

**CONFIRMED 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*

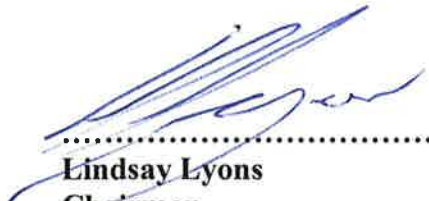
Arash Alaeinia advise the report from the New Zealand Council meeting had been sent via email to Council members.

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.



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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]*

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