

**CONFIRMED MINUTES OF THE 217th MEETING OF THE EASTERN FISH AND
GAME COUNCIL, HELD AT ROTORUA OFFICES OF FISH & GAME NEW
ZEALAND ON THURSDAY 16 OCTOBER 2025 AT 11 AM.**

Present

Crs. Mark Sceats, Alec McIver, Scott, Nicol, Pat Swift, Kevin Coutts, and Murray Ferris

In attendance

Arash Alaeinia, Kate Thompson, Anthony van Dorp (present item 12 only), Eben Herbert (present from item 13) Eastern Fish & Game; Barry Roderick and Debbie Mair.

1.0 WELCOME

1.1 Cr Mark Sceats opened the meeting at 11.00 am welcoming all present.

2.0 APOLOGIES

2.1 Apologies were received from Cr Lindsay Lyons.

2.2 *Agreed (Murray Ferris/Scott Nicol) that the apologies for the 217th meeting of the Eastern Region Fish and Game Council be sustained. [25/10/2.2]*

3.0 ELECTION OF MEMBERS

3.1 Cr Mark Sceats vacated the chair and handed over to Arash Alaeinia. Arash informed the Council that he had received an email from Cr Lindsay Lyons expressing his interest in taking on the role of Chair, as Mark had indicated his intention to step down from the position. Cr Mark Sceats provided background on his decision to step aside, explaining that he wished to remain on the New Zealand Council and that some members felt it was too much of a workload for one person to hold both roles. Mark noted that he personally found the workload manageable. Further discussion followed, with some members supporting Mark continuing in both positions; however, it was agreed that if Mark was comfortable focusing on just one role, then Council would proceed on that basis.

3.2 *Moved (Alec McIver/Pat Swift) that Cr Lindsay Lyons be nominated for Council Chair. [25/10/3.2]*

3.3 *Moved (Alec McIver/Pat Swift) that nominations for the position of Council Chair be closed. [25/10/3.3]*

3.4 Cr Lindsay Lyons was duly appointed to the position of Chair.

3.5 As Lindsay was absent today Arash Alaeinia called for nominations of Deputy Chair.

3.6 *Moved (Kevin Coutts/Mark Sceats) that Cr Scott Nicol be nominated for Council Deputy Chair. [25/10/3.6]*

3.7 Cr Scott Nicol was comfortable taking on the role, noting it was not as significant as the Chair position, given his new family and work commitments. He also nominated Cr Alec McIver for Deputy Chair, however, Alec declined expressing his support Scott's nomination.

3.8 *Moved (Kevin Coutts/Mark Sceats) that nominations for the position of Council Deputy Chair be closed. [25/10/3.8]*

3.9 Cr Scott Nicol was duly appointed to the position of Deputy Chair and thanked Council for their support moving to Chair the meeting in the absence of Cr Lindsay Lyons.

3.10 Arash Alaeinia expressed his thanks to the outgoing Chair and Deputy Chair, Crs. Mark Sceats and Kevin Coutts, for the work they have done for the Council over the last 18 months.

- 3.11 Cr Scott Nicol called for nominations for New Zealand Council Appointee.
- 3.12 *Moved (Kevin Coutts/Murray Ferris) that Cr Mark Sceats be nominated for appointment to the New Zealand Fish and Game Council. [25/10/3.12]*
- 3.13 Cr Pat Swift moved a motion to nominate Cr Alec McIver for appointment to the New Zealand Council; however, Alec withdrew his interest expressing his support for Cr Mark Sceats to continue in the role to maintain continuity for the upcoming legislative changes. Alec added that he would be interested in the position in the future.
- 3.14 *Moved (Murray Ferris/Alec McIver) that nominations for the position of New Zealand Council Representative be closed. [25/10/3.14]*
- 3.15 Cr Mark Sceats was duly appointed to the New Zealand Fish and Game Council.
- 3.16 Cr Scott Nicol understood that Matthew McDougall was happy to continue to be Council's representative on the Waikato Catchment Ecological Enhancement Trust (WCEET) and asked if there were any other nominations. There were no other nominations.
- 3.17 *Moved (Murray Ferris/Alec McIver) that Council confirms Matthew McDougall as its representative on the Waikato Catchment Ecological Enhancement Trust. [25/10/3.17]*
- 3.18 *Moved (Murray Ferris/Alec McIver) that nominations for the Council's representative on the Waikato Catchment Ecological Enhancement Trust be closed. [25/10/3.18]*
- 3.19 Staff member Matthew McDougall was duly appointed to continue to represent Council in this position on WCEET.
- 3.20 There was no change to the Executive/Managers Performance and Remuneration Committee as the term of the committee was three-years and the members would essentially remain unchanged despite today's changes to roles within the Council.
- 4.0 MINUTES OF THE PREVIOUS MEETING (7 AUGUST 2025)**
- 4.1 *Agreed (Murray Ferris/Mark Sceats) that the minutes of the meeting held on 7th August 2025 be confirmed as a true and correct record. [25/10/4.1]*
- 4.2 IDENTIFICATION OF RESOLUTIONS FOR INCLUSION IN COUNCIL POLICY**
- 4.3 *Agreed (Mark Sceats/Murray Ferris) that item 9.2 relating to the adoption of the following National Policies be included as Eastern Council Policy:*
- *Performance Management Policy*
 - *REM Policy*
 - *Conflict of Interest Policy*
 - *Code of Conduct Policy*
 - *Prevention of Bullying and Harassment Policy*
 - *Drug and Alcohol Policy*
 - *Governance Code of Conduct Policy [25/10/4.3]*
- 4.4 MATTERS ARISING**
- There were no matters arising from the minutes of the meeting held 7 August 2025.
- 5.0 NOTIFICATION OF ITEMS FOR GENERAL BUSINESS**
- No items were notified for general business.
- 6.0 CONFLICT OF INTEREST REGISTER**
- 6.1 Councillors were asked to inform the chair of any conflicts of interest. No conflicts of interest were recorded.
- 7.0 HEALTH & SAFETY**
- 7.1 Arash Alacinia reported on a minor injury that occurred at the previous Council meeting, noting that no further action or development was required. He also informed

the Council of NZC's proposed Health and Safety audits across four regions, and that Eastern region had volunteered to participate. Northland had already completed its audit and had found it to be very helpful. Cr Mark Sceats added that every region is different, so undertaking an audit across four different regions would provide a wider breadth of information and identify risks that some regions may not have.

- 7.2 Cr Kevin Coutts raised concerns about the risks faced by compliance staff. Arash Alaeinia advised that good processes are in place, including a risk matrix, two-up attendance in higher-risk areas, and comprehensive training (CERT training every two years and annual in-house refreshers). Staff are taught to assess situations, avoid unsafe engagement, and can always withdraw if necessary. Cr Mark Sceats added that it is important to ensure reasonable precautions are taken. Although it is impossible to anticipate every risk, efforts should be made to reduce them. Cr Scott Nicol noted that weekly toolbox meetings reinforce safety practices. Kevin reiterated his concern about potential exposure to criminal behaviour. Cr Murray Ferris added that he had been through the training himself and found it to be very comprehensive.

- 7.3 *Agreed (Mark Sceats/Kevin Coutts) that Council receives the Health and Safety report. [25/10/7.3]*

8.0 2025-2026 OPERATIONAL WORK PLAN – REVISED BUDGET

- 8.1 Arash Alaeinia informed Council that following Minister's decision not to approve an increase in licence fees, Regions needed to revise their budgets to align with the 2.5% increase to base funding allocated by the New Zealand Council. To this end he advised that the allocation for the one-off cost for the administration building roof maintenance would be updated to be funded by reserves ensuring that ongoing operational costs could be covered within the 2.5% increase allocated under the existing licence fee structure. Kate Thompson had prepared a table of adjustments, which was distributed to members prior to the meeting. She confirmed that increased rental income had initially been allocated to the roof maintenance project. Although she hoped that this increased rental income could be used in future years for other significant maintenance projects, they had instead been applied to operational costs increases such as salary adjustments in line with the REM policy and other inflationary expenses. Future significant maintenance projects would need to be applied for as needed.

- 8.2 Council had received the updated summary and supported the transfer of the one-off maintenance costs to reserves.

- 8.3 *Agreed (Murray Ferris/Alec McIver) that Council approves an increase to the proposed drawn down from general reserves from \$5,000 to \$32,500 for one off building maintenance expenditure. [25/10/8.3]*

- 8.4 *Agreed (Murray Ferris/Alec McIver) that Council approves the revised Operational Work Plan and budget for the 2025-2026 year and accepts the proposed drawdown from general reserves of \$7,172 being the pro rata share of the national budget deficit, \$32,500 from general reserves for building maintenance, and \$3,000 from the non-resident reserve for continued acoustic monitoring on Lake Tarawera. [25/10/8.4]*

- 8.5 *Agreed (Murray Ferris/Alec McIver) that Council delegated authority to the Chief Executive Officer to approve expenditure during the year as set out in the Council approved Operational Work Plan and budget. [25/10/8.5]*

9.0 COUNCILLOR NUMBERS AND BY ELECTION

- 9.1 Council discussed the process for filling an extraordinary vacancy and agreed that it needed to comply with the requirement to give public notice of the vacancy in local newspapers as prescribed. Arash Alaeinia also suggested that, in the meantime, Council consider whether it will have sufficient engagement with only seven members noting

that if one or more members are unable to attend a meeting, the number could reduce to six or fewer. The costs of the advertising were discussed, and Kate Thompson advised that these could be up to \$1,000 dependant on the number of newspapers included.

9.2 *Agreed (Murray Ferris/Mark Sceats) that Council instructs the CEO to follow the due process as described and start this by placing an advertisement in local newspapers, with the outcome to be included as an Agenda item for discussion at the December meeting. [25/10/9.2]*

10.0 WAIKAREMOANA SPORTS FISH HABITAT ENHANCEMENT FUND (WSFHEF)

10.1 Arash Alaeinia advised that this report was the annual update on income and expenses of the fund and called for questions.

10.2 Council discussed the delays with the approvals for the installation of Navigation Buoys, for which Council has allocated funding from the WSFHEF. Council questioned whether a time limit should be set for the drawdown of these funds.

10.3 Kate Thompson advised that the allocated funding is included in the 2025-26 budget, and Council supported Cr Scott Nicol's suggestion that the matter could be revisited during the 2026-27 budget round.

10.4 *Agreed (Mark Sceats/Pat Swift) that Council received the Waikaremoana Sports Fish Habitat Enhancement Fund update. [25/10/10.4]*

11.0 CONSOLIDATED ANNUAL REPORT

11.1 Arash Alaeinia informed Council of the requirement to provide feedback to the New Zealand Council (NZC) regarding the proposed Consolidated Annual Report, which forms a part of the upcoming legislative changes. He believed, from discussions at management level, that the NZC wished to receive the information from Region's quarterly to feed into the Consolidated Annual Report. He understood that the intention is to be able to provide up to date information to the Minister and potentially to clubs and licence holders.

11.2 Arash highlighted that requiring quarterly reporting would increase the workload to all staff, especially as bi-monthly reporting to councils is already in place and he felt that this would take away from the Minister's aim of streamlining processes. Arash suggested it would be more appropriate for NZC to provide standardised reporting templates to help ensure consistency across Region's and enable National Office to easily extract the relevant information for the consolidated report.

11.3 *Agreed (Mark Sceats/Alec McIver) that Council supports Management's recommendation for the New Zealand Council to consult with Region's to establish various standardised templates for Region's to complete their bi-monthly reporting to Council's, which could then be utilised to produce a National Report. [25/10/11.3].*

12.0 INFRINGEMENT NOTICE

12.1 Arash Alaeinia updated Council on the Draft Infringement Notice Policy for which the New Zealand Council (NZC) was also seeking feedback from councils. He advised that the existing diversion process under the Solicitor-General's Prosecution Guidelines was no longer appropriate, particularly for low-level offences such as licensing or breach of regulations. The draft policy had been developed by Anthony Van Dorp in collaboration with the Department of Conservation, NZC, and other regional staff.

12.2 Anthony van Dorp was present for the discussion and highlighted the following points;

- The objective of the Infringement Notice Policy is to streamline enforcement, provide a faster and more efficient alternative to prosecution or diversion, and standardise penalties across the Country.

- It is a proportional response to low-level offending and better aligns with community expectations.
- It was not an instant fine, rangers continue to collect information as usual and a decision is made in the office after assessing evidence.
- All relevant assessments are conducted before deciding whether to issue an infringement or offer a formal warning with education instead.
- Serious or repeat offenders can still be prosecuted.
- The IN will significantly reduce time and resources spent on prosecution file preparation, summoning, and processing diversions.
- Faster resolution as once issued the matter is finalised, unless of course the recipient pleads not guilty in which case it proceeds to Court.
- If fines are not paid, the Ministry of Justice collection process takes over, removing the burden from Regional Offices.
- Increased National consistency.

12.3 *Agreed (Mark Sceats/Alec McIver) that Council supports the proposed Draft Infringement Notice Policy noting it is a fair, standardised approach across all Regions and in keeping with the Solicitor General's Prosecution Guidelines for dealing with low-level offences. [25/10/12.3]*

13.0 Council adjourned the meeting at 12.20pm for lunch.

13.1 The meeting recommenced at 12.50pm and Arash Alaeinia requested to delay discussion on item 13 “2026 Game Season Regulations” as Eben Herbert would be speaking to the paper today but was delayed.

14.0 DRAFT PERFORMANCE REPORT

14.1 Arash advised that the audit currently in progress and Kate Thompson pointed out that the information supplied in this meeting’s Finance Report was also what was reported within the Financial Statements for the year.

14.2 *Agreed (Murray Ferris/Pat Swift) that Council received the draft reports comprising the Statement of Service Performance and Financial Statements for the 2024-2025 year. [25/10/14.2]*

15.0 OPERATIONAL REPORTS

Finance Report

15.1 Kate Thompson and Arash Alaeinia provided some background to the proposed transfer of funds to reserves at year end noting particularly the generous donation from the Agrodome (\$4,000) which had been earmarked for updating decals on the fish tanker.

15.2 *Agreed (Alec McIver/Murray Ferris) that Council supports the transfer of funds as proposed to the Awakaponga Water Reticulations Reserve \$27,826, the Breeding Programme Reserve \$4,000, and the Property Maintenance Reserve \$520. [25/10/15.2]*

15.3 *Agreed (Alec McIver/Murray Ferris) that Council receives the finance report and approves the payments for July and August 2025 totalling \$268,160.73. [25/10/15.3]*
Management Report

15.4 Arash Alaeinia provided a verbal update covering:

- Hatchery liberations
- 4x4 Expo
- Kids fishing - two events scheduled for November
- Ngongotaha fishing group
- Sponsorship board
- Update on Te Arawa Lakes CEO changes

16.5 Licence Sales Report

- 16.6 Kate Thompson provided a verbal update on sales. Overall results for the 2024-25 complete season were positive, however, current sales for 2025-26 season are approximately 2.5% down compared to the same time last year. Some South Island regions are seeing more significant decline. It was noted that it is still early in the season; and the on-sale date this year was pushed out by two weeks. The recent changes to the family licence are likely to have had some influence on these results. Considerable discussion took place regarding these changes and the rationale to remove couples' eligibility, noting that the DOC Taupo family licence still allows couples only.
- 16.7 Cr Pat Swift suggested that poor weather in the South particularly may have affected early season sales. Kate Thompson agreed, noting that if anglers do not purchase licences early, some tend to wait and may instead buy short term licences later in the season.
- 16.8 Council discussed the need to actively promote our fisheries. Arash Alaeinia expressed concern that lost participants may not return and provided Council with a summary of recent promotions undertaken by this Region. He also informed Council of several suggestions he had put forward to National Office and highlighted the need for a dedicated marketing strategy, beyond the usual, that links with the ReWild campaign.
- 16.9 Cr Scott Nicol queried the possibility of a combined Fish and Game Bird licence? Kate Thompson advised that this was proposed when new categories were introduced in 2016 but was not approved by DOC. Cr Pat Swift mentioned potential collaboration with Tourism Rotorua for joint promotion. Arash noted that while funding was limited, there is an opportunity to piggyback on their networks.
- 16.10 Cr Alec McIver stressed the importance of providing guidance for new participants noting that many lack knowledge or support. Debbie Mair spoke of Taupo's recent success with the Ministry of Education's secondary school fishing programme (linked to NCEA). Eben Herbert provided a summary of training provided by staff in this Region, and Arash commented on the courses run by the Rotorua Anglers Assn and Rotorua Boys High through their fishing programme.
- 16.11 Council supported an agenda item for the next meeting to bring forward ideas for submission to the New Zealand Council.

17.0 2026 GAME SEASON CONDITIONS

- 17.1 Arash Alaeinia confirmed that Matt McDougall was unable to attend today's meeting and that Eben Herbert was familiar with his processes and would answer questions or would take notes for reference to Matt McDougall when he returned to the office. Eben explained that this agenda item was focused on identifying items to be considered for the 2026 Game Bird season regulations. Council was also asked to consider items raised by Matt McDougall listed on page 36 of agenda and reviewed each of the recommendations individually.
- 17.2 *4.1 That Council identifies any other game season condition matters it would like further information on, or consultation with hunters about, before its December 2025 meeting.*
- Cr Kevin Coutts commented on issues with overpopulation of Pukeko and Weka. Eben Herbert advised regulations are already very relaxed and the issue was less about regulation setting and more about encouraging hunters to harvest them. He noted that Weka were not a species that could be managed by Council
 - Cr Alec McIver would like to investigate options for sex- based harvest limits for mallards, and split bag limits. For example, this may involve a max hen limit within a bag, and/or a lower bag limit following the opening period. Rationale for this is that by maintaining standard conditions during the opening period hunter

participation should be maintained, but season harvest may be reduced by more restrictive conditions following opening.

- Cr Mark Sceats felt that current methods for greylard population estimates are unreliable and not fit for purpose. Cr Scott Nicol advised that Matt McDougall had offered to inform Council about the modelling used and suggested that this might be worthwhile. Eben Herbert noted that the methods employed were developed by highly regarded statistical experts at the time and while newer methods may exist, we were not aware of them, and unlikely to be something that could be undertaken with the limited resources we have. He confirmed that Council would like some information on our data collection methods, and population modelling methods along with its history and justification of its robustness.
- Cr Mark Sceats requested information on the potential to manage the East Coast waterfowl population separately from the rest of the region.

17.3 4.2 *That Council identifies if they wish to redefine hunter opportunity (i.e. “ducks in the air”) and if so, do they need more information such as surveying hunters to ascertain what their preference and expectations are.*

- Council does wish to look at re-defining “hunter opportunity.” Council has requested more information on a potential hunter survey, including example questions, for consideration at their December meeting.
- Eben advised that currently, “hunter opportunity” is defined in the *Sports Fish and Game Management Plan (SFGMP) which expired in 2024*. The Plan had not yet been updated due to proposed legislative changes, including the upcoming Fish and Game Bill, which will see substantial changes. He said an extension of the existing Plan remains in place until the new legislation is completed.
- Eben suggested that it would be appropriate to continue along the lines of the current SFGMP definition for “hunter opportunity” in the interim, while also beginning to think about what this would look like for the new management plan. The forthcoming survey could help inform that future direction by capturing hunters’ views on what “opportunity” should look like going forward.

17.4 4.3 *That staff investigate population-based harvest regulation criteria for shoveler duck.*

- Discussion around highly mobile population and the background to why there is a limit in place currently.
- Council was comfortable with the status quo. Harvest is considered relatively low, with no obvious signs of significant impact on the population.

17.5 4.4 *That staff determine if useful criteria can be developed for pukeko and upland game harvest regulations.*

Council was comfortable with the status quo regarding harvest regulations for these species. They did note that they would like to be made aware of any signs that the population is changing significantly.

17.6 4.5 *That staff examine the greylard regulation thresholds with the view to dropping the intermediate threshold if the effect of a 44-day season on the following season is acceptable.*

Council confirmed that it would like this to be investigated.

17.7 *Agreed (Murray Ferris/Mark Sceats) that Council would like more information on items 4.1, 4.2 and 4.5 and agree with the status quo on items 4.3 and 4.4.*

[25/10/17.7]

18.0 LIAISON OFFICERS REPORTS

18.1 *Report from Bay of Plenty Conservation Board*

No Report

18.2 *Report from Department of Conservation*

No Report.

18.3 *Report from New Zealand Council*

Cr Mark Sceats advised that a summary had been distributed to Council and that he had nothing further to add.

19.0 GENERAL BUSINESS

19.1 There were no items notified for General Business.

20.0 PUBLIC EXCLUDED SESSION

20.1 *Agreed (Murray Ferris/Alec McIver) that pursuant to Section 48 (1) of the Local Government Official Information and Meetings Act 1987, the public be excluded at 2.25pm from the following parts of the proceedings of this meeting, namely to discuss Council and the CE's Performance review. [25/10/20.1]*

20.2 *Agreed (Mark Sceats/Murray Ferris) that Council moves out of public excluded at 2.44 pm. [25/10/20.2]*

20.3 *Agreed (Mark Sceats/Murray Ferris) that the public be readmitted to the meeting at 2.45 pm. [25/10/20.3]*

21.0 MEETING CLOSED

21.1 Cr Scott Nicol closed the meeting 2.45 pm.



.....
Scott Nicol
Deputy Chairman

SUMMARY OF RESOLUTIONS

2.0 APOLOGIES

- 2.2 *Agreed (Murray Ferris/Scott Nicol) that the apologies for the 217th meeting of the Eastern Region Fish and Game Council be sustained. [25/10/2.2]*

4.0 ELECTION OF MEMBERS

- 3.2 *Moved (Alec McIver/Pat Swift) that Cr Lindsay Lyons be nominated for Council Chair. [25/10/3.2]*
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 - *Governance Code of Conduct Policy [25/10/4.3]*

7.0 HEALTH & SAFETY

- 7.3 *Agreed (Mark Sceats/Kevin Coutts) that Council receives the Health and Safety report. [25/10/7.3]*

8.0 2025-2026 OPERATIONAL WORK PLAN – REVISED BUDGET

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