

**CONFIRMED MINUTES OF THE 214th MEETING OF THE EASTERN FISH AND
GAME COUNCIL, HELD AT ROTORUA OFFICES OF FISH & GAME NEW
ZEALAND ON THURSDAY 13 MARCH 2025 AT 11 AM.**

Present

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

In attendance

Arash Alaeinia, Kate Thompson, Mark Sherburn, Matthew Osborne, Eben Herbert (Eastern Fish & Game).

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/Mike Jarvie) that the apologies for the 214th meeting of the Eastern Region Fish and Game Council be sustained. [25/03/2.2]*

3.0 MINUTES OF THE PREVIOUS MEETING (13 FEBRUARY 2025)

3.1 *Agreed (Alec McIver/Murray Ferris) that the minutes of the meeting held on 13th February 2025 be confirmed as a true and correct record. [25/03/3.1]*

3.2 IDENTIFICATION OF RESOLUTIONS FOR INCLUSION IN COUNCIL POLICY

No items were identified for inclusion in Council policy from the minutes of the meeting held 13 February 2025.

3.3 MATTERS ARISING

There were no matters arising from the minutes of the meeting held 13 February 2025.

4.0 NZC APPOINTEE NOMINATIONS AND VOTING

4.1 Cr Mark Sceats had been nominated as Eastern's representative on the New Zealand Council for the first two meetings of 2025 for him to deal with matters he had been involved with prior to Christmas. It was Mark's intention that he would stand down following this and the Eastern Council could proceed with appointment of a replacement for him. Mark advised however, at the last meeting of the New Zealand Council a resolution was passed supporting Mark's continuation as the Eastern representative on the New Zealand Council given that several matters had arisen which they believed his input would be helpful. Given the circumstances Mark was happy to continue if this was supported by Council.

4.2 Cr Kevin Coutts queried whether there was a problem with the Chair also taking the role of NZ Council Representative? Mark advised that there was nothing to prevent this and commented that in several other regions the Council Chair was also the NZ Council Representative. Mark also advised that if matters changed, he was more than willing to stand down in due course.

4.3 Cr Murray Ferris commented on the real need to move the Fish & Game review process forward and Mark advised that the minister had an appetite for this to happen sooner than later.

4.4 Cr Alec MacIver had indicated at the prior meeting that he was keen to put his name forward advising that Corina Jordan had suggested this knowing his background in Governance. Alec advised that he was happy to withdraw and was keen to see some good reporting to this Council from the NZC meetings. Alec also queried Mark on recent communications that he had had with the Minister e.g. emails, as he understood that these should be circulated to Council and reported on. Cr Mark Sceats confirmed

that he had not had email communications from minister rather a recent text from his PA and a five-minute phone discussion. Mark confirmed that it was his intention keep Council updated and he had the preliminary NZC report to share with Council following today's meeting.

4.5 Cr Alec McIver also questioned whether being Chair for Eastern could put him in conflict-of-interest situation as New Zealand Council appointee? Mark recognised that potential or perceived conflicts could occur and advised that he was very aware of his obligations regarding these.

4.6 Cr Murray Ferris also commented that should Marks input go beyond the latest extension that he could be involved in NZC matters that required his legal expertise as a Co-Opted NZC appointee from Eastern. This was generally accepted as an alternative course of action by the Council.

4.7 ***Agreed (Kevin Coutts/Mike Jarvie) that Council supports the continuation of Cr Mark Sceats appointment to the New Zealand Fish & Game Council and acknowledges that Cr Sceats will remain in the position of Eastern Council Chair while undertaking this appointment to the New Zealand Council. [25/03/4.7]***

4.8 There were no other nominations as Cr Alec McIver had withdrawn his interest, Cr Mark Sceats was reappointed to the New Zealand Council as the Eastern Council's representative.

5.0 NOTIFICATION OF ITEMS FOR GENERAL BUSINESS

Cr Kevin Coutts – Mallards, calls to add to pest register

Cr Pat Swift – Okataina access

Cr Murray Ferris – Waikaremoana Boating Fishing Assn

Cr Mark Sceats – Discussion with Minister re GB regulations

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 Cr Mark Sceats commented on Health and Safety discussions that had occurred at the recent New Zealand Council meeting particularly highlighting that some regions did not report incidents to the New Zealand Council and this was something that needed to be addressed. Arash Alaeinia confirmed that there had been no incidents since the last report.

7.2 ***Agreed (Mike Jarvie/Scott Nicol) that Council receives the Health and Safety report. [25/03/7.2]***

8.0 2025-2026 ANGLERS NOTICE

8.1 Arash Alaeinia informed Council that no further feedback had been received since the last meeting and further communications with clubs and interested parties will occur between now and the May council meeting where the Anglers Notice process for the 2025-2026 Season would be concluded. Cr Mike Jarvie asked if it was worthwhile for Councillors visit their local clubs for feedback as this may be a better means of inviting discussion. Matt Osborne informed Council that this year was an intermediary year and that the full biannual review of the Anglers Notice would occur next year per the Council's policy. He said that in an intermediary year only emergency situations would be addressed or if correspondence was received from our consultation this would be put in the agenda for consideration. Council supported attendance at club meetings and Alec McIver felt it would be great to support staff at the next Hunting & Fishing Expo.

8.2 *Agreed (Pat Swift/Murray Ferris) that Council agrees to hold the conclusion of the Anglers Notice process for the 2025-26 season until the 29 May meeting. [25/03/8.2]*

9.0 WAIKAREMOANA SPORTS FISH HABITAT ENHANCEMENT FUND

9.1 Arash Alaeinia advised that the purpose of this item was to approve funding of \$6,500 for the 2025-26 operational year from the Waikaremoana Sports Fish Habitat Enhancement Fund for the monitoring, access and buoy related work scheduled for Waikaremoana next year.

9.2 Cr Murray Ferris advised that the installation of the shallow water marker buoys which the Council had agreed to funding of up to \$15,500 last year had again been put on hold. Cr Mike Jarvie queried their purpose and Matt Osborne advised that the proposal was to install these shallow water markers/beacons at areas down the lake where boats have come to grief in the past.

9.3 Cr Mark Sceats asked about the water quality monitoring buoy. Matt Osborne advised that the internal components were currently being serviced in Hamilton and was due to be returned to the lake.

9.4 Council briefly discussed the purpose of the fund and how it came to be.

9.5 *Agreed (Murray Ferris/Scott Nicol) that Council approves funding from the Waikaremoana Sports Fish Habitat Enhancement Fund for the 2025-26 operational year to the value of \$6,500 for monitoring, access and buoy related work. [25/03/9.5]*

10.0 2025-2026 OPERATIONAL WORK PLAN

10.1 Arash Alaeinia informed Council that priorities reviewed at Council's February meeting had been incorporated to the Operational Work Plan (OWP) and budgets had been reviewed. Arash advised that the New Zealand Council's new Zero-Based Budgeting (ZBB) requirements were still 'work in progress' and the New Zealand Council had accepted that this year would be a learning process. He confirmed that the Council's budget had been completed on the old template and advised that it was our aim to complete the new ZBB tool as time permitted. Arash outlined the approval process for increased budgets advising that those over the 30k threshold were considered at New Zealand Council level. Kate Thompson added that increases requested under 30k still needed approval by this Council and that these would be considered by the National Office CEO and CFO before going to NZC.

10.2 Cr Scott Nicol noted the addition of a new Compliance Officer position and asked if this needed to be supported with a proposal to increase revenue and queried where the funds come from to support this new role? Kate Thompson advised that ultimately the increase comes from licence revenue, our targets are set, regional/national requirements are reviewed, and a licence fee increase proposed to provide for the national budget requirement.

10.3 Arash Alaeinia presented his business case to Council for the new compliance role. He outlined the changed environment we now work in in this region and the challenges we face with the Region's dynamics that are not so significant in other regions. Arash advised that health and safety of staff is the key reason for this additional resource with compliance and boat work now a two-up role, meaning staff were taken from their core duties to undertake this work.

10.4 Kate Thompson provided some detail to the proposed increases per table 3 page 23 of the agenda. The increased budget requirement for Insurance, Rates, Fish Food and Council were largely inflationary, Vehicle Maintenance costs had increased with new vehicles no longer being supplied with capped servicing, the administration building roof re-screw/repaint estimated at \$25,000 would be offset by additional rental revenue resulting in a net budget increase of \$5,000. The East Coast aerial trend counts had been reinstated for 2025-26 after suspending them for budget cuts for the 2024-25 year, and

the Lake Tarawera acoustic monitoring would continue to be funded from the Non-Resident Reserve. Arash Alaeinia detailed his proposal for a Scholarship for a University Student studying in a field relevant to Fish & Game, like that offered by Otago Fish & Game, and lastly the salary increase required for the new Compliance role, and staff salary adjustments determined through Strategic Pay.

- 10.5 ***Agreed (Scott Nicol/Kevin Coutts) that Council considered the draft Operational Work Plan and accompanying budget for the 2025-2026 financial year and approves the proposed increases to the budget as per Table 3 (Agenda pg 23) totalling \$142,829 which includes a request to drawdown funds from the Region's Non-Resident Reserve, and the business case for a new Compliance Officer. [25/03/10.5]***
- 10.6 The meeting was adjourned for lunch at 12.10pm and recommenced at 12.28pm.

11.0 OPERATIONAL REPORTS

Finance Report

- 11.1 There were no questions raised on the finance report.

- 11.2 ***Agreed (Murray Ferris/Mike Jarvie) that Council receives the finance report and approves payments for January 2025 totalling \$251,815.24. [25/03/11.2]***

Management Report

- 11.3 Cr Mark Sceats queried whether there was a protocol for restocking rivers in the East Coast impacted by Cyclone Gabrielle. Mark Sherburn informed Council of research undertaken by Cawthron institute several years ago on hatchery operations in relation to stocking wild river fisheries and while there are always exceptions generally the policy is that we don't stock rivers and streams, they needed to be self-sustaining. He said that often after extreme events such as Cyclone Gabrielle the food source crashes at the same time, and it can take months to years to re-establish. For example, recent investigations at the Waitahaia River staff had noted that the food source was all very small indicative that Cyclone Gabrielle had had a major impact on the catchment. The exceptions he said might be where the carrying capacity had dropped below a critical level and we might look to reseed them. Further discussion occurred around the genetics of wild fish versus hatchery fish and the differences between river and lake populations.
- 11.4 Cr Kevin Coutts asked if call counts were conducted just in Kaingaroa forest as he believed more shooters went into the Rotoehu forest. Eben Herbert confirmed that call counts were currently completed in Kaingaroa, they had been completed in Rotoehu in the past but limited due to resourcing. Kevin Coutts questioned the accuracy of the counts, as he was concerned about the current five per day limit for cock pheasants. Eben advised that the purpose of the monitoring undertaken was to detect significant change, it did not estimate the population and extrapolate how many cocks and hens there were i.e. a measure of change over time. Eben advised that there was a lot of overseas research on extrapolating the data for population estimates and our data could potentially be used for this, but there would obviously be a higher resource requirement to do this. Kevin's concern was that we allow a limit of five per day when we don't know how many there are. Eben advised there is two sides to the argument ie you could potentially say you are not monitoring an absolute number so you shouldn't be shooting five birds but on the other side of the coin is the limit has been in place for many years and the population hadn't shown any significant change over that time. He said the monitoring was originally established to measure impact of forest management practices on local pheasant populations.
- 11.5 Council received the Management Report

Licence Sales Report

- 11.6 Kate Thompson provided a brief update on licence sales explaining why we are seeing a drop off in the positive result which was seen earlier in the season. It was expected

however that the result will still be positive at the end of the season and that sales target for the year will be exceeded.

11.7 Council received the Licence Sales Report

12.0 LIAISON OFFICERS REPORTS

12.1 *Report from Bay of Plenty Conservation Board*

No Report

12.2 *Report from Department of Conservation*

No Report

12.3 *Report from New Zealand Council*

Mark Sceats advised that he would forward the recent meeting update via email as this had only just come through.

13.0 GENERAL BUSINESS

13.1 *Mallards, calls to add to pest register*

Cr Kevin Coutts questioned whether Council needed to address the call by Southland Federated Farmers to add mallards to the pest register. Cr Mark Sceats provided Council with the background to the events that had occurred in Southland Region which may have prompted this call, and that he understood that this was very unlikely.

13.2 *Lake Okataina Access*

Cr Pat Swift advised that he had fished a three-day tournament this week where people believed they could get access to Lake Okataina with the four-digit PIN following washing their boat at the wash station on Te Ngae Road. He said some were waiting up to an hour for a PIN to arrive, some chose to fish elsewhere or had gone out there and a chain was still in use. Arash Alaeinia confirmed that the gate was not yet operational and that this was the first time he had been made aware of this. He said that while the gate was in place it was not yet operational due to technical issues. The problem appeared to be with information at the wash station and the process of scanning the QR code did not highlight that the gate was not yet in operation, and rather it was business as usual i.e. 6am-8pm weekdays and 5am – 8pm weekends. Arash advised that he would follow this up and actually go and have a look at the instructions at the wash station to ensure people were receiving the correct information.

13.3 *Waikaremoana Boating & Fishing Assn*

Cr Murray Ferris expressed concern about a comment in the Waikaremoana Boating & Fishing Association's meeting minutes about Fish & Game "Piggy Backing" on the boating associations relationship with Tuhoe. Obviously, this was not the case and Murray hoped to establish the background to this comment. Cr Alec McIver updated Council advising that there is no longer any flying into the Te Uruwera's.

13.4 *Discussion Minister re Game Bird Regulations*

Cr Mark Sceats confirmed with Council that he had emailed them a copy of what had been sent to the Minister re this seasons Game Bird Regulations after which he advised he had a five minute discussion to support that email. He advised that he had obtained his information from various sources such as the national magazine.

14.0 EASTERN FISH & GAME COUNCIL STRATEGIC 5 YEAR PLANNING

14.1 Arash Alaeinia advised that Cr Lindsay Lyons had proposed that Council needed to work on developing a five-year strategic plan. Arash advised that this would be a process that will be worked through over several meetings and that the Eastern Fish and Game 10-year Management Plan would provide the basis for discussion. He said that this would be a white board exercise to establish where the Council believes Fish & Game should be in 5 years, what will its purpose and priorities be? Arash advised that

on completion of today's discussion he would document and share the detail to enable Council to delve deeper into it at its next meeting.

15.0 PUBLIC EXCLUDED SESSION

- 15.1** *Agreed (Mark Sceats/Murray Ferris) that pursuant to Section 48 (1) of the Local Government Official Information and Meetings Act 1987, the public be excluded at 2.00 pm from the following parts of the proceedings of this meeting, namely, to discuss Council and the CE's Performance review. [25/03/15.1]*
- 15.2** *Agreed (Murray Ferris/Scott Nicol) that Council moves out of public excluded at 2.31 pm. [25/03/15.2]*
- 15.3** *Agreed (Mark Sceats/Murray Ferris) that the public be re-admitted to the meeting at 2.52 pm. [25/03/15.3]*

16.0 MEETING CLOSED

- 16.1** Cr Mark Sceats closed the meeting 2.33 pm.



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Mark Sceats
Chairman

SUMMARY OF RESOLUTIONS

2.0 APOLOGIES

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