11
7 Health & Safety Audit (11.35, 20min)	(R) 13
8 Anglers Notice Review (11.55, 10min)	(R) 14
9 Goals and Priorities for the 2025-26 OWP (12.05, 20min)	(R) 19
Working Lunch (12.30PM – 12.50PM)	
10 Crop Depredation Policy (12.50M, 20 min)	(R) 23
11 National Game Bird Monitoring Programme, Protus Report (13.10,20min)	(R) 29
12 R3 Regional Implementation (13.30, 20min)	(R) 31
13 Fish & Game Reform Discussion (13.50, 30min)	(D)
14 Operational Reports (14.20, 20 min)	40
14.1 Finance Report	(R) 40
14.2 Management Report	(I/D) 52
14.3 Licence Sales Report	(I/D) 64
15 Liaison Officers Reports (14.40, 10 min)	(I) 65
16 General Business (14.50, 20min)	
17 Meeting Closes (15.10)	

R = resolution required, D = for discussion/advice, I = for information only

**UNCONFIRMED MINUTES OF THE 218th MEETING OF THE EASTERN FISH AND
GAME COUNCIL, HELD AT ROTORUA OFFICES OF FISH & GAME NEW
ZEALAND ON THURSDAY 11 DECEMBER 2025 AT 11 AM.**

Present

Crs. Lindsay Lyons, Alec McIver, Pat Swift, Kevin Coutts, and Murray Ferris

In attendance

Arash Alaeinia, Kate Thompson, Matthew McDougall, Eben Herbert Eastern Fish & Game; and Barry Roderick.

1.0 WELCOME

1.1 Cr Lindsay Lyons opened the meeting at 11.00am welcoming all including Barry Roderick, and staff present. Lindsay thanked Council for their confidence in putting him forward to take on the role of chair and wished to acknowledge the work that Cr Mark Sceats had put in over the past year.

2.0 APOLOGIES

2.1 Apologies were received from Crs. Scott Nicol and Mark Sceats.

2.2 *Agreed (Kevin Coutts/Murray Ferris) that the apologies for the 218th meeting of the Eastern Region Fish and Game Council be sustained. [25/12/2.2]*

3.0 MINUTES OF THE PREVIOUS MEETING (16 OCTOBER 2025)

3.1 *Agreed (Murray Ferris/Alec McIver) that the minutes of the meeting held on 16th October 2025 be confirmed as a true and correct record. [25/12/3.1]*

3.2 IDENTIFICATION OF RESOLUTIONS FOR INCLUSION IN COUNCIL POLICY

3.3 There were no items for inclusion in Council Policy.

3.4 MATTERS ARISING

There were no matters arising from the minutes of the meeting held 16th October 2025.

4.0 NOTIFICATION OF ITEMS FOR GENERAL BUSINESS

Cr Murray Ferris - Waikaremoana

5.0 CONFLICT OF INTEREST REGISTER

5.1 Councillors were asked to inform the chair of any conflicts of interest. No conflicts of interest were recorded.

6.0 HEALTH & SAFETY

6.1 Arash Alaeinia reported no incidents since the last meeting of Council. He advised that the Health & Safety audit for the region had been completed and he planned to share the report for discussion at the next meeting.

6.3 *Agreed (Alec McIver/Lindsay Lyons) that Council receives the Health and Safety report. [25/12/6.3]*

7.0 EASTERN COUNCILLOR NUMBERS DISCUSSION

7.1 Cr Lindsay Lyons confirmed that no responses had been received following the advertisement of the Council vacancy and requested that Council consider how to proceed. Council supported retaining the current number of Councillors, noting that co-option could be considered at a later date. Arash Alaeinia asked Council to be mindful of the number of Councillors required to meet a quorum. Lindsay suggested that should a quorum not be met the meeting could continue and that resolutions could

be confirmed at the following meeting if necessary. Arash also noted that it was now admissible to undertake meetings online via the likes of zoom.

7.2 *Agreed (Kevin Coutts/Alec McIver) that Council will not proceed with appointing an eighth Councillor at this time and will continue with its current seven elected members. [25/12/7.2]*

8.0 EASTERN FISH AND GAME RISK REGISTER

8.1 Arash Alaeinia informed Council of the need to review the Eastern Fish & Game Risk Register and its associated risk levels. He highlighted recent additions and changes to the risk levels and invited Council to discuss.

8.2 Council discussed the potential risk to fisheries arising from proposals put to the Minister regarding releasing of trout and management of the fisheries. Arash Alaeinia referred to a recent Cawthron Institute study on the effects of trout on native Koaro, and Cr Lindsay Lyons also noted a study completed by Wellington staff which he said would be useful to obtain.

8.3 Arash also informed Council of a recommendation made by the auditor regarding risk associated with public access to the hatchery. The risk being that a season's liberations could be affected, although this has never occurred to date. He advised Council that he had undertaken initial investigations into installing a fence along the road frontage of the property; however, he noted short of fencing the entire property and closing to the public, there are limited measures available to further mitigate this risk. During operational hours, staff are present on site and hatchery visitors monitored by security cameras.

8.4 *Agreed (Murray Ferris/Alec McIver) that Council accepts the Risk Register for Eastern Fish & Game and supports its annual review and providing a copy to the New Zealand Council. [25/12/8.4]*

9.0 ANNUAL MEETING AND BUDGET TIMETABLE

9.1 Council discussed the meeting timetable for 2026 and proposed bringing the March meeting forward to 12 March as three members would be unavailable on the suggested date 26 March, and as the December period was very busy for some members Council agreed to bring the December meeting forward from the 10th to 3rd of December.

9.2 *Agreed (Murray Ferris/Pat Swift) that Council confirms the proposed meeting dates and locations for 2026 per the table below. [25/12/9.2]*

	Date	Venue	Key Topics
1	<i>Thurs 12 February 2026</i>	Rotorua	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Council Priorities, • F&G Reform Submission • Anglers Notice – initial consideration
2	<i>Thurs 12 March 2026</i>	Rotorua	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • OWP - first draft plus proposed budget
3	<i>Thurs 28 May 2026</i>	Rotorua	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Licence Fees • OWP - second draft • Anglers Notice – finalise recommendations
4	<i>Thurs 30 July 2026</i>	Rotorua	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Finalise OWP • Game Conditions - initial consideration • Council & CEO Performance Review
5	<i>Thurs 8 October 2026</i>	Rotorua	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Annual Performance Report – draft • Game Conditions - consideration
6	<i>Thurs 3 December 2026</i>	Rotorua	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Game Conditions - finalise recommendations • Review Risk Register • Set Annual Council Meeting Schedules
AGM	<i>Thurs 3 December 2026</i>	Rotorua	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Present Annual Performance Report

10.0 BIOSECURITY GOLD CLAM AND HPAI – VERBAL UPDATE

- 10.1 Arash Alaeinia provided an update on the gold clam (*Corbicula fluminea*) which was discovered in New Plymouth's, Lake Rotomanu in November 2025. He advised that no further incursions had been detected to date and that the lake is to be drained in an effort to contain this incursion. Arash also noted that MPI is resourcing additional officers in the Waikato to help control the movement of boats. The current CAN order which requires boats to be washed at the Wash Station on Te Ngae Road, will be extended to include a new wash station being established in Whakatane. It was also anticipated that a further wash station on Old Taupo Road will be included once it becomes operational.
- 10.2 Council discussed the "Controlled Area Notice" for Lake Okataina and the impact it was having on users and the occupancy at the lodge.
- 10.3 Barry Roderick questioned whether MPI had improved its performance at the border noting that there are many more high-risk pests overseas that could potentially enter NZ. Arash Alaeinia advised that MPI had acknowledged wakeboard boats as a pathway for pest transmission, and that NIWA had been funded to research methods to control or eradicate gold clam. This research may have flow-on implications for boats coming through the border.
- 10.4 Arash noted HPAI as a constant threat which will have a significant and potentially devastating impact on waterfowl in New Zealand. He said Matt McDougall was involved locally with a working party that meets every two weeks with members from Regional Council, DOC, District Council and MPI, however, Fish & Game Regions were awaiting national direction. Matt McDougall commented on the increased presence of the low pathogenic variety of HPAI in birds sampled at Kaituna/Waewaitutuki wetlands. He said that the incidence of this low path variety is an indicator for the Bay of Plenty population and could be putting additional stress on the duck population in the area.
- 10.5 Arash noted that MPI would be funding some of the South Island regions to undertake duck banding in 2026 and it was hoped they would contribute to some of the costs in the North such as maize.
- 11.0 Council adjourned the meeting at 12.04pm for lunch.
- 11.2 The meeting recommenced at 12.33pm

12.0 2026 GAME SEASON CONDITIONS

- 12.1 Arash Alaeinia handed over to Matt McDougall who presented information to Council on monitoring methods undertaken to support decisions on game season regulations for mallard and grey duck.

Key points from the presentation:

- The Sports Fish & Game Management Plan requires Councils to consider biological data before setting season conditions.
- Monitoring methods discussed included banding, harvest surveys, aerial transects, and CPUE (catch per unit effort). Matt considered banding combined with harvest data to be the most robust approach.
- Aerial transects and CPUE were less effective due to NZ's topography and shrinking habitat.
- Banding data provides insights into survival, productivity, mortality, and movement (29 yrs data held) and with harvest surveys combined models are used with different variables to predict populations.
- Lincoln Petersen marble example provided. Subject to uncertainty around reporting rates (63% in Eastern Region) and estimated harvest size. Uncertainty is dealt with using computer simulations to produce an estimate of total population size along with how uncertain that estimate is (confidence interval).

- The best models include summer rain/temperature, but we don't have that information at the time regulations need to be set.
 - Analysis of past 44-day (6-week) seasons has indicated lower populations and harvests in subsequent seasons.
 - Key drivers influencing population estimates include number of hens, harvest size, and winter rainfall/temperature.
 - This year drain surveys have shown reduced numbers of ducklings, concern if current weather continues over potential impacts of botulism.
- 12.2 Cr Lindsay Lyons questioned whether the impact of last year's 44-day season was currently known. Matt McDougall advised that this would only be clear on completion of the 2026 season. Lindsay asked whether continuing the extended season for a further year would assist with analysis of the data? Matt responded that the longer the approach is maintained, the more useful the data becomes; however, this needs to be balanced against the risk of losing hunters noting that a high percentage of hunters already shoot very few birds if any.
- 12.3 Cr Kevin Coutts asked Matt what he thinks the season length should be. Matt responded advising that the thresholds and regulations associated with them were accepted at the last meeting, ie if the population falls in the restricted zone, then the associated regulations apply and this includes a four-week season. Matt acknowledged the difficult position for Council, as Council needed to weigh the benefits of increased hunting opportunity and licence sales alongside its responsibility to support long-term sustainable harvest.
- 12.4 Enforced sex-based limits were discussed. Lindsay Lyons suggested that education was the way to go to promote "go for green" as many hunters are not aware that the population is declining. Matt McDougall advised that it is often very difficult to for hunters to identify hens so felt enforcement was not appropriate
- 12.5 ***Agreed (Kevin Coutts/Lindsay Lyons) that sex-based limits are not implemented to manage greylard harvest. [25/12/12.5] Cr Alec McIver against.***
- 12.6 ***Agreed (Kevin Coutts/Murray Ferris) that split bag limits are not introduced to manage greylard harvest. [25/12/12.6] Cr Alec McIver against.***
- 12.7 Hunter opportunity was discussed. Canada geese were noted as opportunity to hunters despite not being a species included in the Game Bird schedule. Eben Herbert advised that "Hunter Opportunity" is something that is discussed in the Sports Fish and Game Management Plan and as a review of this is to occur in 2026, he suggested that hunter opportunity could be reviewed and redefined during that process
- 12.8 ***Agreed (Kevin Coutts/Alec Mc Iver) that the definition of hunter opportunity be reviewed during the review of the Sports Fish & Game Management Plan in 2026. [25/12/12.8]***
- 12.9 ***Agreed (Kevin Coutts/Murray Ferris) that Council noted the findings in relation to the possibility of lowering the intermediate threshold limit in relation to the 44-day season. [25/12/12.9]***
- 12.10 ***Agreed (Alec McIver/Murray Ferris) that Council endorse the method used to monitor the greylard population in the Eastern Region until a better method can be found. [25/12/12.10] Cr Kevin Coutts abstained initially at the meeting, but then called on the 15th Dec and wished to change his position to "against".***
- 12.11 ***Agreed (Murray Ferris/Alec McIver) that Council noted the additional resourcing required to split greylard harvest regulations into sub-units and decided this is not an option that they would like to pursue. [25/12/12.11]***
- 12.12 ***Agreed (Kevin Coutts/Alec McIver) that Council note the submission from the WBOP Fish & Game club. [25/12/12.12]***

- 12.13** *Agreed (Alec McIver/Kevin Coutts) that Council agrees to hold another special swan season in in Management Area A1 in 2027, spanning two weekends including the weekdays in between commencing 27 March 2027. [25/12/12.13]*
- 12.14** *Agreed (Alec McIver/Kevin Coutts) that there be a special pukeko season on the same dates as the special swan season for all of the Eastern Region. [25/12/12.14]*
- 12.15** *Agreed (Murray Ferris/Kevin Coutts) that the season for brown quail remain closed for the 2026 season. [25/12/12.15]*

13.0 FISH AND GAME REFORM DISCUSSION

- 13.1** Council discussed the proposed reform expressing their initial concerns and agreed that a special meeting would be appropriate to allow for a more in-depth discussion. Eben Herbet advised that staff had started to formulate a submission from the Region and suggested that Council could review this at that meeting. Matt McDougall felt it would be appropriate to understand the NZC submission prior to this.
- 13.2** *Agreed (Murray Ferris/Pat Swift) that Council request RMA Officer Eben Herbert and CEO Arash Alaeinia to prepare a draft submission paper for review at a special meeting which would need to occur in early March and would be confirmed in due course. [25/12/13.2]*

14.0 2024-2025 PERFORMANCE REPORT

- 14.1** Arash Alaeinia spoke to key recommendations from the audit being security of the hatchery facility and petty cash processes. He advised the delay in receiving the report was related to layout rather than changes to figures and noted that the report highlighted that Eastern Fish & Game Council operates under stringent controls and processes. Arash thanked Kate Thompson for preparation of the report and for her work with the auditor.
- 14.2** Kate Thompson detailed changes required this year to align with reporting standards which had unfortunately delayed the audit process. Ultimately, she said the region had a positive year on the back of good licence sales.
- 14.3** Cr Kevin Coutts questioned whether the changes to the family licence had cost the Region in licence sales and questioned whether these changes would be reviewed. Kate Thompson confirmed that licence sales YTD had shown a decline on last year, largely attributed to these changes and agreed that a review would be beneficial. Arash Alaeinia understood that the NZC would reflect on this, and Council agreed that there would be benefit in writing to NZC noting their concerns.
- 14.4** *Agreed (Kevin Coutts/Alec McIver) that Council adopts the 2024-2025 Eastern Fish and Game Council Performance Report [25/12/14.4]*

15.0 OPERATIONAL REPORTS

Finance Report

- 15.1** Kate Thompson informed Council that the last section of the finance report included the budgeted financial statements for the 2025-26 year and that she had provided separately an updated version of the Statement of Financial Performance which also incorporated to changes to reporting which were required for the 2024-25 Financial Statements. Kate commented on the budgeted loss for the 2025-26 Financial Year which was largely attributed to depreciation and drawdown from reserves for planned maintenance projects.
- 15.2** *Agreed (Kevin Coutts/Murray Ferris) that the payments for September and October 2025 totalling \$289,425.25 be approved. [25/12/15.2]*

15.3 *Agreed (Alec McIver/Kevin Coutts) that Council approves the proposed budget figures for the Statement of Financial Position, Statement of Financial Performance and Cash flow for the 2025-2026 financial year. [25/12/15.3]*

Management Report

15.4 Eben Herbert commented on the RMA reform noting that the two new bills had been released this week. He had not yet reviewed in detail but initial concerns he noted were around reduced ability to argue for public access, removal of protection of habitat for trout and salmon, reducing limits for water quantity and quality, and amenity values being all things around values for recreational use such as access, wilderness values, natural character. Arash Alaeinia confirmed that Council will have received an email yesterday from the CEO of the New Zealand Council highlighting these concerns.

16.5 *Licence Sales Report*

16.6 Kate Thompson noted that the Eastern's licence sales variance of 1.9% down on last year compared favourably with the national variance, which was 4% down with several South Island experiencing larger declines. She advised that the reduction in family licence sales in Eastern Region was offset, in part, by increased season and local area categories; however, overall, the result was a loss in both value and participant numbers.

16.0 LIAISON OFFICERS REPORTS

16.1 *Report from Bay of Plenty Conservation Board*
No Report

16.2 *Report from Department of Conservation*
No Report.

16.3 *Report from New Zealand Council*
Arash Alaeinia advise the report from the New Zealand Council meeting had been sent via email to Council members.

17.0 GENERAL BUSINESS

17.1 Cr Murray Ferris expressed concern that Tuhoe had called an urgent meeting and Fish & Game had not been informed about it. Alec McIver provided Council with an update on court proceedings currently underway.

18.0 MEETING CLOSED

18.1 Cr Lindsay Lyons express his thanks to Councillors and staff for the work they do for licence holders and Barry Roderick for his contribution too.

18.2 Arash Alaeinia also thanked Council for their passion to their recreation and the work they do on a voluntary basis.

18.3 The meeting closed at 3.04 pm.

.....
Lindsay Lyons
Chairman

SUMMARY OF RESOLUTIONS

2.0 APOLOGIES

2.2 *Agreed (Kevin Coutts/Murray Ferris) that the apologies for the 218th meeting of the Eastern Region Fish and Game Council be sustained. [25/12/2.2]*

3.0 MINUTES OF THE PREVIOUS MEETING (16 OCTOBER 2025)

3.1 *Agreed (Murray Ferris/Alec McIver) that the minutes of the meeting held on 16th October 2025 be confirmed as a true and correct record. [25/12/3.1]*

6.0 HEALTH & SAFETY

6.3 *Agreed (Alec McIver/Lindsay Lyons) that Council receives the Health and Safety report. [25/12/6.3]*

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7.2 *Agreed (Kevin Coutts/Alec McIver) that Council will not proceed with appointing an eighth Councillor at this time and will continue with its current seven elected members. [25/12/7.2]*

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- 14.0 **2024-2025 PERFORMANCE REPORT**
- 14.4 *Agreed (Kevin Coutts/Alec McIver) that Council adopts the 2024-2025 Eastern Fish and Game Council Performance Report [25/12/14.4]*
- 15.0 **OPERATIONAL REPORTS**
- 15.2 *Agreed (Kevin Coutts/Murray Ferris) that the payments for September and October 2025 totalling \$289,425.25 be approved. [25/12/15.2]*
- 15.3 *Agreed (Alec McIver/Kevin Coutts) that Council approves the proposed budget figures for the Statement of Financial Position, Statement of Financial Performance and Cash flow for the 2025-2026 financial year. [25/12/15.3]*

5. CONFLICT OF INTEREST REGISTER

Ref: 7.02.01

20 January 2026

1. Purpose

A standing agenda item to disclose any Councillor (“Member”) Conflict of Interest or potential Conflict of Interest, and record this in the Councillor Conflict of Interest Register.

2. Background

In 2016 the Eastern Fish and Game Council adopted a revised policy and rules for dealing with Conflicts of Interest and these include providing a standing agenda item to allow Councillors to disclose any Conflict or highlight any potential conflict. The “Interest Register” ring binder will be circulated in the first part of each meeting for Councillors to record any interests. The Council should then discuss how it wants to deal with any interest or perceived interest identified.

Conflict of Interest (refer s2.7 Governance Policies) means when the member can be shown to have actual bias or apparent bias in respect of a matter¹ i.e:

- (i) A member can be shown to have actual bias when a member’s decision or act in relation to a matter could give rise to an expectation of financial gain or loss (that is more than trivial) to the member (and/or to the member’s parent(s), child(ren), spouse, civil union partner, de facto partner, business partner(s)/associate(s), debtor(s) or creditor(s)).
- (ii) A member can be shown to have apparent bias when a member’s official duties or responsibilities to the Council in relation to a matter could reasonably be said to be affected by some other interest or duty that the member has.
- (iii) A member’s “interest or duty” includes the interests of that member’s parent(s), child(ren), spouse, civil union partner or de facto partner that may be affected by the matter at issue. It also includes the interests of a person with whom the member has a close, personal relationship where there is a real danger of personal favouritism.
- (iv) There is no Conflict of Interest where the member’s other interest or duty is so remote or insignificant that it cannot reasonably be regarded as likely to influence him or her in carrying out his or her responsibility.

A potential conflict of interest (refer s2.8 Governance Policies) arises when:

- (i) There is a realistic connection between the member’s private interest(s) and the interest(s) of the Council;
- (ii) The member’s other interest could specifically affect, or be affected by, the actions of the Council in relation to a matter;

¹ “Matter” means:

- (i) The Council’s performance of its functions or exercise of its powers as set out in Part 5A of the Conservation Act 1987, subject to the Council’s statutory purpose set out in section 26P(1) of the Conservation Act; or
- (ii) An arrangement, agreement, or contract made or entered into, or proposed to be entered into, by the Council.

- (iii) A fair-minded lay observer might reasonably consider that the member's private interest or duty may influence or motivate the actions of the member in relation to a matter; and
- (iv) There is a risk that the situation could undermine public trust and confidence in the member or the Council.

Conflicts of Interest should be dealt with as follows (refer s1.13 Standing Orders):

1.13.1 Every member present at a meeting must declare any direct or indirect conflict of interest that they hold in any matter being discussed at the meeting, other than an interest that they hold in common with the public.

1.13.2 When a conflict of interest arises in respect of a matter, the affected member will:

- (i) not vote on issues related to the matter;
- (ii) not discuss the matter with other members;
- (iii) conform to the majority view of other members present as to whether to be excluded from discussions regarding the matter and/or leave the room when the matter is discussed;
- (iv) not, subject to the discretion of the Chairperson, receive further papers or other information related to the matter.

1.13.3 Where a member can be shown to have a potential conflict of interest, the Council (excluding the affected member) will determine an appropriate course of action, which may include the following:

- (i) applying some or all of the actions applied to a member with a conflict of interest (set out in 1.13.2 i) – iv) above);
- (ii) providing a written explanation outlining why there is no legal conflict of interest that can be made available to all Fish and Game Councils, licence holders and other interested parties.

1.13.4 The conflicted member will be given the opportunity to be heard by the Council on the points raised and the member's submissions will be taken into consideration by the Council.

1.13.5 The minutes must record the declaration and member's subsequent abstention from discussion and voting.

Councillors should take this opportunity to disclose any Conflict of Interest they are aware of now and record it in the circulated Conflict of Interest Register. If during the course of the meeting a conflict or perceived conflict is recognised, then this should be disclosed at that point in time.

3. Recommendation

3.1 That Councillors disclose any Conflict or potential Conflict of Interest, record it in the Interest Register, and Council agrees on how to deal with any Conflict of Interest raised.

6. HEALTH AND SAFETY REPORT

Ref: 9.10

19 January 2026

Background

As part of its commitment to Health and Safety and to providing a safe working environment, the Eastern Fish and Game Council receives a Health and Safety report at each meeting. This report outlines the following:

1. Implementation and adherence to the Health and Safety Plan, including Health and Safety as a standing agenda item at staff and ranger meetings;
2. Monitoring and reporting in accordance with the Health and Safety Plan;
3. Risk management, including the identification and treatment of new or emerging hazards;
4. Training programmes, including information sharing and training of staff and volunteers;
5. Health and Safety incidents, including near misses or injuries, and updates on previous incidents;
6. Recommendations to Council.

Reporting Period: December 2025 – January 2026

1. Implementation and Adherence to the Health and Safety Plan

- Regular weekly staff meetings are held.
- Minutes from the Health and Safety section of each meeting are emailed to all staff.
- Visitors to the office and contractors are required to sign the desk register.
- The hazard register is updated as required.

Tailgate forms were completed for the following activities:

- December 2025 – Delivery of traps to banding sites – Gisborne
- January 2026 – Banding Kaituna, Robins Road and Waewaetutuke

2. Monitoring and Reporting

Workplace Accident Register as at 20 January 2026

Number of workplace **injuries** in the 2025–2026 year: **1** (2024-2025 year: 3)

Number of workplace **near miss incidents** in the 2025-2026 year: **1** (2024-2025 year: 0)

3. Risk Management (Identification and Treatment)

Health and Safety notes are recorded during weekly staff meetings and emailed to all staff. Key notes for the reporting period include:

- 1 December 2025:** Sunscreen and antihistamines available in admin office for boats and vehicles
Staff near miss – fall from ute when lifting heavy load, prevention discussed
- 8 December 2025:** Hot weather – sunscreen hats, water, etc
Peak safety – adrenaline training next week
- 15 December 2025:** Staff injury – hurt back unloading maize, prevention discussed
Peak safety – adrenaline training - 10.30am 15/12/2025
- 22 December 2025:** Prepare for hot weather when ranging
- 29 December 2025:** No meeting
- 5 January 2026:** Ensure preparedness for changing weather
AA working on audit report and implementation
- 12 January 2026:** Ensure preparedness for changing weather, expecting heavy rain this week
- 19 January 2026:** Nothing new to report

4. Training Programme

Staff have undertaken training with Peak Safety for the use of injectable adrenalin. Adrenalin kits have been purchased for use in specific field vehicles, with a further kit available for others needing to work in field, and for the office. The adrenaline kits are an alternative to the costly Epi pens which have a limited lifetime.

5. Health and Safety Incidents for this period

25 November 2025 – Near miss: Staff member fell from ute deck onto soft ground.
Cause: While removing fish transport tub from ute – tub fell to ground and clamp caught clothing of staff member resulting in fall.
Prevention: Ensure a second person assists with this type of work.

9 November 2025 – Injury: Staff member sprained lower back, a result of heavy lifting.
Cause: Maize delivery, delivery company had no pallet jack so staff available (4) unloaded three tons of maize manually (25 kg bags). Injury resulted for one staff member from the repetitive lifting.
Prevention: Ensure drivers have appropriate equipment to unload; F&G investigate purchasing their own trolley jack; warm up prior to lifting and ensure safe lifting techniques observed.

6. Recommendation

That Council acknowledges receipt of this Health and Safety Report.

7. HEALTH AND SAFETY AUDIT

Ref: 9.10

26 January 2026

1. Purpose

NZC arranged for an independent H&S&W auditor to look at 4 regions and access our policies, procedures and applications as well as culture and attitude towards H&S&W. This was so that NZC could evaluate a general overview of organisational gaps and opportunities for standardised policies and procedures that could support regional teams.

Eastern audit report including the consolidated audit report of all 4 regions is in a separate addition to the PFI.

2. Background

Eastern region volunteered to be one of the regions to be audited as it will be an opportunity for a specialist oversight of our policies and procedure and give us constructive feedback on areas that need attention and or updating.

The report is broken down into 2 main categories of recommendations.

1. Significant Gaps Identified – areas that need immediate attention
2. Opportunities for Improvement – these are areas that can be improved to meet best practice protocols but are not essential or immediate concerns

Eastern ‘Significant Gaps’ were 5 points, and “Opportunities for Improvement” were 18.

3. Staff Recommendation

The review has given us vital insight into areas that need to be updated. Our policies and practices are in place but some of our administrative documents and our policy/reviewing process needs to be planned and documented.

We have created a project timeline action table that focuses on both the significant gaps as well as the opportunities for improvements.

There are areas that we are seeking direction and input from NZC as this is where opportunities are for NZC to take a national role in developing forms and general procedures that can be standardised and utilised by all regions.

6. Recommendation

That Council acknowledges receipt of the Health and Safety Audit and receives an update of progress of implementation at successive Council meetings.

8. ANGLERS NOTICE REVIEW

File: 1.07.01

21 January 2026

1. Purpose

To review the 2025-2026 Anglers Notice and identify any changes to the current regulations that might be warranted in the 2026-2027 season.

2. Background

The Anglers Notice review provides an opportunity to amend regional sport fishing regulations. Licence holders and the public are able to submit on issues they may have identified with the current regulations for consideration by Council.

Council has developed a comprehensive approach to dealing with the Anglers Notice. The policy approach splits regulations into those that serve a social function and those that serve a biological function. Social regulations are those that affect the angler and principally relate to angling methods. Waters are categorised based on trout densities, and levels of angler use. These categories are used to determine how social based regulations should be applied. Biological regulations are those that affect trout populations and include bag and size limits. A matrix was developed considering biological objectives associated with sustainability, harvest allocation, and specific population manipulations. Any changes to the Anglers Notice must not conflict with the Anglers Notice policy which is provided in Appendix 1 to this item.

This approach has greatly simplified the task of reviewing the Anglers Notice and enables regulations to be confirmed or amended quickly and efficiently.

A full review of the regional regulations (Schedule 2) is undertaken every second year. A less comprehensive process is conducted in the year between. This year (2026) represents a year in which a full review is required.

This process will involve;

1. At the February Council meeting, any submissions received to the Anglers Notice will be presented to the Council for discussion. The Council will consider which submissions have merit and warrant further investigation. Staff will (if required) seek feedback from clubs and public.
2. Prior to the March meeting, Councillors will receive feedback from staff and submitters through an Agenda item. At the April 2026 meeting, all submissions received will be debated and the Council will decide if these are to be accepted following resolution or require further examination.
3. At its May 2026 meeting, the Eastern Region Fish and Game Council will receive any additional correspondence from new submitters along with a draft to the Minister of the changes to the 2026-27 Anglers Notice. Council will accept resolutions on remaining proposals and finalise the 2026-27 Anglers Notice.

3 Initial suggestions for consideration

3.1 Open up lower sections of tributaries of Lakes Aniwhenua and Matahina (Whirinaki, Horomanga, Mangamako, Waihou, Waikopu Streams) to year-round fishing.

3.1.1 Outline

A submission was received seeking greater angler opportunity within the tributary streams of the lower Rangitaiki River system. The submission stated that Lakes Matahina and Aniwhenua contain high fish numbers and experience low angler usage. It sought to 'Open up the lower stretches of the tributary streams to year-round fishing'.

This will create opportunity for anglers whilst still protecting the spawning areas of the streams.

3.1.2 Staff Recommendation.

The National Angler Survey has been conducted on five occasions since 1994-95. Its angler days estimates for the waters involved are as follows.

	1994-95	2001-02	2007-08	2014-15	2021-22
Lake Matahina	884±337	588±222	357±150	354±36	357±57
Rangitaiki R. above Matahina	1411±397	6418±1877	3534±649	906±73	440±126
Rangitaiki R. Aniwhenua Dam to Matahina	3557±1430	2355±1578	1175±456	1118±119	799±115
Rangitaiki R. below Matahina	715±214	770±341	317±121	559±105	575±172
Lake Aniwhenua	11327±1693	9838±2153	2357±626	1493±136	598±86
Waihua S.	306±305	271±122	116±61	296±160	-
Mangamako S.	-	-	-	-	48±30
Horomanga S.	1240±514	187±66	1793±1147	565±416	116±28
Whirinaki S.	1714±517	747±195	2178±587	1250±128	481±59

The last National Angler Survey was conducted during the 2021-22 season which still had partial covid-19 lockdown for the Auckland/ Waikato areas and Non-resident anglers were still unable to enter the country. Despite this, the table illustrates a general drop in angler usage of the Rangitaiki system since the boom-angling period of the mid 90's when Lake Aniwhenua was considered a trophy fishery due to the proliferation of water net and the vast resource of snails that made up the rainbow trout food web.

The recommendation is that the following sections of waters are opened to allow angling all year. Bag limit would be two trout per person per day. Fly and spin methods would be permissible. A move to open these lower stretches would provide greater angler opportunity.

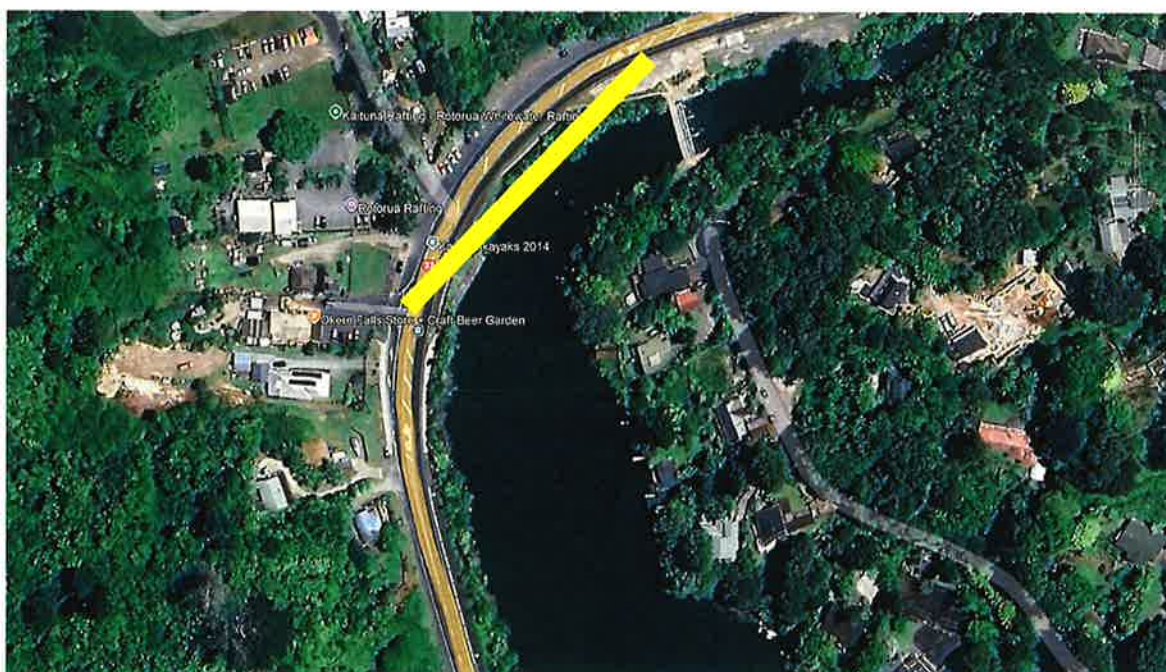
The upstream sections of these waters would remain under ‘All other Waters’ open 1 October to 30 June and closed from 1 July to 30 September to protect spawning values.

<i>Water</i>	<i>Section of Water</i>	<i>Open Season</i>	<i>Distance this will open</i>
<i>Whirinaki</i>	Downstream of Troutbeck Rd.	Open All Year	6km
<i>Horomanga</i>	Downstream of Troutbeck Rd.	Open All Year	6km
<i>Mangamako</i>	Downstream of Galatea Rd.	Open All Year	0.1km
<i>Waikokopu</i>	Downstream of Galatea Rd.	Open All Year	1.5km
<i>Waihua</i>	Downstream of Galatea Rd.	Open All Year	0.5km

3.2. Extend Lake Rotoiti Winter fishing area to include “The 130m section of the SH33 shoreline from the Lake Rotoiti Control Gates at Okere Falls to the upstream end of the Public Jetty opposite the Okere Falls Store.”

3.2.1 Outline

There is currently one winter shoreline fishing area on Lake Rotoiti, situated down the Eastern end of the lake (Tapuaekura Bay landmark to Hinehopu landmark). There is very little spawning habitat available at the Okere end, with a little occurring near the Okere jetty, but opening this area to year-round fishing would increase participation through the winter period on Lake Rotoiti.



The Rotorua lakes Council are also interested in providing a wheelchair fishing platform at the jetty that would assist mobility impaired anglers in their sport.

3.2.2 Staff recommendation

Having the option of some angling opportunity provided at the Western end of Lake Rotoiti would be valuable to anglers. Any impact on the small amount of spawning activity occurring in the area near the Okere jetty would have little consequence to the overall Lake Rotoiti trout fishery.

3.3 Defining a softbait within the regional definitions.

3.3.1 Outline

Currently a softbait isn't well defined within Schedule 1 (National regulations) or Schedule 2 (Regional regulations). As technologies and marketing develop, new preparations are made available for purchase. Some of these are malleable putty type preparations all being marketed as 'soft baits' The intent when allowing scented softbaits for use within Eastern Region regulations was that a minnow style soft plastic could be fished that imitates natural prey. Scented variations were made legal because packaging and foreign imports made it very difficult to discern what was scented and what was unscented. The new malleable putty type 'Trout Bites' and "Corn" could lead to deeper hooking than a traditional style soft plastic minnow.

3.3.2 Staff Recommendation.

Staff wish to see anglers being successful and encourage participation in angling. We don't wish to be alarmist and make a problem out of what isn't currently an issue. The use of the malleable putty style 'soft baits' is not thought to be high; however, we are trying to close a loophole in the regulations of what may be considered a bait than a traditional soft bait.

Other regions utilise wording in their regulations that says "A softbait must be actively fished so as to imitate a baitfish." That is all very subjective, in what constitutes active.

Staff recommend instead placing a new "Definition" at the start of the Eastern Regulations as below;

1. Definitions;

"Softbait" means 'A soft plastic lure that imitates a baitfish or crustacean'.

3.4 Make 'All Other Waters Not Listed' more prominently displayed within regulation guide.

3.4.1 Outline

Any water not listed within the regulations automatically falls under the first entry in Table 3. *Open Season, Permitted Methods, Daily Bag Limits* and is assigned a 1 Oct-30 Jun Open Season, Fly/Spin methods and 2 fish per angler/day bag limit. This occurs because we are unable to list all regional waters within the guide.

As anglers may search alphabetically by the water they are seeking, they may miss this first entry in the table. To make it more prominent we are proposing making the text bold to stand out more clearly and repeating the entry at the end of the regional table.

3.4.2 Staff Recommendation

This would help to alleviate confusion by being more prominently displayed.

4. Resolutions

4.1 That Council agrees to the consultation process and time frame for considering changes to the 2026 -2027 Anglers Notice.

4.2 That Council identifies any issues for further discussion be prepared following the February meeting to be disseminated to clubs and public.

9. GOALS AND PRIORITIES FOR THE 2026-2027 OPERATIONAL WORK PLAN

Ref: 8.02.01

20 January 2026

1. Purpose

To review Council's goals and priorities for the 2025-2026 year and identify changes in priorities or work areas and projects that Council would like to see incorporated into the 2026-2027 Operational Work Plan.

2. Background

Operational Work Plans (which come into force on 1 September each year) are developed over several months from February onwards, and involve a review by Council of strategic priorities, core functions, project objectives, allocation of resources, and performance measures. The process may include seeking Council's approval for a business case, seeking additional funding for a project or specific purpose that needs NZC's approval.

This year is the second year of NZC's plans in implementing a "zero based budget concept" for budgeting. The implementation of this is over a year period.

Based on the new steps involved, the process and schedule for the 2026-2027 Operational Work Plan (OWP) will be as follows:

1. Council reviews priorities and project areas it wishes to focus on over and above core functions (this meeting).
2. Staff compile a draft work plan and budget (excluding internal costs) and identify potential additional funding cases it believes warrant consideration. Council will review this 1st draft at its **12th March** meeting. Then the draft budget and cases need to be submitted to the NZ Council by their deadline of **14 March**.
3. **28 March**, A summary of all Regional Budgets will be circulated to Regions.
4. NZC Council Budget Meeting on **11 April**, will review impact of regional budgets on Licence Fee and will inform regions of the outcome their budget proposals. A licence fee consultation document will be distributed to Regions following this meeting by **16 April**.
5. Staff revise projects and resourcing including hours and internal costs to take into account outcomes of NZC budget meeting and circulate the second draft of the Eastern OWP to Council ahead of its **28 May** meeting.
6. The second draft of the OWP and proposed licence fee consultation is considered by Council at the **28 May** meeting and projects, budgets and targets are reviewed and refined as necessary.
7. **30 May**, All regional responses on Licence Fee proposal returned to NZC.
8. Draft OWP is circulated to clubs and other interested parties for comment if they wish.
9. Feedback from this consultation is considered and incorporated, if Council considers appropriate, into the final OWP presented for approval at Council's meeting on **30 July**.

As indicated above, the operational planning cycle commences now with a review of current priorities and goals. Council needs to determine whether changes to these are needed within the next OWP year in response to changing circumstances and/or other factors. **Decisions on this are needed now so that staff can undertake initial planning and costing of projects.**

3. Current (2025-2026) Priorities

- A. **Access** – Enabling anglers and hunters to locate, access and utilise resources through habitat maintenance, advocacy to safeguard/ expand publicly accessible habitat and development of improved information sharing platforms for licence holders.
- B. **Increasing Revenue** – Using an R3 approach to Retain, Recruit, Reactivate anglers and hunters and to develop additional income sources.
- C. **Enhancing Fishery Opportunities and Water Quality** – Supporting healthier fisheries and enhancing angler satisfaction through good science, surveys and efficient hatchery practices. Advocate for improved water quality and quantity.
- D. **Improvement of Greylard Production and Habitat** – Using good science, historical trends and surveys to best support and improve production, habitat, species management and sustainable harvest.

The above priorities are also ‘business as usual’ tasks and work streams.

On reflection this year I would like to offer to Council a different outlook to what and how we identify regional priorities.

Fish and Game Councils main purpose is:

“Manage, maintain and enhance the sports fish and game resource in the recreational interests of anglers and hunters.”

In fulfilling this purpose, the primary functions of Fish and Game Councils are to:

- 1. Assess and monitor sports fish and game bird populations, habitats and harvests.
- 2. Assess and monitor angler and hunter satisfaction.
- 3. Maintain and improve the sports fish and game bird resource.
- 4. Provide information and promote angling and hunting.
- 5. Represent the interests of anglers and hunters in the statutory planning process.
- 6. Give cause to the Treaty of Waitangi

Our Regional Priorities need to reflect our incoming yearly challenges and not just our business-as-usual tasks that compliment and fulfill our legislative responsibilities.

Eastern Fish and Game region faces some key challenges, and these need to be focused on as our key priorities.

At successive February Council meetings over the years, Council has concluded that the key regional priorities for the following year have remained the same. It was acknowledged that some of Council’s priorities continue to be of greater importance than others, for example, those that are critical to maintaining the viability and operational sustainability of Fish & Game.

Higher priorities are considered to be **Access, Maximising Fishery Opportunities, and Increasing Revenue**, the arguments being that without access to sports fish and game bird resources the opportunities available to many licence holders are limited, and without adequate revenue we are unable to perform many of the operational undertakings needed to provide sustainable populations of sports fish and game birds for licence holders to harvest. **Maximising fishery opportunities** was seen as a means of increasing participation, and revenue.

Proposed Priorities (2026-2027)

1. **Licence Numbers and Revenue** – without sustainable incoming through our licence membership and revenue, EF&G cannot carry out any tasks or responsibilities. Using an R3 approach to Retain, Recruit, Reactivate anglers and hunters and to develop additional income sources.
2. **Access** – Enabling anglers and hunters to locate, access and utilise resources through habitat maintenance, advocacy to safeguard/ expand publicly accessible habitat and development of improved information sharing platforms for licence holders.
3. **Increasing Opportunities, Fishers & Hunters** –Enhancing angler & hunter satisfaction through trusted science, surveys, practical & easy to use regulation, efficient hatchery practices and gamebird banding.

The Council also undertakes to support the aspirational outcomes of NZ Fish & Game and bears these in mind when preparing its OWP each year. These aspirations are:

- **Unified and Enduring Organisation** - a national and regionally cohesive organisation built on a culture of shared values, trust and engagement. Delivering on a vision and purpose for stakeholders and Mana Whenua. Maintaining the statutory mandates that enable effective service delivery.
- **Attract and Retain Licence Holders** - deliver well-valued and cost-effective experience for licence holders by understanding their needs, providing simple and effective communication, making fishing and game bird hunting more attractive to a wider group of future participants.
- **Mana Whenua Connected** - Māori values are understood and reflected within Fish and Game with aligned advocacy and a positive collaborative approach that builds upon Te Tiriti obligations defined in Conservation Act.
- **Public Perception and Legitimacy** - understanding and reshaping public perception of Fish & Game NZ, angling and game bird hunting through positive messaging of natural environment protection, wild food harvesting and well-being through outdoor recreation.
- **Healthy Species, Habitats, and Ecosystems** - Sports fish and game bird species are monitored and sustainably managed, freshwater habitats are protected, and access to sustainable wild harvest opportunities are secured for future generations.

Over the years we have gained a much greater understanding of what can and can't be influenced in terms of achieving the outcomes Council is seeking, and with this understanding we have adaptively managed our approach and refined projects or changed our focus more towards what can be done.

A breakdown of the proposed **Activities** and **Projects/Programmes** is contained in the PFI.

4. Concluding Remark

As previous Councils have noted, one of the most challenging elements of the business planning process for Council is not so much concerned with identifying new projects, programmes or priorities it wants to introduce to next or future years' operational work plans, but to identifying what programmes it would drop or scale back in order to accommodate the proposed changes.

5. Recommendation

5.1 That Council reviews its priorities and programmes for the 2025-2026 year, and identifies any changes it wishes to see incorporated into its draft operational work plan for the 2026-2027 year.

2026 - 27 Risk v Threat v Opportunity v Priority Table

Risks v Threat v Opportunities v Priorities

Risks	Threat	Opportunities	Who & What	Outcomes	Priorities
Access	Reduced access means less opportunities and increase in effort to fish or hunt leading to reduction in licence sales/revenue	Maintain or create or re-open access which increases opportunity	Forestry, DoC, Iwi	Continue to work and have relationship with orgs to help create opportunity for creating or re-engaging access.	Increased opportunity leads to increase in satisfaction of F&G work leads to increase revenue - R3 - Reactivate, Retain, Recruit
Compliance	Reduction in revenue, negative impact on sustainable management of species, loss of respect and value of F&G's work	Engaged licence holders & increasing licence sales	Education of role F&G plays to manage sustainable harvest of fisheries and gamebird	Encouraging school visits, supporting RBHS outdoor/fishing program, supporting Youth Centre Fishing program	Social licence promotion, R3 - Retain & Recruit, Increase Revenue
Bio Security Threats	Reduction/closure of access, resulting less opportunity	Build respected, valued & professional relationships	Have plan in place by using 30 years of science and data	Work collaboratively with MPI, DOC, Iwi, BOPRC	Iwi respect, professionally respected, valued work & authority
Declining Revenue	Reduction of our ability to manage, maintain and enhance the species and habitat. Unable to perform statutory responsibilities. Reduction in maintaining opportunity, managing the species to fish & hunt and compliance ranging. All leading to anti R3 (decline in retention, decline in reactivation and nonexistence of recruitment) equalling failure and closure of F&G	Promote benefits and environmental outcomes of fishing & hunting to increase engagement (R3-Reactivate, Recruit, Retain) and donations	NZC - national campaigns, social media, news articles, building relationships with tourism operators, schools, other relevant and supportive organisations	Increase licence sales and societal support for F&G by increasing public and corporate donations.	Social licence, professionally respected and acknowledgment as an authority in freshwater and gamebird management and enhancement
Iwi Aspirations of Managing Fisheries	Loss of managing fisheries (Waikaremoana and Rotorua Lakes Area), leading to loss of licence sales and revenue, leading to loss ability to perform duties leading to possible closure of EF&G	To keep us relevant and a needed partner/organisation to help manage sustainable fishing & hunting for current and future generations. To be seen as a professional, engaging and valued entity.	Build engaging, respectful and valued relationships	Showing skill, professionalism and passion for environment & sustainable kia gathering while supporting balanced eco systems	Social licence promotion, increasing revenue, increased compliance and strengthen iwi relationships

10. DRAFT NZ CROP DEPREDATION POLICY

Ref: 1.08.01

24 January 2026

1. Purpose

In association with Wildlife Authorisations, NZC would like to adopt a Crop Depredation policy for regions to use in relation to the authorisations under s53, 54 & 56 in the Wildlife Act which they anticipate will be provided by the Director General of DOC when the F&G Bill is made public. NZC have based this policy on the 2003 NZC Crop Depredation policy, which has also been used by CSI and North Canterbury.

The amended draft NZC Crop Depredation Policy is in the PFI.

2. Background

Fish & Game has an authority dated 21 December 2018. This authority provides for catching alive or killing game causing damage and or causing nuisance. New case law has now confirmed that section 53 can only provide for the protection of wildlife, not for the killing of wildlife. Therefore, we have a number of permits that are issued in accordance with this authority from DOC.

The bill focuses solely on the authorisation of incidental killing and does not affect other types of authorisations that may be provided under section 53. The application of section 53 was considered by the High Court in *Environmental Law Initiative v The Director General of the Department of Conservation and others* [2025] HCNZ 391. The Court determined that there must be a direct connection between each act of killing wildlife and the protection of wildlife. The court therefore ruled that it had been unlawful for DOC to authorise the incidental killing of protected wildlife.

A new section 53A1 has been passed to allow the Director General to authorise the incidental killing of wildlife that occurs as a consequence of an otherwise lawful activity.

A new section 53C2 ensures the Director General is able to impose conditions on an authorisation to address potential adverse effects of the activity on the affected populations of wildlife, the species and the individual animals.

3. Staff overview of Document

The draft crop depredation policy document (the document) appears to be a mixture of an earlier document taken from NC and CSI regions in 2003. It is factually incorrect and has little understanding of the practicalities of managing game birds causing damage. The recommended process is unnecessarily complicated.

Game birds cause damage, and are a public nuisance, to a wide section of the community. This document concentrates primarily (**exclusively**) on farmers and crops. Damage by game birds *inter alia*, includes, damage to crops, horticulture, amenity planting, home and commercial gardens, estuaries (*Zostera sp.*) public parks (including sports grounds), public and private swimming pools. Game birds can also frighten and intimidate members of the public (particularly small children) where they have been regularly fed (such as in parks). There may

be instances where game birds infected with disease such as avian influenza are close to poultry farms, zoos, or endangered species, where controlling game birds may be a desirable option.

The title of the policy should be consistent with Section 54 of the Wildlife Act and that of the existing Authority namely: *Authorities to catch alive or kill game causing damage or nuisance on non-public conservation land.*

The Eastern Region is about 36,000 square kilometers. Some parts of the region take more than 6 hours to reach by car and there can be multiple requests for a permit in a day. There is one staff member that manages Authorities to control game birds. The expectation that staff will visit sites that have an issue is impracticable and unnecessary (in the last 30 years we have effectively managed game bird issues without visiting 99% of the properties). And the requirement to supply an application to the landowner for their signature is an unnecessary bureaucratic requirement.

Of 680 complaints about game birds in the Eastern Region pukeko exceeded any other species (over 40%) many of which were not associated with crops (such as home and commercial gardens, amenity planting, and habitat enhancement).

The definition of hunt or kill includes disturbing game. The Activities that require a permit from Fish and Game include disturbance, not just when a firearm is used. The handling of disturbance vs. killing of game in the document is confusing. The issuing officer (of the permit) can assess if the permit includes killing birds based on such factors as public safety, population vulnerability/ health, history (sites that have held game birds for an extended period are often harder to deal with than those sites that have only recently been occupied), species (some species show a stronger fidelity to a site than others) and type of vegetation (some crops/ are more attractive than others – e.g., *Zostera* beds are a primary food source for swan in many instances they are not going to move elsewhere).

The document states that permits can only be issued to the landowner or leaseholder. Farm managers, contract growers, Councils, habitat developers, etc. can require permits to control game birds.

The requirement for Councils to “maintain devices to disperse birds and mitigate the effects of crop damage”, is ambiguous. Assuming this means gas guns, it ties Councils into what could be old technology (other technologies may be more effective such as automated drones). Further, is there an expectation that all complainants will be eligible to receive a gas gun?

The Eastern F&G Council has had Zon guns (LPG guns) for many years and used to loan them out to people who have issues with game birds. However, due to landowners not returning the guns in a timely manner and almost on every occasion, guns were returned broken, the service was retracted.

The flow chart does not replicate or follow the written process very well. The written process does not reflect how F&G are notified of an issue. The member of the public that has the issue contacts F&G, not as in point 3, which suggests F&G contact the landowner. Furthermore, the flowchart states that a different process is followed during the game bird season. Sites in town or urban areas cannot be hunted during the game bird season or any time. This does not fit with the flow chart.

4. Staff Recommendation

The information in the policy does not agree with the delegated authority and is factually incorrect in places. The suggested process is not practical and overly bureaucratic. There are also key elements that are essential to effective control that are not mentioned. For example, when initiating the control, it is essential that the person carrying out the control does so for a minimum of three consecutive days at the outset and then follows up with regular disturbance visits.

We recommend that NZC engages with specialist staff around the country, especially in the North Island to re-write the policy and have separate operational process, that will reflect the issues and concerns in the NI as well as the SI.

This current draft policy will be unusable for Eastern Region and most likely other NI Regions.

5.0 Recommendations

5.1 That NZC engage and receive input from specialist staff around the Country to create a practical and workable policy and operational guidelines that meets the legislative requirement and is able to be used and implemented nationally.

Draft NZC Crop Depredation Policy

New Zealand Fish and Game Council Meeting 178 – 5 & 6 December 2025

Prepared by: Helen Brosnan, Senior Policy Advisor, NZ Fish and Game Council

Kōrero taunaki - Summary of considerations

Purpose

1. We have updated NZC at meeting 175 regarding wildlife authorisations. Previously, permits were issued under s54 of the Wildlife Act. DOC has provided a new template letter, but we await the replacement authorisation from the Director General to cover sections 53, 54 & 56. We anticipate that this will be available around the time that the Fish and Game Bill is made public.
2. In association with Wildlife Authorisations, NZC would like to adopt a Crop Depredation policy for regions to use in relation to these authorisations. We have based this policy on the 2003 NZC Crop Depredation policy, which has also been used by CSI and North Canterbury. The amended draft NZC Crop Depredation Policy is attached in Appendix 1.

Financial considerations

- Nil Budgetary provision Unbudgeted

Risk

- Low Medium High Extreme

Ngā taunaki - Staff Recommendations

3. That NZC:
 - a. **Receives** this update on the authorisation under the Wildlife Act.
 - b. **Notes** a new template from DOC has been received that enables Regions to disturb/kill game birds under s53 of the Wildlife Act.
 - c. **Approves** the draft NZC Crop Depredation Policy to go to the regions for consultation.

Kōrerorero – Discussion

Wildlife Authorisations Issued by Fish and Game

4. Fish & Game has an authority dated 21 December 2018. This authority provides for catching alive or killing game causing damage and or causing nuisance. New case law has now confirmed that section 53 can only provide for the protection of wildlife, not for the killing of wildlife. Therefore, we have a number of permits that are issued in accordance with this authority from DOC.
5. The bill focuses solely on the authorisation of incidental killing and does not affect other types of authorisations that may be provided under section 53. The application of section 53 was considered by the High Court in *Environmental Law Initiative v The Director General of the Department of Conservation and others* [2025] HCNZ 391. The Court determined that there must be a direct connection between each act of killing wildlife and the protection of wildlife. The court therefore ruled that it had been unlawful for DOC to authorise the incidental killing of protected wildlife.
6. A new section 53A¹ has been passed to allow the Director General to authorise the incidental killing of wildlife that occurs as a consequence of an otherwise lawful activity.
7. A new section 53C² ensures the Director General is able to impose conditions on an authorisation to address potential adverse effects of the activity on the affected populations of wildlife, the species and the individual animals.

--	<i>Implications of amending section 53 (proposed)</i>
	Part 5
	General provisions
53	Director-General may authorise taking or killing of wildlife for certain purposes
53A	Authority may be granted under section 53 to kill wildlife incidentally
53B	Authority under section 53 to kill wildlife incidentally: consistency with protection of wildlife
53C	Conditions that may be imposed on authority under section 53 to kill wildlife incidentally
54	Director-General may authorise hunting or killing of wildlife causing damage
55	Keeping of specimens in museums
56	Restrictions on liberation or export of animals, birds, etc
56A	Application of Customs and Excise Act 2018
57	Ownership of animals

8. The amendment will also ensure that authorities granted under section 53 of the Wildlife Act before the date of the judgement are not unlawful merely because consent is required under s71 of the Act, rather than an authority under section 53 – this applies more to NZ Transport Agency for projects under section 53, that should have been given consent under section 71.

Draft Crop Depredation Policy

¹ Section 53A: inserted, on 14 May 2025, by [section 4](#) of the Wildlife (Authorisations) Amendment Act 2025 (2025 No 22).

² Section 53C: inserted, on 14 May 2025, by [section 4](#) of the Wildlife (Authorisations) Amendment Act 2025 (2025 No 22).

9. The attached Draft NZC Crop Depredation Policy is an amendment of the 2003 NZC policy. Staff recommend that NZC adopts this draft for consultation with the regions. This draft policy is attached in Appendix 1.
10. The policy covers what can be done without a permit and what activity requires a permit (eg handling or harming of birds, use of firearms). The policy includes an overview of species to which the policy relates, susceptible crops, how to be vigilant and to act immediately to scare off birds. There is a section on methods of dispersing birds and a summary and an overview of response to game birds causing damage.

Whai whakaaro ki ngā whakataunga - Considerations for decision-making

Financial Implications

11. There is currently no budget required or requested for this work.

Legislative Implications

12. There are no legislative implications currently regarding this proposal, but there is scope for legislative improvements regarding these permits.
13. This policy may be relevant to the evidence that we provide for the Fish and Game Bill, particularly how we operate in relation to others users of habitat (item 53).

Section 4 Treaty Responsibilities

14. There are no Section 4 responsibilities related to this proposal.

Policy Implications

15. Our internal policy and any regions with policy or SOP relating to this issue will need to be reviewed and updated.

Risks and mitigations

16. The risk for Fish and Game is that our processes and any outdated policy may need modifying to align with the latest case law.

Consultation

17. Once the draft policy is adopted the policy can go to the regions for comment.

Ngā mahinga e whai ake nei - Next actions

18. Await universal authority from the Director General and consult or adopt draft NZC Crop Depredation Policy (and amend this as required).
19. Formally consult the regions on the draft crop depredation policy and report back with their comments to the Feb meeting 2026.

Appendix 1 – Draft NZC Crop Depredation Policy for consultation

Appendix 2 – Template Authority to Control Game Birds for information,

11. STATISTICAL CONSIDERATION FOR GAME BIRD MONITORING AT A NATIONAL LEVEL – PROTEUS REPORT

Ref: 1.01

24 January 2026

1. Purpose

There is a need for a national coordinated approach to Game bird monitoring and analysis of the data to help drive management objectives, detect trends and provide timely and actionable insights. (Proteus report is in PFI)

2. Background

Monitoring game bird populations is a critical component of effective game bird management in New Zealand, providing essential information to guide harvest regulation, habitat enhancement and long-term conservation planning. Historically, monitoring has been implemented independently by each regional Fish & Game Council, resulting in variation in methods, data quality and reporting standards.

While locally tailored approaches offer important benefits, the absence of a consistent national framework has limited the ability to compare results across regions, assess national trends and coordinate management responses. Proposed reforms to the governance structure of Fish & Game New Zealand, as outlined in Department of Conservation (2025), are intended to address these issues by clarifying roles and strengthening national coordination. Under the revised structure, regional councils will retain responsibility for local delivery, while the New Zealand Fish & Game Council will take on a stronger leadership role in administrative and regulatory functions, including oversight of core monitoring activities.

This shift is expected to support greater methodological consistency, improve data integration and enable more robust assessments of population trends at both regional and national scales.

This report provides background to inform the development of a unified monitoring framework aligned with these structural changes. It provides the foundation for a coordinated, best-practice approach to game bird monitoring that balances national consistency with regional relevance. It synthesises current approaches that could potentially be used to monitor game bird species in New Zealand, and presents a framework for improving the scientific rigour, consistency and utility of game bird monitoring at a national scale. It draws on foundational work by MacKenzie (2014, 2018), the Department of Conservation's bird monitoring guidelines (Dowding 2012), and relevant international models such as adaptive harvest management in North America (Johnson et al., 2015). The report also builds on recent advances in monitoring technology, data integration and hunter satisfaction research.

3. Staff overview of Document

Interestingly the Game Bird Research Committee (when it was in operation) considered most of the methodologies discussed in the report and recommended that aerial transects be conducted in all regions for a trial period and a select group of regions undertake banding in conjunction with the aerial counts and this was implemented in all regions.

The Eastern Region has been banding ducks since 1997 (29 years) and conducted aerial counts for seven years. We also ran randomised aerial transect counts in Northland, Auckland Waikato, Eastern, and Hawkes Bay.

The aerial transect counts had a number of issues associated with them such as: the topography made it unsafe to fly low enough to count dabbling duck in many parts of the regions, the height we had to fly (about 300ft. cf. 50ft in the US Prairie Pothole region) made it difficult to maintain a constant ribbon width (the area on the ground that is counted), detectability could not be ground truthed as it was too variable, and flood events provided misleading results.

Eastern tried a number of the other methodologies discussed in the Proteus report without much success. We therefore decided to drop aerial transects and concentrate on banding. Randomised aerial transect counts may be useful in some parts of NZ but not for most of the North Island, due to our topography.

As Proteus rightly point out, banding provides insight into why the population is changing (aerial transect counts only tells you it is changing). It can be used to estimate population size (in conjunction with harvest surveys and assessments of reporting rate). Annual survival rates can be modelled against season regulations, which we do. Managers can determine the effect size of different harvest regulations. Despite what the Proteus report says, we had previously analysed most of the mallard and grey duck historic band data and determined that environmental covariates such as rainfall and temperature explained changes in annual survival. We then used the system developed by Leathwick et.al to map mallard and grey duck management zones or environments. Next, we fitted band recovery data to these zones to examine the fidelity to these areas. This information was very useful when developing season regulations for different parts of the country.

Proteus highlighted the use of Adaptive Harvest Management. Eastern has been using this system since at least 2012.

Annual survival rates have been analysed and modelled since 1997. Population size, and recruitment models have been used to develop predictive models for many years.

We have also run the harvest survey and shoveler survey, the only national game bird monitoring programs. Over many years Eastern specialist staff have had discussions with F&G staff about creating a common repository for monitoring data.

4. Staff Recommendation

What Proteus is proposing is in line with what Eastern already have in place. As national framework for monitoring, was developed some years ago by the Game Bird Research committee (with the assistance of Proteus) and implemented by the regions. Abolishing the game bird research committee coincided with the loss of momentum in achieving a national game bird monitoring program.

Initial consideration highlights the need for any national monitoring framework to recognise existing regional capability and datasets, and to provide flexibility for regions to implement monitoring approaches that are practical and fit for purpose. The report also identifies substantial requirements for training, data systems, quality assurance and capacity building, which have not been costed or discussed. Similar to the Crop Depredation policy, we would recommend that NZC engages with its own specialist staff around the Country first to have input and give consideration to the project and outcomes desired.

5.0 Recommendations

5.1 That we support the findings of the Proteus report and its recommendations and direct NZC to reinstate the National Bird Monitoring program to help create a workable and practical approach to help implement.

12. R3 REGIONAL IMPLEMENTATION – PILOT PROGRAMME

Ref: 8.01.03

25 January 2026

1. Purpose

This paper proposes an R3 (Retention, Reactivation and Recruitment) regional implementation pilot for the remainder of this financial year. The strategy builds on the 2019 R3 Roadmap and leverages national infrastructure now in place, including the ReWild campaign, new website, and developing CRM system.

Given that regions have already established their operational work plans for the current period, this is proposed as a pilot programme with flexible goals. Regions would be invited to participate on a voluntary basis, with success measures adapted to reflect available resources.

The plan focuses on six priorities:

1. Access Restoration
2. Events and Education
3. Women and Junior Outreach
4. Rural Relationship Building
5. ReWild Campaign Support
6. Local Marketing

2. Background

The 2019 R3 Roadmap identified strategic priorities for growing participation in fishing and hunting. Since then, Fish & Game has established key national foundations, including the ReWild brand, new website infrastructure, and CRM development. Regional implementation has been discussed but not formally structured.

Regions are at different stages of R3 implementation and face varying resource constraints. Some regions have dedicated staff for outreach activities, whilst others have limited capacity. Access to facilities like fish-out ponds, shooting ranges, and suitable event locations also varies significantly between regions.

3. Staff Recommendation

It is positive to see that NZC are addressing some focus on R3 planning and opportunities. More focus needs to be placed on 'Recruitment' and 'Reactivation' as these outcomes equal 'sales'.

The programme is voluntary and Eastern already supports and or participates in many of the suggested actions.

The success measures for some of the priorities are not practical or look like they will achieve results of increasing sales and revenue.

Up until recently there have been 2 working groups that have become defunct due to lack of leadership and direction by NZC – The Licence Working Party and the Public Awareness Group. Both these groups had specialist staff who would work together and shared regional and national ideas on promotions, opportunities and EDM's for milestone dates (Fishing Opening, Labour weekend, Kings Birthday etc), or took on tasks to data mine trends and uptakes, investigate impacts on changes to license fee changes etc.

It would be fortuitous for NZC to reactivate these working groups to investigate the Licence fee attitude, different types of licences available and their possible financial impacts, automatic payments annually for licence fees, a national coordinated marketing plan with templates for regional additions etc.

Ideally for NZC to first consult with the regions and specialist staff to help create a draft R3 programme that is then presented to the NZC council and sent out for Regional Councils feedback.

4.0 Recommendations

4.1 The Eastern F&G Council supports the principle and acknowledges that operationally Eastern is already involved and participates. That NZC develops a more robust Marketing and R3 plan in consultation with the regions and specialist staff to help increase sales and revenue

R3 Regional implementation - pilot programme

New Zealand Fish and Game Council Meeting 178: 5-6 December 2025

Prepared by: Maggie Tait, Principal Communications Advisor, NZ Fish and Game Council

Kōrero taunaki - Summary of considerations

Purpose

This report seeks Council approval to consult with regions on a pilot R3 Regional Implementation Strategy for 2025-2026.

Financial considerations

Nil Budgetary provision / Unbudgeted

Risk

Low Medium High Extreme

Executive Summary - Whakarāpopoto

1. This paper proposes a pilot R3 (Retention, Reactivation and Recruitment) regional implementation pilot for the remainder of this financial year.. The strategy builds on the 2019 R3 Roadmap and leverages national infrastructure now in place, including the ReWild campaign, new website, and developing CRM system.
2. Given that regions have already established their operational work plans for the current period, this is proposed as a pilot programme with flexible goals. Regions would be invited to participate on a voluntary basis, with success measures adapted to reflect available resources. For example, regions without access to fish-out ponds would set different event targets than those with such facilities.
3. The plan focuses on six priorities: access restoration, events and education, women and junior outreach, rural relationship building, ReWild campaign support, and local marketing. The purpose of this paper is to seek Council approval to consult with regions on this proposed pilot.

Background - Takenga mai

4. The 2019 R3 Roadmap identified strategic priorities for growing participation in fishing and hunting. Since then, Fish & Game has established key national foundations, including the ReWild brand, new website infrastructure, and CRM development. Regional implementation has been discussed but not formally structured.
5. Regions are at different stages of R3 implementation and face varying resource constraints. Some regions have dedicated staff for outreach activities, whilst others have limited capacity. Access to facilities like fish-out ponds, shooting ranges, and suitable event locations also varies significantly between regions.

Discussion - Kōrerorero

6. Strategic Context:
 7. National foundations are now in place with the ReWild campaign launched, new website live, CRM system planned, national EDM marketing plan circulated to regions, and extension resources being created. This provides the infrastructure for effective regional implementation.
 8. This strategy is proposed as a pilot programme with the following characteristics:
 - A. Voluntary participation: Regions choose whether to participate based on capacity and alignment with existing work plans
 - B. Flexible goals: Success measures would be adapted to regional resources (e.g., regions without fish-out ponds would run fewer events, regions with limited staffing would set proportionate targets)
 - C. Consultation first: Council seeks regional input before finalising any expectations or measures
 - D. Learning opportunity: Pilot allows testing and refinement before broader rollout
 9. Regional priorities (for consideration):

1. Access Restoration & Improvement

Systematically identify, restore and promote access to fishing and hunting areas. This issue is consistently the number 1 concern for licence holders.

Regional actions:

- Conduct workshop with staff and stakeholders to map lost access areas in your region

- Document why access was lost (landowner relationships, signage, information gaps, legal barriers)
- Select 2 priority access locations to restore/improve
- Develop action plans with timelines for each priority location
- Partner with Herenga ā Nuku Aotearoa (the Outdoor Access Commission), DOC, LINZ, local councils and primary sector where relevant
- Create communications campaign highlighting restored access using ReWild branding (supported by NZC)
- Celebrate and hero landowners who provide access by creating articles/videos

Success measure: 2 priority access locations re-established per region by June 2026 (flexible based on regional circumstances)

2. Events & Education Programme

Deliver quality retention and recruitment events using extension resources.

Regional actions:

- Audit current events against R3 objectives (Who are we targeting? What outcome are we seeking?)
- Focus events on: Retention (skills development courses, safety training, how-to sessions); Reactivation (organised hunts/fishing events, competitions, welcome back initiatives); Recruitment (introductory workshops, open days, school programmes)
- Survey participants at all outreach events: Keep surveys very short - ask about communication channels they use, rate event content, gather suggestions for improvement
- Utilise national extension resources (videos, how-tos, and resources) as they become available
- Maintain regular communications (river conditions, fishing/hunting reports, seasonal tips)
- Issue regular EDMs (Electronic Direct Mail) to licence holders: Critical for retention and reactivation

Success measure: Minimum 6 targeted R3 events per region annually, with documented participant outcomes; EDMs issued as set out in schedule.

Targets flexible based on regional resources (e.g., regions without fish-out ponds would set different event numbers).

3. Women & Junior Focused Outreach

3. Targeted programmes addressing underrepresented demographics.

Regional actions:

- Develop women-specific initiatives: Introductory workshops in safe, supportive environments; mentorship connections with experienced female anglers/hunters; skills-based courses; women's fishing/hunting events; target all-girls schools for presentations
- Strengthen junior programmes: Family fishing events with consistent branding; school holiday programmes; youth mentor matching; consider child fishing licence data collection (starting age 12)
- Promote threshold experiences that convert interest into commitment
- Success measure: 25% increase in women and junior licence sales by June 2030

4. Rural Relationship Building

- Rebuild trust and collaboration with rural landowners and communities.
- Regional actions:
- Staff actively participate in catchment groups
- Share environmental expertise on habitat and wetland management
- Offer collaborative support on common interest areas (water quality, biodiversity, pest management)
- Recognise shared values between Fish & Game and rural communities
- Develop respectful local relationships through consistent positive engagement
- Position Fish & Game as environmental partner, not just enforcement agency
- Publicly celebrate and profile supportive landowners

Success measure: Active involvement in minimum 3 catchment/community groups per region; documented collaborative projects; 2 articles in media

5. ReWild Campaign Support: Feed regional stories and successes into national brand campaign.

Regional actions:

- Provide regular stories to NZC team: Field work successes, event highlights, research findings, ranger/staff achievements, licence holder stories, advocacy wins, access improvements
- Use ReWild branding consistently across all regional communications
- Amplify national ReWild messages through regional channels
- Align regional social media with national campaign themes
- Success measure: Minimum 12 regional stories/content pieces provided to NZC annually

6. Local Marketing and Advertising for Licence Sales

- Drive licence sales by reaching local communities through targeted advertising and media coverage.
- Regional actions:
- Paid advertising (focus on conversion):
- Social media advertising: Run targeted campaigns on Facebook/Instagram
- Local newspaper advertising: Place ads in community newspapers and rural publications
- Local radio advertising: Run spot ads on community radio stations
- Use compelling offers and timely messages
- Free media coverage (editorial/PR):
- Build relationships with local journalists and rural reporters
- Provide regular story angles: Conservation work, research results, opening day previews, success stories, access improvements
- Write opinion pieces and letters to editor on relevant local issues
- Offer spokespeople for interviews on fishing/hunting topics
- Send media releases on regional achievements, events, and initiatives
- Provide high-quality photos and videos for media use
- Community engagement:

- Present at local agricultural shows, field days, and community events
- Partner with local outdoor retailers for in-store promotions
- Engage with local clubs and organisations
- Build presence at farmers markets and community gatherings

Success measure: Quarterly paid advertising campaigns run across at least 2 channels; minimum 12 pieces of free media coverage secured per region annually; documented licence sales attribution; community event presence at minimum 6 local events annually

Considerations for Decision-Making - Whai whakaaro ki ngā whakataunga

Financial Implications

No additional central funding is proposed at this stage. Regions would implement activities within existing budgets and operational work plans. Some activities (such as local advertising) may require regional budget allocation. The pilot approach allows assessment of resource requirements before any potential future funding decisions.

Legislative Implications

4. No legislative changes are required.

Section 4 Treaty Responsibilities

5. The strategy supports improved access and participation opportunities that could benefit all New Zealanders including Māori. Regional implementation would include engagement with local iwi and hapū as appropriate.

Policy Implications

6. The strategy aligns with the 2019 R3 Roadmap and supports Fish & Game's mission to provide fishing and hunting opportunities. It complements existing regional activities and the national ReWild campaign.

Risks and Mitigations

7. Risk: Regional capacity constraints limit participation

8. Mitigation: Pilot structure with flexible goals; voluntary participation; no mandatory targets during existing work plan period
9. Risk: Inconsistent implementation between regions
10. Mitigation: Clear framework with support from NZC; best practice sharing; quarterly reporting for learning

Consultation

11. Regional consultation is the purpose of this paper. If approved, the strategy would be circulated to all regions for feedback on:
 12. Alignment with regional priorities and capacity
 13. Appropriateness of success measures and flexibility provisions
 14. Support requirements from NZC
 15. Interest in participating in the pilot

Next Actions - Ngā mahinga e whai ake nei

16. If agreed:
17. Circulate strategy to regions for consultation (December 2025)
18. Gather regional feedback (December 2025 - January 2026)
19. Report back to Council with consultation outcomes and recommendations (February 2026)
20. Subject to Council approval following consultation, support interested regions to commence pilot implementation

14. OPERATIONAL REPORTS

14.1 FINANCE REPORT

Ref: 8.03.01

27 January 2026

1. Purpose

To inform the Council of the year-to-date financial position, approve payments for the months of November and December 2025.

Tables within this report:

Table 1	Profit and Loss to 31 December 2025
Table 2	Balance Sheet as at 31 December 2025
Table 3	Variance Report to 31 December 2025
Tables 4 & 5	Bank Transactions November and December 2025
Tables 6 & 7	Credit Card Transactions November and December 2025

2. YTD Profit and Loss

The Profit & Loss statement for the period ending 31 December is provided in Table 1.

Summary

The net position for the 2025-2026 Financial Year YTD is \$305,016 surplus against a budgeted surplus of \$330,467 net variance \$25,451 (deficit).

The net variance of \$25,451 is a result of income being lower than that budgeted by \$24,730, and increased expenditure \$721.

Income	Var YTD	Expenses	Var YTD
Licence Sales	31,876 ▼	Depreciation	852 ▼
Other Income	7,145 ▲	Operating Expenses	8,940 ▼
		Administration Expenses	10,513 ▲
	24,730 ▼		721 ▲
		Net	25,451 ▼

A more detailed summary is provided in the following notes.

Income

Licence Sales

Licence revenue is currently reporting at \$31,876 below budget. A more up to date picture of licence sales is provided in the Licence Sales Report.

Other Income

Revenue from other sources for the period totalled \$57,792 and is made up of the following:

Hatchery	\$13,376	Fishing competitions	\$254
Habitat maintenance fees	\$2,386	Donations	\$108
Grazing	\$5,200	Contract work NZC	\$3,638

Genesis Energy Contract work	\$11,821	DOC Cont...Thornton Fencing	\$2,125
MOJ Fines	\$364	Interest General	\$2,028
Fish food, tours	\$720	Rentals	\$14,030
Children's fishing	\$624	Miscellaneous	\$30
BOPRC Mowing	\$1,088	Total Other Income	\$57,792

Other income is \$7,145 ahead of budget. This is due primarily to unbudgeted contract income from Genesis Energy work undertaken in Waikaremoana and funding received for Thornton fencing work which will offset expenditure on the project when it occurs. Rentals are below budget due to vacancies in both houses at the start of the financial year and contract income to NZC is also reduced.

Species Management

Expenditure within the Population Monitoring budgets is related to maize, wages and miscellaneous materials for the banding project.

Hatchery spending reported during the period included fish food (\$6,539), tanker servicing and registration, and various maintenance materials and equipment. The usual expenses associated with, electricity, oxygen, and fuel are also reported.

The Species Management output is under budget YTD \$714. The Hatchery overspend on the Tanker repairs reported previously is offset during this period due to timing of fish food orders.

Habitat

Reserves Management spending for the period related to pest traps and maintenance materials and Assisted Habitat spending related to food expenses for Waikaremoana work. Over budget YTD \$279.

Participation

Expenditure reported within the Participation budgets relates to Whirinaki and Waioeka angler access, a reprint of Tauranga fishery brochure, and minor expenses for the children's fishing programme. Under budget YTD \$172.

Public Interface

The spending within the Public Interface output was related grounds maintenance costs for bark for gardens, painting materials for the Octagon, and cleaning of the public toilets. Resin chairs were purchased through the Public Promotions budget for the January boat fishing tuition. Over budget YTD \$259.

Compliance

Compliance expenditure includes the usual 0800 Poaching service and cell phone costs. The catering expense for the recent ranger training day and legal fees for a prosecution are also reported. Under budget YTD \$1,066.

Licensing

Licensing costs include agent commissions, the fees associated with the Public Online sales. Under budget YTD \$6,393, partly attributed to reduced licence sales but also a shift to online sales reduces the overall cost of sales.

Council

Travel and catering expenses are reported relating to the October and December Council meetings. Over budget YTD \$32.

Planning

Planning expenditure is related to the Audit fee (\$10,942) and levies to NZ Fish & Game Council (\$24,839). Under budget YTD \$1,165.

Administration

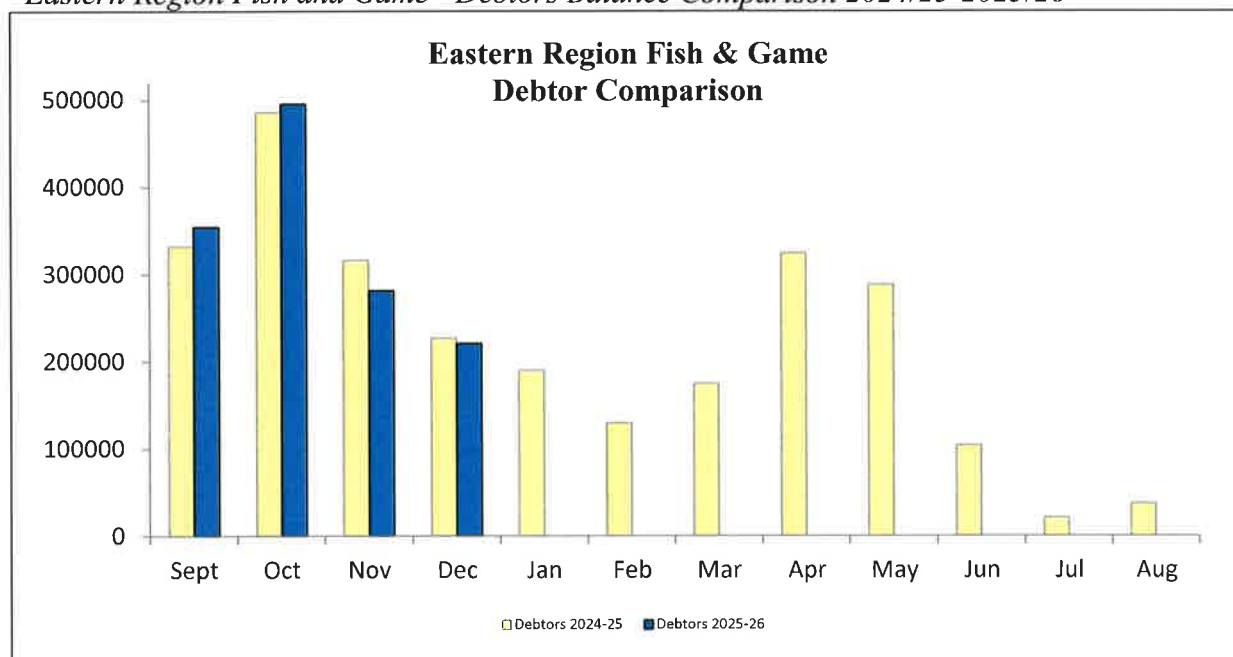
Salaries	Over budget \$9,995 YTD due to increased annual leave accruals and additional staff costs with tanker driver training.
Staff Expenses	Staff expenses for the period included Power boat level 2 training for three staff and professional development for one. Other expenses were incurred for employment advice, and health and safety equipment. Over budget YTD \$606.
Staff Houses	Staff Houses expenses related to Real Estate agent commissions and annual gas bottle rentals. Under budget YTD \$76.
Office Premises	Office Premises spending was significant in November and is related to the re-screw and repaint of admin building roof, and electrical repairs. The standard electricity, cleaning, rubbish removal, and alarm monitoring costs are also reported. The Office Premises budget is overspent \$4,475 YTD due to additional costs incurred for painting of gable ends of the building (these had been omitted from the original quotes). This not only included the preparation and paint but also additional scaffolding requirements for the highest parts of the building.
Office Equipment	Office Equipment expenses include the phone system and eftpos lease costs. Under budget YTD \$322.
Communications/ Consumables	Communications spending includes the 0800 service, Garmin InReach, staff cell plans and the 2Talk calling plan needed to utilise the IP phones. Expenses are also reported relating to stationery, Starlink, and photocopying. Under budget YTD \$1,549.
General	General Expenses are reported for the Survey Monkey subscription, and recently we have started incurring a Xero subscription charge which will continue at \$125 pm. Previously our Xero costs were nil due to our region being the subscribing region for all and being responsible for on charging all other regions. With changes in National office we have been unable to retain this arrangement and as a result bulk discounts and particularly our subscriber discount was lost. Other spending within the General Expenses budgets related to tearoom supplies, Christmas cards and bank fees. Under budget YTD \$2,326 due to reduced insurance costs which will ultimately offset increased accounting costs within this budget area.
General Equipment	Maintenance spending related to tractor repairs, mower repairs, WoF's for trailers, and various maintenance materials. Expenses are also reported for the seaflux subscription, and fuel. Under budget YTD \$1,367.
Vehicles	Vehicle maintenance expenditure for the period included a vehicle service, three WoF's, and fire extinguishers for new vehicles. Other vehicle costs related to registrations, RUC's, and fuel. Over budget YTD \$1,077.

Cash Position: As at 31 December 2025

\$ 902,737 (includes \$48,989 Asset Replacement Reserve)
 \$ 495,715 (Waikaremoana SFHEF – Restricted Reserve)
\$ 1,398,443 Total

Debtors: Outstanding Debtors \$220,624 as at 31 December 2025 (\$226,966 as at 31 December 2024).

Eastern Region Fish and Game - Debtors Balance Comparison 2024/25-2025/26



Agent debtors are all up to date with payment. Other debtors overdue at time of writing totalled \$67 and have been followed up.

3. Variance Report (Table 3)

The variance report shows the actual result including staff hours entered for each project area to provide Council with an overview of the staff time component of the Operational Work Plan.

Table 1

Profit and Loss - Council
Eastern Fish and Game Council
For the 2 months ended 31 December 2025

Income	Nov 2025	Dec 2025	YTD Actual	YTD Budget	Total Budget	Var YTD	Var %
Licence Income	133,727	131,627	849,124	881,000	1,469,319	(31,876)	-4%
Other Income	31,837	25,956	77,628	70,483	239,923	7,145	10%
Total Income	165,563	157,582	926,753	951,483	1,709,242	(24,730)	-3%
Operating Expenses							
Depreciation	7,133	7,115	28,880	29,732	89,195	(852)	-3%
1100 SPECIES MANAGEMENT							
1110 Population Monitoring	0	4,725	6,186	6,350	37,339	(164)	-3%
1120 Harvest Assessment	0	0	168	560	3,340	(392)	-70%
1140 Hatchery Operations	2,114	8,271	38,180	38,338	106,150	(158)	0%
1180 Game Bird Control	0	0	0	0	400	0	0%
Total 1100 SPECIES MGMNT	2,114	12,995	44,534	45,248	147,229	(714)	-2%
1200 HABITAT PROTECTION							
1220 Works & Management	282	0	830	700	14,200	130	19%
1230 Assisted Habitat	76	73	149	0	22,000	149	0%
Total 1200 HABITAT PROTECTION	358	73	979	700	36,200	279	40%
1300 PARTICIPATION							
1310 Access	79	614	1,093	1,600	4,800	(507)	-32%
1340 Other Publications	962	0	962	1,000	2,000	(39)	-4%
1350 Training	62	141	308	150	850	158	105%
1370 Huts	302	216	615	400	1,450	215	54%
Total 1300 PARTICIPATION	1,405	971	2,978	3,150	9,100	(172)	-5%
1400 PUBLIC INTERFACE							
1410 Liaison	0	0	0	50	100	(50)	-100%
1440 Public Promotions	0	108	108	400	1,000	(292)	-73%
1450 Visitor Facilities/Education	370	111	701	100	500	601	601%
Total 1400 PUBLIC INTERFACE	370	219	809	550	1,600	259	47%
1500 COMPLIANCE							
1510 Ranging	33	68	265	340	1,000	(76)	-22%
1520 Ranger Training	138	0	138	500	1,000	(362)	-72%
1530 Compliance	0	100	571	1,200	4,000	(629)	-52%
Total 1500 COMPLIANCE	171	168	974	2,040	6,000	(1,066)	-52%
1600 LICENSING							
1610 Licence Prod/Distrib	0	0	0	60	60	(60)	-100%
1630 Commission	3,849	3,867	28,107	34,440	58,773	(6,333)	-18%
Total 1600 LICENSING	3,849	3,867	28,107	34,500	58,833	(6,393)	-19%
1700 COUNCIL							
1720 Council Meetings	770	1,123	2,882	2,850	8,500	32	1%
Total 1700 COUNCIL	770	1,123	2,882	2,850	8,500	32	1%
1800 PLANNING/REPORTING							
1810 Management & Planning	0	0	535	1,100	2,500	(565)	-51%
1830 Reporting/Audit	0	10,942	0	500	12,500	(500)	-100%
1840 National Liaison	24,839	0	24,839	24,939	99,555	(100)	0%
Total 1800 PLANNING/REPORTING	24,839	10,942	25,374	26,539	114,555	(1,165)	-4%
1900 ADMINISTRATION							
1910 Salaries	83,350	132,453	363,452	353,457	1,096,315	9,995	3%
1920 Staff Expenses	3,383	640	7,942	7,336	43,000	606	8%
1930 Staff Houses	1,380	480	9,913	9,989	18,150	(76)	-1%
1940 Office Premises	37,069	3,575	50,848	46,373	59,900	4,475	10%
1950 Office Equipment	231	231	926	1,248	3,650	(322)	-26%
1960 Communications	946	768	3,802	5,351	14,600	(1,549)	-29%
1970 General	239	363	13,164	15,490	18,870	(2,326)	-15%
1980 General Equipment	1,002	874	7,300	8,667	18,800	(1,367)	-16%
1990 Vehicles	4,881	7,145	28,873	27,796	65,400	1,077	4%
Total 1900 ADMINISTRATION	132,482	146,530	486,220	475,707	1,338,685	10,513	2%
Total Operating Expenses	173,490	184,003	621,737	621,016	1,809,897	721	0%
Net Profit	(7,927)	(26,420)	305,016	330,467	(100,655)	(25,451)	-8%

Table 2**Balance Sheet**

Eastern Fish and Game Council

As at 31 December 2025

Assets	31 Dec 2025	31 Aug 2025
Bank		
Westpac Current Account	185,283	10,694
Westpac Call Account	99	201,047
Petty Cash	759	237
Investments	720,049	614,650
Waikaremoana Fund Investments	495,715	493,035
Total Bank	1,401,905	1,319,663
Current Assets		
Accounts Receivable	220,624	37,109
Accounts Receivable - Hawke's Bay & External parties	818	94
Inventory - Fish Stock	232,334	232,334
Prepayments and Accrued Income	0	6,885
Total Current Assets	453,776	276,422
Fixed Assets		
Buildings	1,049,503	1,049,503
Land	102,000	102,000
Motor Vehicles	616,347	478,550
Office Equipment	65,959	65,959
Plant & Equipment	192,508	192,508
Accum Dep Land & Buildings	(822,769)	(813,441)
Accum Dep Motor Vehicles	(168,314)	(154,813)
Accum Dep Office Equipment	(52,212)	(49,948)
Accum Dep Plant & Equipment	(143,816)	(140,030)
Total Fixed Assets	839,206	730,288
Total Assets	2,694,886	2,326,373
Liabilities		
Current Liabilities		
Accounts Payable	92,895	34,940
Accruals and Prepaid Licences	88,092	101,883
Employee Entitlements	119,186	133,365
Game Bird Habitat Stamp Levy Clearing	39	0
GST	7,182	(4,935)
PAYE Clearing	42,423	26,263
Salmon Endorsement Clearing	87	0
Staff Social Club	1,711	1,671
Westpac Business Credit Card - A Alaeinia	1,774	(1,901)
Westpac Business Credit Card - K Thompson	1,688	598
Rounding	1	0
Designated Waters Clearing Acc	303	0
Total Current Liabilities	355,381	291,883
Total Liabilities	355,381	291,883
Net Assets	2,339,505	2,034,489
Equity		
Accumulated Funds	1,298,627	1,183,352
Asset Replacement Reserve	14,700	14,700
Back Country Fisheries Reserve	153,252	153,252
Breeding Programme Reserve	5,018	5,018
Fish for Gold Reserve	14,000	14,000
Hatchery Water Reticulation Reserve	16,109	16,109
Hunter Ballot Reserve	14,012	14,012
Waikaremoana Sportfish Habitat Enhancement Fund Reserve	490,425	490,425
Current Year Earnings	305,016	115,275
Awakaponga Water Reticulation Reserve	27,826	27,826
Property Maintenance Reserve	520	520
Total Equity	2,339,505	2,034,489

Table 3 2025/2026 REPORT OF VARIANCES BETWEEN TOTAL BUDGET AND YEAR TO DATE ACTUAL EXPENDITURE AND INCOME

as at 31 December 2025														
Schedule B Code	Project	EXTERNAL COSTS		HOURS		INTERNAL COST		NETABLE INCOME		NET COST		NET COST		%
		Budget	Actual	Budget	Actual	Budget	Actual	Budget	Actual	Budget	Actual	Budget	Variance	
1110	Species Monitoring	\$ 37,339	\$ 6,186	2,101	619	\$ 159,848	\$ 52,667	\$ -	\$ -	\$ 197,187	\$ 58,853	\$ 138,334	\$ 29.8	
1120	Harvest Assessment	\$ 3,340	\$ 168	786	339	\$ 59,800	\$ 28,843	\$ -	\$ -	\$ 63,140	\$ 29,011	\$ 34,129	\$ 45.9	
1140	Hatchery Operations	\$ 106,150	\$ 38,180	3,128	1,070	\$ 237,983	\$ 91,039	\$ 68,000	\$ 14,838	\$ 276,133	\$ 114,381	\$ 161,752	\$ 41.4	
1160	Releases	\$ -	\$ -	134	179	\$ 10,195	\$ 15,230	\$ -	\$ -	\$ 10,195	\$ 15,230	\$ (5,035)	\$ 149.4	
1170	Regulations	\$ -	\$ -	80	4	\$ 6,087	\$ 340	\$ -	\$ -	\$ 6,087	\$ 340	\$ 5,746	\$ 5.6	
1180	Control	\$ 400	\$ -	36	5	\$ 2,739	\$ 425	\$ -	\$ -	\$ 3,139	\$ 425	\$ 2,714	\$ 13.6	
	TOTAL - SPECIES MANAGEMENT	\$ 147,229	\$ 44,534	6,265	2,216	\$ 476,651	\$ 188,545	\$ 68,000	\$ 14,838	\$ 656,880	\$ 218,241	\$ 337,639	\$ 39.3	
1210	Resource Management Act	\$ -	\$ -	1,598	547	\$ 117,014	\$ 46,541	\$ -	\$ -	\$ 117,014	\$ 46,541	\$ 70,473	\$ 39.8	
1220	Works & Management	\$ 14,200	\$ 830	970	288	\$ 73,799	\$ 24,504	\$ 11,650	\$ 13,715	\$ 76,349	\$ 11,619	\$ 64,730	\$ 15.2	
1230	Assisted Habitat	\$ -	\$ -	658	111	\$ 50,062	\$ 9,444	\$ -	\$ -	\$ 50,062	\$ 9,444	\$ 40,617	\$ 18.9	
1240	Assess & Monitor	\$ -	\$ -	72	9	\$ 5,478	\$ 766	\$ -	\$ -	\$ 5,478	\$ 766	\$ 4,712	\$ 14.0	
1250	Lake Waikaremoana	\$ -	\$ -	0	0	\$ -	\$ -	\$ -	\$ -	\$ -	\$ -	\$ -	\$ 0.0	
	TOTAL - HABITAT PROTECTION & M	\$ 14,200	\$ 830	3,238	955	\$ 246,352	\$ 81,255	\$ 11,650	\$ 13,715	\$ 248,902	\$ 68,370	\$ 180,532	\$ 27.6	
1310	Access	\$ 4,800	\$ 1,093	670	221	\$ 50,975	\$ 18,803	\$ -	\$ -	\$ 55,775	\$ 19,896	\$ 35,878	\$ 35.7	
1330	Newsletters/Information	\$ -	\$ -	276	47	\$ 20,999	\$ 3,999	\$ -	\$ -	\$ 20,999	\$ 3,999	\$ 17,000	\$ 19.0	
1340	Other Publications	\$ 2,000	\$ 962	30	1	\$ 2,282	\$ 85	\$ -	\$ -	\$ 4,282	\$ 1,047	\$ 3,235	\$ 24.5	
1350	Training	\$ 850	\$ 308	807	176	\$ 61,398	\$ 14,975	\$ 12,250	\$ 1,638	\$ 49,998	\$ 13,845	\$ 36,353	\$ 27.3	
1360	Club Relations	\$ -	\$ -	36	32	\$ 2,739	\$ 2,723	\$ -	\$ -	\$ 2,739	\$ 2,723	\$ 16	\$ 99.4	
1370	Huts	\$ 1,450	\$ 615	50	3	\$ 3,804	\$ 255	\$ 400	\$ 235	\$ 4,654	\$ 635	\$ 4,219	\$ 13.1	
	TOTAL - ANGLER & HUNTER PARTIC	\$ 9,100	\$ 2,978	1,869	480	\$ 142,197	\$ 40,840	\$ 12,650	\$ 1,873	\$ 138,647	\$ 41,945	\$ 96,701	\$ 30.3	
1410	Liaison	\$ 100	\$ -	205	63	\$ 15,597	\$ 5,360	\$ -	\$ -	\$ 15,697	\$ 5,360	\$ 10,336	\$ 34.1	
1420	Communication	\$ -	\$ -	168	18	\$ 12,782	\$ 1,532	\$ -	\$ -	\$ 12,782	\$ 1,532	\$ 11,250	\$ 12.0	
1440	Public Promotions	\$ 1,000	\$ 108	146	4	\$ 11,108	\$ 340	\$ -	\$ -	\$ 12,108	\$ 448	\$ 11,660	\$ 3.7	
1450	Visitor Facilities/Education	\$ 500	\$ 701	681	10	\$ 51,812	\$ 851	\$ -	\$ 931	\$ 52,312	\$ 621	\$ 51,691	\$ 1.2	
	TOTAL - PUBLIC INTERFACE	\$ 1,600	\$ 809	1,200	95	\$ 91,298	\$ 8,083	\$ -	\$ 931	\$ 92,898	\$ 7,961	\$ 84,937	\$ 8.6	
1510	Ranger Training	\$ 1,000	\$ 265	1,146	440	\$ 87,190	\$ 37,437	\$ -	\$ -	\$ 88,190	\$ 37,702	\$ 50,488	\$ 42.8	
1520	Compliance Prosecutions	\$ 4,000	\$ 571	308	87	\$ 23,433	\$ 7,402	\$ 5,000	\$ 1,181	\$ 22,433	\$ 6,792	\$ 15,641	\$ 30.3	
	TOTAL - COMPLIANCE	\$ 6,000	\$ 974	1,570	606	\$ 119,448	\$ 51,561	\$ 5,000	\$ 1,181	\$ 120,448	\$ 61,354	\$ 69,094	\$ 42.6	
1610	Licensing	\$ 60	\$ -	146	52	\$ 11,108	\$ 4,424	\$ -	\$ -	\$ 11,168	\$ 4,424	\$ 6,744	\$ 39.6	
1620	Agent Servicing	\$ -	\$ -	91	20	\$ 6,923	\$ 1,702	\$ -	\$ -	\$ 6,923	\$ 1,702	\$ 5,222	\$ 24.6	
	TOTAL - LICENSING	\$ 60	\$ -	237	72	\$ 18,031	\$ 6,126	\$ -	\$ -	\$ 18,091	\$ 6,126	\$ 11,965	\$ 33.9	
1710	Council Elections	\$ -	\$ -	0	0	\$ -	\$ -	\$ -	\$ -	\$ -	\$ -	\$ -	\$ 0.0	
1720	Council Meetings	\$ 8,500	\$ 2,882	707	364	\$ 53,790	\$ 30,970	\$ -	\$ -	\$ 62,290	\$ 33,852	\$ 28,437	\$ 54.3	
	TOTAL - COUNCILS	\$ 8,500	\$ 2,882	707	364	\$ 53,790	\$ 30,970	\$ -	\$ -	\$ 62,290	\$ 33,852	\$ 28,437	\$ 54.3	
1810	Management Planning	\$ 2,500	\$ 535	290	152	\$ 22,064	\$ 12,933	\$ -	\$ -	\$ 24,564	\$ 13,468	\$ 11,096	\$ 54.8	
1820	Annual Planning	\$ -	\$ -	104	15	\$ 7,912	\$ 1,276	\$ -	\$ -	\$ 7,912	\$ 1,276	\$ 6,636	\$ 16.1	
1830	Reporting/Audit	\$ 12,500	\$ -	486	194	\$ 36,976	\$ 16,506	\$ -	\$ -	\$ 49,476	\$ 16,506	\$ 32,969	\$ 33.4	
1840	National Liaison	\$ 200	\$ 24,839	264	100	\$ 20,086	\$ 8,508	\$ -	\$ -	\$ 20,286	\$ 33,347	\$ (13,062)	\$ 164.4	
	TOTAL - PLANNING/REPORTING	\$ 15,200	\$ 26,374	1,144	461	\$ 87,037	\$ 39,224	\$ -	\$ -	\$ 102,237	\$ 64,598	\$ 37,640	\$ 63.2	
	TOTAL	\$ 201,889	\$ 78,981	16,230	5,249	\$ 1,234,805	\$ 446,604	\$ 97,300	\$ 32,638	\$ 1,339,394	\$ 492,447	\$ 846,947	\$ 36.8	

6.0 Recommendations

6.1 That the payments for November and December 2025 totalling \$507,768.70 be approved.

<i>November - Current account</i>	<i>\$218,577.04</i>
<i>December - Current account</i>	<i>\$279,778.14</i>
<i>November/December - Credit Card - AA</i>	<i>\$3,050.40</i>
<i>November/December - Credit Card - KT</i>	<i>\$6,363.12</i>
<i>Total</i>	<i>\$507,768.70</i>

14.2 MANAGEMENT REPORT

26 January 2026

SPECIES MANAGEMENT

1111 River Fisheries Investigations

Rangitaiki River Water Quality Monitoring

Fish & Game staff are scheduled to undertake annual monitoring of the Rangitaiki River within Kaingaroa Forest during February.

This will consist of either drift dive monitoring, if the river conditions are suitable, or if in-water visibility proves unsuitable water parameters will be taken at a range of historically documented sites. Pre-Christmas period access work suggested the river whilst low was fairly green and may not be in a state fit for drift dive surveys. A through-water distance of 3m or greater is required for drift diving.

1112 Datawatch

During the four and a half months following the season opening, a total of 238 datawatch tags have been returned and entered into the database. The distribution is as follows:

Lake Okareka	2
Lake Okataina	38
Lake Rerewhakaaitu	9
Lake Rotoehu	4
Lake Rotoiti	65
Lake Rotoma	2
Lake Tarawera	118

**Datawatch returns (entered to 22/01/2026)*

This total is 20 tags greater than during the same approximate period during 2025. Lake Okataina is up by 16 tag returns, Lake Rotoiti is up 15, Lake Rerewhakaaitu is up five and Lake Rotoehu is up by two returns. Lake Rotoma is down by 16 returns and Lake Okareka down by two returns. Lake Tarawera has had the same number of returns for the year entered to date.

1113 Lake Waikaremoana

Lake Waikaremoana Monitoring Buoy Update

The Lake Water Quality Monitoring buoy is due for maintenance involving retrieval of the sensor chains and physical cleansing of sensors. Staff attended the Lake Waikaremoana Boating and Fishing Association's Family angling competition on 17th January, and intended to incorporate this work into that visit, but the weather was unfortunately not conducive.

1114 Lake Tarawera

Lakes Tarawera Acoustic Sampling

Acoustic monitoring was undertaken across 14 parallel transects of Lake Tarawera on 25th and 27th of November 2025. Acoustic monitoring has been undertaken twice yearly since November

2018 to give an estimate of the food resource across Lake Tarawera. The ‘back scatter’ recorded picks up all air pockets or swim bladders within the transects. DOC Taupo have been undertaking monthly transects across Taupo over the past calendar year but had not been calibrating the unit. We noted issues with the gear during the pre-survey calibration in that not all sectors of the transducer were recording data. In discussion with Dr Michel Dedual we decided to complete the transects as some data was still being gathered and didn’t want to miss the opportunity. However, post transects we have opted not to analyse the November 2025 data as we believe the information will not be an accurate reflection of the lake food web.

After our deployment of the gear, it was delivered to NIWA Wellington by the DOC Taupo staff for assessment. Water ingress of the cable had caused corrosion and separation of the wiring within the transducer plug. This will be fixed and funded by DOC Taupo.

1115 Lake Fisheries Research

Ngongotaha Stream trap

Repairs were made to the Ngongotaha trap structure to get the facility up and running following months being out of action after flooding and breakage from debris.

Ngongotaha Stream trap run (December 2025)

	<i>Av. Length</i>	<i>Av. Weight</i>	<i>Trap Run</i>	<i>Fish/night</i>	<i>10 pound+</i>	<i>% Brown</i>
<i>Rainbow</i>	513	1.68	28	7	0	
<i>Brown</i>	569	2.84	94	24	1	77%

High numbers of trout, particularly brown trout were exiting Lake Rotorua to escape the rising early summer temperature. The largest fish trapped was a 650mm, 4.9kg brown female. The largest rainbow was a 520mm, 2.5kg male.

Ngongotaha Stream trap run (January 2026)

The Ngongotaha trap is yet to be operated at time of report writing.

1116 Waterfowl Harvest Management

Summer Monitoring

Paradise shelduck and black swan aerial counts were conducted in the first week of January. Banding mallard and grey duck is underway, but the weather is playing havoc with our ability to trap the birds.

Paradise shelduck

Paradise shelduck trend counts indicate the populations in all management units are stable over the long term (24 years; Table 1). The populations in B1 and B2, however, may have been affected by Cyclone Gabrielle, particularly in B2 (see Figure 1).

Table 1. Paradise shelduck percentage change in population 2003 – 2026, by management unit (A1, A2, B1, B2).

<i>Management.Area</i>	<i>Lambda</i>	<i>LowCI</i>	<i>UpperCI</i>
<i>A1</i>	2.12	-2.51	6.75
<i>A2</i>	0.40	-13.65	14.45
<i>B1</i>	-3.67	-10.00	2.66
<i>B2</i>	-3.59	-8.75	1.57

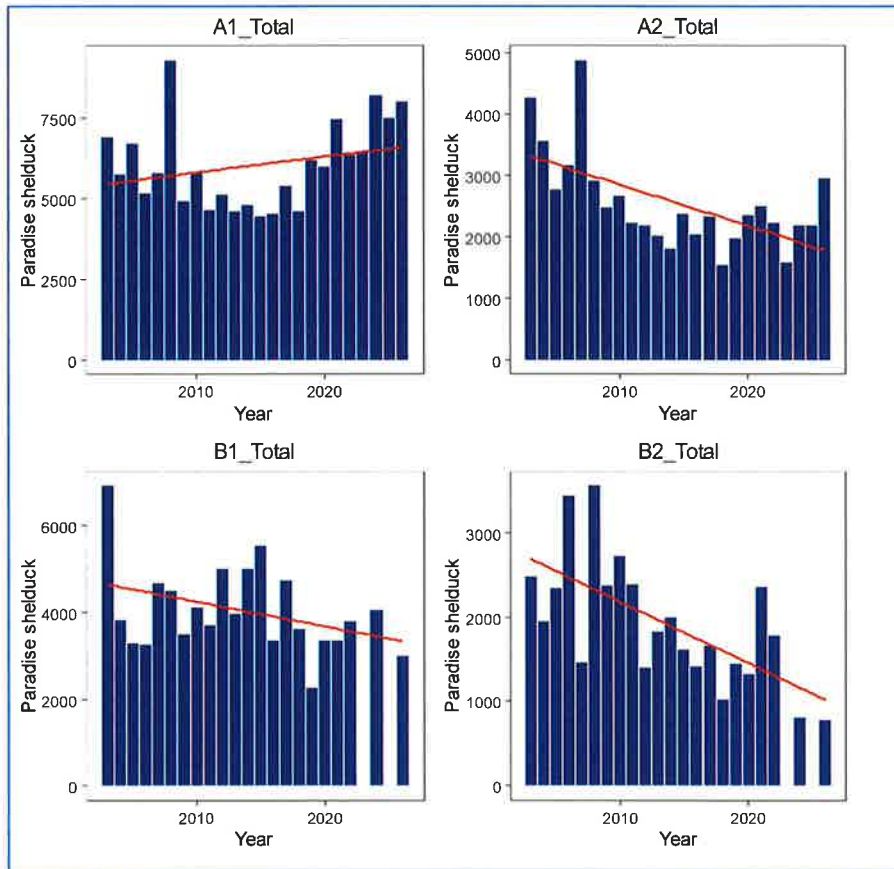


Figure 1. Total paradise shelduck counts by management unit (A1, A2, B1, B2) and year (2003 – 2026). The red line is regression line of count over time.

Black swan

Black swan trends indicate the populations are stable in all management units (Table 2). Total counts were up in management unit A1 but down in all other units (Figure 2). The populations were below the threshold to hold a season in B1 and B2.

Table 2. Black swan percentage change in population 2003 – 2026, by management unit (A1, A2, B1, B2).

<i>Management.Area</i>	<i>Lambda</i>	<i>LowCI</i>	<i>UpperCI</i>
A1	2.12	-2.51	6.75
A2	0.40	-13.65	14.45
B1	-3.67	-10.00	2.66
B2	-3.59	-8.75	1.57

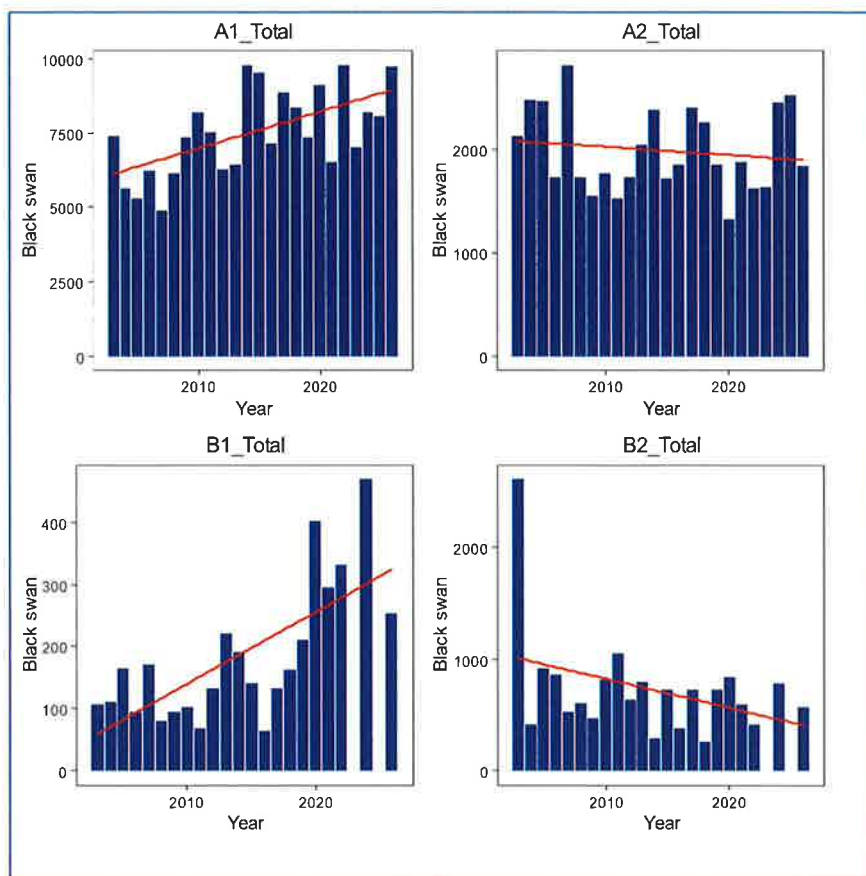


Figure 2. Total black swan counts by management unit (A1, A2, B1, B2) and year (2003 – 2026). The red line is regression line of count over time.

Mallard and grey duck

Banding of mallard and grey duck has commenced (we have banded over 900 in the BOP so far) but we are having a few issues finding days that are dry enough to trap the birds. MPI have sampled 320 of these for their avian influenza monitoring. We have had a good turnout of helpers including Errol Johnson, Barry Roderick, Kevin Coutts, and Scott Nicol.

The general feeling is that the birds are in average condition and that the proportion of juveniles is on par with recent years.

1121 Lake Fisheries Creel Surveys

Summer Creel Surveys

Staff have been conducting creel surveys on the Rotorua lakes since mid October. The majority of these have been on lakes Tarawera and Rotoiti, with several visits to Okataina, Rotorua and Rotorua shorelines. Since the season opening, conditions across the Rotorua lakes have been generally favourable to anglers and lake users except for the period immediately post-Christmas. Excellent quality has been observed in the younger fish across lakes Tarawera, Rotoiti and Okataina. Lake Rotorua shoreline angling came on early at the Waiteti and lower Ngongotaha Stream mouths with rapidly warming water conditions. Between Christmas and the first week of January windy conditions, rain and cooler nights predominated slowing catch rates as trout moved back into the main lake away from the stream mouths.

Angler diaries have once again been distributed to several regular anglers that fish Okataina to obtain additional data as survey trips there have resulted in low numbers of anglers encountered.

1122 Opening Day Angler Survey

The 2025-26 Opening Day Survey report has been completed.

Executive Summary

- Fish & Game staff conducted 649 interviews with anglers who had fished for 2,474 hours in total and produced 575 fish for measurement during the Opening Day Creel Survey on Wednesday, October 1st, 2025.
- Lake Tarawera anglers experienced slightly lowered catch rates than at the 2024 Opening. They were above the past 10-year average with one fish caught for around every two and a half hours effort. The average sized fish caught at the 2025-26 Opening was just smaller (-1mm), lighter (-14g) but in better condition (0.47 condition points) than at the 2024 Opening. Hatchery released fish made up a greater proportion of the catch (60%) compared with the 2024 opening (53%) and the hatchery contribution sits just below the past 10-year average (61%), likely due to recent changes to the liberation schedule. The two-year-old spring released hatchery fish caught at the 2025-26 Opening Day were smaller (-7mm), lighter (-110g), and in slightly poorer condition (-0.71 CF points) compared to the 2024 Opening Day two-year-olds. The autumn released two-year-olds were significantly longer (5mm, $P < 0.001$), heavier (50g), and in slightly better condition (0.03 CF points) compared to the same aged cohort recorded from the Opening Day of the 2024-25 season. The largest fish from Lake Tarawera on Opening Day 2025 was a 660mm, 3.7kg Lp clipped (2023 spring released) rainbow male.
- Lake Rotoiti anglers had a poorer Opening Day catch rate compared to the 2024 Opening with one fish caught for every four hours effort. This catch rate equalled the past 10-year average catch rate (0.25 fish/hr). The average fish caught was significantly smaller (-19mm, $P = 0.29$), significantly lighter (-190g, $P = 0.017$), and in significantly poorer condition (-2.83 CF points, $P < 0.001$) than those caught during the 2024 Opening. The two-year-old spring released hatchery fish were smaller (-9mm), significantly lighter (-150g, $P = 0.0041$) and in significantly poorer condition (-1.77 CF points, $P = 0.036$) than the 2024 caught spring two-year-olds, and at an average length of 512mm were longer than the past ten-year average length (509mm). The autumn liberated two-year olds were on average smaller (-9mm), lighter (-197g) and in poorer condition (-1.80 CF points) than the same aged fish caught on the 2024 Opening Day. The largest fish presented for measurement from Lake Rotoiti during the 2025 opening day surveys was a 615mm, 3.3kg Lp clipped rainbow male (from the 2023 spring liberations).
- Lake Okataina anglers experienced a poorer catch rate at the 2025 opening compared to the 2024 opening with one legal sized fish caught for every four hours effort. The 2025 Opening catch rate (0.25 fish/hr) was also poorer than the past 10-year average of one fish per three hours effort (0.33 fish/hr). Hatchery liberated fish contributed 57% of the Opening Day catch which was lower than the 2024 Opening and the past 10-year average of 68%. The average fish caught was smaller (-2mm), but heavier (4g), and in better condition (1.19 condition factor points) than the fish produced for measuring at the 2024 Opening Day. The two-year-old spring-released hatchery fish (Rp clip) were significantly longer (21mm, $P = 0.039$), significantly heavier (260g, $P = 0.035$), and in better condition than the two-year-

olds caught during the 2024 Opening. The two-year-old autumn released (RpAd clip) fish caught on Opening Day 2025 were longer (23mm), heavier (220g) but in slightly poorer overall condition (-0.07 condition factor points) than the same aged fish caught at the 2024 Opening Day. The largest fish measured at Lake Okataina on the 2025 Opening Day was a 612mm, 2.83 LpAd clipped three-year-old from the 2023 autumn liberations.

1141 Hatchery Operations

Rearing ponds are being populated with fry. Fish have been allocated for autumn liberations 2026. Spring liberations are yet to be moved.

Staff are underway with various summer maintenance tasks.

Fish locations at 22nd January 2026:

Location	Type	Age	Qty (approx.)	Comment
Hatchery	Rt	0+	70,000	Liberations 2026
Tank A	Bt	0+	1,000	Liberations 2026
Tank B	Rt	0+	2,000	Small fry for DOC, Tara-iti programme
Tank C	Brook	2+	6	Brood
Tank D	Rt, Bt, Brook	1+	200	Paradise Valley Springs 2026
Tank E	Brook	0+	200	
Tank F	Brook	2+	20	Brood (W)
Pond 4	Rt	0+	6,900	Autumn liberations 2026
Pond 5	Rt	0+	6,900	Autumn liberations 2026
Pond 6	Rt	0+	6,900	Autumn liberations 2026
RW1,2	Rt	1+	4,950	2+ for 2026 KF programmes

1161 Sports Fish Liberations

Liberations, Eastern Region 24 November 2025 to 22 January 2026

Water	Date	Mark	Tag	Species	Age Class	Qty
Tuai/Kaitawa	16/12/2025	Lp	-	BT	1+	200
Tuai/Kaitawa	16/12/2025	Lp	-	RT	1+	500
McLaren	4/12/2025	Lp	-	RT	1+	1000
McLaren	4/12/2025	Lp	-	BT	1+	500

Fish were also liberated to, or collected by DOC Northland, and Auckland Waikato Fish & Game.

1171 Anglers Notice

The 2025-26 season constitutes a full review of the Anglers Notice process for Eastern Region Fish & Game. A letter outlining the process and a copy of the 2024 Anglers Notice Policy was sent to clubs and stakeholders to advise them of this on the 12th of January 2026.

The regulations for the 2026-27 angling season will be finalized at the May 2026 Council meeting.

HABITAT PROTECTION AND MAINTENANCE

1211 RMA Planning

Bay of Plenty Regional Council

Fish and Game is continuing to liaise with BoPRC on the review of the Schedule of Important Trout Habitats in the region. Consultation via the RESOF group is continuing. Regional Council's work to implement the National Policy Statement for Freshwater Management 2020 (NPSFM) is underway and early discussions are occurring on some early drafts of the Regional Policy Statement (RPS) and chapters of the Regional Natural Resources Plan (RNRP). Comments have recently been submitted on a draft version of the fish passage provisions for the RNRP. Comments have also been submitted on the *Changes to Freshwater Management in the Bay of Plenty* document. Due to the recent change in Government, BoPRC has recently put this freshwater management planning, extending planned notification of the RNRP until late 2025. No new developments.

Other

Bay of Plenty Regional Council has established a group to provide advice in relation to policy development for NPSFM implementation. Fish and Game is part of this Rural and Environmental Sector Organisation Forum. The most recent meeting in October was missed. The next meeting has not yet been scheduled.

The NZ RMA team has been very active recently with a number of important workstreams on the go – including development and consultation on Sports Fish and Game Bird Management Plans, access, freshwater fish species interaction and passage, water allocation and limit setting, and the development of practice notes, along with a submission on afforestation on Crown Land, and a review of DoC's consultation document on Charging for Access to some Public Conservation Land.

Sports Fish and Game Management Plan

A large upcoming work stream is the development of a new Eastern Region Sports Fish and Game Management Plan to replace our recently expired version. Work on the plan as a whole has temporarily been put on hold due to uncertainty over upcoming changes in Fish and Game reforms. With that in mind, the Minister for Hunting and Fishing has recently granted an operational extension of our existing plan until 30 June 2027. However, there are relevant elements of the upcoming review that will need progressing in the 12 months.

Fish & Game Reform

Another important workstream involves the Fish and Game reform itself. We have been advised that the Bill is complex, with more than 60 policy changes being introduced alongside the development of a stand-alone Act. The notification of the Bill was scheduled for late 2025, but it is now likely to be in early 2026. As of yet (Jan 2026) there has been no notification from the Government as to when this will be released. While NZC will be submitting on the Bill, we have also been advised that regional councils should also submit individually. In our case, we will be working on a submission that captures those matters which are most important to us and incorporating the feedback that was provided by our Council to NZC in early 2025.

1212 Consent Applications

Date	Authority	Applicant	Type	Resource Involved	Action
24 Nov	GDC	Newman Family Trust	LUC- temporary river crossing	Waimoko River, Gisborne	No concerns email
5 Dec	BOPRC	WDC	WP- municipal water supply	Braemar Springs, Tarawera River	No concerns email

1221 Reserves Management

Due to the ongoing wet summer and very high-water levels within the wetland reserves, the second cycle of mowing access tracks within the WMR wetlands has been delayed. Consequently, not all wetland tracks will be mowed prior to the opening of the access gates (6th Feb) for the ballot holder maintenance period. Mowing should be completed in all reserves by 20th Feb.

Water reticulation channel and track pest plant spraying has also been delayed and expected to commence post the second mowing round.

Water reticulation pest weed excavation by machine is expected to also commence post the second mowing round and be concluded by mid-March. This includes Kaituna, Awaiti, Bregmans and Orini.

Awakaponga remains unable to be mowed as the damaged padlock remains in place as we could not remove it. We are currently considering other options. This reserve should be accessed prior to completion of mowing round two. The water supply system remains unusable, and we continue to speak to engineers to consider options. Insurances funds have been received and are held in reserve.

1231 Respond to Landowner Requests for Assistance

No landowner requests for habitat assistance have occurred since the last Council report.

ANGLER AND HUNTER PARTICIPATION

1311 Maintain & Enhance Access

Angler access maintenance work continues with inspections and work at various locations around the region. This will continue over the next few months into Autumn. Some work is being carried out by a contractor.

1312 Signage

Signage maintenance continues around the region.

1331 Electronic Newsletters

Reel Life was produced for December 2025 and January 2026 prospects for the period ahead and regional news and biosecurity updates.

1332 Fish & Game Publications

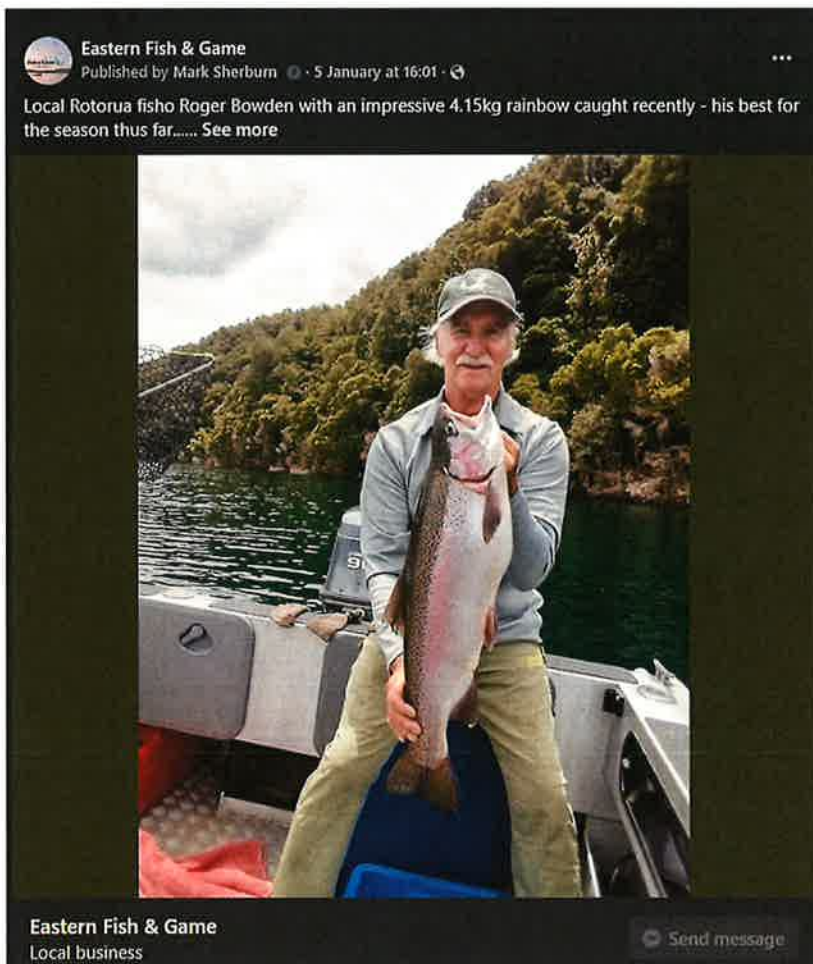
Eastern's three-page supplement for the "hunting special edition" F&G magazine has been lodged, with staff also providing a feature article.

1333 Fish & Game Website

Minor changes were made to the website over this period including and editing access brochures and uploading Council information.

1334 Social Media

A variety of posts were made to Facebook and Instagram, including news, biosecurity notices, inspirational fishing and hunting images, weather and water conditions and important regional notices. Good angling images are proving to be popular, with the following image receiving almost 50k views.



1341 Information Pamphlets

Two Eastern brochures were added to our website.

1352 Angler/Hunter Training

A successful Boat Fishing How-to event was held on site in January with 60 attendees.

1354 Fishing Competitions

Six fishing competition permits were processed for the period. Staff attended the weigh-ins for DMS group at Rotoiti in November and the Waikaremoana Boating and Fishing event at Waikaremoana in January.

1371 Fish & Game Huts

Maintenance is up to date at both the Waikaremoana Hut and Wairua Hut. We have no update from DOC regarding the Wairua toilet situation. Currently we have not replaced the hut toilet lock which has been vandalised and removed twice during last year, but the excessive public use of the hut toilet is not conducive to its proper function as a composting system and we may need to consider again locking the toilet to prevent overuse.

PUBLIC INTERFACE

1411 Statutory Liaison and Political Awareness

Quiet period over the Summer closure period in this space. Attended a Community meeting on the 28 Dec, to discuss the threat of controlled access on Lake Okareka and Tarawera that was instigated by the local community groups. Fortunately the closure did not happen, but the community instigated great advocacy work at the boat ramp to help inform, educate and mitigate the risk of spread of Gold Clams plus other aquatic pests.

An EDM was sent to all Eastern Licence holders informing and encouraging them to voice their concerns over some of the reform changes that Eastern Fish and Game Council have concerns about. This was sent in early January 26.

1421 Public Communications

Local articles in the Ngongotaha Community News letter and the Free Adventurer paper.

1441 Public Promotions

Regular postings on Facebook promoting the activities of the team and the great fishing have at times received good clicks and interactions with one of posts reaching over 200k views.

The NGO Fishing Club (Free Kids Fishing Club – set up by local angler) that we have supported is gaining great traction and lots of FB postings and engagement.

COMPLIANCE

1511 Ranging

Ranging is focusing on the Rotorua lakes and tributaries especially the Lake Rotorua stream mouths and lower streams. Generally, compliance has been good with relatively low numbers of offences dealt with. An angler fishing without a licence was dealt with at a remote part of Lake Waikaremoana in mid-January when staff were working at the lake. Boat angler surveys and compliance checks are in progress but poor weather conditions over much of the key summer holiday period has impeded the ability to carry out this work to the desired level.

Planning for the game season ranging operations has commenced.

Contacts 2025-2026 year.

1,057 contacts with anglers have been made for the 2025 – 26 year to the end of December. Overall compliance is in excess of 98 %.

Contacts: Year 2025-2026 year

Month	2021-2022	2022-2023	2023-2024	2024-2025	2025-2026	Last 5 yr average
September	51	35	36	42	54	36
October	718	520	856	627	712	689
November	66	16	161	154	125	83
December	182	182	256	253	166	232
January	352	212	217	150		267
February	140	12	117	198		124
March	93	111	185	101		131
April	238	25	81	13		102
May	203	203	175	161		208
June	141	52	80	88		97
July	57	36	59	47		49
August	32	13	29	70		33
Total	2,273	1,417	2,252	1,904	1,057	2,051

1521 Ranger Training

Ranger training is up to date.

Rangers

We currently have 7 honorary rangers located around the region who support the staff.

1531 Prosecutions

Four offenders currently have active matters pending resolution in relation to seven offences, and this includes active court charges.

Offences 2025-2026 Year:

For the 2025-26 year to date 21/01/2026, we have dealt with 11 offenders for 15 offences as tabled below.

Offence table 2025-2026 year to date – 21/01/2026

Offence name	Number of offences
Fishing without licence	8
Fishing in closed waters	4
Fish with more than 1 rod	2
Fails to give details to ranger	1
Total number of offences	15

Offences Pending Resolution

Offences table – pending resolution as of 21/01/2026

Offence name	Number of offences
Fishing without licence	4
Fishing in closed waters	2
Fails to give details	1
Total number of offences	7

PLANNING AND REPORTING

1841 NZ Fish & Game Liaison

Licensing

Kate Thompson continues to provide regular updates of licence sales and other information requests to the New Zealand Council and regions. There have been no recent meetings or significant workstreams for the licence working group. She is starting to collate Game Magazine mail lists from the regions.

National CLE Liaison Role

This role is continuing led from this region. This has focused on preparing submissions on the new Arms Bill 2025 for the New Zealand Council submission.

14.3 LICENCE SALES REPORT

28 January 2026

1. 2025-2026 Fish Licence Sales

1.1 Fish licence sales for the 2025-26 season compared with the 2024-25 season YTD to 27 January are summarised in Table one.

1.2 Total sales year to date are 2.5% (179 LEQ's) down on 2024-25 Season results. The loss of 397 family licence sales is offset in part by increases to both Local Area and Season licences totalling 323 licences. Day licences are down on 2024-25 results, and this could be attributed to recent weather events impacting sales.

Table One: Fish Licence Sales 2025-26 vs 2024-25 YTD to 27 January

Licence Category	Agency Online	Public Online	Total YTD 2024-25	Agency Online	Public Online	Total YTD 2025-26	Inc/Dec on prior Season
Fish Adult							
Family	832	1,238	2,070	750	923	1,673	-397
Season	714	1,007	1,721	740	1,157	1,897	176
Season Non-Resident	62	139	201	58	183	241	40
Loyal Senior	238	284	522	227	277	504	-18
Local Area Adult	795	618	1,413	887	673	1,560	147
Winter Adult	0	0	0	0	0	0	0
Long Break Adult	15	25	40	10	27	37	-3
Short Break Adult	93	393	486	76	392	468	-18
Day	295	1,526	1,821	221	1,389	1,610	-211
Day Non-Resident	166	452	618	123	548	671	53
Total Adult	3,210	5,682	8,892	3,092	5,569	8,661	-231
Fish Junior							
Season	166	265	431	159	353	512	81
Season Non-Resident	3	16	19	3	17	20	1
Day	73	221	294	46	278	324	30
Day Non-Resident	10	30	40	6	22	28	-12
Total Junior	252	532	784	214	670	884	100
Fish Child							
Season Non-Resident	2	9	11	2	12	14	3
Day Non-Resident	2	7	9	12	14	26	17
Total Child	4	16	20	14	26	40	20
Total Fish	3,466	6,230	9,696	3,320	6,265	9,585	-111
Whole Season Equivalent (LEQ)			7,099			6,919	-179
Variance between Seasons							-2.5%
\$ (excl GST)			\$962,934			\$938,638	-\$24,296

Summary 2025-2026 Season YTD Actual vs Total Budget

2025-26 Annual Budgeted FISH LEQs	9,005	100.0%	\$1,221,548
2025-26 Actual	6,919	76.8%	\$938,638
Variance to budget	-2,086	-23.2%	-\$282,910

15. LIAISON OFFICERS REPORTS

15.1 Conservation Boards

- Bay of Plenty Conservation Board

15.2 Reports from Other Agencies

- Department of Conservation

15.3 Report from New Zealand Council

- Cr Mark Sceats