

Statement of Service Performance

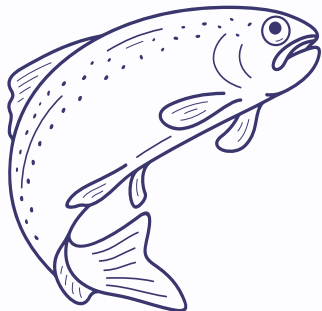
North Canterbury Fish & Game
Council 2023-2024 Financial Year



Strategic priorities of North Canterbury

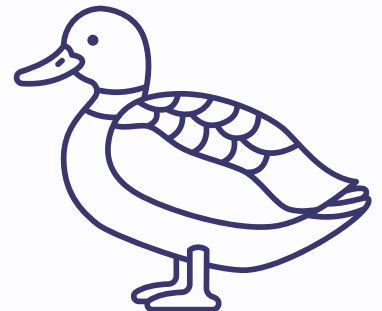
The North Canterbury Fish & Game Council developed a set of strategic priorities at their February 2020 workshop to give direction to the preparation and implementation of operational work plans and other management frameworks.

This Statement was revised at the February 2023 Council planning meeting and an annual operations workplan for 2023/24 was generated to achieve or progress key outcomes.



~Purpose~

The North Canterbury Fish and Game Council exists so that anglers and hunters have access to sustainable sports fish and game resources in the North Canterbury Region.



Compliance

High levels of compliance amongst licence holders. Regulatory bodies held to account in the implementation of policies and regulations that protect the habitats on which the species we manage depend.



Science Driven

Robust study design for data collection and analysis informs and improves species management and user satisfaction. Council has sufficient information for making decisions related to fisheries and game bird management.



Statutory Responsibilities

Species Management, Habitat Protection and Management, Licence Holder Communication.



Species Management

Trout and Salmon

In 2023, the Designated Waters Licence replaced Backcountry Endorsements to help manage angling pressure and improve the wilderness fishing experience across the South Island.

Surveys of resident and non-resident Designated Waters licence holders in the North Canterbury region demonstrated satisfaction with the new system.



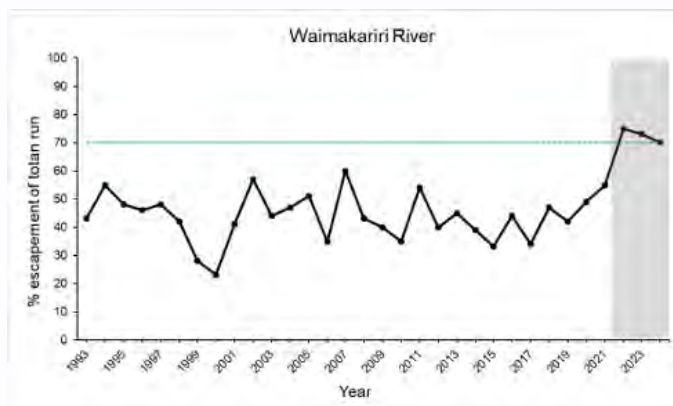
On average, anglers reported a high level of satisfaction with their experience fishing Designated Waters in their North Canterbury region.

To address complaints about overcrowding and capture of trophy fisheries by guides and/or private access arrangements, the Council decided to trial a Controlled Fishery on the Upper Hurunui River in 2024, which has high "trophy trout fishery" values.

The Controlled Fishery booking system helps resolve conflicts between anglers in this remote fishery. A robust data collection and public consultation process will evaluate the trial booking system, how well it is achieving its objectives, and ways it may need to be adjusted. This trial contributes to creating a comprehensive Management Framework for the region's Trout Fisheries.

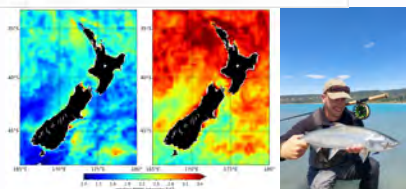
The adaptive sea-run salmon management framework and season bag limit have now successfully increased spawning escapement to 70% for three years in a row. Last year's salmon run was small, partly due to warm ocean conditions over the last few years, which have resulted in poor survival rates and smaller than normal adult salmon.

Salmon management is driven by harvest and spawning surveys on major salmon rivers. Harvest is estimated through voluntary returns and phone surveys, while escapement is determined through aerial spawning surveys. Spawning surveys across the three indicator rivers (Rakaia, Waimakariri and Rangitata) estimated escapement at 1,455 salmon and a total estimated harvest of 518 salmon.



To view detailed reports from the North Canterbury Fish & Game Staff

[Click Here](#)



To view a Stuff NZ video about 'Sea-Run Salmon'

[Click Here](#)



Species Management

Game Birds



Modern wildlife management is driven through adaptive strategies based on biological and sociological indicators. Frameworks have been developed for some species, with work ongoing to develop management strategies for other key species.



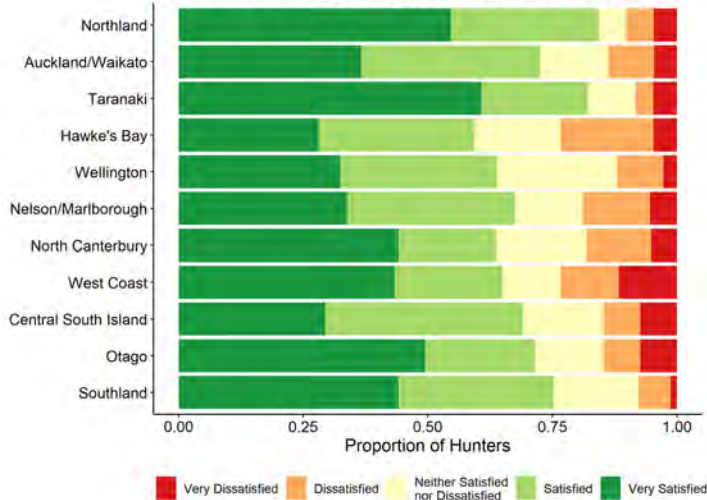
"MANAGEMENT TOOLS"	Closed Season	Restrictive Season	Moderate Season	Liberal Season
	Increase Population	Increase Population	Maintain Population	Reduce Population
Justification	Non-lethal tools primarily, however, unique situations may be addressed using kill permits. Egg harvest limited.	Non-lethal tools primarily, however, unique situations may be addressed using kill permits. Sustainable egg harvest is to be conducted at Ngāi Tahu's discretion.	Non-lethal tools primarily, however, chronic depredation issues may be addressed with kill permits. Population growth is to be limited through egg harvest conducted by Ngāi Tahu.	Chronic depredation issues may be addressed with kill permits. Population growth is to be limited through a combination of kill permits and egg harvest conducted by Ngāi Tahu.
Summer Population Index (2-year average)	<3000	3,000-4,500	4,500-7,500	7,500+
Bag Limit	—	1/day	2/day	2/day

Black swans are a minor yet valued game bird species across many Fish & Game regions. Within the North Canterbury region, there was a need for an adaptive strategy to direct swan harvest and depredation control. During the 2023/2024 Financial Year, population-level thresholds or frameworks were set to guide the swan harvest strategy, which includes managing depredation issues.



Science Driven

Satisfaction with Opening Weekend Experience



Opening weekend is a sacred and traditional period for many gamebird hunters as it is a great opportunity to catch up with friends and family to enjoy the harvest.

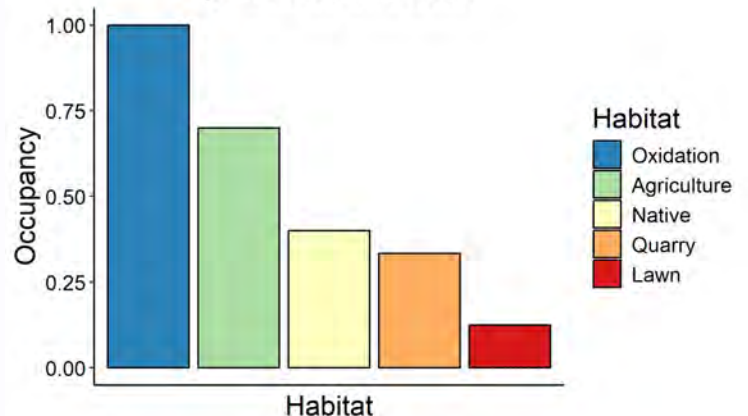
North Canterbury staff coordinated the first-ever national game bird hunter satisfaction survey over the Opening Weekend harvest survey period. A total of 991 surveys were collected across 11 regions. The survey design will allow investigation into how hunter harvest, harvest expectations, and number of ducks seen interplay with hunter satisfaction.



Staff completed a pilot paradise shelduck occupancy study as a first step toward redesigning the paradise shelduck monitoring programme. Further work will be required to model paradise shelduck habitat across the region. In total, 44 wetlands were successfully surveyed, with occupancy highest in oxidation ponds, followed by agricultural ponds.

Staff also took a deep dive into licence holder dynamics to better understand Recruitment, Retention, and Reactivation at both the regional and national levels. Numbers of fishing licence holders over time in North Canterbury have been declining since the 2015/2016 season.

Proportion of Sites Occupied by Paradise Shelduck



We found the greatest decline in licence holders since the 2015/2016 season has come from working-age adults. This information and other insights from this work will help us to improve our R3 efforts.

Compliance

Fish & Game rangers conducted compliance operations throughout the region during the 2023/2024 Financial Year, with a total of 734 angler licence checks and 92 game bird licence checks.

There were a total of 16 fishing offences and 14 game bird offences detected. The fishing compliance rate was 97%, while game bird compliance rate was 85%.



Offence Category	Number of Offences
Fishing without a licence	11
Fishing with illegal method	1
Fishing closed waters	3
Failing to carry licence (Salmon Licence)	1
Hunting without a licence	5
Possession of lead shot within 200m of open water	8
Hunt/kill protected species	1



During the 2023/2024 fishing season, our North Canterbury staff and honorary rangers achieved impressive coverage across the region, visiting >30 different lakes and rivers. Our checks were informed by angler usage data gathered from the national angler survey, ensuring we focused our efforts where they were needed most.

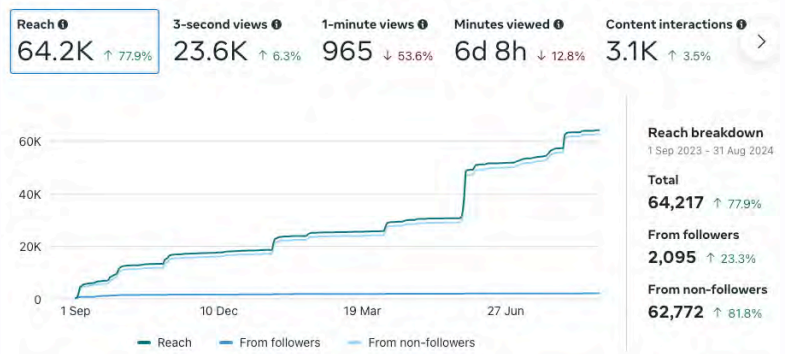


Media & Communications

The 2023/2024 year saw a remarkable increase in our reach on Facebook, with an approximate 78% growth compared to previous years. Reach, defined as the number of unique accounts that view our content, experienced a steady upward trend until May 2024. Notably, the release of the Amuri Fish Salvage Video resulted in an impressive boost, reaching an additional 20,000 accounts.

This surge in reach highlights the importance of understanding the type of content that resonates with both our current and potential followers. The 48-second video effectively showcased the valuable work of our staff, striking an entertaining balance that engaged viewers.

Offering a variety of media formats is crucial, as the data indicates that



engaging videos can significantly expand our audience. These insights reveal that a broader range of individuals are interested in our operations. Our focus now is on effectively communicating our projects through the right mediums, ensuring that we present our work in the most compelling way possible. This strategic approach will ultimately enhance all media metrics, including follower growth.

Facebook by the numbers for Sept 1st 2023- Aug 31st 2024

Followers (August 31st 2024)	2,095
Number of posts/updates in the past year	72
Number of videos released	8
NZ-International Followers Ratio	93.7%-6.3%





Events around the region



Trout Fishing Festival

The 3rd Bi-Annual Trout Fishing Festival at the Groynes attracted over 500 fishing enthusiasts. Attendees enjoyed a lively atmosphere with stalls showcasing the latest gear, expert tips from seasoned guides, and delicious food options. The Fish & Game tent offered valuable advice to all participants. The event is a result of a collaboration between Fish & Game and Canterbury Fly Fishing Club.

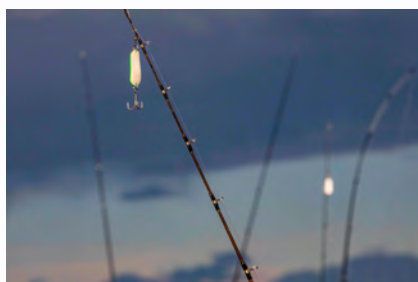
Lake Coleridge Annual Competition

Kicking off the High-Country opening was the Annual Fishing Competition at Lake Coleridge and surrounding lakes. It was held on the first weekend of November. With generous prizes donated by local Hunting and Fishing stores. Anglers enjoyed connecting with the community while celebrating their shared passion for fishing.



Salmon Fishing Competitions

In late summer, Salmon Fishing Competitions brought dedicated anglers to the Rakaia & Waimakariri rivers, all competing for the winning catch. Participants in these annual events enjoyed memorable times and engaged with organisers and Fish & Game staff about salmon management and restoration.



ReWild Launch in North Canterbury

The #ReWild campaign was launched at the Roto Kohatu Lakes. This national initiative has been a remarkable success for Fish & Game nationwide, specifically aligning with our R3 objectives. The launch drew attendees from various regions, including Fish & Game staff, anglers, clubs, and media representatives. The event marked a milestone for the organisation and highlighted North Canterbury's growing urban fishery.



Preparations for Take a Kid Fishing 2024

The team has been working with the Take a Kid Fishing Trust to organise the return of Take a Kid Fishing event, which took place at the end of September 2024. Our team is committed to providing assistance and support to ensure this event is an annual success, fostering a love of fishing in the next generation. Preparations for the September 2025 event are already underway.





Habitat Protection

Environmental Advocacy & Habitat Protection

A major role of Fish & Game is to identify and protect the habitat of sports fish and game birds.

Advocating for habitat protection and public access improvements is fundamental for the sustainable management of fish and game bird populations and is extremely important to our licence holders.

Funds from prosecutions of illegal game bird hunting and fishing activities are allocated to be spent on habitat and/or access improvements via small grants.



In the 2023/2024 Financial Year, five habitat protection grants were given out, totalling \$27,950. Fish & Game grants were matched by landowner contributions, with a total impact of \$53,300 spent toward habitat protection and improving public access to benefit anglers and hunters.

Staff coordinated a variety of works at Te Waihora (Lake Ellesmere) to improve public access, remove hazards from the lake (burnt-out cars, derelict fences, maimai's, trash, etc.), and built new ballotable maimai. A total of \$130,500 was spent, with \$81,500 funding from the Fish & Game Maimai Fund and an additional \$49,000 secured via a grant from Environment Canterbury.

In addition, habitat protection and/or public access improvements were made in the upper Rakaia, upper Waimakariri, Wairewa (Lake Forsyth) and Muriwai (Coopers Lagoon).





Habitat Protection



Canterbury High Country Wetland & Waterway Protection Project

In 2021, North Canterbury Fish & Game secured funding from the government “Jobs For Nature / Freshwater Improvement Fund” to work with the use of a bequest left to Fish & Game by James McIntyre to protect and restore nursery habitats to enhance the salmon fishery in the Rakaia and Waimakariri rivers.

The over \$1,600,000 project was funded by the Ministry for the Environment and completed in collaboration with Environment Canterbury, Rakaia River Fishing Promotions and New Zealand Salmon Anglers Association. For the last three years, this funding grant has employed two staff members, Steve Terry and Belinda Bull.

The project aim was to secure, enhance or re-establish 60ha of streams and wetlands through a minimum of 10km of new fencing, thereby improving the nursery and rearing habitat for fish and waterfowl species within these



ecosystems and enhancing downstream water quality. Through negotiations with landowners in the High Country, the “High-Country Wetland & Waterway Protection” project has exceeded its targets, with the retirement of approximately 370ha, utilising existing fences, along with over 20km of new fencing.

Glenariffe Stream / McIntyre Wetland

More information about the Glenariffe Stream and Wetland Protection project's many components is available on the Fish & Game website.

Resource Management Act

Environmental Advocacy & Habitat Protection

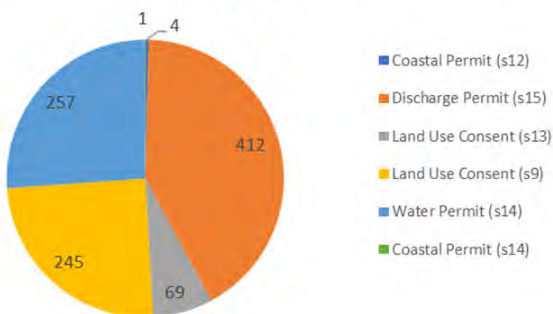
Fish & Game has a statutory duty to protect the country's natural freshwater resources, which provide the habitat to support healthy fish populations and offer some of the best wild trout fishing opportunities available in the world.

Resource Consents

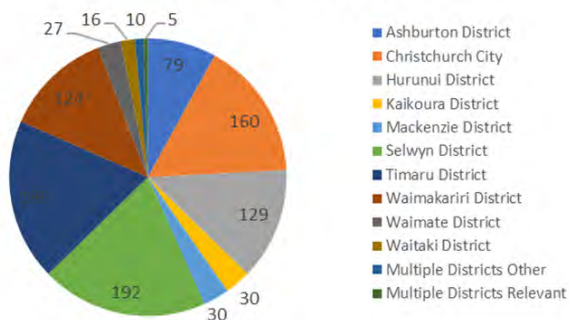
As the statutory management agency for sport fish and game birds, Fish & Game is required to consider the Legislation, the RMA, District and Regional Council plans, and National Policy Statements applicable to our Region.

In Canterbury, all resource consent applications lodged with the regional council are presented weekly to affected parties to assess whether these are relevant to us. Where relevant, Fish & Game provides feedback to Regional or District Councils and, where necessary, proposes applications be publicly notified.

Total resource consent applications per type 2023-2024



Total resource consent applications per local authority 2023-2024



Total consent applications received	988
Applications relevant to Fish & Game values	610

Advocacy / EDS Conference

NZ Council CEO Corina Jordan, NCFG staff and Councillors attended the Environmental Defence Society (EDS) conference in mid-June. The theme for this year's conference was "The Future is Now: Biodiversity, Climate and Us".

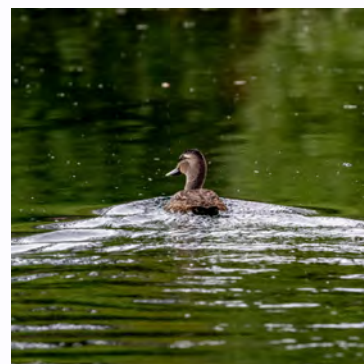
Corina chaired a Freshwater Reforms session at the pre-conference workshop, during which Rasmus presented a response from an environmental advocate's perspective.

A short video of Fish & Game's response to the current state of freshwater in NZ, the government's proposed reforms to the RMA (Fast Track Legislation) and Freshwater Policy in NZ is included below.

Submissions / Interested parties

NC Fish & Game play a central role in trying to protect public access for hunters and anglers.

Recently, a proposed Waimakariri District Council (WDC) Bylaw change was going to stop hunters from being able to use dogs for game bird hunting in the lower Ashley River/Estuary. Fish & Game staff went through the consultation process and submitted both a written and verbal submission to WDC. The WDC's final decision regarding the use of dogs and areas where game bird hunting will continue to be allowed in the Ashley/Rakahuri hapua (estuary) aligned with Fish & Game's input.



To View Corina Jordan & Rasmus Gabriellsson speak at the EDS Conference

[CLICK HERE](#)

Protecting NZ Fish & Waterways

Fish & Game has played a major role in protecting some of New Zealand's outstanding wild and scenic waterways through the application of Water Conservation Orders (WCOs).

Over the last few years, NC Fish & Game and Environmental Defence Society (EDS) have been engaging with Environment Canterbury and other river advocates to clarify who has the responsibility for monitoring and managing the Rakaia and other WCOs.

After years of concerns about degradation of river health and fishery values raised by local anglers, Fish & Game, iwi, community members and others, the public debate over the management of the Rakaia River



flared up in the national media in late 2021, following the leaking of a draft Environment Canterbury technical report (The Rakaia Water Balance Report) and the resignation of its author, a senior Environment Canterbury hydrologist.

Environment Canterbury's response was to distance itself from the report's findings, confirming and accelerating public concerns about exceedance of consent limits for water-takers, inadequate monitoring and poor enforcement of consent conditions resulting in the Rakaia River being "impeded and manipulated" beyond the level anticipated in the WCO.

In response, NC Fish & Game and EDS joined forces and agreed to seek a declaratory judgement from the



Rakaia WCO Hearing

Environment Court to determine the fundamental question of who has the responsibility for WCO monitoring and enforcement, which has national implications in terms of the protection offered by all WCOs.

This declaratory judgement is the critical first step in addressing the environmental problems faced by the Rakaia River. It will also determine who is responsible for monitoring and enforcing the WCO, not just in Canterbury but all over New Zealand. The Rakaia River's problems have arisen because of significant intensification in land and water use in recent decades, an overly complex water management regime, a lack of adequate resource and compliance monitoring, and is intensified by a lack of management response from Environment Canterbury.

Links to Media:

[~Link 1~](#) [~Link 2~](#) [~Link 3~](#) [~Link 4~](#)

Initially, it looked as if non-compliance was a significant issue, but as time has gone by, the focus has shifted to Environment Canterbury's failures in land and water management. It seems remedial action can only be achieved progressively through plan changes, reconsenting processes and WCO amendments.

During winter, staff and our legal/expert advisors participated in mitigation meetings, as instructed by the Environment Court. The limited outcomes from the mitigation process included refinements to the legal questions. The next phase and formal official hearing is scheduled to take place in late November 2024.

For More Information

Legal case documents and supporting affidavits related to this Rakaia WCO proceedings hearing are available for viewing by the public on the North Canterbury Fish & Game website. New documents will be continually uploaded once they have been officially lodged with the Environment Court.

A number of Newsroom media articles written by David Williams have reported on the debate over the health and management of the Rakaia River and the subsequent Rakaia WCO Declaratory Proceedings hearing. Fish & Game is determined to continue to advocate for improving the health of the Rakaia River and ensuring WCO is a powerful instrument for setting rules that recognise and protect the outstanding values of NZ wild and scenic water bodies.

