

NORTHLAND FISH & GAME COUNCIL
CONFIRMED MINUTES OF A MEETING
HELD AT THE NORTHLAND FISH & GAME OFFICE
NELL PLACE, WHANGAREI
7.00PM THURSDAY 15TH AUGUST 2025

PRESENT:

Chairman: Phil Durham

Councillors: Mark Bell, Cameron Shanks, John McEntee, Russell Daniels, Barrie Barnes, Sean Brickland, Darryl Reardon, Kelvin Ellis, Lloyd Altham

Staff: Craig Deal (Manager), Rachael Quin (Administrator)

Member of the Public: Adrienne Murray (HR & HS Advisor, NZFGC)

The Chairman welcomed the councillors and Adrienne Murray. The Chairman introduced those present to Adrienne. Adrienne explained her role and purpose of visit. The Conflict-of-Interest register was circulated around the table for all councillors to sign and declare any conflicts.

APOLOGIES: Lewis Peart (leave of absence)

Previous Minutes

It was resolved: *That the minutes of the previous meeting held on the 22nd May 2025 are confirmed as true and correct.*

Russell Daniels / Darryl Reardon **CARRIED**

Matters Arising

Waitangi Wetland

The Manager has communicated to Department of Conservation (DOC) the intention to terminate the agreement that Northland Fish and Game Council has with DOC regarding management of water levels in the Waitangi Wetland. The manager was advised his request had been passed on to the DOC legal team for advice. No further communication has been received.

1122 Game Bird Hunter Harvest

The Manager reported a good response with hunter surveys and full analysis will be completed after the end of the game season.

1221 Jack Bisset Wetland

The Manager advised on the current state of the structure with the breached bund. The repair work will commence after winter.

1225 Flaxmill Maintenance

Action: The Manager to investigate whether poplar pulp is a viable option.

Action carried over to next meeting

Wetland Management Costs

Addressed as later agenda item.

Licence Fee Recommendation 2025-26

Addressed as later agenda item.

Managers' Report

The Manager advised the council that Auckland Airport intends to cull swan in Manukau Harbour and has received support from DOC. Although there will soon be a legislative requirement that game management does not impact on aviation safety it is concerning that Fish & Game was not involved until late in the planning of the cull as the proposed cull will affect the entire upper north island swan population across the Northland, Auckland/Waikato and Eastern regions. The level of risk to aircraft was discussed by councillors. David Klee from Auckland/Waikato region has corresponded with the airport and communicated swan dynamics and populations. The Chairman stated that it is worthwhile to know of any near-miss data that supports their decision to cull 7000 birds. The Manager will keep in close contact with David and convey support from Northland F&G Council.

1242 Botulism Monitoring and Clean Up

The Manager reported on progress and the remaining work (years) as it continues. The first and smallest pond is still being cleaned (work started in March) and to date 2500 tonnes of sludge has been removed.

1312 Anglers/Hunters Signs

The Manager highlighted that the new signs will be better placed and have a QR code.

1315 Fish Tuition

The Manager invited councillors to attend or help at the upcoming Fish Tuition Day on 18 October at Whau Valley Dam.

1531 Prosecutions

The Manager reported on the results with the most recent prosecution and clarified to the Chairman that any fines awarded go to the Crown while the legal bills come to Northland Fish & Game.

1840 National Liaison

The Manager reminded councillors that Northland Fish & Game has volunteered for an independent H&S audit on Monday to assist Adrienne Murray to plan for the drafting of the national H&S policy for all regions.

Field Officers Report

The Council discussed the population and movement trends of paradise shelduck and had no questions.

It was moved: *That the Manager and Field Officer's Reports be received.*

Mark Bell / John McEntee *CARRIED*

NZFGC Update

Cr Barnes reported that the recent NZC meeting was primarily regarding the budget and licensing, including the family licence. Cr Barnes asked if there were any questions regarding the recently received summary of legislative changes for Fish and Game.

Final Approval of Draft Budget 2025-26

The Chairman considered the recent Ministers decline to increase the licence fee and its impact on the draft budget and OWP for 2025-26. The Manager circulated a memorandum offering three options. The Chairman asked the Manager about other regions positions. It was agreed that the shortfall from the approved Budget 2025-26, would come from reserves.

It was moved: *To keep the original budget 2025-26 with the deficit made up from reserves.*

Cameron Shanks / Mark Bell *CARRIED*

Action: Inform NZ Council of intention to use reserves.

Final Approval of Operational Work Plan 2025-26

The OWP is unchanged from the February meeting.

It was moved: *That the Operational Work Plan 2025-26 is accepted.*

Cameron Shanks / Mark Bell *CARRIED*

Budget Adjustments

The Manager circulated a memorandum outlining the budget adjustments for 2024-25. The Manager reported an estimate for Jack Bisset Wetland repairs as \$35,000 and requested deferring \$10,000 to the next financial year. Stand holders would be advised of work dates as a good opportunity for weed control and maintaining their stand areas. The Chairman suggested volunteers are called upon.

Wetland Costs and Permit Fees

The Manager gave examples from other F&G regions of recouping wetland maintenance expenses from stand holders on Fish and Game managed properties. The manager advised that it will be difficult to charge a habitat contribution fee when issuing permits as it creates the impression of breaching section 23 of the Wildlife Act (1953). Council discussed the options presented. Also discussed was the privilege of stand holders over the other licence holders, stand terms of tenure and turnover. Cr Bell stated the priority should be to cycle as many hunters as possible through the wetlands that Northland Fish & Game have created. The Chairman posited that stand holders only be entitled to mark-up priority and not have a 9-day exclusive hunting period. The Manager proposed that casual hunters are not to be charged a habitat maintenance contribution to avoid discouraging use of Fish and Game managed wetlands. Cr McEntee stated that some wetlands and stands are not productive despite stand holder efforts to increase the appeal to wildlife. Discussions focussed around the worthiness of keeping possession of wetlands to provide social licence and benefit to wildlife versus the significant maintenance costs that predominantly benefit a handful of hunters - not all licence holders who finance the work. Cr Bell stated the Northland Fish & Game are good at making wetlands but cannot afford to maintain them. Cr Barnes stated that Fish & Games primary role does not require Councils 'to build wetlands'. Cr McEntee stated our core role is to 'create habitat' however. The Chairman stated that there is a strategic objective to encourage people to hunt. The Manager referenced the strategy in the OWP. The Chairman questioned if it would be better to spend the wetland maintenance funds elsewhere and sell off the properties. Cr Ellis suggested there are mechanisms to transfer ownership. It was raised that there are restrictions to the transfer of some properties into private ownership. The Chairman proposed that all stand holders are informed of the actual cost of their opening weekend hunting and show they have been subsidised by all licence holders. The Manager stated that the question remains, does the Council want to try to recover costs? A consultation process to all hunters was suggested. Promoting the wetlands to raise awareness and funds via a 'Friends of the Wetlands' was considered, using emails, newspapers, social media, rotary tours to raise awareness. The Chairman requested three people make up a subcommittee to move the initiative forward. Cr's Brickland and McEntee volunteered. The conclusion was to park the wetland cost recovery concept for the short term and look to raise \$30,000 from outside sources.

Action: Manager to seek outside funding sources for Jack Bisset bund repair.

Staff Code of Conduct

The Staff Code of Conduct policy was reviewed by Council and supported by the Manager. Adrienne Murray spoke to the need of a standard to avoid risk. Cr Ellis suggested that wording 'serious misconduct' and 'misconduct' need to be clearly defined. Adrienne said it can be added to disciplinary procedures later. Cr. Barnes stated that there is no inter-region code of conduct policy.

It was moved: That Northland Fish & Game Council adopt the Staff Code of Conduct.

Darryl Reardon / Barry Barnes

CARRIED

It was moved: *That budget adjustments as per memorandum enclosure be approved.*

Russell Daniels / John McEntee *CARRIED*

BDO Audit Proposal

The Manager advised the Council that the proposal is signed but is on a year-to-year basis. Cr Barnes stated there may be a national auditor in the future which will be a saving to regions.

Time 9.58pm

The Council moved into a public excluded session of the meeting.

Cameron Shanks / Russell Daniels *CARRIED*

This resolution is made in reliance on Section 48(1)(a) of the Local Government Official Information and Meetings Act 1987 and the particular interest or interests protected by Section 9 of the Official Information Act 1982 which would be prejudiced by the holding of the whole or relevant part of the proceedings of the meeting in public are as follows:

ITEM	REASON UNDER THE OFFICIAL INFORMATION ACT 1982	SECTION	PLAIN ENGLISH REASON	WHEN REPORT CAN BE RELEASED
XX.	Protect the privacy of natural persons.	Sec. 9(2)(a)	Information provided identifies a particular person or can easily be connected with a particular person.	Once the person to whom the information relates consents to its disclosure.
	Protect information where the making available of the information would be likely unreasonably to prejudice the commercial position of the person who supplied or who is the subject of the information	Sec 9(2)(b)(ii)	Commercial information about a third party would likely prejudice the commercial position of that party if released.	Once the third party to whom the information relates consents to its disclosure.
	Protect information which is subject to an obligation of confidence ... where the making available of the information would be likely to prejudice the supply of similar information, or information from the same source, and it is in the public interest that such information should continue to be supplied	Sec 9(2)(ba)(i)	Disclosing the information would jeopardise the relationship with the supplier because the supplier may no longer trust the Council to hold its information in confidence.	Not unless there is a public interest in disclosure of the specific information.
	Maintain the effective conduct of public affairs through the protection of such Ministers, members of organisations, officers and employees from improper pressure or harassment.	Sec 9(2)(g)(ii)	Prejudice or harm is likely to occur making it necessary to withhold the information to prevent that occurring.	Only where the public interest in disclosure of the information, in whole or part, outweighs the need to withhold the information.

	Maintain legal professional privilege	Sec. 9(2)(h)	To enable the Council to discuss legal advice.	Once the matter is completed and the legal advisor agrees to its release.
	Enable a Minister of the Crown or any Department or organisation holding information to carry out without prejudice or disadvantage, negotiations.	Sec.9(2)(j)	To enable the Council to discuss the information without improper gain or advantage being given to third parties.	Once agreement has been reached or contract signed.

Time 10.15pm

The open meeting of the Northland Fish and Game Council resumed.

Legislative Reforms

The Chairman invited Councillors to respond to the Reform Update. Cr Ellis proposed that the issue is important enough to warrant a special meeting with an independent facilitator. The submission process was discussed and the need for a focussed submission from the Northland region. Cr Barnes stated that individual Fish and Game regions would have the opportunity to have their say in the development of the new legislation during the select committee process.

The Chairman will investigate the availability of a facilitator to assist with a special meeting for Council to address the legislative changes and isolate core issues of concern or support.

Action: The Manager to gather staff concerns and report back to the Council. The Chairman will contact a potential facilitator then arrange a special meeting date.

General Business

There being no further business the Chairman declared the meeting closed at 10.32pm.

Phil Durham

Chairman