

**Agenda for the meeting of Otago Fish & Game Council
On 2nd December 2025
At Otago Fish and Game Council Office
5 Hazlett Road, North Taieri, Mosgiel
Starting 11:45am with a light lunch**

Timetable	Council Meeting - 2nd December 2025
11:00 am	Staff Reports
11.45 am	Lunch
12.15 pm	Councillor Only Session
12.30 pm	Meeting Begins
2:45 pm	Afternoon Tea
3:00 pm	Annual General Meeting
3:30 pm	Public Excluded Session
5:00 pm	Meeting Ends
6:30 pm	Seated at Mosgiel RSA for joint staff/councillor dinner

Timetable	Building Opening – 3rd December 2025
10:00 am	Assemble at carpark
12:00 pm	Concludes. Depart for home

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1.0 Present and Apologies

2.0 Matters to be raised not on the agenda

3.0 Declarations of Interest

4.0 Confirmation of Previous Minutes

Minutes For the Meeting of Otago Fish & Game Council On 23rd September 2025 At Cromwell Presbyterian Church Rooms

1.0 Present and Apologies

Present: Adrian McIntyre (Chair), John Cruden, John Preedy, Blair Trevathan, Colin Weatherall.

In attendance: Ian Hadland (CE), Jamie Ward (Operations Manager), Bruce Quirey (Communications Officer), Pete Ravenscroft (Otago Regional Council).

Apologies: Paulette Tamati-Elliffe (Ngāi Tahu), John Highton, Vicky May, Neil Harraway (Otago Conservation Board)

Moved: Cr Weatherall, Cr Preedy

**That apologies be accepted
Carried**

Before the meeting began officially discussing agenda items, the Council received a presentation from Pete Ravenscroft, Team Leader Biodiversity from Otago Regional Council, about work to protect non-migratory galaxiids, including removal of trout and brook char from headwaters where they interacted with the at-risk native species. Mr Ravenscroft outlined the threat status of the various species and their limited habitat range. The presentation provided Council with a progress update on work to date and next steps because removal of trout required permits from Fish & Game. The CE noted that the native fish work was relevant to OF&G's species interaction policy.

The Chair thanked Mr Ravenscroft for his presentation.

2.0 Matters to be raised not on the agenda

None

3.0 Declarations of Interest

John Cruden – Forest and Bird member

John Preedy - Teviot Anglers club member

Adrian McIntyre – Deerstalkers Association member

4.0 Confirmation of Previous Minutes

Moved: Cr Barker, Cr Trevathan

That the minutes of the Council meeting held on 22nd July 2025 be confirmed as a true and correct record.

Carried

5.0 Matters Arising from the Minutes

Cr Barker drew Council's attention to 12.2 of the Minutes. In response to a question from the CE at the July Council meeting, he had replied that children could fish independently under the changed family licence.

Cr Barker said that was wrong. He had answered to the best of knowledge at the time but that was not correct.

Cr Weatherall asked what was deemed as fishing independently. The CE noted that was a ranger question and undertook to get clarification.

6.0 Health and Safety Report Aug/Sept 2025

The CE said the report was there to be received.

Moved: Cr Preedy, Cr Cruden

That the health and safety report for August/September be received.

Carried

7.0 Items Requiring Decisions

7.1 Revised Operational Workplan and Budget 2025-2026

The CE said the new financial year had started on September 1. NZC guidance to OF&GC was to provide last year's budget plus 2.5%. The CE had used those figures to recalculate the budget and with some funding from Council's own reserves.

He had opted to leave the Operational Work Plan as it was and proposed that Council fund any shortfalls from reserves, including from the non-resident reserve. He directed councillors to the revised OWP and budget guidance. The CE highlighted some items which are to be removed from the budget. The Chair said the CE had done a great job at saving some money.

Crs discussed the proposed removal of the R3 (recruitment, retention and reactivation) budget item and said it was critically important for the Council to get the best advice about R3 it could at this time. The CE had proposed to spend \$5,000 to bring a R3 specialist from the United States to New Zealand to visit some regions and address the Council and staff to assist with programme development. The R3 specialist he had engaged with only wanted payment for airfares and would waive consultation fees.

The CE said the consultation could be funded from Otago reserves, and he could try and retrieve some funding from other regions if need be.

Cr Weatherall spoke in favour of using reserves for the purpose and other Councillors agreed.

Cr Trevathan suggested the Council also reinstate \$5,000 in the 2025-2026 budget for native fish work. The CE said it could also be covered by reserves.

Moved: Cr Weatherall, Cr Barker

That the Council;

- **Agree to the revised 2025/26 operational workplan.**
- **Agree to the revised budget including funding of essential operational workplan items from Otago Council Reserves namely;**
 - **\$18,000 from the Non Resident Reserve**
 - **\$37,450 from the Otago Property Reserve to fund the remaining three lease payments on the Hanover Street building and associated storage.**
 - **\$5,000 from general reserves for external R3 advice**
 - **\$5,000 from general reserves for species interaction native fish protection programmes**

Carried

7.2 Donald Scott Memorial Scholarship Fund

The CE said Council had funded the Donald Scott Memorial Scholarship Fund at \$5,000 per annum for five years.

He drew to councillors' attention a staff report and separate correspondence from the University of Otago. Supporting the scholarship was a good way to advance relationships with the University, a priority of the Council's Communications Strategy.

Cr Barker commented he did not think the university had been very forthcoming with information to the Council about how the scholarship was progressing.

A question was raised why Council should continue to put in \$5,000 when the scholarship fund balance was around \$62,000. The CE replied it was supposed to be a perpetual fund that was intended to grow.

Moved: Cr Barker, Cr Weatherall

That the Council:

Continue its annual financial contribution to the Donald Scott Memorial Scholarship of \$5,000 for three years from the Non-Resident Reserve.

Carried.

7.3 DRAFT 2026-27 Game Gazette Notice (Gamebird hunting regulations)

The CE pointed out the gazette presented to Council today was a draft form and was not the final say. Council would get another opportunity to provide feedback in December. The gazette also depended on the outcome of the paradise shelduck/putangitangi moult count at the end of January. Staff

intended to send the draft Notice to stakeholders, including iwi, for their feedback.

Council was asked to adopt the draft regulations so staff could begin consultations.

The CE offered to summarise the changes in the draft.

Cr Trevathan spoke in favour of the CE, and asked about the time frame for changes to the summer season.

The CE said one of the recommendations was to increase the daily game bag limit for paradise shelduck/putangitangi from 12 to 15 in the main season, and to 15 per day in the summer season.

Cr Barker noted on page 25 that figure 5 should be figure 3.

Cr Weatherall questioned the timing of the “summer” season in the first two weekends in March and said his personal feeling as a hunter was it was not quite right.

Cr McIntyre said as a grain grower if you hit those early crops early you are going to see those birds move on. The CE said paradise shelduck were still moulting in February.

Cr Preedy asked when grey teal would be added to the game bird list. The CE replied grey teal status had been shifted from fully protected but getting an open season on the species would have to be a national decision. He said the Council would have to write to the NZC on the proposal. The CE said the process would be separated from the game gazette and come with a degree of risk. The Department of Conservation would ask for Fish & Game’s monitoring data.

Cr Trevathan suggested Council write to all the regions for their feedback about teal populations and seek feedback from the Ngai Tahu delegate before advancing further.

The CE said he would write to the other regions seeking their views and report to the next meeting.

There was discussion about a perceived increase in pukeko numbers, noting they had a zero-bag limit. The CE said pukeko monitoring methods had changed and a longer monitoring was needed to get a clearer picture.

Moved: Cr Trevathan, Cr Preedy

1. That the draft 2026-27 game regulations be approved for consultation.

Carried

7.4 DRAFT Meeting Schedule 2025-2026

The CE presented a proposed schedule of Council meetings for 2025–2026. He said the draft assumed Council would continue to meet on Tuesdays, generally beginning with staff presentations from 11 a.m. and the formal meeting commencing after lunch.

The Chair asked whether Tuesdays continued to suit councillors.

Cr Trevathan noted that in the past some meetings had run short of time and suggested allowing flexibility to extend meetings when workloads were heavy. Cr Barker asked if Council would continue to hold a meeting in Roxburgh, given that one had been missed in the previous rotation.

The CE said a new meeting room would be available in the Cromwell office and expressed the hope that by the time of the next schedule, Council would be meeting in its own boardroom there. A proposal for a formal boardroom space at the Cromwell office would come to Council shortly.

He noted that the 2025 planning meeting would be held in Mosgiel and proposed that the March 2026 meeting be in Roxburgh, subject to confirmation.

Cr Trevathan said if the Council's workload increased, he would support allocating additional time or holding occasional Zoom meetings. The CE agreed this might be necessary, particularly during the reform process, when additional meetings could be required to consider the organisation's future direction.

Cr Preedy said he preferred a single extended day meeting rather than two-day meetings.

Cr Barker commented that the staff presentations were valuable and added useful context to the formal agenda.

Moved: Cr Trevathan, Cr Preedy.

**That the Council adopt the 2025–2026 meeting schedule as presented.
Carried.**

Note: Building Opening 10am, 3rd December 2025

Moved: Cr Cruden, Cr Trevathan

**That the meeting move into public-excluded session.
Carried**

Cr Barker questioned the order of the paperwork.

8.0 Public Excluded Items

Items considered under public-excluded session:

8.1 Draft Public-Excluded Meeting Minutes – 22 July 2025

8.2 Otago Property Update

8.3 Friends of Bullock Creek Trust Agreement

The meeting resumed in open session at 3.14pm.

9.0 Financial Report

The CE said Council needed to adopt a draft set of accounts for audit. Some movement between accounts was expected as finances were finalised. He also advised that updated signatory arrangements for the ANZ and ASB bank accounts required formal Council approval before the audit.

Cr Weatherall queried whether it was usual for the Chair not to be included as a signatory. While acknowledging the practicality of remote authorisations, he noted that best practice was to include at least one elected governor among signatories for transactions of significant size.

The Chair said remote arrangements with the CE had worked effectively, and that if Council preferred, his name could be added.

The CE responded that the signatories were specific to banking authorisations and, provided they were approved by Council, the arrangement met audit requirements.

Moved: Cr Weatherall, Cr Trevathan

1. That the signatory changes for ANZ and ASB banks as described above be approved
2. That the Draft set of accounts be approved for Audit
3. That this report be received be received.

Carried.

1:22

10.0 Chief Executive's Report

The CE referred to the written report and provided verbal updates. He said the Council had earlier received a presentation from Pete Ravenscroft (ORC) and there was also a separate report on RMA-related matters, which had attracted public attention.

The Operations Manager outlined recent discussions around Lake Hāwea water levels and Contact Energy's proposal to alter management of lake storage. A new ORC report indicated that if the lake level dropped below 338 metres above sea level, local aquifers could disconnect, causing bores to run dry. The consent conditions excluded the Hāwea Irrigation Company but would affect other consent holders. Contact Energy had sought amendments that would allow the lake to be managed as a national

“energy-security buffer”, keeping it higher through summer and autumn and drawing on it during low-generation periods from wind or solar sources.

The CE said the Council’s interest centred on spawning habitat and access issues, and that staff would monitor the situation closely.

The Operations Manager added that local groups, including the Guardians of Lake Hāwea, had raised concerns with local MP Miles Anderson, who had written to Minister Bishop expressing opposition. Other MPs might do likewise. Several groups were considering a joint legal challenge, and the Upper Clutha Anglers had submitted an excellent response.

The CE then updated Council on the replacement office project. He thanked Cr Colin Weatherall for his ongoing support and oversight of the build. Staff were in the process of relocating, with the full move scheduled for 22 October 2025. Signage, cleaning, and technology installations were being finalised.

The CE invited discussion on arrangements for the official opening of the new Cromwell office on 3 December 2025 at 10am.

Councillors discussed the scale of the event. Suggestions included inviting NZC chairs, the Minister, and key Otago supporters such as Pat Scott, Niall Watson, John Jillett, angling club presidents, staff (and partners), former councillors, and representatives from ORC, DOC, and industry partners.

Cr Weatherall proposed the opening be a formal yet modest morning-tea event, centred on Otago’s supporters, with Colleen Wright invited to cut the ribbon.

Cr McIntyre suggested inviting the new Southland Chair, while Cr Preedy felt the event should remain focused on Otago. There was general agreement with that sentiment.

The Chair also proposed holding a Christmas dinner for staff, councillors, and partners following the December Council meeting.

Moved: Cr Cruden, Cr Preedy

That this report be received

Carried

11.0 RMA Planning and Consents Report

The CE said the report was provided for information. Recent legislative changes had accelerated regional planning processes and effectively extended the life of deemed permits by six or seven years. He noted that the new legislation created a potential loophole allowing multiple consents to be issued for similar activities.

Cr Barker commented that ORC had set a provisional minimum flow of 2.4 cumecs at the Manuherekia caravan park.

The CE said that figure represented an ecological health target rather than a confirmed minimum flow.

Moved: Cr Barker, Cr Trevathan.

1. That the report be received.

Carried

12.0 Committee & Delegate Reports

12.1 New Zealand Fish and Game Council

The Otago delegate, Cr Mike Barker, tabled a written report. The CE noted that staff flu vaccinations had been offered to Otago staff for many years.

12.2 Clutha Mata Au Sports Fish and Habitat Trust

The Trust Chair Rick Boyd had tabled a written report. Cr Barker said Mr Boyd had advised his intention to stand down in February 2026. The Council acknowledged his contribution and noted Morgan Trotter's recent appointment to the Trust.

12.3 Ngai Tahu – Paulette Tamati-Elliffe

Apology

12.4 Clutha Fisheries Trust – Ian Cole

No report

12.5 Conservation Board

Apology

12.6 Tiaki Maniototo

No report

Moved: Cr Weatherall, Cr Barker

That the delegate committee reports be received.

Carried

13.0 Correspondence

CE: NZC has asked for feedback for a couple of things

13.1 NZC to Otago

13.1.1 Consolidated Annual Report

The CE explained that NZC was seeking feedback on a proposed consolidated national reporting framework. He said that while the idea appeared benign, the proposed quarterly reporting requirements and extensive performance metrics would add significant bureaucracy.

He recommended Council provide feedback along the following lines:

- Scale back metrics to those nationally comparable and genuinely useful.
- Adopt an annual rather than quarterly collection cycle, aligned with existing reporting.
- Use current regional annual reports as the main data source, supplemented only where agreed gaps exist.
- Engage regional staff through a workshop process before adopting final metrics.

Councillors discussed the proposal. Cr Weatherall said the level of detail was excessive. The CE noted there had been no consultation with regional managers. Cr Cruden described the proposed KPI list as extensive.

Council agreed that the CE would prepare feedback to NZC consistent with his recommendations.

13.1.2 Infringement Fines Policy

The CE said NZC had circulated a 20-page procedural document outlining a proposed national infringement system. He questioned whether it was appropriate as a “policy”, noting concerns that infringement fines went to the Crown’s consolidated fund, potentially reducing Fish & Game’s visibility in compliance enforcement.

The Chair noted Otago’s wetland fund was supported by infringement proceeds.

Cr Barker said Council was being told rather than consulted and suggested the CE seek clarification from NZC Chief Executive Richie Cosgrove.

Council agreed that the CE write to NZC requesting clarity on the intent and consultation process for the infringement policy.

13.1.3 Fish & Game Reforms – Ministerial Response

Cr Weatherall asked whether a reply had been received from the Minister regarding questions on the reform process. The CE undertook to follow up and resend the letter if necessary, copying the Department of Conservation. Councillors noted the importance of receiving timely information before legislative drafting was finalised.

13.2 Otago to NZC

Nil

13.3 General Correspondence In

13.3.1 OF&GC SFMP To Be Delayed To June 2027

13.3.2 University of Otago – Dr Donald Scott Scholarship Programme

13.3.3 Audit of Otago Fish and Game Council

Moved: Cr Cruden, Cr Barker

That correspondence be received.

Carried

13.4 General Correspondence Out

13.4.1 Submission on the Fish and Game Governance and Organisational Improvements

Council noted that related matters, including the Donald Scott Scholarship and audit letter, had already been discussed.

Cr Weatherall asked if the CE was satisfied with the audit timetable. The CE replied that the auditor's onsite visit was scheduled for 3 November, with all documents signed off by 21 November and the audit opinion issued at least 10 days before the AGM. He was confident this would be achieved.

Cr Weatherall said the audit process was tight and suggested requesting an additional day or two for Council review. The CE undertook to raise the point while maintaining a cooperative relationship with the auditors.

Move: Cr Trevathan, Cr McIntyre

Correspondence be received.

Carried

14.0 Items to be Received or Noted – Papers listed separately

The CE said the listed reports were provided for Council's information. The Chair thanked staff for the quality of their work, noting the Game Bird and Salmon reports were particularly strong.

Councillors discussed document distribution preferences. Cr Barker said he was happy to receive reports as PDFs rather than printed copies. The CE undertook to confirm councillors' preferences for future meetings.

Cr Trevathan raised a question on the Compliance Summary (p. 91) regarding the percentage of hunters contacted by rangers. He asked whether the 10 percent target was achievable.

The Operations Manager explained that, given the region's size and dispersal of hunters after Opening Weekend, 10 percent was unrealistic. Compliance rates were high, and Otago achieved strong results through its volunteer ranger programme.

The CE said the 10 percent target was a legacy national figure and could be revised. He noted compliance performance should reflect both contact numbers and compliance rate. Council agreed that realistic targets would be reviewed in the next operational plan.

Further discussion covered the value of volunteer rangers, health and safety considerations, and reporting methods.

Additional reports noted included:

- **14.1 Clutha Mata-Au Sports Fish & Habitat Trust Annual Report**
- **14.2 Upper Clutha Salmon Spawning Report**
- **14.3 Investigating Migration of Brown Trout in the Leith – University student report** (commended; CE to write to University and invite future Donald Scott applications)
- **14.4 Acoustic Salmonid Monitoring of Southern Lakes**
- **14.5 Whole Season Game Bird Harvest and Activity 2025**
- **14.6 Additional Game Bird Survey Questions** – noting 12 percent of hunters used landowner exemptions (approx. 5000 additional birds)
- **14.7 Otago Pūkeko Monitoring 2025**
- **14.8 Greenhouse Gas Emissions Inventory 2023/24** – CE noted vehicles as largest emission source; hatchery pump not included in Macraes reporting.
- **14.9 Compliance Summary** (see discussion above)
- **14.10 Otago Fish & Game Climate Adaptation** – to be discussed at planning meeting
- **14.11 Designated Waters and Controlled Fishery Review** – noted summary from Mason Court's presentation
- **14.12 Communications Plan Annual Report 2025**

Moved: Cr Cruden, Cr Trevathan

That staff reports be received and noted.

Carried

15.0 General Business

No additional items were raised.

The Chair thanked councillors and staff for their attendance and contributions.

The meeting closed at 5.10pm.

5.0 Matters Arising from the Minutes

6.0 Health and Safety Report – October to December 2025

Events/Work Requiring OHS Planning – Job hazard sheets complete

- Spawning surveys
- Soft Bait learner classes
- Hatchery fish distribution.
- Hatchery spawning
- Move to new office

OHS Audits - Internal

Completed audits:

- Hazardous substances Cromwell
- Ranger Support

Next audit areas:

- New Mosgiel office health and safety audit
- Staff qualifications and training register update
- Main Hazard Register – ongoing
- Hazardous Substances Cromwell and Mosgiel

Incidents/Accidents/Near Misses/New Hazards – discussed with mitigation at weekly meetings and recorded on file if needed.

- F&G Skoda collision, no damage to people and a little to the car.
- A large polystyrene lump dropped off a trailer ahead of a travelling staff member. Collision avoided.
- Concern by two staff about buses in the middle of the road near the Mosgiel airport and a lack of easy crossing sight at the 5 Road Corner. Care required.

Training Completed

- Boat training at Lakes Waihola and Dunstan and completed.
- 1 first aid refresher course attended
- CERT Ranger training and refresher course for most staff.

General Discussions, Actions

- Local fire brigade arranged to check out our new office.
- New Mosgiel office assembly point, first aid kits signage, AED installed and fire extinguishers installed.
- Possible amnesty for chemicals from ORC, discussions on signage for the new chemical storage shed at Mosgiel.

Recommendation

1. To receive the health and safety report for October to December

Sharon Milne - Administration Officer
20th November 2025

7.0 Items Requiring Decisions

Paper Title	7.1 Ministers Reply to Otago Council Letter on Reforms
Author	Ian Hadland, Chief Executive
Purpose	For discussion
Executive Summary	The Council wrote to the Minister of Hunting and Fishing in July to provide feedback on the proposed reforms and posed a number of questions for clarification. The Ministers reply is attached.
Discussion/Analysis	<p>Despite the length of the Minister’s Q&A, several critical questions raised by Otago were only partially answered or not answered at all. These include:</p> <p>Governance & Accountability</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Who audits NZC’s compliance and performance? No independent audit mechanism described. • How regional strategic priorities will align with NZC direction was not addressed. <p>Advocacy</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • How urgent local advocacy needs will be protected under NZC/Ministerial approval requirements. • Timeframes for NZC/Ministerial approval of court proceedings remain undefined. • Criteria for when NZC can override regional initiatives remain vague. <p>Funding</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Resource allocation will be housed in secondary legislation and a working group has been established. Little detail on terms of reference. <p>Operational Impacts</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Still not clear how DOC will support the transition (staffing, funding, advisory). • What reforms mean for hatcheries, which the Minister did not address. <p>Election & Representation</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Costs of expanded electoral roll and postal voting were not addressed. • Effect of removing subregions on amalgamations received no real analysis. <p>Consultation with F&G Councils</p> <p>There is over a dozen references to NZC consultation with regional F&G Councils regarding binding policy making this a very important function and one the organisation must get right. The present approved Consultation Policy isn’t being applied correctly and may not be adequate for the robust discussion to come so needs review.</p>

	Council will also need to discuss its potential submission to the reforms, even though they are still being drafted. With the delay in the first reading, its clear that timeframes will be tight for submissions. Discussions on this could be held over to the January meeting of Council.
Links to Previous Papers/Decisions	Cabinet paper on F&G Reforms
Attachments (if any)	Ministers Letter and Q&A
Recommendation	That the Council: 1. Write to NZC and request that the Consultation Policy be reviewed as the highest priority policy to take the organisation forward following the reforms. 2. Plan for a submission, including resourcing and timing of additional meetings.
Decision Record	Moved by: Seconded by: Carried / Lost:

Hon James Meager

Minister for the South Island
Minister for Hunting and Fishing
Minister for Youth
Associate Minister of Transport



2:1 NOV 2025

To the Chairs of Fish and Game Councils

JMC-919

Dear Chairs,

I am writing to provide further information and an update on my proposals for Fish and Game reform.

Recently, several Fish & Game Councils contacted me individually with questions about the proposals and Bill. I recognise that you will all have an interest in this information. I am therefore sharing the attached Q&A document, which collates all the questions received, with all councils.

The document also includes more detailed information on key proposals in the reform plan, including areas that have developed further during the Bill's drafting process. For example, I have included more information about my advocacy proposal, including what will trigger Ministerial authorisation for Fish & Game Councils to initiate court actions.

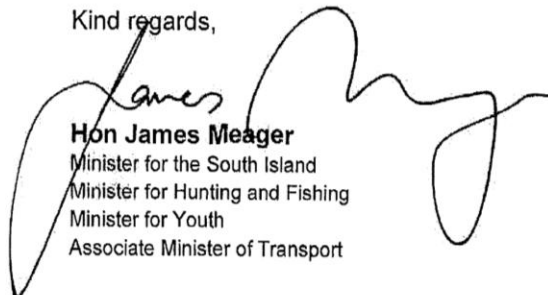
More broadly, I wanted to update you on timing for introduction of the Bill and next steps. Parliament's remaining 2025 agenda is at capacity, yet progressing these proposals remains one of my top priorities. I expect to introduce a Bill in 2026, subject to Parliamentary time. I want to use this interim period to ensure the draft legislation is right: the Bill is complex, with more than 60 proposed policy changes being introduced alongside the development of a stand-alone Act. It will also need to link effectively with existing legislation, including the Conservation and Wildlife Acts, to provide a coherent framework.

Officials will also continue to engage with you to progress the remaining work, including engaging on proposals for a funding allocation model and gathering the necessary information to support the drafting of the Bill and to ensure it is in good shape before it is introduced into Parliament.

Thank you once again for your continued support and engagement in the development of the Fish & Game reform proposals. This is a collaborative effort, and I welcome your feedback, suggestions and questions as we work through this next phase in the process.

I will contact you again once we have a clear timeline for introduction of the Bill, and progress to Select Committee, where you will be able to provide further feedback. If you have further questions, please contact either my office, or fishandgamereform@doc.govt.nz.

Kind regards,



Hon James Meager
Minister for the South Island
Minister for Hunting and Fishing
Minister for Youth
Associate Minister of Transport

Cc Manager of Fish & Game Councils

IN-CONFIDENCE EXTERNAL

Fish & Game - Questions and Answers

National Policy Development

Question	Answer
Will the NZC use its existing consultation policy or design a new one?	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • While there will be a legal requirement for the New Zealand Council (NZC) to consult with Fish and Game Councils (FGCs), how consultation on binding policies is run is a matter for the NZC to decide. • This includes whether the NZC uses an existing consultation policy or creates a new one. • FGCs should raise ideas or comments with the NZC if applicable.
What are the consequences for non-compliance with nationally binding policies?	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • The reform creates a new legislative requirement for FGCs to comply with binding policy determined by the NZC. • I would expect in the first instance for non-compliance to be met with constructive discussions to understand the reasons behind the issue and agree what actions could be taken to address issues. • In the event of continual non-compliance, where warranted, the Minister has a range of powers that could be used. These include: appointing additional councillors to enhance decision making in those rare cases where additional support is considered warranted; the Minister reviewing the operations and performance of Fish and Game, a FGC, or the NZC; and dismissing a councillor or a whole FGC for just cause.
How will binding national policy be implemented with regard to regional feedback and costs?	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Binding policies are to be set by the NZC in consultation with FGCs. This process should take account of regional variance and requirements as necessary. • Allocation of funding among FGCs will be determined under a model still to be developed with Fish & Game. • The NZC must ensure adequate funding for FGCs in areas where they have set minimum work programmes.

Compliance and Monitoring

Question	Answer
How will minimum compliance activity be assessed?	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • The NZC will define a compliance policy, in consultation with FGCs. This will include minimum activity levels for national consistency and should guide how local compliance activities are carried out. FGCs will then have to report annually on their compliance activities. • The NZC might also set binding policy for procedures to be used by enforcement officers, and set training standards, etc, in consultation with FGCs. • The expectation is that this should provide greater consistency in approach across the organisation, with policies able to account for local circumstances.

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How will over-monitoring of low-interest species be managed?	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • The NZC will set compliance and monitoring policy in consultation with FGCs to ensure nationally consistent approaches, minimum standards, and methods – potentially including priority species. • Having set the minimum level of monitoring effort, the NZC would guarantee funding for that work (i.e. ensure minimum funding). • Each FGC will then develop its local plan around this framework and this national policy and may choose to increase monitoring effort for particular species or habitats beyond the minimum if desired – this would be up to each FGC to determine. • I expect greater consistency across Fish and Game Councils' activities, which will enable more accurate reporting and national comparisons.
Would the funding allocation model account for the different management input needs for resources in different regions?	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • The funding model is expected to direct the bulk of funding to regions in proportion to licence holder activity to address the impact each fisher/hunter has on a region's resources and habitat. • It will also ensure funding for certain specified FGC activities, national research, and the NZC's work. • My officials will soon consult with you on the funding allocation model. You will have opportunities to input and share your views on how to ensure the allocation model is workable and channels adequate funding to each FGC and the NZC so they can perform their key activities.

Corporate Policies

Question	Answer
Can examples be provided of expected efficiency gains from nationally binding corporate policies?	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • I anticipate efficiencies from reducing duplication of effort and resources, for example where separate regional policies currently address issues that would be better met through a single consistent approach across regions. • I expect Fish & Game will also benefit from greater consistency in business processes and systems, corporate and personnel policies (e.g. determining appropriate salary expectations for similar roles, common in other organisations), and minimum health and safety standards. • Further efficiency gains will come from the NZC setting common templates/forms and timeframes, as well as providing (and employing) specialist staff to work across regions.

Advocacy

Question	Answer
Will changes diminish Fish & Game's advocacy function?	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Fish & Game play an important role in advocating for hunting and fishing interests, including seeking to maintain sports fish and game bird habitat located on land not managed by Fish & Game. I am clear that this must remain a function. Fish & Game advocacy can also have benefits for habitats and ecosystems more widely.

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	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • A national binding advocacy policy will guide FGCs' and the NZC's advocacy actions to ensure they are consistent and such actions are taken in the interests of the organisation as a whole and thus for all licence holders. • Fish & Game will also be required to consider other interests in their decision-making on advocacy work. • The NZC, and sometimes the Minister, will have a role in approving court action relating to advocacy. I know that such actions are not common, and that most Fish & Game advocacy efforts focus on submissions related to resource consent processes, new legislative proposals, and changes to national planning frameworks.
<p>What is the process and timeframe for the NZC/Ministerial approval of court proceedings?</p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • We anticipate that the NZC will establish an advocacy policy for the organisation in consultation with FGCs. This clear framework will guide Fish & Game's priorities and ensure advocacy activities and messaging are consistent across all regions. • All FGC court actions, other than for enforcing offences, will be subject to the direction of the NZC, except when the FGC is challenging the NZC or another FGC. No timeframe is specified in legislation, but I anticipate the NZC will develop time-appropriate procedures (in consultation with FGCs) to ensure that statutory or appeal deadlines are not missed. • Court proceedings (other than for enforcing offences) will be filed by FGCs only with authorisation of the responsible Minister where the proceeding: <ul style="list-style-type: none"> ▪ challenges the NZC or another FGC; or, ▪ involves a conflict of interest; or ▪ may fall outside Fish & Game's statutory functions; or ▪ is inconsistent with Fish & Game's advocacy policies; or ▪ exceeds pre-determined triggering thresholds (e.g. financial cost, reputation risk, or resource demands, etc.) as developed by the NZC, in consultation with FGCs, and approved by the Minister. • In all other cases, court proceedings, other than for enforcing offences, will only be filed with NZC authorisation.
<p>How will conflicts be resolved if the NZC's advocacy overrides regional initiatives?</p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • The NZC will set binding advocacy policy, in consultation with FGCs. FGC representation within the NZC will ensure regional perspectives are considered during this policy development. • I expect Fish & Game to operate as a unified organisation, resolving conflicts through constructive dialogue. • As a last resort, the NZC and will be empowered to intervene in local advocacy when actions are contrary to that policy. • If an FGC is concerned that the NZC is overriding regional initiatives beyond what has been agreed in the advocacy policy, they can raise their concerns with the Minister.
<p>How will regions retain independence in advocacy?</p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • FGCs retain their advocacy roles but must act within the parameters of the advocacy policy defined by the NZC in consultation with FGCs. This ensures advocacy actions are consistent and coherent across the organisation. • Under this umbrella, FGCs will still decide what advocacy activities to undertake, such as submissions on policy and resource consent processes. • FGCs will only require authorisation from the NZC or the Minister before initiating court proceedings (other than for enforcing offences).

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Should the NZC develop an RMA policy with expert panel input?	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • The NZC will be able to develop a binding advocacy policy in consultation with FGCs. The process for developing these policies will not be set in legislation, apart from the requirement to consult with FGCs. • It will be up to Fish & Game to determine whether and when the involvement of an expert panel would be appropriate.
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Management Plans (SFGMPs)

Question	Answer
How will conflicts between SFGMPs and NZC policy be managed?	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • The NZC will define policies in consultation with FGCs and may set minimum SFGMP provisions where relevant binding policy applies. • FGCs will then develop their respective SFGMPs in compliance with legal requirements and the NZC policy framework. • The NZC will provide a template to assist in setting out SFGMPs and addressing common issues to enable consistency. • We would expect best practice to be identified and highlighted by the NZC, and ongoing, constructive dialogue across regions (especially where there are shared borders) and with the NZC as plans are developed.
Should plan terms be reduced to 5 years? [Currently 10 years in leg: CA s.17(m)(5)]	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • There is no plan to reduce the term of the SFGMPs. • However, FGCs may review SFGMPs at any time if warranted and provided it does not create unnecessary burdens. The only legislative requirement is that SFGMPs must be reviewed no later than 10 years after their approval date.
How do national policies support regional flexibility in planning?	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • NZC policies should be drafted in such a way that allows regions to make their own choices within an agreed framework. • This is the same approach taken in other conservation planning documents: Legislation provides the highest-level direction, then General Policies provide direction and guidance on how the legislation should be implemented in general, and finally the local management plans (informed by both the legislation and general policies) step out more specifically what is to be done in the local context.

Funding Allocation

Question	Answer
Where and when will the model be defined?	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Allocation among FGCs will be determined by a funding model. • I anticipate that the primary legislation will enable this model to be established through secondary legislation, to provide greater flexibility if adjustments need to be made in the future. • No timeframe is specified at this point. However, to minimise disruption to the Fish & Game financial cycle, I anticipate the model will be ready at the start of a financial year. • My officials will consult with you on the funding model in due course.

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<p>Will a cap be considered on the NZC's share (e.g., 10-15%)?</p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • The funding model will ensure funding for key activities, national research, and the NZC's work, with the bulk directed to regions in proportion to licence holder activity. • My officials will be working with a Fish & Game working group in due course, and I will make the final decision on the allocation model having heard the views of Fish & Game.
<p>What's the difference between the Financial Strategy and the Funding Allocation Model?</p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • We anticipate that a financial strategy (developed by the NZC, in consultation with FGCs) sets the larger and long-term goals and aims of Fish & Game as an organisation. • The funding allocation model (set in secondary legislation) will determine how licence-fee revenue is allocated among FGCs. • I anticipate consistency between the financial strategy and the funding allocation model, helping ensure annual funds are directed in line with the organisation's strategy – taking account of short and long-term needs.
<p>What safeguards exist if allocation causes instability?</p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Once the NZC is responsible for collecting and distributing the licence fee, the model should provide greater certainty for FGCs in the amount of funding they receive each year (based as far as possible on licence holder activity) and greater discretion for individual FGCs in how they spend funds allocated to them. • The NZC (comprising representatives of each FGC) will continue to decide how much funding the NZC receives – as is the case currently. • I decided to include the allocation model in secondary legislation as this provides greater flexibility if adjustments are needed in the future.
<p>How will allocation be determined fairly?</p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • I expect the model to direct the bulk of funding to regions in proportion to licence holder activity, while ensuring funding for key activities, national research, and the NZC's work, and including a discretionary fund. • My officials will work closely with you to develop the allocation model. You'll have opportunities to provide input and share your views to help ensure the model is fair and workable.
<p>Will Fish & Game lose funding as a consequence of the changes?</p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Fish & Game is funded primarily from licence fees and does not receive government funds. Total funding will continue to be dependent on licence sales. I would hope boosting licence sales through a variety of different actions, and supporting Kiwis to hunt and fish, will be an ongoing consideration for Fish & Game. • The NZC will play a greater role in managing revenue, and reducing inefficiencies, and the funding model will ensure funds are directed where they are needed most to support hunting and fishing in line with licence holder activity. • I'm aware that some FGCs have secured alternative funding mechanisms to deliver projects that benefit anglers and hunters. I want to encourage FGCs to explore this pathway as a way to fund projects that would support and inspire more people to hunt and fish.

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Reporting and Auditing

Question	Answer
How will consistency of Operational Work Plans with SFGMPs and NZC policy be audited?	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Developing operational work plans and SFGMPs is not a new requirement. I expect these plans to be developed in alignment with each other, and I anticipate this sound approach will continue in the future, while also taking into consideration NZC's binding policies. • The NZC will have an explicit function to review the activities and performance of FGCs and of Fish & Game as a whole and can require information for audits. • As a last resort, the Minister will also have the ability to review the operations and performances of Fish & Game as a whole, or individual FGCs or the NZC.
Who audits NZC performance?	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Under the proposed new system, the NZC will need to prepare an annual operational work plan (something it is already doing) and will compile a combined annual report (NZC + FGCs) for the Minister to present to Parliament. • I expect this combined annual report to indicate how performance across the organisation compares against the planned objectives, with a common reporting framework enabling easier comparisons and helping consistency.
Why report legal proceedings to DOC?	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • DOC is responsible for administering the Wildlife Act 1953 and Conservation Act 1986, under which FGCs do the enforcement of hunting and fishing regulations. DOC needs to be kept aware of whether the legislation is meeting the needs of the necessary enforcement work and more generally ensure there is consistency where appropriate, so that changes to legislation can be made if required.
How can reporting be streamlined to avoid duplication and cost?	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • The NZC will have a new function to determine the forms and templates to be used by FGCs for work planning, performance reporting, and the SFGMPs. These standards are expected to reduce duplication of effort across FGCs in the long term, contribute to cost savings, and make it easier for licence holders to see and compare performance across the organisation. • It remains a requirement under the Conservation Act 1987 for each FGC to prepare a separate annual report – as each FGC has its own management and operational plans, activities and associated expenditure. However, under the proposed new framework, this process will be simplified through all 13 reports being combined into one before submission to Parliament. • FGCs remain locally responsible for managing expenditure (including non-licence fee revenue) and must therefore be audited each year. I've heard suggestions about whether FGCs and the NZC should have a single financial auditor. I believe such an approach is likely to support some good efficiencies and help consistency across the organisation but is an internal matter for Fish & Game to determine.

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Licence System

Question	Answer
What efficiencies will be gained?	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> The NZC will issue all sports fishing and game hunting licences and receive all fee revenue. This should reduce the administrative burdens (such as avoiding triple handling of licence money) in the current system and provide more effective management and distribution of licence fee income.
Will agents contract directly with the NZC?	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> This is an administrative decision for Fish & Game. However, it is anticipated that licences will continue to be sold via a central website operated by a specialist contractor, with agents selling via a portal (i.e., no change to current practice). DOC does not intend to specify the contractual arrangements between the NZC and sales agents.

Governance and Elections

Question	Answer
Will voting be electronic only? Can voting move past mailed forms?	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Regulations will provide for both electronic (online) voting and postal voting. Voting papers may be sent to voters via email/internet links or by post, depending on each voter's choice.
Will lack of subregions discourage amalgamations?	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> The proposals will remove subregions because – against their intent – they do not provide for better local representation. All voters vote for candidates in all regions, and a candidate can stand in any region. Subregions also complicate voting administratively and for voters. At present my officials and I cannot foresee a reason why the removal of subregions may discourage mergers but would welcome any insight.
Should regions retain up to 12 councillors for representation?	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Having 12 members on FGCs does not support agile decision making and has proven difficult to sustain with many councils unable to attract a good range of suitable candidates. Shifting to eight members is a better match for Fish & Game's size and membership. It should also ease organisation of meetings, streamline decision making and make it easier to fill vacancies. Going forwards, FGCs will have 8 members (not including co-opted or appointed members), unless seats are unfilled at election time or there are resignations that FGCs decide not to fill – in line with the legislation.
Is this an attempt to centralise Fish & Game?	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> The reforms give the NZC the role that was intended when Fish & Game was established in 1990. The reforms clarify what roles the NZC has, and what roles it does not have. The NZC is expected to alleviate the administrative burden on FGCs and provide general direction to ensure greater cohesion of Fish & Game. Fish & Game's regional structure is key to its success, and this is to be retained. The reforms will free up FGCs to do what they do best. They will retain their authority over local hunting and fishing conditions and will

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	be able to focus on improving opportunities for their hunters and anglers.
Clarification required on the proposed change to voting in elections where it is stated that individuals who have held a Season Licence in the three years leading up to the election are eligible to vote. Does this mean holders must have maintained a Season Licence consecutively for three years, or does it include anyone who held a Season Licence at any time during those three years? If the latter, it is submitted that a one-time licence holder from 3 years ago will add very little to the FGC	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Any person who has held an adult hunting or fishing licence at any point in the 35 months immediately preceding the close of the roll for the election will be able to vote. Junior licence holders who have not bought a licence since they turned 18 will not be able to vote in Fish & Game elections. • Additionally, the secondary holder (spouse, civil union partner, or de facto partner of the primary holder) of a family licence may vote. • This approach supports the objective of increasing engagement and representation through the election process. • Should an individual who has only held a single day licence wish to run for council, there should be nothing stopping that person from doing so. It would be for electors to decide on whether to elect them.

Treaty Partners, Other Interests and Minister's Powers

Question	Answer
What does 'conflict with other natural resources users' mean?	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • FGCs already must have regard to impacts on other natural resources users (e.g., farmers, mana whenua) when developing Sports Fish and Game Management plans. • This proposal adds a requirement for FGCs to outline in SFGMPs how they will manage conflict between, for example, game bird management and farming operations (i.e., "other users of habitat").
Why would the Minister need the power to prohibit the transfer of sports fish to a location where they already exist?	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • The proposed power addresses situations where releasing additional fish could conflict with Treaty expectations or scientific advice. For example, iwi may request that releases into a put-and-take fishery cease to allow native species to recover, or experts may warn that introducing fish could harm wild genetics and undermine licence holder interests. This power is intended as a backstop measure only. In the first instance, we would expect Fish and Game to manage these issues.
Will the Minister's power to prohibit fish transfers apply to existing sites?	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Yes. The proposed power will allow the Minister to prohibit the transfer of live sports fish to a location where the species already exists. We anticipate the new power would be used only in rare circumstances. • For nearly all situations, FGCs will continue to be able to release fish to waterbodies where the species already exists without requiring further authorisation.
What does 'needs of other users' mean in practice?	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • The resources FGCs manage are often located on habitat owned and used by other people – for example, ducks living in farmland. The existing need for FGC to have regard to the needs of other users of sports fish and game bird habitat is being clarified.

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	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • This is not to suggest that Fish & Game does not take this type of interaction seriously already. Rather, it is to ensure continued good relationships and maintain Fish & Game's social licence, while protecting hunting and fishing resources. • Not compromising aviation safety or conservation of isolated populations of threatened native fish (i.e., non-migratory galaxiids) will be requirements, given their importance.
Can the Minister amend Fish and Game notices without prior consultation back to regions?	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • The Minister already has the power under the Wildlife Act to amend the Open Season for Game Notice before approving it. • The proposed changes would extend a similar power to Anglers Notices. • The intention is to help speed up processes, and remove the risk of a potential impasse that could undermine confidence in the regulatory regime. Currently, without this power, the Minister must either approve a notice as presented, or if the Minister considers there are inappropriate provisions, refer it back for reconsideration and resubmission. • If a FGC does not agree to changes, the Minister faces an all-or-nothing choice to delay the start of the fishing season or accept provisions the Minister considers are inappropriate. • In reality, these situations rarely arise. The Minister works with relevant FGCs to discuss particular provisions of concern to reach a sensible way forward. This provision remains of benefit in these circumstances to speed up agreement of the Notice without having additional administrative burdens to refer back and resubmit.

Transition and Implementation

Question	Answer
How will DOC support reforms?	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • It will be up to Fish & Game to implement the reforms as an independent organisation. However, DOC will remain available to provide guidance if needed or clarify any parts of proposals that may be unclear.
What is the timeframe for secondary legislation?	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Timing of introduction of secondary legislation is currently being considered, and is linked with Parliamentary timeframes for consideration of the primary legislation.
We appreciate that government priorities are demanding and that parliamentary timetables may shift. Could you please provide an update on the expected timeline for the new Fish & Game Act and the key steps along the way? If the timeframe remains the same as that previously outlined to the organisation by DOC,	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Passing the Fish and Game Councils Bill (the Bill) remains one of my top priorities. • Timeframes are dependent on a number of factors, including drafting the Bill itself, consideration by the Cabinet and time for good consideration in Parliament. • Fish & Game will be kept up to date with progress.

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confirmation of that would suffice.	
Will an exposure draft of the Act be available for comment?	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • It is unusual for the Government to release an exposure draft of a Bill. It is typically only done when there are highly technical matters to be determined through the legislation. • The policy intent behind this Bill has already been released and will be reflected in the draft legislation. • The Bill will become publicly available after it has been introduced to Parliament. • The timeline for achieving Cabinet approval for introducing the Bill and the Bill being introduced to Parliament is very slim – usually a matter of days. There would be limited, if any, benefit to Fish & Game seeing a draft of the Bill prior to introduction. • The Select Committee is the best place for consideration of the Bill, and ensuring the drafting meets the policy intent agreed. Fish & Game will have an opportunity to make comments on the details in the Bill at that point.

General questions you may have

Question	Answer
What are the core changes?	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • The aim is to support Fish & Game as a strong, credible and consistent regulator of the resources, and provide value for money for licence holders. • The reforms will clarify the roles of regional FGCs and the NZC. • The NZC will collect and distribute the licence fee to better support the core functions of the organisation and to ensure a transparent and predictable funding mechanism. • Decision-making within Fish & Game will be modernised by, for example, reducing the number of councillors on each FGC, raising professional standards, and broadening eligibility to vote in and stand for Fish & Game elections. • Ministerial powers will be revised to improve accountability including providing backstops as needed, such as filling gaps in expertise on FGCs. For example, I will be able to appoint up to two additional regional councillors where needed. • Other changes aim to remove bureaucracy and modernise the organisation by, for example, enabling online meetings and online voting.
Weren't the changes implemented by Fish & Game following the 2021 governance enough?	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • The 2021 Governance Review's purpose was to assess whether Fish & Game's governance and structure were still "fit for purpose" in contemporary New Zealand. The review made 36 recommendations. • I understand that Fish & Game implemented some of the recommendations made following this 2021 Governance Review, however, others required legislative changes to the Conservation Act 1987 and the Wildlife Act 1953. • The current reform has a wider remit, including consideration of the functions of Fish & Game.

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	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Legislative amendments are necessary to bring Fish & Game up to the standards of similar public entities and to improve the organisation's ability to conduct its statutory functions and improve its efficiency.
Under the new framework, what are the NZC and FGCs' respective roles?	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> FGCs will retain decision-making authority over regional hunting and fishing conditions. They will also have discretion on the use of the funding provided to them. The NZC will be responsible for collecting licence fees and allocating revenue across the organisation. The NZC will set policies for standard approaches to activities like monitoring, compliance, advocacy, planning, and reporting. The NZC will have a stronger coordination role in policy and direction setting in particular limited areas to provide for a more unified and nationally consistent regulator. This role will be carried out in consultation with FGCs. The NZC, and sometimes the Minister, will have a role in approving court action relating to advocacy.
When will these changes come into effect?	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> The Bill must first be introduced and considered by Parliament, including taking account any recommendations from the Select Committee. This process may result in changes to the Bill Once the Bill receives Royal Assent, changes will start to come into effect. I am providing for a transition period to ensure alignment with Fish & Game processes and to minimise disruption to the organisation's day-to-day activities. As the Bill progresses through Parliament, I will have a clearer view of the best timing for implementing changes.
Why have a stand-alone Act?	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Creating a stand-alone Fish and Game Councils Act, like the Game Animal Council Act 2013, formally acknowledges Fish & Game's important role in the hunting and fishing sectors. The Fish and Game Councils Act will nonetheless be interlinked with relevant provisions in the Conservation Act 1987 and the Wildlife Act 1953. The creation of a stand-alone Fish and Game Councils Act is not intended to alter the organisation's existing functions or responsibilities but will clarify who carries out these roles.

Paper Title	7.2 Grey Teal Status Change
Author	Ian Hadland, Chief Executive November 2025
Purpose	For Discussion and Decision
Executive Summary	<p>Grey teal remain protected under the Wildlife Act despite being moved to Schedule 3 in 2010, a change intended to address accidental shooting rather than create a huntable species.</p> <p>A pathway now exists for regulated hunting through Ministerial notification, but this would require robust population data, a clear harvest and risk-management framework, and comprehensive iwi and stakeholder engagement. It is recommended that NZC coordinate an approach to the Minister of hunting and fishing.</p>
Discussion/Analysis	Regional feedback shows mixed but generally cautious support, with concerns focused on species identification risks and political sensitivity. Given the statutory requirements, meaningful engagement, and likely timelines, any proposal would target the 2027 gamebird season.
Links to Previous Papers/Decisions	Requested from last meeting of Council
Attachments (if any)	Appendix 1 – 2024 Response from the Minister
Recommendation	<i>That, if agreeable, the Otago Council writes to the New Zealand Council requesting that it exercise its coordination powers to seek the declaration of an open season for grey teal through Ministerial notification.</i>

Decision Record	Moved by: Seconded by: <div style="text-align: right;">Carried / Lost:</div>
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Grey Teal Status Change

Background

In 2010 Grey teal (*Anas gracilis*) were moved from being absolutely protected (i.e., not on any schedule, meaning maximum protection) into Schedule 3 of the Wildlife Act. *Schedule 3* is the category for “wildlife that may be hunted or killed subject to Minister’s notification.” Despite being in Schedule 3, grey teal did not become a game (hunnable) species – this would have required a move to schedule 1 of the Act. So in practice, they remain protected from legal hunting.



There were several reasons which prompted the change in status including that grey teal often fly in close formation with mallard ducks and are accidentally shot by recreational hunters. Because of this, the change reduced the penalty for unauthorized shooting: previously the fine could be up to NZD \$100,000, but after the move to Schedule 3, the maximum fine for shooting them in error was dropped to \$5,000 — matching the penalty for shooting game birds out of season. The change acknowledges the risk of accidental shooting, but doesn’t necessarily open the door to unrestricted recreational hunting.

Is the status change an opportunity?

The 2010 change shows a precedent – grey teal were already “downgraded” from total protection to a schedule that allows possible regulated take. Any future proposal to make them a huntable species would build on this: rather than needing to add them to Schedule 1 (game), you could argue for a Ministerial notice under Schedule 3 — which might be more politically and legally feasible, depending on science and stakeholder support.

Ex Staff member John Dyer wrote to the Minister of Hunting and Fishing in 2024 making a case for grey teal to be added to the schedule of gamebirds. The Ministers reply is attached as Appendix 1.

What would need to happen to make them a huntable population?

Making grey teal huntable, either via a schedule change or subject to the Ministers notification, would require a multi-step, statutory and management process;

1. **Robust population and sustainability evidence** - High quality, peer-reviewed data showing national population size, trend, distribution and that a sustainable annual harvest is biologically feasible.
2. **Risk assessment and management plan** - A harvest model, proposed seasons, bag limits, regional rules, monitoring and compliance strategy, and adaptive management to reduce risk to populations and non-target species.
3. **Stakeholder and Treaty (iwi/tāngata whenua) engagement** - Māori consultation under the Crown’s obligations, local communities, conservation NGOs, and

recreational hunters. Cultural values and customary non-commercial harvest rights would be part of the discussion.

4. **Ministerial/statutory change to the Wildlife Act schedules.** - Gamebird species are controlled through the Wildlife Act (Schedule 1 and associated regulations). Changing a species' legal status requires a formal process via the Department of Conservation and the Minister of Conservation (and possibly Orders in Council to make an amendment to schedules as provided for under the Act). DOC administers the Act.
5. **Public consultation and final decision** - Legal and policy change would typically include public consultation and could be politically sensitive (wildfowl protection is often contentious). A final regulatory or legislative decision would be required.

Practical and political considerations

- Even if biologically sustainable, there are strong cultural, conservation and welfare considerations (including iwi views and conservation NGO positions) that often make downgrading protection politically difficult. The 2010 changes to protection levels show precedent for selective changes, but each species' case is handled individually and could be controversial.
- There would need to be cross regional support, and backing from New Zealand Council, to make a proposal to the Minister. Below is a summary of the feedback from other regional managers:

Region	Comment
Northland	Not been raised by their Council in recent years, acknowledges there may be identification issues raised with brown teal int northland.
Auckland/Waikato	After a long history of pursuing a change in status, the last term of council voted down a request to have their status reviewed in favour of hunting. New Council may have a different view.
Eastern	Have been monitoring grey teal for over 20 years in anticipation of a potential move to gamebird schedule.
Hawkes Bay	No response.
Wellington	Not discussed the matter formally.
Taranaki	Taranaki Council would like to seek minister notification for declaring and open season. Also gathering information to support a case.
Nelson/Marlborough	No formal discussion on the topic but noted that there is likely support for a reclassification as a gamebird. Suggests one option may be for the season to be subregion specific to safeguard against other protected species.
North Canterbury	Not discussed at Council in recent times. Species misidentification, particularly Brown Teal considered a risk.
Central South Island	Council likely neutral on the topic.
Southland	(Chair) Not discussed at recent meeting. Thinks it may be difficult to get traction on given potential misidentification with other species.

West Coast	Not discussed by WC Council.
NZC	No formal position but noted a letter from Minister on topic from 2024 (Appendix 1)

Next steps

Engage with the New Zealand Council to coordinate a formal request to the Minister for Hunting and Fishing to exercise his powers to notify a grey teal hunting season, with terms, areas, and bag limits to be determined. If approval is not granted, seek clarity from the Minister on the additional information, analysis, or consultation required to support a favourable future decision.

In parallel, regional councils should commence early engagement with iwi/hapū and key stakeholder groups to identify potential issues, build support, and address any concerns associated with the proposal.

Timing

It is unlikely that this work can be completed in time for deliberations on the 2026 gamebird hunting season. Accordingly, any proposal developed should be directed toward the 2027 gamebird hunting season.

Recommendation

That, if agreeable, the Otago Council writes to the New Zealand Council requesting that it exercise its coordination powers to seek the declaration of an open season for grey teal through Ministerial notification.

Appendix 1

Hon James Meager

Minister for the South Island
Minister for Hunting and Fishing
Minister for Youth
Associate Minister of Transport



13 MAR 2025

John Dyer

JMC-20 / CORM-1485

By email: johnwadyer@xtra.co.nz

Dear John,

Thank you for your letter dated 3 December 2024 asking whether grey teal could become a game species. You also wrote to the Minister of Conservation and I am, therefore, responding to you on his behalf as well.

This issue has been raised with me recently, and I have asked for some advice on options that might be available for making grey teal a game species.

Although the population of grey teal has increased (including through the efforts of hunters), there are other important factors I am required to consider when proposing changes to species included in Schedule 1 of the Wildlife Act. I am advised that making grey teal a game species could risk harm to populations of threatened brown teal which are now being established throughout the country. The two species can be difficult to tell apart when in flight, particularly in situations with difficult light. While, brown teal numbers are increasing, the species is far from secure.

Other factors would also be important, including considering the views of iwi Māori, conservation groups, other interested groups, and the public more generally if any proposed changes to the legal status of grey teal were to be considered.

I appreciate your interest in this matter and thank you for taking the time to write.

Warm regards,

A handwritten signature in blue ink, appearing to read 'James Meager', written over a light blue background.

Hon James Meager
Minister for the South Island
Minister for Hunting and Fishing
Minister for Youth
Associate Minister of Transport

cc Hon Tama Potaka, Minister of Conservation

Paper Title	7.3 2025 Anglers Notice Management Review and Issues and Options
Authors	Jayde Couper and Mason Court – Fish and Game Officers November 2025
Purpose	For Decision
Executive Summary	<p>This report details the findings of the 2025 Anglers Notice review conducted under the newly ratified Regulation Setting Procedure and Policy, utilising biological data, angler usage trends, and compliance feedback to propose regulatory updates for the Otago region.</p> <p>Key recommendations focus on simplifying the regulations by removing the bag limit exemption to align with national rules, permitting scented soft baits, and removing the treble hook restriction in Designated Waters based on recent scientific evidence.</p> <p>The review also balances opportunity and protection by proposing new winter access on the Tahakopa and Tautuku estuaries while extending Designated Waters status to the entire Lochy River.</p> <p>Council is recommended to approve the changes outlined in Table 1 for public consultation. Changes will be sent to key stakeholders and Otago licence holders for consultation. Staff will summarize feedback and present a draft Anglers Notice to the Council's January meeting. After Council ratification, it moves to the National Council, DoC lawyers, and the Minister for final approval.</p>
Discussion/Analysis	<p>This analysis evaluates biological data, angler usage trends, and compliance feedback to ensure regulations remain fit for purpose under the Conservation Act and the new Regulation Setting Policy.</p> <p>The discussion weighs the statutory requirement to maximise angler opportunity against the risks of fishery depletion and habitat degradation, particularly in pressure-sensitive catchments.</p> <p>Options focus on simplifying the Anglers Notice to reduce compliance issues and aligning local rules with national standards to improve the angler experience.</p> <p>These regulations seek to balance the risk to licence sales through overly complicated or restrictive regulations with maintaining the healthy populations and varied experiences that anglers require.</p>
Links to Previous Papers/Decisions	2024 Regulations setting policy and procedure.

Recommendation	That the recommended changes in Table 1 are put to stakeholder and public consultation.
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Decision Record	Moved by: Seconded by: Carried / Lost:
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2025 Anglers Notice Management Review and Issues and Options

1. Process

This report covers the second and third step of the Anglers Notice review under the newly adopted Regulation Setting Procedure and Policy.

The next step of the Procedure is for Council to indicate which regulations go to consultation and their intention regarding which regulations they expect to change.

These intended changes will then be sent to key stakeholders including iwi and Otago licence holders for consultation.

Staff will then summarise this feedback to Council alongside a draft Anglers Notice for presentation at the January meeting, which when ratified by Council will be sent to the National Council for their approval, alongside DoC lawyers and then the Minister for final approval.

2. Management Review: Summary of Findings

2.1 Neighbouring Regions

Central South Island Fish and Game Council have just completed their triennial review last year, so intend to make no changes this year. Changes from their triennial review, relevant to OFG are the introduction of allowing scented soft baits in spin fishing waters and the reduction of the Sea Run Salmon season bag limit to one salmon in response to the severely low salmon spawning populations observed in 2025.

Southland Fish and Game Council are not looking at making any changes to their Anglers Notice.

2.2 Initial Mana Whenua Consultation

We initiated Mana Whenua engagement to guide the review process, as required by the *Otago Fish & Game Regulation Setting Policy* (Couper & Priest, 2024). We received no feedback on this topic.

Separately, the Rangatahi Tumeke Charitable Trust submitted a request regarding their operations. Over the past 12 years, the Trust has hosted more than 350 rangatahi (ages 12–17) at camps in the Catlins to help them reconnect with their Māori culture, self-identity, and the environment. The Trust borrows equipment from Southland Fish & Game and holds group licences to fish the Tahakopa River (Papatowai), Tautuku Estuary, and Waikawa River (Southland region).

Current seasonal restrictions limit their options, as these camps often run in June and September. During these months, the Tautuku Estuary is closed, confining anglers to the lower reaches of the Tahakopa and Waikawa rivers. The Trust requested increased winter angling opportunities to support their work introducing rangatahi to trout fishing.

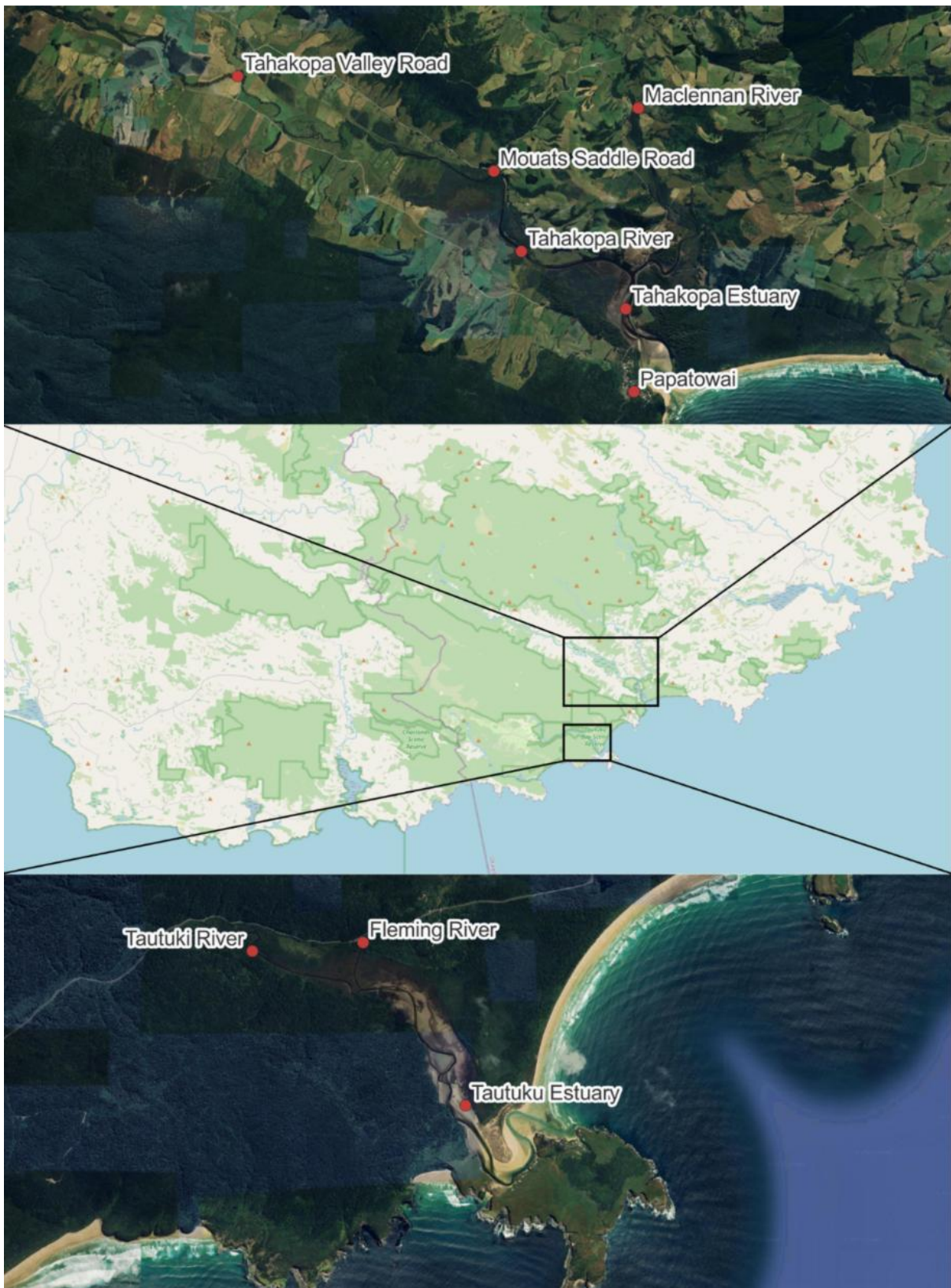


Figure 1: Tautuku and Tahakopa estuaries, with their relative location in the Catlins.

2.2.1 Tautuku Estuary

The Tautuku is the second most southern catchment in Otago (Figure 1) recognised as a potential fishery, situated just north of the Waipati/Chaslands River. Usage varies, with the estuary and mainstem receiving 50–400 angler days annually and averaging 150 (Stoffels & Unwin, 2023). The Fleming, the other main tributary, receives minimal angling effort.

Fishing is generally limited to the estuary, as bush-clad banks make stream angling difficult. The fishery's isolation and tidal nature make significant increases in angling pressure unlikely. Furthermore, because trout do not spawn in tidal reaches, there are no sustainability concerns with liberalising regulations.

2.2.2 Tahakopa Lower Reaches

The Tahakopa is a far larger fishery than the Tautuku. The 1994/1995 National Angling Survey (NAS) recorded up to 1,600 angler days, making it the second most popular fishery in the Catlins behind the Catlins Lake/Owaka catchment. The MacLennan River also contributes a small amount of usage.

While the lower estuary offers good fishing opportunities, particularly at high tide, the river's lower reaches present challenges. Despite a legal marginal strip, good access points are infrequent and often require crossing private land. Furthermore, wetlands, prolific vegetation, and deep, tannin-stained water prevent wading.

We conducted a desktop analysis and site investigation to determine the downstream extent of spawning. While the access issues mentioned above made this difficult, it is unlikely that significant spawning occurs below the Tahakopa township at Tahakopa Valley Road.

2.3 Species Assessment

2.3.1 Upper Leith and Lindsay

Fish & Game has collaborated with the University of Otago to create one of the world's longest-running annual juvenile trout datasets. The data show abundant juvenile trout throughout the Water of Leith and its main tributary, Lindsays Stream, with no immediately clear trends (Figure 2).

Initial analysis by university academics suggests that floods are the primary driver of juvenile densities. Furthermore, lower densities are associated with larger fish sizes.

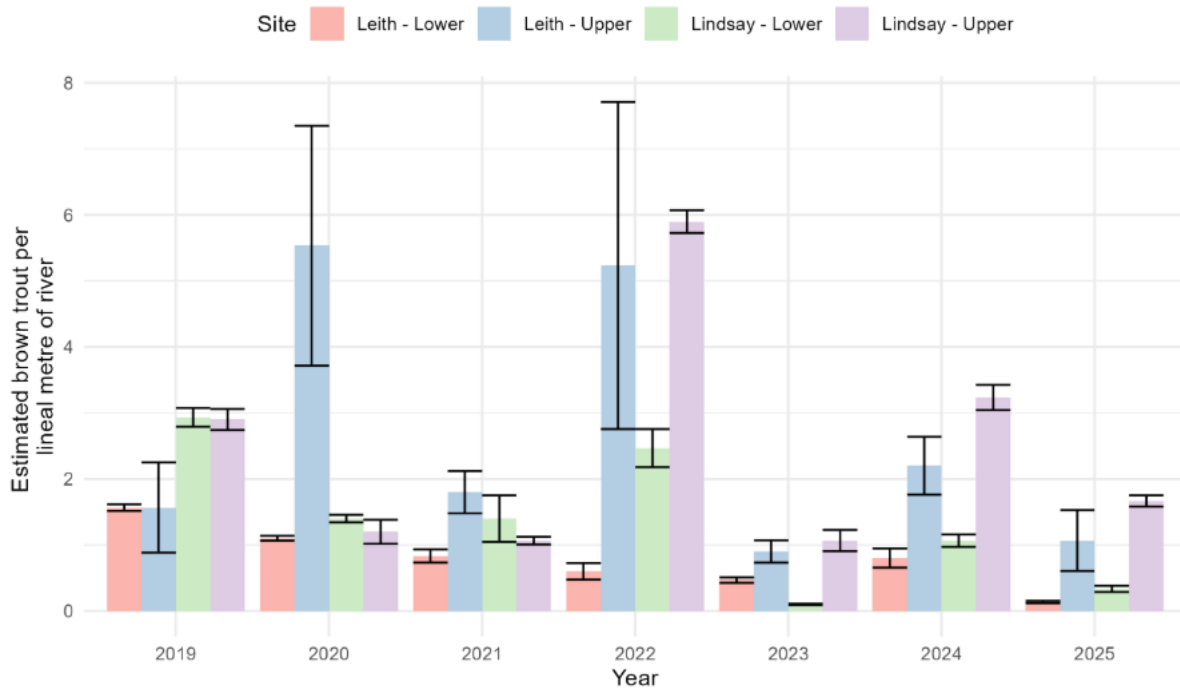


Figure 2: Brown trout densities per lineal metre \pm 1 standard error estimated via 3-pass electric fishing and the Carle-Strub depleting returns method (Carle & Strub, 1978).

The Leith (upstream of Lindsays Stream) and Lindsays Stream itself are currently closed to all fishing; the most restrictive regulation available to the Council. Despite this, the catchment holds a reasonable number of mostly small fish. While these waters are unlikely to become destination fisheries, they offer opportunities for Dunedin locals in an area with limited options outside of stocked still waters.

Local streams often serve as a pathway into the sport for young people who cannot yet drive. Historical closures reportedly stemmed from anglers intentionally foul-hooking fish in large pools and targeting spawning salmon. As the catchment contains abundant spawning and recruitment, largely driven by sea-run fish, and the issues with foul hooking and salmon spawning are already covered by other regulations, the regulations are unnecessarily restricting opportunity.

2.3.2 Southern Lake Populations

Figure 3 displays available creel data for the Southern Lakes. Both Lake Hāwea and Lake Wānaka indicate a decline in the total catch rate of fish per hour when comparing the period prior to 2010 with the post-2010 era. These decreases are 17 percent for Hāwea and 20 percent for Wānaka. It is currently unknown if this decline is statistically significant. Despite the overall drop, the yearly values show considerable overlap, as recent high values exceed previous low values and vice versa.

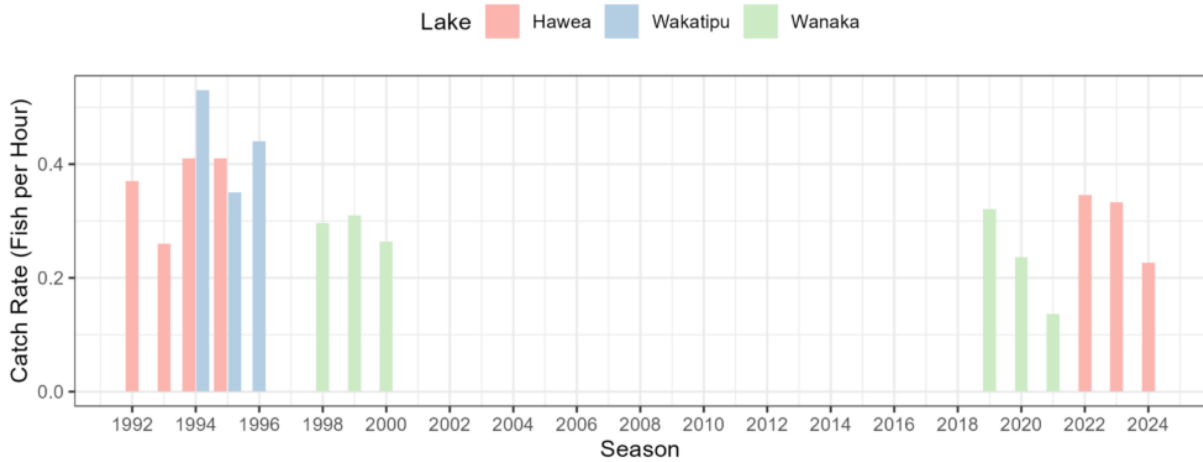


Figure 3: Creel survey total fish caught per hour across three Southern Lakes. Data sourced from Scott & Wright, 2007; Ward & Sowry, 2025.

Figure 4 shows the acoustic density of tracked targets assumed to be fish per the area of lake bottom surveyed. No long-term trends are apparent between the two eras of surveys however recent surveying suggests a drop in the population index for Hāwea and Wakatipu and an increase for Wānaka.

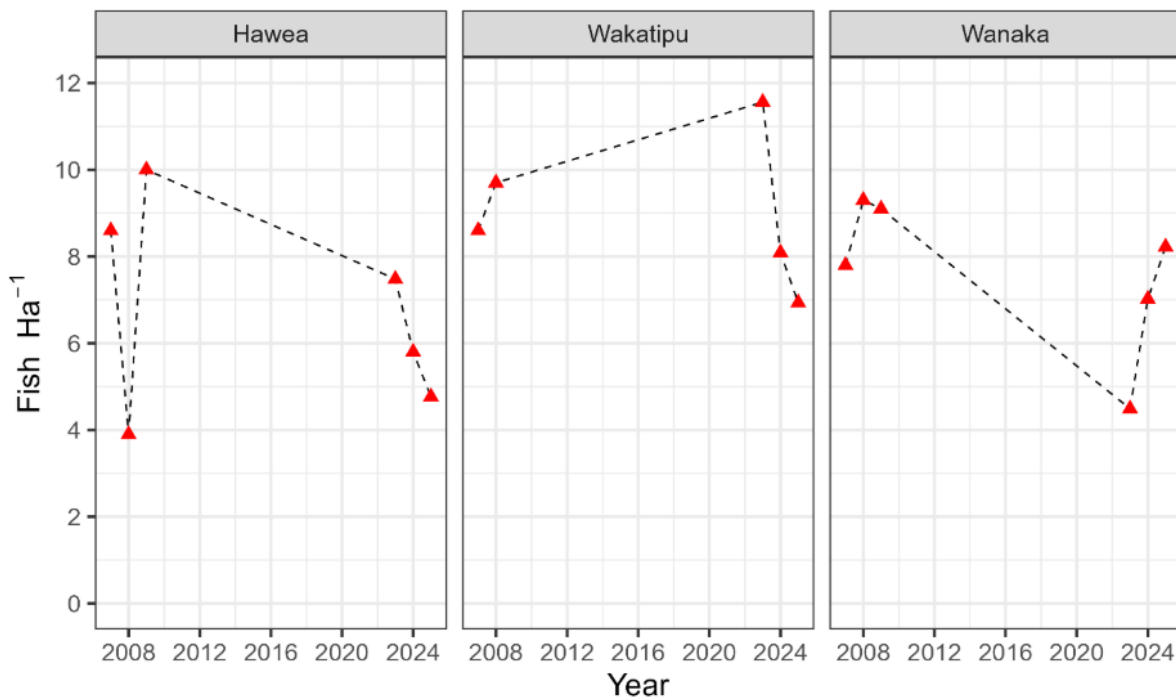


Figure 4: Trout densities from acoustic surveying. Data source: (Couper, 2024; Escobar-Flores & O’Driscoll, 2023; Gauthier, 2009).

Based on the above two charts there is nothing to suggest any major changes in these fisheries over the studied time period.

2.3.3 Diamond Creek

Diamond Creek is currently open from 1 October to 30 May, with a bag limit of one trout and zero salmon. During mid to late May, large numbers of salmon enter the creek to spawn. Although there is no bag limit for these salmon, anglers often target them for catch-and-release fishing, with some individuals reporting catches of up to 50 salmon over a single weekend.

Diamond Creek is the only identified spawning stream within the Lake Wakatipu catchment. While no salmon may be harvested, even with best-practice catch-and-release handling, a percentage of fish will perish due to physiological stress and physical injury. The population currently appears stable; however, there is a risk that if an environmental event occurs and the population is limited, additional pressure on the Diamond Creek spawning population could lead to a decline similar to the collapse seen in the Wānaka catchment.

Closing the creek for May still provides a full season while aligning with the season dates common to brown trout fisheries throughout Otago. This change would also help protect the main portion of the salmon run and reduce pressure on this critical spawning population with limited angling opportunities lost.

2.4 Angling Trends

Figure 5 and Figure 6 show angler usage trends (Angler Days) for the 12 waters with the strongest indications of downward and upward movement over time. We sourced data from the latest National Angler Survey (NAS) (Stoffels & Unwin, 2023).

Sen's slope estimator was used to calculate trend magnitude. This non-parametric method was chosen because it is robust to outliers and does not require normally distributed data, making it well-suited for survey data (Hirsch et al., 1982). The p-value (displayed in each panel) indicates the trend's statistical strength; lower values represent greater certainty.

Many p-values are high (e.g., > 0.05), which is expected given the small sample size. Additionally, the NAS dataset carries relatively high error margins, especially for minor fisheries. Therefore, these results indicate the likely direction of change rather than strictly confirming statistical significance.

Figure 5 suggests that the Waikouaiti, Waipahi, and Lake Hayes fisheries experienced the largest relative declines. While declining trends for Lakes Dunstan, Hāwea, and Wānaka are very uncertain, they remain concerning due to their regional importance.

Glenorchy Lagoons showed the most likely increase in angling pressure (Figure 6). This is a positive outcome, as the last triennial review opened this fishery year-round to create new opportunities and relieve pressure on nearby waters.

The Lochy River and Poolburn Reservoir also require ongoing review as both are sensitive to angling pressure. The Lochy is valued for its remote backcountry nature, while the Poolburn has limited spawning availability.

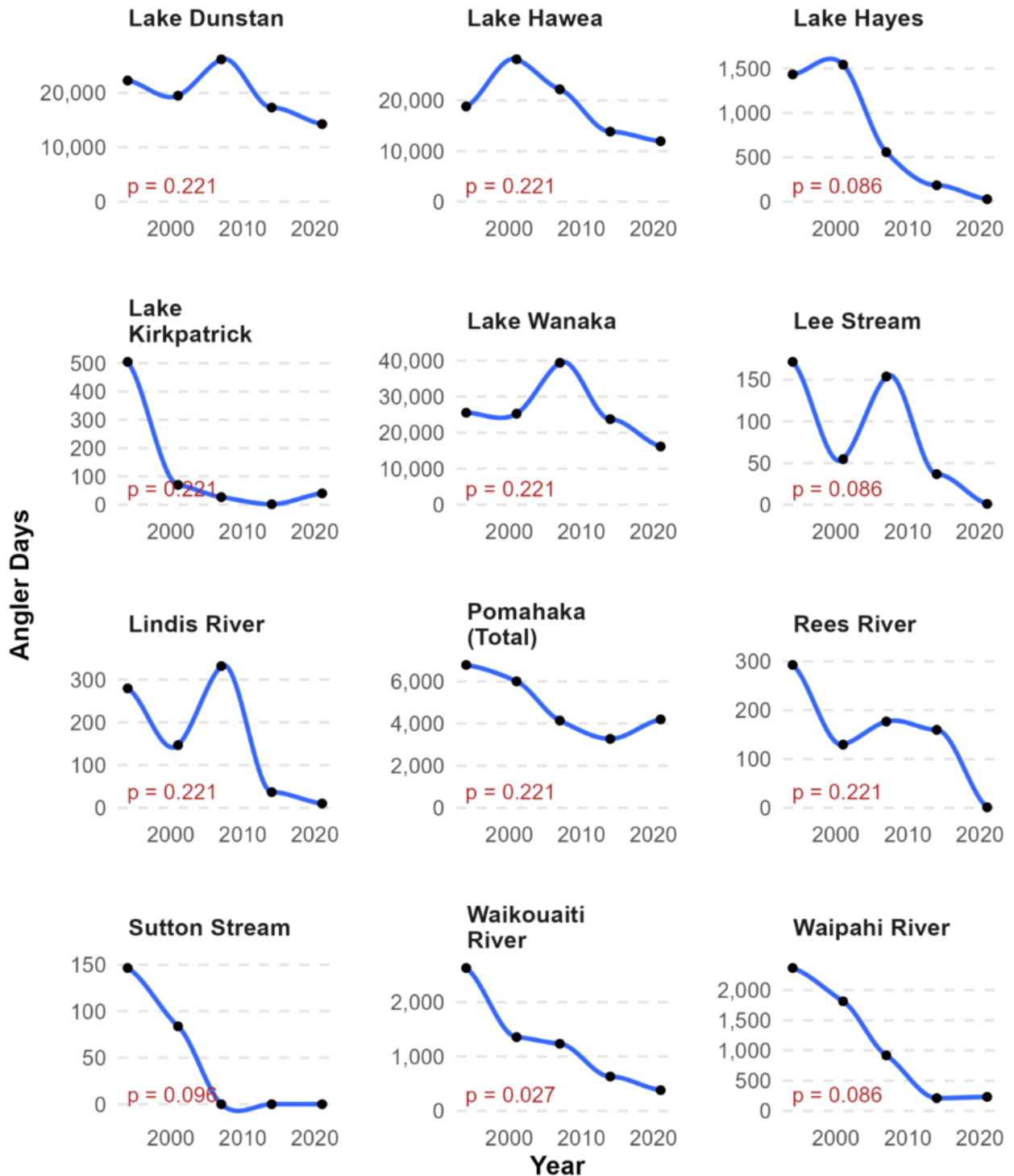


Figure 5: Trends in angler usage (Angler Days) for the 12 angling waters with the lowest p-values for a downward trend. The specific p-value for each trend analysis is displayed in the bottom-left of its panel. Data sourced from the National Angler Survey.

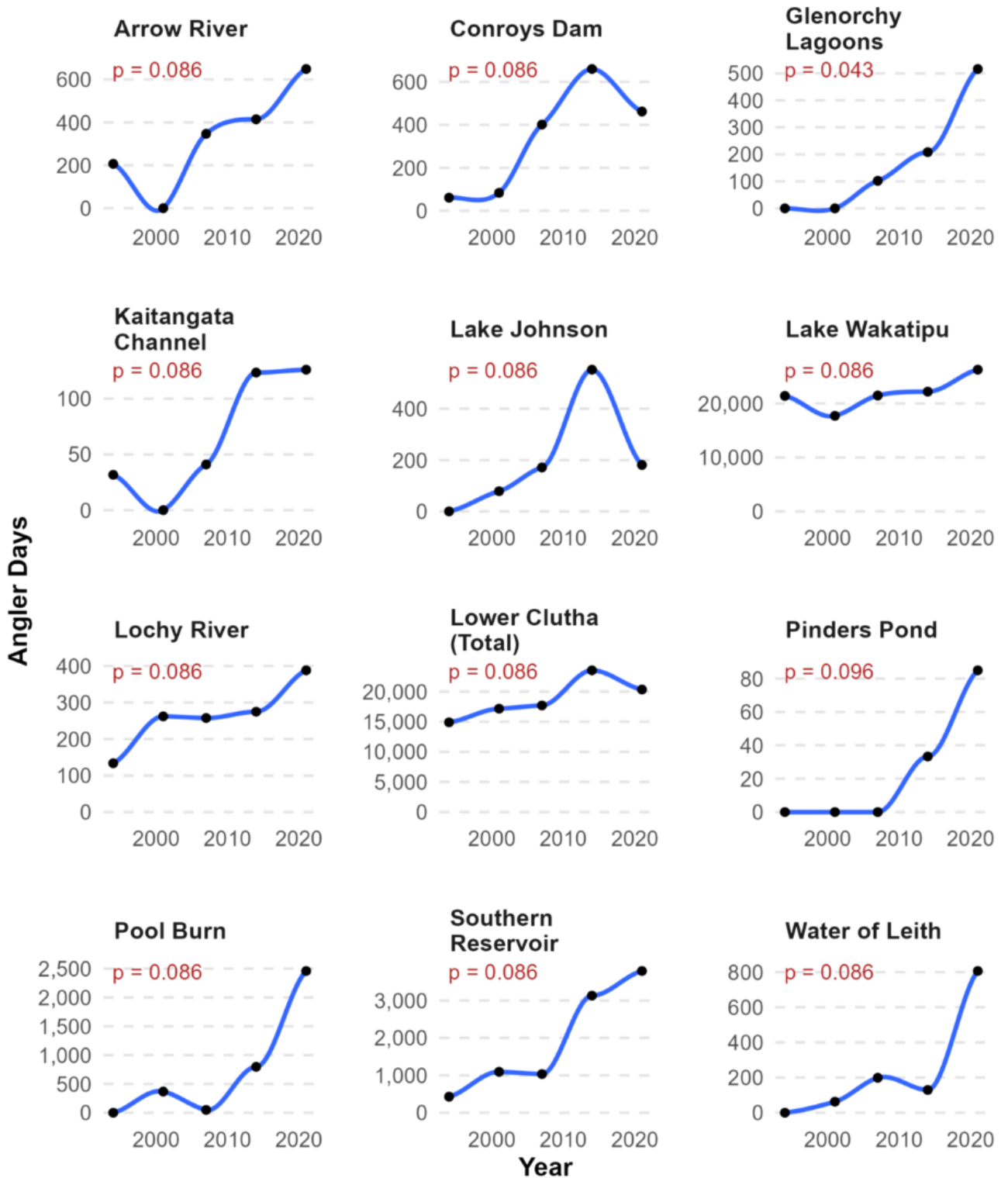


Figure 6: Trends in angler usage (Angler Days) for the 12 angling waters with the lowest p-values for an upward trend. The specific p-value for each trend analysis is displayed in the top-left of its panel. Data sourced from the National Angler Survey.

2.4.1 Lochy River Status

The Lochy River is located midway along the Kingston arm of Lake Wakatipu. Access is restricted to boat or helicopter. These limitations, combined with a large gorge in the middle reaches, concentrate usage to a relatively small length of water. Although Court (2025) notes relatively low total usage of the upper Designated Water fishery above Disputed Creek, Figure 6 suggests usage of the river as a whole is increasing.

The Designated Waters Licence was developed to allow Fish & Game to reduce overcrowding on a small number of sensitive fisheries and improve angler usage monitoring (New Zealand Fish and Game Council, 2023). Consultation determined that Designated Waters status applies to pressure-sensitive fisheries (Kos, 2023). These waters typically share the following features:

- Almost exclusively rivers located in the South Island.
- Clear water with excellent sight fishing and large average fish size.
- High scenic value, often in a wilderness or backcountry setting.
- High levels of non-resident angler use.

The Lochy River meets the majority of these criteria. While there is no evidence of recent high non-resident angler use, analysis of National Angling Surveys prior to 2020 suggests an average of 20 percent. This was the twelfth highest in the region. Recent drift dive surveys show low numbers of very large fish, further confirming its status as a pressure-sensitive fishery. Associated with this low number of upper river fish there is likely to be increasing pressure as anglers move downstream.

Given the sensitivity of this fishery, more intensive monitoring is required to maintain the high-quality experience expected in this remote setting. Designating the entirety of the Lochy River will provide this. Furthermore, this measure will prevent guides and non-resident anglers from shifting pressure to the Lochy when per-diem limits are reached on other fisheries.

2.4.2 Greenstone Controlled Fishery Status

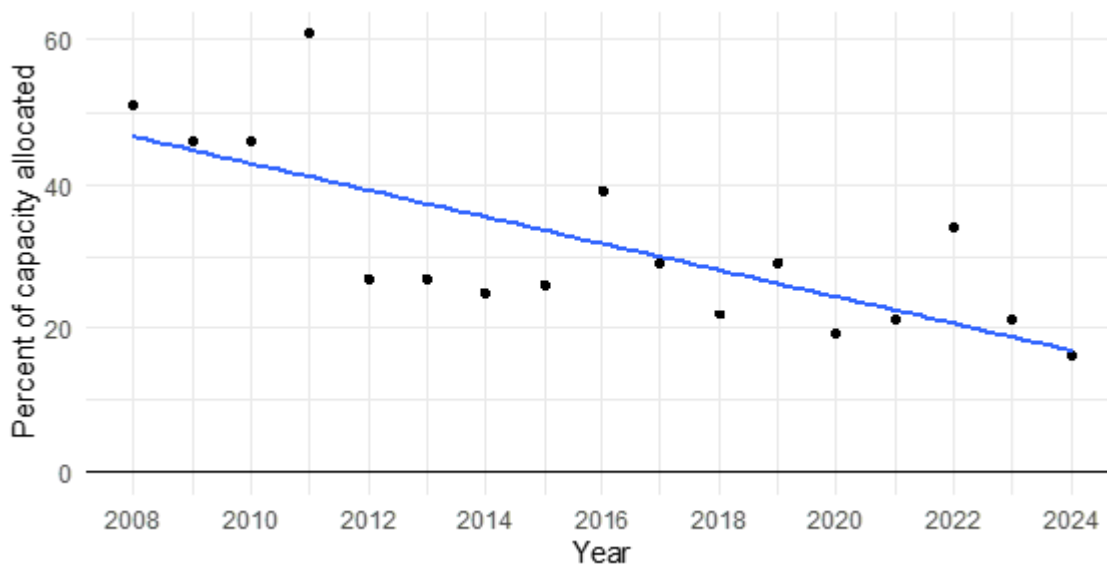


Figure 7: Percent of total available beats allocated by year with the linear trend shown in blue. Sourced from Court (2025).

Usage of the Greenstone Controlled Fishery has declined significantly since its inception ($p < .001$), indicating reduced demand. Despite this, consultation on the Designated Waters programme revealed that anglers want to see more fisheries utilising the controlled fishery format (Kos, 2023).

The controlled system provides anglers with greater certainty that they will secure a fishing reach. This certainty is particularly valuable under the Designated Waters scheme, as non-resident anglers must purchase a per-diem licence before entering the fishery, which lacks mobile coverage.

With the decrease in use, there has been a decrease in angler conflicts with no recent complaints of walk-in anglers being disrupted by helicopters on the Greenstone during the non-controlled period.

2.5 Habitat issues

An analysis of the LAWA dataset (Te Uru Kahika et al., 2025), looking at the shortest available water quality trends has been performed and is tabulated in Appendix 1.

2.5.1 Waikouaiti River

The Waikouaiti River raises concerns regarding both water quality and angler participation. Appendix 1 - Table 3 indicates that two of the four chemical parameters have "very likely degraded" over the last five years. Concurrently, Figure 5 suggests a likely decline in angler usage.

Recent spawning surveys recorded low to medium densities in the lower reaches between Orbell's and Bucklands Crossing. In contrast, higher densities were observed around El Dorado in the upper reaches.

The decline in angler usage is likely driven, at least in part, by the proliferation of willows and pest plants. This vegetation significantly hampers access, making it difficult for anglers to navigate around the large, deep, bedrock-lined pools characteristic of this river.

2.5.2 Waipahi River

The Waipahi River also presents concerns regarding ecosystem health. Biological monitoring at the Waipahi site indicates a strong downward trend (Appendix 1 - Table 2), with both ASPM and MCI scores "very likely degrading" and QMCI "likely degrading."

Water quality data reveals a complex picture. Positive trends are evident in clarity and nitrate-nitrogen, which are improving at both the Waipahi and Cairns Peak sites. However, dissolved reactive phosphorus (DRP) is degrading at both locations. E. coli levels show variability, improving at the Waipahi site but "very likely degrading" at Cairns Peak.

Consistent with these environmental challenges, angler usage is tracking downwards, with statistical analysis suggesting a likely decline ($p=0.086$) (Figure 5).

2.6 Compliance and Clarity

As they represent the organisation's front lines, we surveyed volunteer rangers and licence agents to identify common points of confusion for themselves and the licence holders they assist. Agents provided valuable feedback regarding database issues and misunderstandings about Designated Waters and Sea-Run Salmon endorsements. However, we received no feedback on issues that can be resolved through this specific review process.

We also inspected the compliance database. The majority of recorded offences involved Schedule One breaches, such as fishing without a licence or using two rods. These lie outside the scope of this review. Offences attributed to misunderstanding regional rules were uncommon and largely limited to fishing out of season or failing to hold a Designated Waters licence.

The notes section in the regulations remains a primary source of confusion, as it requires anglers to flip between pages to interpret regulations. Consequently, this review seeks to simplify regulations and minimise the use of notes.

The lower Clutha is a notable outlier. It contains two specific notes: an exemption to the Schedule One ban on using gaffs for large salmon, and a prohibition on using floats between Roxburgh township and the dam.

2.6.1 Note - Clutha Gaffs

The lower Clutha remains the only waterway in the country that permits the use of gaffs. This practice conflicts with modern angling ethics, particularly regarding the increasing precedence of catch and release. While historically limited, the catch and release of sea-run salmon has increased in response to record poor runs.

Removing this exemption would encourage anglers to make deliberate decisions about whether to harvest or release a fish. Furthermore, should a hatchery be established on the Clutha, prohibiting gaffs would align with potential future regulations enforcing the release of wild-spawned salmon.

2.6.2 Note - Clutha Floats

Historically, the ban on floats was attributed to their high effectiveness (Cr. Preedy, pers. comm.) and incompatibility with anglers swinging large metal lures for salmon. However, peak usage creel surveys indicate that pressure on this fishery has declined drastically, dropping from approximately 3.0 anglers per survey in 2013 to 0.45 last summer (Couper, 2025). Additionally, catch rates remain very low, and the proportion of anglers specifically targeting salmon has dropped significantly.

2.6.3 Note - Bag limit exemption

Note 1.4 currently permits an angler to continue fishing for a species after retaining a daily bag limit, provided all subsequent catches are immediately returned to the water with minimal injury. Otago is the only South Island region maintaining this exemption. Nationally, only Northland shares this rule, though it holds very limited trout fisheries they all have a bag limit of two trout. Consequently, the rest of New Zealand effectively prohibits this practice.

This regulatory outlier creates a compliance risk for Otago anglers travelling to other regions. Anglers accustomed to Otago regulations may inadvertently breach the law when fishing elsewhere in New Zealand, where ceasing fishing upon reaching the limit is mandatory.

The premise of Note 1.4 assumes that all released fish survive. However, research demonstrates that even swimming away strong is not a reliable indicator of survival. Dedual (1996) found that mortality in Tongariro River rainbow trout occurred up to 48 hours post-release. Even with best-practice handling, a percentage of fish will perish due to physiological stress and physical injury.

The current exemption creates issues for Otago anglers, as bag limits apply to killed fish rather than the number of fish caught; the daily bag limit meaning the “total number of sports fish that may be taken or killed by any one person during any one day”. If an angler reaches their limit but continues fishing, as permitted, they may hook a trout in a critical location, such as the gills. This presents two options. The angler can release the fish, potentially already dead or mortally wounded meaning that fish is effectively wasted. Alternatively, they can dispatch and keep the fish to act humanely and prevent suffering. In either case the angler is in breach of the Conservation Act due to circumstances largely outside of their control. Removing the

exemption resolves this conflict by requiring the angler to leave the water once they achieve their limit and protects licence holders from unintentional and unavoidable regulation breaches.

Removal of this exemption would require the removal of the zero bag limit fisheries, the upper Lochy and the Routeburn. Otago currently has highly restrictive bag limits (Figure 8), Ideally a region-wide bag limit of two trout minimum would be enacted, affecting 43 named fisheries, almost a third of which are stocked fisheries.

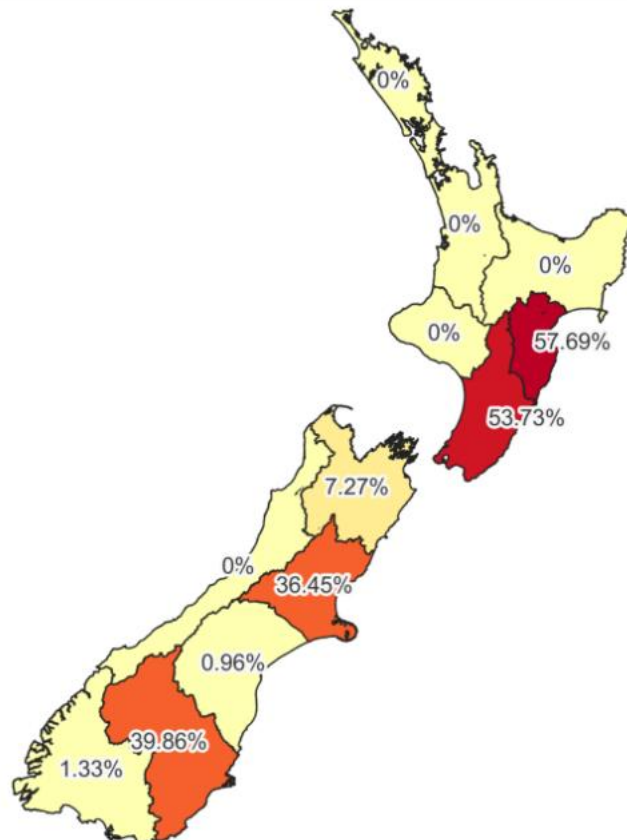


Figure 8: Map of the 12 NZ Fish and Game Regions showing the percentage of listed waterway/ sections with bag limits 1 or less. Fisheries without trout have been removed. Combined salmonid bag limits treated as trout limits.

2.6.4 Daily Bag Possession.

The Schedule One rules state that:

“It shall be permissible to make up the difference between a lesser bag limit prescribed in one place and a higher bag limit prescribed in another if the extra fish are taken in the area with the higher bag limit.

Otago has the following notes that apply to all waterways:

Note 1.2:

“Except in the case of perch for which there is no daily limit, no angler shall on any one day take and kill or be in possession of more than the prescribed daily limit from the waters specified in clauses 2 and 3.

Note 1.3

“In addition to the daily limits specified in clauses 2 and 3 and note 1.2, no angler shall on any one day take, kill or be in possession of more than 6 sports fish from any waters except Lake Onslow.”

These rules establish that:

- There is no limit for perch.
- Anglers are only allowed to catch a total of 6 (non-perch) sports fish from any waterway in a single day (with an exception for Lake Onslow).
- Anglers can only be in possession of a total of 6 (non-perch) sports fish while in the field on any one day (with an exception for Lake Onslow).

These rules are difficult for rangers and anglers to interpret, with circular references back to Clause 2, confusion with perch which are classed as sports fish, redundancy between the terms “take” and “kill”.

The National Rules already prevent bag limit accumulation. An angler moving between waters can only "top up" to the higher bag limit; they cannot add two limits together.

The existing possession rule is presumably included to assist with compliance (preventing anglers from claiming excess fish were caught on a previous day). However, in practice, rangers police this by determining the freshness of the catch. Rangers seldom encounter anglers exceeding bag limits or possessing limits from multiple fisheries.

To simplify the regulations, staff recommend replacing the two existing notes with one simplified note that relies on the National Rules for bag limits and removes the confusing possession stipulations:

Note 1.2: There is no bag limit for perch

2.6.5 Note – Fishing Near Captive Fish

Note 1.1 prohibits fishing in any waters where sports fish are held in captivity, including for display or hatching, or within 100m of such boundaries.

Since Queenstown Bay is already subject to a fully closed season, this regulation effectively applies only to Lonestone Reservoir near the Macraes hatchery outfall. This site is located on private land and is fished only during the OceanaGold family fishing day, which is supported by Otago Fish & Game.

2.6.6 Soft Bait Exemption

The use of soft baits for sports fish in NZ is now common and widespread, yet the current distinction in Otago's regulations between scented and unscented soft baits is confusing and impractical. At present, unscented soft plastics are legally "spinners", while scented versions are "bait". This inconsistency creates frustration for anglers and rangers as they often look identical and are almost exclusively fished with the same active technique.

Otago Fish & Game surveys (Figure 9) show that a lack of success is strongly associated with satisfaction levels and those are related to angler's likelihood of purchasing a future licence (Figure 10) at least for anglers new to the sport.

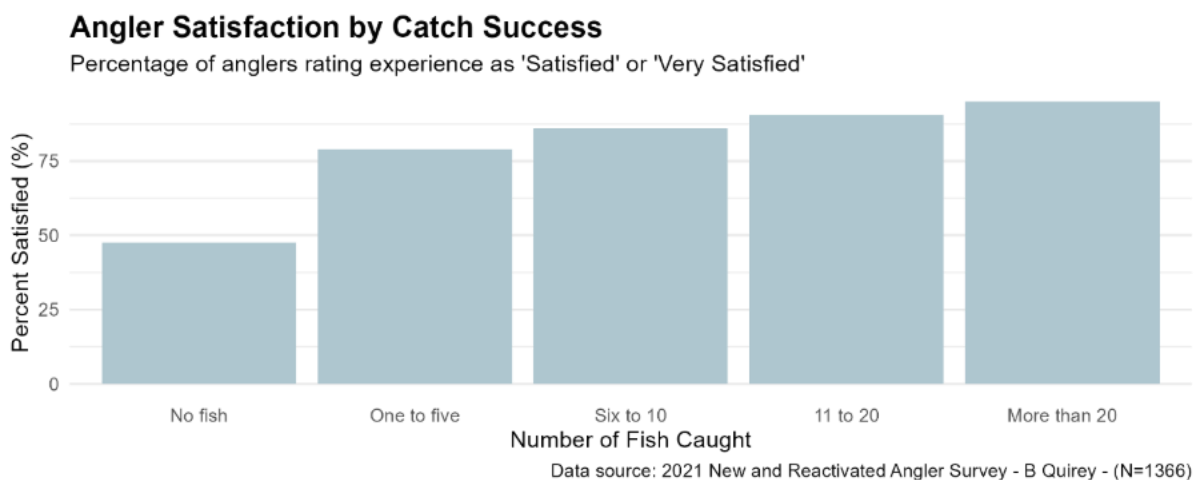


Figure 9: New angler satisfaction vs season success.



Figure 10: New anglers satisfaction against percentage intending to fish the following year.

Simplifying the rules by permitting scented artificial lures in all Otago waters where spin fishing is already allowed would directly support goals of increasing angler opportunity and satisfaction. Allowing the use of these effective lures can improve catch rates, which is crucial

for retaining licence holders and making fishing more accessible and understandable for everyone in the Otago region.

When considering that the West Coast has no waters where bait fishing isn't allowed, three-quarters of regions, both in the South Island and nationally, allow for soft bait use in spin fishing waters. Of our immediate neighbours, CSI brought this change in last year. Southland has had this change for a number of years and reports positive feedback from anglers, observing no negative impacts on fishery sustainability.

2.6.7 Lake McKellar

Since the last review, staff have received semi-regular queries regarding Lake McKellar's status. Located beside McKellar Hut, the lake sits at the top of Beat 1 on the Greenstone River. As an unlisted Upper Clutha waterway, it currently operates under default regulations: an open season from 1 November to 31 May, bait fishing prohibited, and a limit of one trout.

However, the lake also falls within the Greenstone Designated Water. The *Forms and Fees Notice* defines this area as the Greenstone River upstream of the swing bridge at the Greenstone Station Road car park, including all tributary streams flowing into it (such as the Caples River).

Additionally, the lake is included in the Controlled Fishery definition, which covers the catchment upstream of the Sly Burn confluence. However, because no specific beat is allocated to this section, the Controlled Fishery regulation is not currently enforced.

2.6.8 Treble Hooks in Designated Waters

A common source of confusion for anglers and rangers is the hook rule in Designated Waters (Note 8.2). During the last review, the Council adjusted the staff's recommended wording. However, Department of Conservation (DOC) lawyers subsequently rejected this wording, determining that the intent was unclear.

Council's Wording:

The use of any legal lure with more than one hook with one point in a Designated Water is prohibited.

DOC Lawyer's Edit:

Only single-point hooks may be used, and a lure (including flies) may not have more than one hook attached in a Designated Waters fishery in this region.

Because this legal edit occurred after the Council review, this issue has been included in the current review to confirm the Council's intent.

Literature Review on Hook Types

Southland Fish & Game recently completed a literature review on the morbidity and mortality associated with different hook types (Appendix 2 - Table 5). This study prioritised salmonid data, analysing six papers and meta-analyses, some of which summarised dozens of studies.

The review provided strong evidence that there is no significant difference in mortality between fish caught on single hooks versus treble hooks. Contrary to common angler opinion, treble hooks are often ingested less deeply due to their size and shape. Deep hooking (in the gills or stomach area) remains a primary driver of salmonid mortality.

Recent Research and Local Context

More recently, a novel three-year mark-recapture study on the Cowlitz River, Washington (Courter et al., 2023), tagged 5,237 unique salmonids to evaluate catch and release (C&R) survival. While overall C&R mortality was negligible for Coho Salmon and ranged from 3.6% to 10.2% for Spring Chinook Salmon, the study found that specific hook types (barbed vs. barbless, or single vs. multi-hook) did not statistically influence mortality. However, using bait significantly increased the probability of hooking in a critical location (oesophagus or stomach), confirming that gear type influences morbidity.

Local evidence supports the view that capture depth (Dedual, 1996), water temperature (Dedual, 2020), and hooking location (Young, 1999) are the primary drivers of mortality. The vast weight of scientific investigation shows no significant difference in mortality based on number of hooks, hook type or the presence of a barb.

Section 5.4.1(c) of the *Sports Fish and Game Management Plan* (SPGMP) states that "management decisions will be based on the best available information," while the Regulation Setting Policy requires regulations to be "based on the most up-to-date and sound scientific information." Consistent with these policies and the evidence reviewed above, staff recommend that this regulation be removed entirely.

2.7 Providing opportunity and spectrum of angling options

2.7.1 Lake Dispute Season

Lake Dispute is a small high-country lake, accessed via a walking track off the Glenorchy–Queenstown Road. Its current regulations allow an open season from 1 October to 30 April. In comparison, the nearby high-country lakes Moke and Kirkpatrick, located less than 10 km away, have the same two-fish bag limit but are open year-round.

Lake Dispute is reported to have little to no natural spawning (B Sowry, pers comms), with its salmonid population sustained entirely through hatchery releases. Given this, there is no biological reason for it to remain out of alignment with Moke and Kirkpatrick. Aligning its regulations would provide additional angling opportunities while also simplifying and making the regulations consistent across these nearby high-country lakes.

3. References

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4. Recommendations

Table 1: List of staff recommended regulation changes. Council to decide which changes go out to consultation.

Topic	Staff Recommendation	Justification	Note/ Decision
Mana Whenua Consultation			
Tautuku Estuary	Add the Tautuku Estuary to the schedule of listed waters and open it to year-round, boat fishing allowed, all methods allowed.	Opening the estuary improves opportunity, while not affecting spawning which will not occur in this reach. Removing restrictions could help improve relationships with mana whenua, one of councils key strategic priorities	
Tahakopa lower Reaches	Open year-round season (below Tahakopa Valley Rd). Allow boat fishing	Supports Rangatahi Tumeke Trust youth camps; site investigation/ desktop analysis suggests no significant spawning occurs in the lower reaches, and abundant spawning habitat in the upper reaches, making winter fishing sustainable.	
Species Assessments			
Upper Leith and Lindsay	Align upper Leith and Lindsays with the lower Leith; 1 Oct – 30 Apr, FSB, 2 trout, 1 salmon, Boat fishing prohibited.	Electric fishing studies show stable juvenile populations. Provides local opportunity particularly for youth. Foul hooking/spawning issues already covered by existing regulations.	
Southern Lake populations	Status Quo	Sum of evidence shows no major shifts in population indices or angling metrics.	

Diamond Creek	Close during May	Protects critical salmon spawning population from angling stress and mortality.	
Angling Trends			
Lochy River Status	Designate entire river	Protects sensitive fishery/wilderness experience; prevents displacement pressure from other waters.	
Habitat Issues			
Greenstone Controlled fishery status	Status Quo	Despite declining use, Controlled fisheries are supported by anglers and provide certainty of a reach being available before a trip.	
Waikouaiti River	Status Quo – Prioritise future work programmes.	Angler usage likely declining due to riparian plant proliferation and access issues; water quality degrading. Regulations already very restrictive.	
Waipahi River	Status Quo – Prioritise future work programmes.	Angler usage likely declining; biological indices (MCI/ASPM) and water quality (Phosphorus) show very likely degradation. Data on file is yet to be analysed.	
Compliance and Clarity			
Note - Clutha gaffs	Ban use of gaffs	Aligns with modern catch-and-release ethics and the rest of the country's regulations. Gets rid of a note making the regulations easier to understand.	
Note - Clutha floats	Remove float ban	Historical reasons for ban are no longer an issue as fishing pressure and salmon targeting have significantly	

		decreased. Gets rid of a note making the regulations easier to understand.	
Note - Bag limit exemption	1. Remove Note 1.4 (Cease fishing when limit reached). 2. Remove zero bag limits on the upper Lochy and Routeburn	Aligns Otago with the rest of the South Island; prevents confusion for traveling anglers. Prevents "legal catch-22" where anglers hooking fish after hitting the limit may have already breached the regulations and must choose between illegal harvest or illegally releasing a mortally wounded fish. Removing the exemption necessitates removing "Zero Bag Limits," otherwise fishing would be prohibited instantly upon arrival.	
Note – 1.2-3 -Daily bag possession	Possession rules are removed	National Rules already effectively manage total daily harvest	
Note – Fishing near captive fish	Remove Note 1.1	The regulation is now largely redundant; Queenstown Bay is already closed entirely, and the only other affected site (Lonepine at Macraes) is on private land and managed via special controlled events.	
Soft bait exemption	New Note – “Scented artificial lures may be used where spin fishing is permitted, when actively fished so as to imitate a bait fish.”	Eliminates confusion between soft plastic spinners and soft baits. Improves angler success and retention.	

Lake McKellar	List in regulations with non-named upper Clutha regulations: 1 Nov – 30 Apr. FS, 1 trout, Boats prohibited. Redefine Controlled and designated section to cease at Lake McKellar.	Reduce confusion, allow anglers in top hut easier fishing options. Reduce high level protection of an underutilised fishery. Remove grey area where the lake is a controlled fishery but with no way to ballot it.	
Treble Hooks in Designated Waters	Remove hook type restriction	Scientific literature confirms no significant mortality difference between hook types. Simplifies enforcement and clarifies licence holder confusion.	
Providing Opportunity and Spectrum of Angling Options			
Lake Dispute season	Open year-round	Aligns regulations with nearby lakes (Moke/Kirkpatrick). Fishery is hatchery-sustained so seasonal spawning closure is unnecessary.	
Minor Changes – Not Requiring Consultation			
Lake Tewa	Remove from listed waterways.	Houses have been built around the edges and golf course no longer supports angling. Fishery is no longer stocked and has no natural spawning (B Sowry, pers comms)	

Perkins Pond	Remove from listed waterways	Located on private land, landowner has removed access	
Lake Reid	Change name from Reid Lake.	Lake Reid is the name officially recognised by LINZ.	
West Eweburn	Add to listed waterways	Supports a good fishery that should be recognised in the regulation handbook	
Tautuku Estuary	Add to listed waterways	Supports a small- medium fishery that should be recognised in the regulation handbook	

5. Appendix

1. Appendix 1 – Habitat Analysis

Table 2 presents macroinvertebrate trend data from the last ten years, sorted by average trend strength. These biological indices indicate changes in waterway health, which influences the species and numbers present.

The Macroinvertebrate Community Index (MCI) relies on the sensitivity of species, while the Quantitative MCI (QMCI) also accounts for abundance. The Average Score Per Metric (ASPM) combines three metrics to indicate stream health: MCI, EPT-taxa richness (Ephemeroptera, Plecoptera, and Trichoptera, excluding Hydroptilidae), and %EPT abundance (Te Uru Kahika et al., 2025). Because EPT taxa are high-value trout food, this metric likely offers the best predictive power for fisheries management.

Table 2: Biological indices ten-year trends in Otago rivers. Data sourced from LAWA (Te Uru Kahika et al., 2025).

Site ID	ASPM	MCI	QMCI
Manuherekia River at Blackstone Hill	Indeterminate	Very likely improving	Very likely improving
Kaikorai Stream at Brighton Road	Very likely improving	Very likely improving	Likely degrading
Lindis River at Ardgour Road	Likely improving		
Kye Burn at SH85 Bridge	Indeterminate	Indeterminate	Indeterminate
Owaka at Katea Road	Likely degrading	Indeterminate	Indeterminate
Cardrona River at Mt Barker	Indeterminate	Likely degrading	Indeterminate
Dunstan Creek at Beattie Road	Indeterminate	Likely degrading	Indeterminate
Silverstream at Taieri Depot	Likely degrading		
Tokomairiro River at West Branch Bridge	Indeterminate	Very likely degrading	Likely degrading
Manuherekia River at Ophir	Very likely degrading	Very likely degrading	Likely improving

Shag River at Goodwood Pump	Very likely degrading	Indeterminate	Likely degrading
Waitahuna River at Tweeds Bridge	Likely degrading	Likely degrading	Very likely degrading
Waipahi River at Waipahi	Very likely degrading	Very likely degrading	Likely degrading
Luggate Creek at SH6 Bridge	Very likely degrading	Very likely degrading	Very likely degrading

Water quality indicator trends over the last five years have been broken down by site below in Table 3. For clarity a number of parameters have been removed, for example total nitrogen and phosphorus as data on their more biologically active components were available.

Table 3: Trends over last five-year period in water quality indices in Otago Rivers. Data sourced from LAWA (Te Uru Kahika et al., 2025).

Site	Dissolved reactive phosphorus	E. coli	Nitrate nitrogen	Clarity
Rees at Glenorchy Paradise Road Bridge	Very likely improving	Very likely improving	Very likely improving	Very likely improving
Maclennan at Kahuiku School Road	Very likely improving	Very likely improving	Very likely improving	Likely improving
Waitahuna River at Tweeds Bridge	Likely improving	Very likely improving	Very likely improving	Very likely improving
Scott Creek at Routeburn Road	Very likely improving	Very likely improving	Likely improving	Very likely improving
Tahakopa at Tahakopa	Very likely improving	Indeterminate	Very likely improving	Very likely improving
Kawarau River at Chards Rd	Very likely improving	Indeterminate	Very likely improving	Very likely improving
Oamaru Creek at SH1	Indeterminate	Very likely improving	Very likely improving	Very likely improving
Precipice Creek at Glenorchy Paradise Road	Very likely improving	Very likely improving	Likely improving	Likely improving

Dart River at The Hillocks	Very likely improving	Very likely improving	Indeterminate	Very likely improving
Owaka at Katea Road	Indeterminate	Likely improving	Very likely improving	Very likely improving
Quartz Reef Creek at SH8	Very likely improving	Indeterminate	Very likely improving	Likely improving
Tuapeka at 700m u/s bridge	Likely degrading	Very likely improving	Very likely improving	Very likely improving
Waiwera River at Maws Farm	Likely improving	Likely improving	Likely improving	Very likely improving
Taieri River at Allanton Bridge	Indeterminate	Likely improving	Very likely improving	Very likely improving
Taieri River at Sutton	Indeterminate	Likely improving	Very likely improving	Very likely improving
Invincible Creek at Rees Valley Road	Very likely improving	Likely improving	Very likely improving	Indeterminate
Motatapu at Wanaka Mt Aspiring Road	Likely improving	Very likely improving	Indeterminate	Very likely improving
Catlins River at Houipapa	Very likely improving	Indeterminate	Indeterminate	Very likely improving
Akatore Creek at Creek Road	Very likely improving	Very likely improving	Likely degrading	Likely improving
Upper Pomahaka at Aitchison Runs Road	Very likely improving	Likely improving	Very likely improving	Likely degrading
Lovells Creek at Station Road	Likely degrading	Likely improving	Very likely improving	Very likely improving
Whare Creek at Whare Flat Road	Very likely improving	Indeterminate	Very likely improving	Indeterminate
Silverstream at Taieri Depot	Very likely improving	Very likely improving	Likely improving	Likely degrading
Turner Creek at Kinloch Road	Likely improving	Likely improving	Likely improving	Likely improving
Makarora at Makarora	Indeterminate	Very likely improving	Likely improving	Likely improving

Timaru at Peter Muir Bridge	Likely improving	Indeterminate	Very likely improving	Likely improving
Waitati at Mt Cargill Road	Likely improving	Likely improving	Likely improving	Indeterminate
Tokomairiro River at West Branch Bridge	Likely degrading	Likely improving	Likely improving	Very likely improving
Greenstone at Greenstone Station Road	Likely degrading	Very likely improving	Likely improving	Likely improving
Upper Cardrona at Tuohys Gully Road	Indeterminate	Likely improving	Very likely improving	Indeterminate
Cardrona River at Mt Barker	Very likely improving	Likely improving	Very likely degrading	Very likely improving
Crookston Burn at Kelso Road	Indeterminate	Likely degrading	Very likely improving	Very likely improving
Waipahi River at Waipahi	Likely degrading	Likely improving	Likely improving	Very likely improving
Poolburn at Cobb Cottage	Likely degrading	Indeterminate	Very likely improving	Very likely improving
Shag River at Craig Rd	Very likely improving	Indeterminate	Likely degrading	Very likely improving
Silverstream at Three Mile Hill Roa	Very likely improving	Indeterminate	Likely improving	Indeterminate
Waipori River at Waipori Falls Reserve	Indeterminate	Indeterminate	Likely improving	Very likely improving
Taieri at Outram	Indeterminate	Likely improving	Very likely improving	Indeterminate
Ox Burn at Rees Valley Road	Likely improving	Likely degrading	Likely improving	Very likely improving
Buckler Burn at Glenorchy Queenstown Road	Very likely improving	Indeterminate	Likely degrading	Very likely improving
The Neck Creek at Meads Road	Very likely improving	Likely degrading	Very likely improving	Indeterminate
Mill Creek at Fish Trap.	Likely improving	Likely degrading	Indeterminate	Very likely improving

Thomsons Creek at SH85	Indeterminate	Likely improving	Likely degrading	Very likely improving
Manuherikia River at Galloway	Likely improving	Indeterminate	Likely degrading	Very likely improving
Trotters Creek at Mathesons	Indeterminate	Very likely improving	Very likely degrading	Very likely improving
Taieri River at Linnburn Runs Roa	Indeterminate	Likely degrading	Very likely improving	Likely improving
Deep Stream at SH87	Very likely improving	Likely degrading	Likely improving	Indeterminate
Taieri River at Waipiata	Very likely degrading	Likely improving	Very likely improving	Likely improving
Dundas Creek at Mill Flat	Likely improving	Likely improving	Very likely degrading	Very likely improving
12 Mile Creek at Glenorchy Queenstown Road	Likely degrading	Indeterminate	Very likely improving	Likely improving
Kaikorai Stream at Brighton Road	Very likely degrading	Very likely improving	Likely degrading	Very likely improving
Leith at Dundas Street Bridge	Indeterminate	Indeterminate	Indeterminate	Likely improving
Lindsays Creek at North Rd Bridge	Likely degrading	Likely improving	Indeterminate	Likely improving
Heriot Burn at Park Hill Road	Very likely degrading	Likely degrading	Very likely improving	Very likely improving
Pomahaka River at Glenken	Likely improving	Likely degrading	Likely improving	Indeterminate
Hills Creek at SH85	Indeterminate	Likely improving	Very likely degrading	Very likely improving
Manuherikia downstream of Fork	Likely improving	Indeterminate	Indeterminate	Indeterminate
Manuherikia River at Ophir	Indeterminate	Likely improving	Very likely degrading	Very likely improving
Upper Shag at SH85 Culvert	Likely improving	Very likely degrading	Very likely improving	Indeterminate

Pleasant at Patterson Road Ford	Likely degrading	Indeterminate	Likely improving	Likely improving
Leaping Burn at Wanaka Mt Aspiring Road	Indeterminate	Likely degrading	Likely improving	Likely improving
Bullock Creek at Dunmore Street Footbridge	Very likely improving	Very likely improving	Very likely degrading	Likely degrading
Clutha at Balclutha	Indeterminate	Likely degrading	Likely improving	
Fraser at Old Man Range	Likely improving	Indeterminate	Very likely degrading	Likely improving
Bannock Burn at Lake Dunstan	Likely improving	Likely improving	Indeterminate	Very likely degrading
Waipahi River at Cairns Peak	Very likely degrading	Very likely degrading	Very likely improving	Very likely improving
Pomahaka River at Burkes Ford	Indeterminate	Very likely degrading	Very likely improving	Indeterminate
Dunstan Creek at Beattie Road	Likely improving	Likely degrading	Likely degrading	Likely improving
Benger Burn at Booths	Indeterminate	Very likely degrading	Very likely improving	Indeterminate
Meggat Burn at Berwick Road	Very likely degrading	Indeterminate	Indeterminate	Very likely improving
Taieri River at Stonehenge	Indeterminate	Indeterminate	Very likely improving	Very likely degrading
Kye Burn at SH85 Bridge	Likely degrading	Indeterminate	Likely improving	Indeterminate
25 Mile Creek Glenorchy Queenstown Road	Very likely degrading	Likely improving	Indeterminate	Likely improving
Arrow at Morven Ferry Road	Very likely improving	Very likely degrading	Very likely degrading	Very likely improving
Tokomairiro at Blackbridge	Very likely degrading	Very likely degrading	Very likely improving	Likely improving
Hawea River at Camphill Bridge		Very likely degrading	Likely improving	Indeterminate
Lindis River at Lindis Peak	Indeterminate	Indeterminate	Very likely degrading	Likely improving

Luggate Creek at SH6 Bridge	Very likely degrading	Indeterminate	Indeterminate	Likely improving
Wairuna Stream at Millar Road	Very likely degrading	Likely degrading	Likely improving	Likely improving
Manuherekia River at Blackstone Hill	Very likely improving	Very likely degrading	Likely degrading	Indeterminate
Shag River at Goodwood Pump	Very likely improving	Likely degrading	Very likely degrading	Indeterminate
Nenthorn at Mt Stoker Rd	Very likely degrading	Very likely improving	Indeterminate	Likely degrading
Horn Creek at Queenstown Bay	Very likely improving	Very likely degrading	Very likely degrading	Likely improving
Matukituki River at West Wanaka	Very likely degrading	Indeterminate	Indeterminate	Likely improving
Taieri River at Tiroiti	Very likely degrading	Very likely degrading	Very likely improving	Indeterminate
Quartz Creek at Maungawera Valley Road	Likely improving	Likely degrading	Very likely degrading	Indeterminate
Roaring Meg at SH6	Very likely degrading	Very likely degrading	Likely degrading	Likely improving
Waikouaiti at 200m d/s DCC intake	Indeterminate	Very likely degrading	Indeterminate	Very likely degrading
Teviot at Bridge Huts Road	Likely degrading	Likely degrading	Indeterminate	Very likely degrading
Sutton Stream at SH87	Very likely degrading	Indeterminate	Likely degrading	Likely degrading
Blackcleugh Burn at Rongahere Road	Indeterminate	Very likely degrading	Very likely degrading	Very likely degrading

Table 4 outlines the 10-year trends for key water quality indices across selected Otago lakes. This data is sourced from Land, Air, Water Aotearoa (LAWA) (Te Uru Kahika et al., 2025). The table focuses on five primary parameters used to assess ecosystem health and recreational safety:

- **Ammoniacal nitrogen:** Measured to assess toxicity risks to aquatic species. Usually caused by point source pollution.

- **Chlorophyll-a (Chl-a):** Used as an indicator of algal biomass and overall lake productivity/ trophic status.
- **Escherichia coli (*E. coli*):** Monitored to detect faecal contamination and assess human health risks for contact recreation.
- **Total Nitrogen and Total Phosphorus:** Tracked to evaluate nutrient enrichment, which is the primary driver of eutrophication and algal blooms.

It is noted that available data for lake ecosystems is currently limited. However, the dataset is expected to become more robust as reporting from new monitoring sites is established.

Table 4: Trends over last 10-year period in water quality indices in Otago lakes. Data sourced from LAWA (Te Uru Kahika et al., 2025).

Site ID	Ammoniacal nitrogen	Chl-a	E. coli	Total nitrogen	Total phosphorus
Lake Onslow at Boat Ramp	Likely improving	Likely degrading	Likely improving	Very likely degrading	Very likely degrading
Lake Tuakitoto at Outle	Likely improving	Very likely degrading	Likely degrading	Very likely degrading	Indeterminate
Lake Dunstan at Dead Mans Point	Very likely improving	Likely improving	Indeterminate	Very likely degrading	Very likely improving

5.1 Appendix 2 –Southland Catch and Release Literature Review

Table 5: Literature review of the effects on morbidity and mortality of different hook types. Prepared by Cohen Stewart, Southland Fish & Game Council.

Title	Location	Year	Author(s)	Finding
A review of catch-and-release angling mortality with implications for no-take reserves	Various – meta-analysis	2005	Bartholomew and Bohnsack	This meta-analysis sought to determine the factors that influenced post release mortality in freshwater fish. In the meta-analysis, seven factors significantly influenced mortality: hook location, natural bait, removing hooks from deeply hooked fish, J-hooks (single hooks typically used by NZ fisherman vs. circle hooks), depth of capture, warm water temperatures, and extended playing and handling times. Salmonid studies in the meta-analysis (n=3) showed that hook type (single vs. treble) did not influence mortality. Brown trout (Taylor and White 1992), cutthroat trout (Pauley and Thomas 1993), Chinook salmon and coho salmon (Gjernes et al. 1993) mortality was not influenced by hook type.
Effect of hook type on mortality, trauma, and capture efficiency of wild stream trout caught by angling with spinners	North America	2004	DuBois and Dubielzig	This study determined hooking mortality, eye damage and jaw injury of three species of wild stream trout caught on size-1 Mepps spinners having barbed or barbless treble or single hooks. The mortality of rainbow trout, brown trout, and brook trout was low in all treatments (<4%). Hook types did not differ significantly in causing mortality or severe eye damage of rainbow or brown trout. Severe eye damage was evident on about 10% of the trout landed (range = 2% to 13%, depending on species). Jaw injuries were found on about 6% of the catch. Barbless single hooks were quicker to remove than the other hook types, but the difference was insufficient to reduce mortality.

The influence of hook type, angler experience, and fish size on injury rates and the duration of capture in an Alaskan catch-and-release rainbow trout fishery	Alaska	2004	Meka	This study did not compare treble and single hooks but rather two types of single hooks (J-hooks and circle hooks). However, their findings are still relevant to discussions around treble hooks. Meka (2004) found that angler experience was a key factor influencing injury to the fish. Novice anglers injured proportionally more fish than experienced anglers, primarily during hook removal.
Evaluating recent innovations in bait fishing tackle and technique for catch and release of rainbow trout	North America	2003	Jenkins	In this study, the author had a variety of different baited hook types and let pen-reared rainbow trout swallow the hook as much as they wanted. Hook types included circle hooks, Shelton self-releasing hooks, standard J and treble hooks and artificial flies (all were barbless). Flies, circle hooks, and Shelton hooks were extracted from the fish, and the lines were cut on the J and treble hooks. The fish caught with flies, J hooks (line cut), and netted controls all survived the post-catch observation period. The survival of fish caught on the Shelton, cut-line treble, and extracted circle hooks was 98, 98, and 91% respectively.
Determinants of hooking mortality in freshwater recreational fisheries: a quantitative meta-analysis	Various – meta-analysis	2011	Hühn and Arlinghaus	In this meta-analysis, hook type (treble or single) did not significantly influence hooking mortality in freshwater fish (many of the studies included in this meta-analysis were on salmonids). More important was whether the hook was barbed or not and most important was water temperature. Water temperature was positively and significantly correlated with hooking mortality (higher temperatures resulted in higher mortality). Additionally, bait angling resulted in higher hooking mortality than spin fishing.
Hooking mortality and landing success using baited circle hooks compared to conventional hook types for stream-dwelling trout	North America	2014	High and Meyer	Wild stream caught rainbow trout, cutthroat trout and rainbow-cutthroat trout hybrids were caught using different hook types and post mortality release was monitored. Mortality rate for fish caught on spinners with a treble hook was 29%. Mortality for fish caught on baited J-hooks (single hooks typically used in

				NZ) was 25%. The slightly different mortality rates were not deemed statistically significant.
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8.0 Public Excluded Items

8.1 Draft Public Excluded Minutes 23rd September 2025

8.2 Collaboration Agreement with Friends of bullock Creek

8.3 Progress Update on Bendigo-Ophir gold Project Fast Track Application

9.0 Financial Report

Finance and Licence Sales to 31st October 2025

9.1 Finance Reports

The financial Profit and Loss report and Balance Sheet for the period from 1st September 2025 to 31st October 2025 for the 2025/26 financial year are below.

Profit and Loss

Income

Licence Income

Fish licence revenue from the profit and loss statement 31st October 2025 totals \$903,293 (Fish sales \$895,584 + Designated Water licence \$7,709) compared with \$950,222 for the same period of the 2024/25 season. Licence revenue is behind 2024/25 season by \$46,929.

The budget for fish licence sales is \$2,099,760 for the full year.

Central South Island Fish and Game and North Canterbury Fish and Game's Councils have a sea run Salmon Endorsement Project. We have sold 238 Sea Run Salmon endorsements with a value of \$1,035 (GST excl). These funds will be returned to them at years end.

All designated water funds from other regions \$1,822 (GST excl) sold by Otago region will be distributed to regions and ours returned at the end of the season.

Other Income

Total other income to 31st October 2025 is \$5,085.

Areas of interest are:

- Interest – Accrual interest from our end of year has been removed and will be applied at the time it is paid out.
- Rent Received is from yard lease in Cromwell
- Donations are shown below.

Donations and Grants (not in budget)

Donation/Grant from	For	Amount GST excl
Otago Community Trust	Take A Kid Fishing	\$2,362
Total		\$2,362

Expenses

Expenditure at the 31st October for the 2025/26 financial year is \$518,359 against a year-to-date budget of \$391,677.

The main reasons for any variances against budget are:

- Participation – Our events for TAKF and soft bait fishing classes look over spent but were donated Otago Community Trust grant of \$2,362 towards Take A Kid Fishing event costs.
- Licencing – Commission is made up from 5% agent sales commission and bank fees associated with online sales. As we had no sales in August sales were high in September and the commission will even out over the year.
- Planning and Reporting – Accountancy assistance and the audit. Accruals for the last years audit have been reversed out.
- Over Heads/Administration- Salaries include 3 sets of payments in September and two in October, also accrued holiday pay.
Staff expenses – Fringe Benefit is an accrual reversed. Staff expenses related to a moving, a staff meeting, accommodation and an Otolith course in Christchurch.
Office premises – Includes two months office lease and expenses in Dunedin, rental of Dunedin storage area, insurances, power, rates and general office maintenance.
General Expenses – includes bank charges, risk insurance, subscriptions and legal advice.
- Approved Reserves Expenses - \$30,579. This is expenditure approved by the council from the Bendigo, Communication, and Otago Property Reserves. Council agreed \$44,000 on fitout of the new Mosgiel building from Otago Property Reserves.
- Depreciation – Depreciation year to date is \$10,396
- Levies to NZC – paid monthly to NZC as per budget.

The profit and loss for the 12 months ended 31st October 2025 shows a surplus of \$518,359.

Balance Sheet

Bank Funds Position at 31st October 2025

Bank	Value
ANZ 00 Account	\$198,218.79
ANZ 70 Account	\$313,747.93
ASB Account	\$35.57
Cash On Hand	\$50.00
Total	\$512,052.29

Term Investments as at 31st October 2025

Investment Bank	Amount	Rate	Maturity
ANZ 1002/1006	\$416,890.98	3.75%	22 th Sept 2026
ANZ 1005	\$500,000.00	3.95%	9 th February 2026
ASB 81	\$217,369.77	4.00%	2 nd February 2026
ASB 82	\$527,551.67	3.90%	10 th March 2026
Total	\$1,661,812.42		

Fixed Assets and Capital Expenditure

\$5,403.83 remained from the previous year asset replacement fund, \$27,553 extra was budgeted for 2025/26. All asset expenses this year have been from the Otago Reserve associated with the building and set up of the new office. So, the asset replacement fund total at 31st October 2025 is \$32,956.83

Note: Land and building transactions are not part of the asset replacement fund.

Liabilities

Total Liabilities at 31st October are \$257,295.

- Accounts payable includes large invoices for building, technology, accountant, board room furniture and landscaping.
- Other payables include visa card spending, accrued accounting and audit fee expenses and income in advance reversals.
- Employee Entitlements includes \$61,432 of outstanding leave entitlements and accrued leave reversal from the previous year.

Debtors

No doubtful debts from agents.

No doubtful debts in the general accounts

Equity

Otago Fish and Game Reserves 31st October 2025

Otago Reserves Movements	Balance 1 st September 2025	Income (To) Reserve	Note	Outgoing (From) Reserve	Balance 31 st October 2025
Non-resident DW Levy	\$342,084	\$7,709	1	\$5,000	\$344,793
Habitat Enhancement & Research	\$23,522	\$1,650	2	\$0.0	\$25,172
Bullock Creek Reserve Restricted Reserve	\$26	\$0.	3	\$0.0	\$26
Bendigo Reserve Restricted Reserve	\$32,812	\$0.0	8	\$3,761	\$29,051
Priority Consents Reserve	\$34,190	\$0	7	\$0	\$34,190
Otago Property Reserves	\$1,759,690	\$0	4	\$175,536	\$1,584,154
Priority Plan Changes	\$19,080	\$0	6	\$0.0	\$19,080
Communications Strategy	\$68,887	\$0.0	5	\$218	\$68,669
Total	\$2,280,291	\$9,359		\$184,515	\$2,105,135

Note 1 Income is from designated water licence sales. \$5000 a year for five years for the Dr Donald Scott University Fund. Agreed by Council September 2025 2025/26 is the first payment. 2025/26 Budget allows for \$18,000 for designated waters monitoring and drift dives.

Note 2 Balance is \$25,172. Less committed but not yet paid out of \$4,000 so balance of \$21,172 available for dispersal by way of grants.

Note 3 Bullock Creek Reserve fund is now largely expended and will be closed

Note 4 Otago Property Reserve – Funds from historical and recent property sales, dedicated to acquiring and maintaining land and building assets in Otago. Recent large increase from sale of Wanaka section. Approved Council spending on finishing build and fitout of new Mosgiel office and final 3 months rent for the old office.

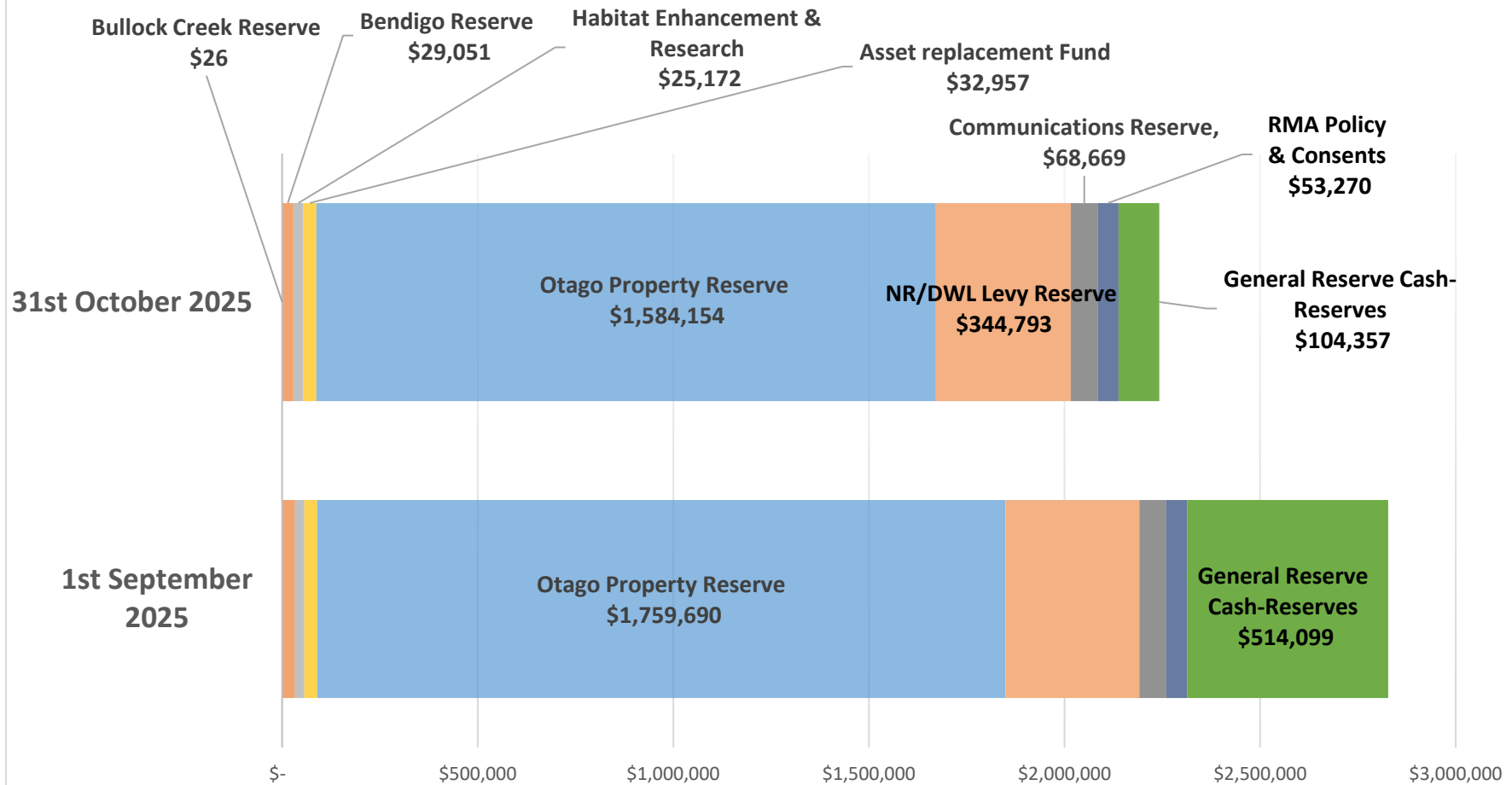
Note 5 Communications Strategy - Council approved September 2024.

Note 6 OF&GC agreed to \$120,000. This reserve is not required now and has been agreed by council (May 2024) to be used by Regional Policy Statement.

Note 7 OF&GC agreed to \$60,000 May 2020. This reserve is not required now and has been agreed by council (May 2024) to be used on Regional Policy Statement work.

Note 8 Bendigo Reserve: May 2022 start by Council to support restoration work in the Bendigo Wetland

MOVEMENT IN RESERVES FROM 1ST SEPTEMBER 2025 TO 31ST OCTOBER 2025



Balance Sheet

Otago Fish and Game Council As at 31 October 2025

	31 OCT 2025	31 AUG 2025
Assets		
Current Assets		
Bank	512,052	1,314,597
Receivables		
Accounts Receivable	849,308	27,486
Total Receivables	849,308	27,486
GST	-	89,070
Investments	1,661,812	1,443,988
Inventory	33,565	33,565
Accrued Interest	-	18,690
Total Current Assets	3,056,738	2,927,396
Fixed Assets		
Property Plant & Equipment	3,167,662	3,019,921
Total Fixed Assets	3,167,662	3,019,921
Total Assets	6,224,400	5,947,318
Liabilities		
Current Liabilities		
Accounts Payable	74,602	241,375
Other Payables	4,519	182,509
Employee Entitlements	111,401	74,687
Salmon Endorsement	1,035	-
Designated Waters other regions	1,822	-
GST	63,917	-
Total Current Liabilities	257,295	498,572
Total Liabilities	257,295	498,572
Net Assets	5,967,105	5,448,746
Equity		
Accumulated Funds		
Accumulated Funds	4,605,109	3,204,580
Current Year Earnings	518,359	1,400,528
Transfer (To)/From Reserves	(1,294,454)	(1,442,057)
Total Accumulated Funds	3,829,014	3,163,052
Dedicated Reserves		
Non Resident Levy Reserve	344,793	342,084
Habitat Enhancement & Research	25,172	23,522
Priority Plan Changes Reserve	19,080	19,080
Priority Consents Reserve	34,190	34,190
Otago Property Reserve (was Historical Property Reserve)	1,584,154	1,759,690

Balance Sheet

	31 OCT 2025	31 AUG 2025
Communications Strategy Reserve	68,669	68,887
Asset Replacement Funding	32,957	5,404
Total Dedicated Reserves	2,109,013	2,252,855
Restricted Reserves		
Bullock Creek Reserve	26	26
Bendigo Reserve	29,051	32,812
Total Restricted Reserves	29,078	32,839
Total Equity	5,967,105	5,448,746

Profit and Loss

Otago Fish and Game Council For the 2 months ended 31 October 2025

	SEPT 2025	OCT 2025	YTD ACTUAL	YTD BUDGET	VARIANCE	% OF YTD BUDGET	ANNUAL BUDGET	LAST YEAR
Income								
Licence Sales								
Fish Licence Sales	570,199	481,411	1,051,611	890,653	160,958	118%	2,099,760	2,114,618
Designated Water Licence Sales	3,930	3,778	7,709	-	7,709	-	-	44,972
Game Licence Sales	97	19	116	-	116	-	378,655	414,537
Total Licence Sales	574,226	485,209	1,059,435	890,653	168,782	119%	2,478,415	2,574,126
Other Income								
Wages Reimbursement	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	4,691
Clutha Mata-Au Trust	-	-	-	-	-	-	30,000	93,296
Interest Income	(369)	268	(101)	4,218	(4,319)	-2%	25,308	67,612
Interest Income Building	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	20,527
Fines - Fishing & Game Offences	-	-	-	82	(82)	-	500	-
Rent Received	500	500	1,000	1,250	(250)	80%	7,508	7,311
Fishing Competitions	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	1,287
Depreciation Recovered on Sale of Fixed Assets	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	22,751
Donations ,bequests and other Fundraising	2,362	-	2,362	-	2,362	-	-	18,938
RMA Costs Reimbursed	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	20,537
Sundry Income	174	-	174	-	174	-	-	1,235
Diversion - Habitat Enhancement and Research Fund	1,100	550	1,650	-	1,650	-	-	3,830
Total Other Income	3,767	1,318	5,085	5,550	(465)	92%	63,316	262,016
Capital Gains on Sale of Assets	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	1,390,784
Total Income	577,993	486,527	1,064,520	896,203	168,317	119%	2,541,731	4,226,927

	SEPT 2025	OCT 2025	YTD ACTUAL	YTD BUDGET	VARIANCE	% OF YTD BUDGET	ANNUAL BUDGET	LAST YEAR
Gross Profit	577,993	486,527	1,064,520	896,203	168,317	119%	2,541,731	4,226,927
Expenses								
Species Management								
Population Monitoring								
Waterfowl Monitoring	-	-	-	2,500	(2,500)	-	10,000	7,719
Spawning Surveys	-	-	-	1,250	(1,250)	-	2,500	-
Fisheries Monitoring	-	-	-	1,500	(1,500)	-	6,000	4,517
Drift Diving	-	-	-	-	-	-	5,500	-
Total Population Monitoring	-	-	-	5,250	(5,250)	-	24,000	12,236
Monitor key fisheries/Research Liaison	-	-	-	-	-	-	1,000	-
Harvest Assessment	-	-	-	-	-	-	1,000	-
Hatchery Operations	30	14	44	1,666	(1,622)	3%	10,000	1,462
Species Interaction	-	-	-	830	(830)	-	5,000	-
Releases	160	-	160	332	(172)	48%	1,000	870
Game Bird Control compliants	-	-	-	-	-	-	1,000	68
Total Species Management	190	14	204	8,078	(7,874)	3%	43,000	14,636
Habitat Protection & Mngt								
Clutha Mata-Au Trust expenses	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	48,113
Resource Mngt Act	-	-	-	166	(166)	-	1,000	21,718
Works & Management	-	-	-	1,666	(1,666)	-	10,000	7,271
Wetland Training Event	-	-	-	-	-	-	1,000	-
Assisted Habitat	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	170
Habitat Enhancement Research Fund Grants	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	2,870
Total Habitat Protection & Mngt	-	-	-	1,832	(1,832)	-	12,000	80,142
Participation								

	SEPT 2025	OCT 2025	YTD ACTUAL	YTD BUDGET	VARIANCE	% OF YTD BUDGET	ANNUAL BUDGET	LAST YEAR
Access and Signage	-	-	-	664	(664)	-	4,000	2,416
Back Country Surveys/Monitoring	-	-	-	1,666	(1,666)	-	10,000	12,801
Promotion Articles and Advertising	-	-	-	-	-	-	6,000	-
Publications and Web Site	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	120
OF&G Training Events	1,972	99	2,071	1,000	1,071	207%	2,000	2,796
Club Relations and Grants	-	-	-	166	(166)	-	1,000	1,975
Fish and Game Huts	-	-	-	-	-	-	2,000	-
Total Participation	1,972	99	2,071	3,496	(1,425)	59%	25,000	20,108
PUBLIC INTERFACE								
Liaison								
Liaison DoC Unin Govt CFT IWI	-	-	-	166	(166)	-	1,000	63
Total Liaison	-	-	-	166	(166)	-	1,000	63
Communication								
World Wetlands	-	-	-	-	-	-	200	164
Total Communication	-	-	-	-	-	-	200	164
Media Releases								
Advocacy Statutory	-	-	-	82	(82)	-	500	-
Weekly Fishing Reports/ social media	280	735	1,015	1,166	(151)	87%	7,000	5,460
Communications Strategy	-	218	218	-	218	-	-	2,415
Total Media Releases	280	953	1,233	1,248	(15)	99%	7,500	7,875
Total PUBLIC INTERFACE	280	953	1,233	1,414	(181)	87%	8,700	8,101
COMPLIANCE								
Ranger Training and Expenses	99	-	99	250	(151)	40%	5,500	2,282
Compliance	-	-	-	-	-	-	10,000	-
Total COMPLIANCE	99	-	99	250	(151)	40%	15,500	2,282

	SEPT 2025	OCT 2025	YTD ACTUAL	YTD BUDGET	VARIANCE	% OF YTD BUDGET	ANNUAL BUDGET	LAST YEAR
LICENCING								
Agent Servicing	66	35	101	123	(22)	82%	500	137
Commission/Fees	16,898	17,193	34,091	33,044	1,047	103%	99,132	89,227
Total LICENCING	16,965	17,227	34,192	33,167	1,025	103%	99,632	89,363
COUNCIL								
Council Meetings and Agendas	1,179	96	1,275	2,833	(1,558)	45%	17,000	18,511
Total COUNCIL	1,179	96	1,275	2,833	(1,558)	45%	17,000	18,511
PLANNING & REPORTING								
Reporting/Audit	(19,466)	6,332	(13,134)	19,650	(32,784)	-67%	19,650	22,546
National Liason	-	-	-	82	(82)	-	500	286
Total PLANNING & REPORTING	(19,466)	6,332	(13,134)	19,732	(32,866)	-67%	20,150	22,832
ADMINISTRATION								
Salaries	141,581	80,611	222,192	164,076	58,116	135%	984,469	913,870
Staff Expenses								
ACC Levy	-	-	-	-	-	-	2,500	2,763
Fringe Benefit Tax	(3,555)	-	(3,555)	-	(3,555)	-	8,000	10,126
Staff Training	-	117	117	1,666	(1,549)	7%	10,000	8,367
Staff Clothing Branded	-	-	-	166	(166)	-	1,000	1,581
Staff Expenses	719	543	1,262	1,650	(388)	76%	9,000	7,404
Staff Employment Expenses	-	-	-	332	(332)	-	2,000	7,458
Total Staff Expenses	(2,836)	661	(2,175)	3,814	(5,989)	-57%	32,500	37,698
Office Premices	18,181	18,622	36,803	50,826	(14,023)	72%	100,791	187,871
Office Equipment	117	209	327	498	(171)	66%	3,000	2,877
Communications	1,595	1,442	3,037	3,548	(511)	86%	21,300	18,007
General Exp (incl Insurance)	3,655	245	3,899	1,848	2,051	211%	6,600	10,547
General Field Equipment	217	263	480	882	(402)	54%	5,300	2,091

	SEPT 2025	OCT 2025	YTD ACTUAL	YTD BUDGET	VARIANCE	% OF YTD BUDGET	ANNUAL BUDGET	LAST YEAR
Vehicles	14,624	5,157	19,780	18,332	1,448	108%	55,000	46,588
Total ADMINISTRATION	177,134	107,209	284,343	243,824	40,519	117%	1,208,960	1,219,549
Approved Reserve Expense	5,599	24,980	30,579	-	30,579	-	-	47,113
Depreciation	4,134	6,263	10,396	-	10,396	-	-	55,531
Loss on Disposal	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	37,342
NZ Fish & Game Levies	94,951	94,951	189,902	189,900	2	100%	1,139,410	1,205,887
University of Otago Research Grant	5,000	-	5,000	-	5,000	-	-	5,000
Total Expenses	288,036	258,125	546,161	504,526	41,635	108%	2,589,352	2,826,398
Net Profit	289,957	228,402	518,359	391,677	126,682	132%	(47,621)	1,400,528

9.4 Licence Sales

Fish Licence Sales 2025/26 Season to 31st October 2025

See table following for fish licence sales numbers and categories for the 2025/26 and 2024/25 season sales to the 31st October of the season.

Fish licence sales began on the 1st of September 2025 for both online and in agencies. This was much later than in previous year. Prices did not increase and there were no category changes.

In summary, 2025/26 fishing licence sales, in whole season licence equivalents (LEQs), 6,520, LEQs this season compared with 6,898 LEQs for last season, to the 31st of October - 378 LEQs behind last season.

Resident full term fishing license numbers have decreased in main full season categories. 307 less family licences, likely due to NZC changes in criteria of family licence participants. Full season non resident licences categories have increased.

Recommendations

- 1. That this report be received be received.**

Sharon Milne

Administration Officer

20/11/2025

Otago Region Fish Licence Sales to the 31st October Of The Season

2025/26

Sales	FWFA	FWA	FWNA	FSLA	FLAA	FWIA	FLBA	FSBA	FDA	FDNA	FWJ	FWNJ	FDJ	FDNJ	FWNC	FDNC	SRSE	DWLR	DWLN	Total	Fish LEQ
Public	707	1088	127	309	118	0	4	42	228	213	273	2	22	11	1	10	0	894	41	4090	2,751
Agency	1068	1629	13	692	71	0	3	17	51	81	205	3	2	7	0	9	238	970	0	5059	3,768
Total	1775	2717	140	1001	189	0	7	59	279	294	478	5	24	18	1	19	238	1864	41	9149	6,520

2024/25

Sales	FWFA	FWA	FWNA	FSLA	FLAA	FWIA	FLBA	FSBA	FDA	FDNA	FWJ	FWNJ	FDJ	FDNJ	FWNC	FDNC	SRSE	DWLR	DWLN	Total	Fish LEQ
Public	888	1176	116	284	117	0	0	58	294	189	283	6	50	12	5	4	0	990	45	4517	3,046
Agency	1194	1568	21	652	70	0	0	26	65	61	221	5	6	5	0	2	279	944	0	5119	3,851
Total	2082	2744	137	936	187	0	0	84	359	250	504	11	56	17	5	6	279	1934	45	9636	6,898

FWFA (Family), FWA (Adult season), FWNA (Non Resident season), FSLA (Senior Loyal), FLAA (Local Area),FWIA Winter, FLBA (long Break), FSBA (Short Break), FDA (Adult Day), FDNA (Non Resident Adult Day), FWJ (Junior Season)

FWNJ (Junior non resident season), FDJ (Junior Day), FDNJ (Non Resident Junior Day), FWNC (non Resident Child season)

FDNC(Non Resident child Day),SRSE(Salmon Endorsement),DWLR(Designated Waters Resident),DWLN(Designated Waters Non Res)

Some of the DWLs sold are for other regions, and other regions have some of ours

10.0 Chief Executives Report – November 2025

10.1 SPECIES MANAGEMENT

Monitor Fisheries

Early season drift diving of upper Clutha lakes tributaries didn't go ahead due to weather and has been reprogrammed for December. Minor disruption to anglers on the day is expected but staff will do what they can to communicate the work activity to licence holders ahead of the dives.

Hatchery Operations

Liberations of yearling class rainbows to approved waters is now complete for the season. There has been a very successful hatching of fry this year meaning some of the surplus could be offered to other regions (such as Southland F&G). Liberations of two year old fish to support TAKF events has also put fish in the hands of a good number of juniors including this group of Cromwell Cub scouts at Molyneux Pond.



Regulations

The **Anglers Notice** process proposes that a fisheries and habitat background paper, along with a draft list of proposed regulation changes, be provided to Council for its consideration. This paper appears in the agenda under "Matters to be Decided." Please note that the Council is not required to finalise any regulations at this meeting. Instead, it must determine which proposed changes it wishes to consult on with stakeholders. It would be beneficial to narrow the list of suggested changes at this stage.

The **Gamebird Gazette Notice** needs consideration this meeting and as usual will be subject to Paradise shelduck trend count results analysed at the end of January. NZC has requested that the final drafts of Gazette Notices be with them by the 31st January 2026 which is a tight timeframe after the moult count flight.

Grey Teal as a Gamebird

Council asked the CE to approach other regions to seek their views on grey teal being added to the species list available for harvest in the hunting season. A brief report on that feedback, and further background to the proposal is provided in this agenda.

Avian Influenza Testing

MPI have sought our assistance to scan the wild population of mallards for High Pathogenic Avian Influenza (HPAI). This is a follow up task to the outbreak in a chicken farm in north Otago but will also act as an early indicator of the arrival of the very detrimental HPAI strain

circulating in the northern hemisphere. CSI and Nth Canterbury region are also proposed to be involved trapping birds for MPI's vets to test and release back into the wild. A contract has now been signed confirming the work.

CE to update.

10.2 HABITAT PROTECTION AND MANAGEMENT

Bendigo Wetland

Staff have yet to hear back from the Conservation Department on the Bendigo Reserve Management Plan. Initial contact raised questions about the DoC's involvement in its development, but our recollection was that they were disinterested in the site. In the meantime, regular planting and maintenance is being carried out by Cromwell staff and recently a bunch of helpful fishing guides turned out pitch in. (pictured)



Operations Manager to update.

Staff have engaged with ORC over the use of their global consent to remove an instream gravel bar from the Taieri River which could have an impact on the upper Taieri wetland water levels. ORC staff have now agreed to take a closer look and have the landowner seek a consent for the activity.

10.3 USER PARTICIPATION

Designated Waters implementation

The Designated Waters licencing system is running relatively smoothly. Monitoring and compliance is already underway with surveys in the Hunter and Nevis having already been completed and no compliance issues have been detected.



Take a Kid Fishing and Adult Fishing Classes

These are now complete, and two additional Soft Bait Clinics were held. These were well attended with over 80 participants at each of the Taieri and Cromwell soft bait fishing clinics. Promotion via our social media channels has been helpful and feedback has been very good from all the events this spring.

10.4 PUBLIC INTERFACE

Otago Fish and Game Council Meeting 2nd December 2025

Licence Holder Communications

Weekly river reports and monthly ezine Reel Life has resumed. The river reports are particularly popular with high open rates by industry standards at around 40%.

Our annual survey of Otago licence holders, which assesses perceptions of value and awareness of Fish & Game activities, is now underway. This year we have added several questions, including those exploring preferences for future management structures. Early responses indicate strong support for retaining local management rather than shifting to a centralised model. The full survey results will be available in January, although some preliminary data will be used to inform our submission to the reforms.



Club visits and talks

There has been a good start to the year with engagement with clubs and groups. The CE spoke to the Otago Deerstalkers and Dunedin Probus Club, and staff have also spoken at Mosgiel Probus, Taieri Anglers and Upper Clutha Anglers. The comms officer also gave a good outline of the organisation to participants of the soft bait clinics.

10.5 COMPLIANCE

Ranger Training

This is proposed for closer to the holiday season and will be scaled back this year. Some of our rangers and staff (including the CE) have recently updated their CERT training which is designed primarily for ranger safety.

10.6 LICENCING

Licence sales are down across the South Island and around 4% behind in Otago. Most of this is related to reduced sales of family licences (see finance report). NZC's prediction of a moderate loss due to the changes has been underestimated in my view and with no increase in licence fees this year, some regions will need to reach deep into their reserves unless sales improve considerably. This will put further pressure on Otago, either via levies or use of reserves.

10.7 COUNCIL

Property Update

The Wanaka site refencing has been delayed with contractors being tied up with flood and wind damage elsewhere. They are proposing to be on site before year end.

New Building: The shift is complete now and all staff and everything is now housed in the new Mosgiel office. It's been a massive job but the whole operation has gone remarkably smoothly. Staff are looking forward to getting back to their regular workloads. The budget for fit out is presently underspent but the balance is expected to be used on shrubs for landscaping (as agreed by Council at the last meeting).



10.8 PLANNING AND REPORTING

Annual Audit and Annual Report

The CE and Admin officer have successfully navigated an audit through a revised (Tier 3) reporting standard. The glossy statement of service performance will be edited to include the chairs letter and then sent directly onto our licence holders for their information. The format, which meets the updated accounting standard, seems to have met with the auditors approval, in fact she was very complimentary about its brevity and newsletter style.

Councillor Training session

Local trainer Jan Samuel, together with NZC Human resource officer have offered a training session on governance, health and safety and HR to be conducted in the new year. The chair wishes to have a discussion before making a further commitment on Councillors time as it potentially needs to be separate from our usual meeting schedule.

Chair to update; For discussion and decision

Next Council Meeting

Just a reminder that our next Council meeting - the annual planning meeting - will be held in Mosgiel on 24–25 January 2026. Subject to any developments with the reforms, this meeting will be used to develop next year's operational workplan. With the strategic direction already set, this shouldn't be a major exercise, however, the reforms may still have a significant influence and could draw key people away from general Fish & Game work next year. It is also possible that part of this meeting will need to be dedicated to finalising Otago's submission to the select committee on the reforms.

Please let me know if you would like any information beyond the usual “where we are up to” update and the “risks and opportunities” paper to guide the Council’s strategic direction.

Recommendation

That this report be received

Ian Hadland - **Chief Executive**

November 2025

11.0 RMA Planning and Consents Report

Paper Title	Planning and Consenting Report
Author	Nigel Paragreen, Environmental Officer November 2025
Purpose	For Information
Executive Summary	<p><i>Since the last reporting period, staff have undertaken the following planning and consent work:</i></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> - <i>Otago Regional Policy Statement</i> - <i>River engineering global consent – Styx Creek gravel extraction</i> - <i>Homestead Bay Fast Track Approvals Act Application</i>
Discussion/Analysis	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> - <i>Bendigo-Ophir Gold Project (report in public excluded)</i> - <i>There is one open notification process</i> - <i>Four written approvals were provided</i>
Links to Previous Papers/Decisions	N/A
Attachments (if any)	N/A
Recommendation	That this report is received

Decision Record	<p>Moved by:</p> <p>Seconded by:</p> <p style="text-align: right;">Carried / Lost:</p>
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Planning and Consenting Report, 14 September – 21 November 2025

Current Legislation, Policy and Planning Processes

Otago Regional Policy Statement (ORPS)

An update can be provided in the public excluded section of the meeting if required, as RPS processes are being mediated. However, I can relay that the mediation sessions have wrapped up and the remaining mediation work is in sorting paperwork to go to the Court.

River engineering global consent – Styx Creek gravel extraction

The Otago Regional Council (ORC) notified Fish & Game of proposed gravel extraction works at the Styx Creek and Taieri River confluence. The work involves removing approximately 500mm of gravel over a 50m reach to reduce upstream water levels affecting adjacent landowners.

Staff raised concerns about the proposed work for several reasons:

- Previous gravel extraction work in 2019 and 2021 resulted in observable lowering of wetland water levels in the regionally significant wetland (RSW), which was documented by staff at the time. ORC consultant Greg Ryder's analysis confirmed that gravel cuts measurably impact water levels within the RSW, with monitoring sites 1-2km upstream showing immediate responses to the work. However, the level reductions measured were temporary in nature, with water levels recovering within a day or two. It isn't clear what is happening here, as Ian Hadland documented the wetland at very low levels around this time. In addition, it's unclear why the work is needed or effective if the level reduction is so short lived. This question has not been resolved.
- The global consent was specifically designed with exclusions to avoid impacts on RSWs and natural inland wetlands. The recommending report for the consent demonstrated that these protections were intended, though they appear inadequate in this instance. The work is clearly not in the spirit of the global consent. Staff have suggested that a separate consent would be the better vehicle for this work, rather than the global consent. This would allow proper scrutiny of the evidence which is helpful given the historical complications in the situation.
- ORC's justification for the work is that gravel buildup results from a 1980s confluence realignment. However, historical aerial photographs from the 1940s-1970s show gravel bars at the original confluence location, suggesting the gravel accumulation is not a new phenomenon caused by the realignment. However, it may be that the two gravel bars would have been sitting at different heights, which may provide some explanation.

Following discussions with ORC staff the ORC has postponed the work to consult with their science team and reconsider whether the global consent is the appropriate mechanism for this type of activity.

Staff have made it clear to ORC that this is ultimately a Council decision requiring consistency with their own policy documents.

The political sensitivity of this issue should be noted, as the affected landowner has already contacted Fish & Game. Staff have endeavoured to address the issue in a politically sensitive manner.

Fast-Track Approvals Act Amendment Bill

In November 2025 the Fast-track Approvals Amendment Bill had its first reading in Parliament. The Bill is ostensibly focused on improving grocery sector competition but makes broader changes to the fast-track approvals regime.

The parent legislation allows applicants to bypass usual consenting processes and gain exemptions from various laws including the Resource Management Act 1991, Conservation Act 1987, Wildlife Act 1953, and Freshwater Fisheries Regulations 1983.

Key changes proposed include:

- Compressed timeframes: Panels must be appointed within 15 working days and decisions issued within 60 working days, regardless of project complexity or environmental risk. Extensions beyond 60 days cannot occur without applicant agreement.
- Reduced public participation: Some parties who previously needed to be consulted now only need to be notified, with commenting rights limited to those the panel considers "appropriate".
- Increased ministerial influence: A new Government Policy Statement would define "regional or national benefit" for panel consideration. The Minister would gain power to direct the EPA, undermining its independence. The Bill includes a "Henry VIII clause" allowing amendments through Order in Council, bypassing Parliament.

The public was given only seven working days to submit, with a deadline of 17 November 2025. The Government intends to pass the Bill before the end of 2025.

There are several Fast Track Approvals Act projects in Otago which have the potential for impacts on anglers and hunters. These may be affected by the amendment bill.

Homestead Bay Fast Track Approvals Act Application

Fish & Game lodged a submission on 28 October 2025 on the Homestead Bay development, a fast-track consent application for approximately 750 residential lots on Lake Wakatipu. The submission provides conditional support, recognising housing needs while seeking protections for the fishery and wetland habitat.

Lake Wakatipu is a fishery of national significance, hosting over 26,000 angler-days in 2021-2022 (14.9% of all Otago angling effort). It's protected by the Water Conservation (Kawarau) Order 1997 for its outstanding fishing characteristics.

Staff identified three key concerns:

Nitrogen discharge: The applicant proposed a groundwater nitrate trigger of 3.0 mg/L, double the 1.5 mg/L trigger at adjacent Jacks Point. Lake Wakatipu is extremely sensitive to nitrogen (Schedule 15 limit of 0.1 mg/L). Staff sought hard limits requiring immediate action upon breach rather than lengthy monitoring periods.

Wetland destruction: The application proposes destroying five of six wetlands on site (89% by area), including critically endangered ephemeral wetlands. The applicant's own consultants recommended

avoiding these wetlands. Staff sought avoidance or, at minimum, offsets targeted at wetland rehabilitation around Lake Wakatipu.

Stormwater management: Staff drew attention to the Bullock Creek failure in Wanaka (21+ discharge events, \$6 million remediation bill) and sought assurance that systems are properly designed and tested before vesting to QLDC.

The application is now before the Expert Consenting Panel.

Current Notification Processes

Applicant	Activity	Outcome
Otago Regional Council notifications		
Oceana Gold (New Zealand) Limited	For the site-wide expansion of mining activities at Macraes Gold Mine, including the discharge of contaminants to the Taieri, Shag and Waikouaiti catchments.	A neutral submission was written by staff which provides helpful information to help inform a decision maker. Key points involved dealing with uncertainty, properly considering cumulative effects and managing the extremely long timeframe for adverse effects (200+ years). Staff made contact with Oceana Gold prior to the submission being made so it was not a surprise. The hearing process remains on hold indefinitely.

Written Approval Provided During the Period

Applicant	Activity	Outcome
Otago Regional Council applications		
Wheelbarrow Mining Limited	To carry out land based mining to extract alluvial gold at Fullarton Stream, near Hyde, including the diversion and reclamation of the stream.	After discussion with the applicant, written approval was provided.
Barry Gordon Shields	To suction dredge in areas of the Pomahaka River that are identified as sensitive to suction dredging	After discussion with the applicant, written approval was provided.
Queenstown Lakes District Council		
Paddle Queenstown	Variation to existing application for kayaking trips on Moke Lake.	A volunteered consent condition was negotiated with the applicant to keep kayakers 50m away when passing anglers. Written approval was provided as a result.
Rotary Club of Queenstown	To hold the rubber duck race in Lake Horne	After discussion with the applicant about crowd control, written approval was provided.

No written approvals were provided during the period for consents from the following bodies:

- Central Otago District Council
- Dunedin City Council
- Clutha District Council
- Waitaki District Council

12.0 Committee & Delegate Reports

12.1 New Zealand Fish and Game Council

12.2 Clutha Mata Au Sports Fish and Habitat Trust

12.3 Ngai Tahu – Paulette Tamati-Elliffe

12.4 Conservation Board

12.5 Clutha Fisheries Trust

12.6 Tiaka Maniototo

13.0 Correspondence

13.1 NZC to Otago Nil

13.2 Otago to NZC

13.2.1 Feedback NZC Infringement Notice Policy

7 October 2025

CEO, New Zealand Fish & Game Council
Via email

RE: Feedback on Infringement Notice System Policy

Dear NZC,

The Otago Fish & Game Council considered the Infringement Notice System Policy and the accompanying Prosecutions Policy at its last meeting.

Policy consultation process

The Council was quite confused about the intent of the papers, particularly given the advice from our NZC representative that both policies were already determined and being circulated for information rather than feedback following recent legal advice NZC had taken.

This understandably raised the question of why consultation was being undertaken at all, especially when the matter appears procedural rather than policy in nature. If these documents are indeed finalised, we suggest they be presented as such rather than circulated under the guise of consultation. If feedback is genuinely sought, then regions should be given an opportunity to meaningfully influence their content, as required by the national consultation policy, and the time to do so.

Feedback on the proposed policy

From a substantive perspective, our Council remains concerned that the infringement system, as proposed, is poorly aligned with the organisation's operational scale and structure. It will be administratively heavy, does not support cost recovery, and provides limited deterrent value. While we recognise the administrative appeal of infringement notices for minor offences, their use should be tightly restricted to that narrow purpose.


We consider the prosecution and diversion model to remain the more effective and strategically valuable compliance tool for most of our offences (>90% of our offences are solved in this way). It provides transparency, deterrence, and a path for local cost recovery through the established mechanisms that return funds to Fish & Game purposes.

In summary, the Otago Council asks NZC to:

- Clarify the intent and status of the Infringement Notice and Prosecution Policies before seeking further regional input.

- Reaffirm the principle that consultation must occur *before* decisions are made on national policy.
- Re-examine whether the infringement system, as currently designed, adds measurable value to Fish & Game's compliance framework.

Yours sincerely,

A handwritten signature in black ink that reads "Adrian D McIntyre". The signature is written in a cursive style with a long horizontal flourish at the end.

Adrian McIntyre, Chairperson
Otago Fish & Game Council

13.2.2 Feedback NZC Consolidated Annual Reporting Policy

7 October 2025

CEO, New Zealand Fish & Game Council
Via email

RE: Feedback on Draft Consolidated Annual Reporting Policy

Dear NZC,

Otago Fish & Game Council and its CE have reviewed the material circulated on the proposed Consolidated Annual Report (CAR) metrics and quarterly reporting requirements.

While we recognise the intent to present a clearer picture of Fish & Game's collective performance and provide visibility to the Minister and licence holders, the level of detail and frequency proposed is disproportionate to the scale and resourcing of the organisation.

Regional Fish & Game Councils already meet their statutory obligations through audited Annual Reports submitted to the Minister. These are the appropriate and legislatively recognised instruments for accountability. Introducing a further layer of detailed internal reporting, particularly on a quarterly cycle, would duplicate effort, increase administrative workload, and draw staff attention away from more important tasks. In brief, internal reporting of this kind does not make the organisation more efficient, it simply creates more work.

That said, we support the principle of developing a concise set of common metrics across regions. A consistent national framework will improve comparability and strengthen our collective story when engaging with the Minister and the public. However, this needs to be pragmatic, proportionate, and aligned with existing reporting systems.

Given that the CAR has no statutory standing and therefore no prescribed timeline for its completion, the information could be collated after Regional Councils, the Game Bird Habitat Trust, and NZC have finalised their respective annual reports.

It is also noted that this proposal was supposed to be workshopped with staff prior to submission to Councils. Such engagement would have been valuable in identifying what data can realistically be gathered, where systems already align, and how duplication might be avoided.

We recommend that NZC consider:

- **Scaling back the proposed metrics** to those that are nationally comparable and genuinely useful.
- **Adopting an annual (rather than quarterly) collection cycle**, integrated with the existing annual reporting process.
- **Using existing annual reports as the primary data source**, supplemented only where necessary.
- **Undertaking a staff workshop** to refine the metrics and approach prior to formal adoption.

This would ensure the CAR remains efficient, proportionate, and genuinely adds value to the organisation's work.

Yours sincerely,

A handwritten signature in black ink that reads "Adrian D McIntyre". The signature is written in a cursive style with a long, sweeping underline.

Adrian McIntyre, Chairperson
Otago Fish & Game Council

**13.3 General Correspondence In
Nil**

**13.4 General Correspondence Out
Nil**

14.0 Items to be Received or Noted

Paper Title	14.1 Staff Scholarship-Report – Otolith Clinic
Author	Jayde Couper, Ecologist
Purpose	For Information
Executive Summary	This report details the outcomes of the Staff Scholarship awarded to Jayde Couper. It outlines the funding allocation, the practical activities undertaken during the workshop, and follow-up initiatives, including the establishment of a national database. Recommendations for future expansion of this work are also provided.
Discussion/Analysis	The project successfully established internal otolith aging capacity, aligning with organisational strategic priorities to manage fisheries scientifically. Financial resources (\$14k) were maximised by training multiple staff and purchase of shared equipment. To mitigate the risk of skill degradation and ensure national consistency, the primary options for future work are establishing a reference library and extending training to North Island regions.
Links to Previous Papers/Decisions	
Attachments (if any)	
Recommendation	That this report be received

Decision Record	Moved by: Seconded by: Carried / Lost:
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Staff Scholarship-Report – Otolith Clinic

1. Project Overview

This staff scholarship funded a specialized, two-day practical workshop for Fish & Game staff, delivered by experts from NIWA/GNS at their Christchurch laboratory. The primary goal was to upskill eight regional staff in cost-effective, accurate techniques for salmonid otolith preparation, mounting, and age estimation. The training, led by NIWA/GNS's Paul Lambert, focused on methods to build in-house capacity for this critical fisheries science.

The scholarship also funded an additional classroom session on data analysis and interpretation, led by NIWA/GNS's Mike Hickford, and the purchase of key supplies, including digital microscopes, to initiate an internal otolith aging programme.



Figure 1: Regional Staff at the 2025 South Island otolith aging clinic.

2. Activities Undertaken

- A two-day intensive workshop was held at the NIWA/GNS Christchurch labs for eight South Island Fish & Game staff.
- NIWA/GNS staff provided advice on otolith preparation and data storage. Storage advice is provided in Appendix 1.
- The course provided training in otolith preparation, mounting, and reading. A key outcome was the development of new salmonid-specific aging techniques by Paul Lambert (NIWA/GNS), as established techniques for other species were unsuitable. These methods are detailed in Appendix 2.
- An additional session was delivered on data analysis, covering cohort progression identification and growth rate comparison.
- Key supplies, including two equipment "kits" (based in Otago and CSI) and digital microscopes, are to be purchased. These kits will be available for neighbouring regions to ensure the work can be undertaken widely.
- A national database has been developed by Otago staff to allow for ongoing cross-validation of age estimates. Details can be found in Appendix 3.

3. Outcomes & Benefits for Fish & Game

This project has delivered significant benefits to Fish & Game, aligning directly with the Organisational Strategy:

- **Enhanced In-House Scientific Capacity:** Regional staff are now trained to accurately determine the age structure of salmonid populations.
- **Informed Management & Scientific Insights:** This capability provides the scientific basis for critical management work, including:
 - Informing sustainable management of seasons, bag limits, and harvest regulations (National strategy 4.5: Healthy habitats & ecosystems).
 - Identifying over- or under-representation of specific age classes to assess recruitment.
 - Calculating growth and mortality rates to understand fishery drivers.
 - Assessing environmental limiting factors by comparing actual versus modelled growth rates.
- **National Cohesion & Standardisation:** Training multiple staff in a standardized method allows for cross-verification. The new national database and shared equipment kits ensure collaborative continuity (National strategy 4.1: Unified & enduring organisation).
- **Cost-Effectiveness & Efficiency:** Training multiple staff simultaneously maximised scholarship funds. In-house preparation for otolith microchemistry will reduce future project costs.
- **Improved Scientific Literacy:** Working directly with NIWA/GNS enhances Fish & Game's scientific literacy and reputation.

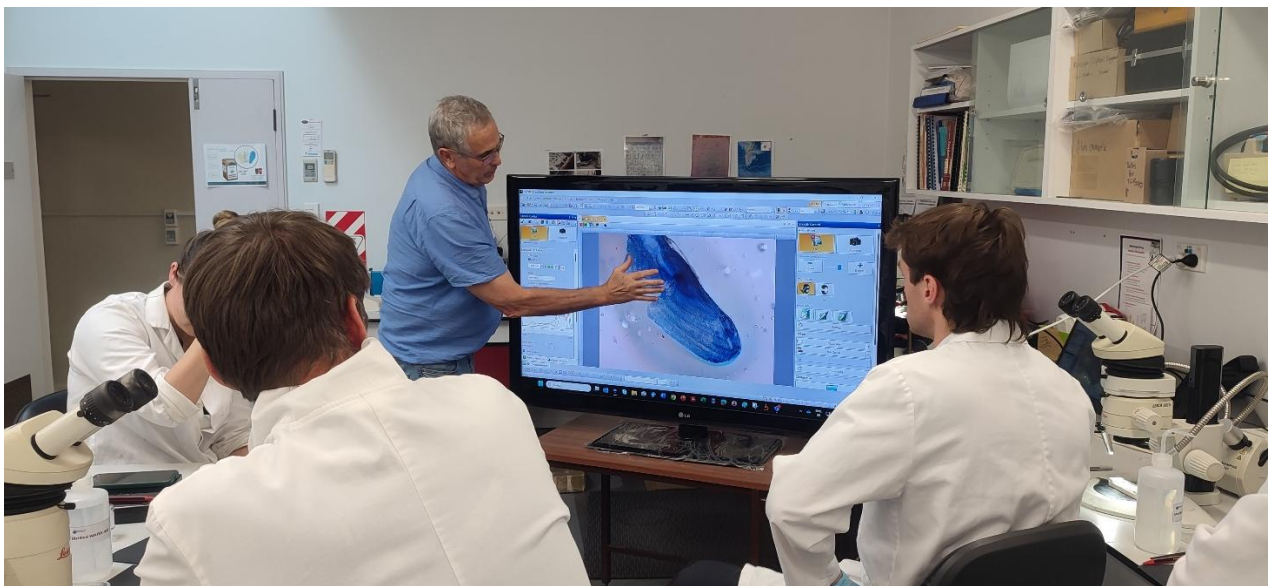


Figure 2: Paul Lambert from NIWA/GNS explains how to read the processed otolith.

4. Funding Summary

- Total Scholarship Grant: \$14,263
- Expenditure:
 - NIWA/GNS Workshop & Analysis Session: \$13,263
 - Supplies (Microscopes, slides, dye, etc.): \$1,000
- Additional Support (Covered by Regions/In-Kind):
 - Staff time, travel, and accommodation (covered by regional budgets).
 - In-kind logistical support (vehicles, airport pickups) from North Canterbury Fish & Game.



Figure 3: Dr Matt Kaverman from the Wellington Region aging some North Island rainbows.

5. Recommendations for Future Work

- **Build a Reference Library:** Regions should actively collect and maintain a reference set of otoliths from known-age fish (e.g., hatchery stocks) to assist with training and validation.
- **Expand National Training:** The National Council should contract Paul Lambert (NIWA/GNS) to run a similar course for North Island regions and South Island staff unable to attend the initial workshop.



Figure 4: Transverse section of a small Lake Onslow brown trout only 300mm at six years old.

6. Acknowledgements

This project was made possible by the funding of the Fish & Game New Zealand National Council Staff Scholarship and internal funding from the Otago Fish and Game Council. Thanks are extended to the team from NIWA/GNS: Angie Lambert, Mike Hickford, and Shannan Crow.

Particular thanks are due to Paul Lambert (NIWA/GNS). Paul spent significant additional time developing salmonid-specific methods for this project and provided follow-up assistance by reviewing otoliths for staff after the workshop.

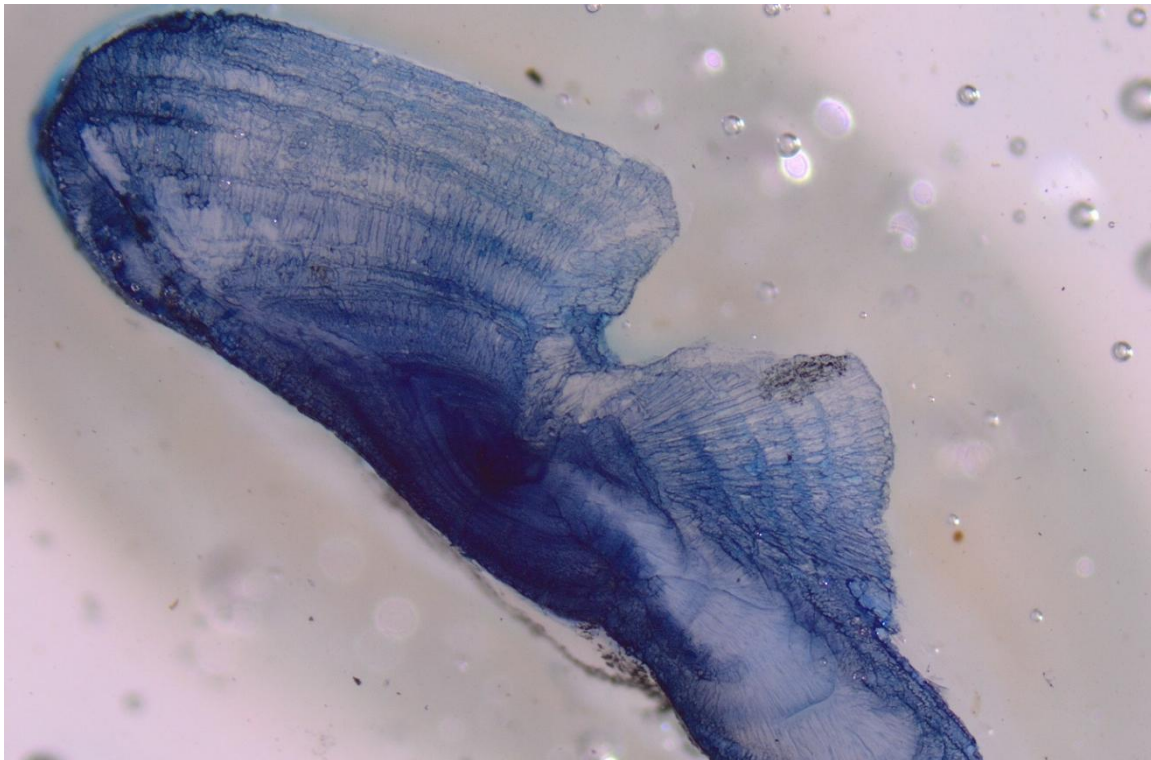


Figure 5: Seven year old brown trout from Lake Mahinerangi caught in the 2023 Lake Mahinerangi Gold competition.

7. Appendices

Appendix 1 - Otolith Collection and Storage Protocol

Proper collection and storage are essential for preserving otoliths for future analysis.

1. Extraction and Cleaning:
 - Carefully extract the otolith from the fish.
 - Remove the otic sac completely.
 - Thoroughly wash the otolith with clean water to remove any remaining tissue or blood.
2. Physical Storage:
 - Place the cleaned, dry otoliths into small storage tubes (e.g., microcentrifuge tubes) to prevent breakage and keep pairs together.
 - Allow the otolith to dry completely, by leaving the tubes open for two+ weeks.
 - Store these tubes in otolith envelopes.
3. Labelling and Data Management:
 - The otolith envelope must be clearly labelled with all relevant collection details (species, date, location, fish length, sex, etc.).
 - Each pair of otoliths must be assigned a unique code.
 - This unique code and all associated collection data must be entered into your regional database.
4. National Database Entry:
 - Once an otolith has been processed for aging, the results (age estimate and reader) and its unique regional code should be entered into the National Otolith Database.
 - This step is critical for cross-validation between regions and improving the accuracy of all staff.

Appendix 2 – NZ Salmonid Aging Guide.

Key Terminology

Understanding the key features of the otolith is essential for accurate age estimation. The goal of preparation is to make the annuli (annual growth rings) clearly visible for counting.

- Core/Nucleus: The centre of the otolith, representing the fish's earliest life.
- Annulus: A ring, typically a "1st winter annulus", formed each year. It consists of two zones:
 - Translucent Zone: A darker, clearer ring representing slow growth (typically winter).
 - Opaque Zone: A lighter, cloudy ring representing fast growth (typically summer).
- Checks: Rings that are not annual, such as "Freshwater checks" or "Supernumerary checks". These can be mistaken for annuli and must be identified.
- Planes: Anatomical directions, such as Dorsal, Ventral, Distal, and Proximal (Figure 6).

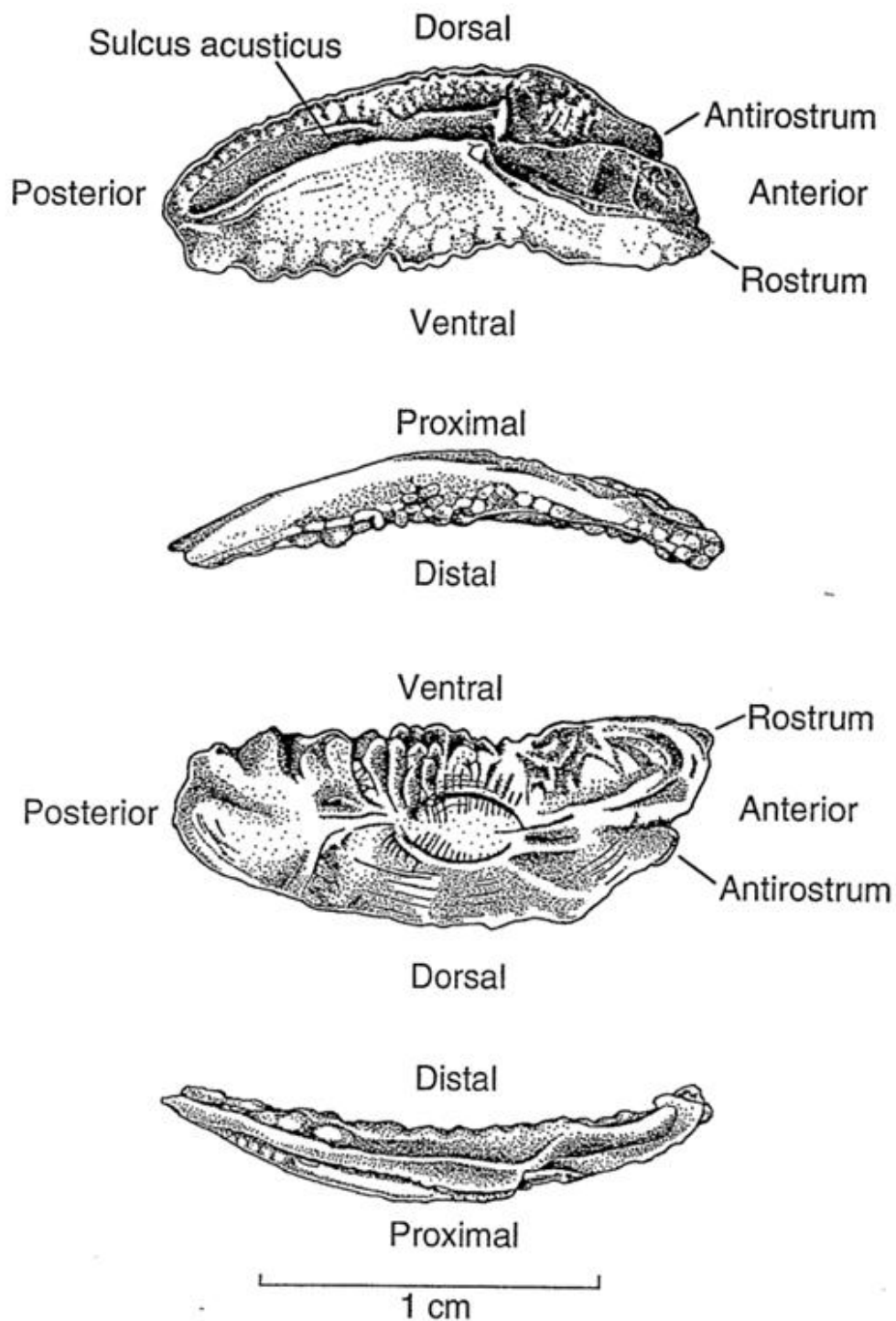


Figure 6: Otolith planes, sourced from Walsh, Cameron., Beentjes, M. P. ., & Kelly, G. . (2016). Age determination protocol for freshwater eels (*Anguilla dieffenbachii*, *Anguilla australis*). Ministry for Primary Industries.

Method 1: Trout (Brown & Rainbow) - Stained Half-Transverse Section

This method involves sanding one side of the otolith to the nucleus, then etching and staining it to make the annuli visible.

Step 1: Preparation and Mounting

1. **Locate and Mark:** Identify the nucleus (core) and mark it with a pencil.
2. **Mark Plane:** Mark around the otolith, especially on the Proximal plane (the sulcus side).
3. **Mount:** Place the otolith on the bottom, narrow edge of a slide and secure it with crystal bond.

Step 2: Sanding and Polishing

Important Note: After each sanding and polishing step below, you must:

1. Wash/rinse the otolith edge with distilled water into the provided plastic container.
2. Gently dab the otolith dry with a tissue.
3. **Coarse Sanding (400 grit):** Using 400 grit wet/dry sandpaper, sand the otolith down to within 1mm of your pencil line. (Wash/Rinse/Dry)
4. **Medium Sanding (800 grit):** Using 800 grit wet/dry sandpaper, sand down to within 0.5-0.75mm of the pencil line. (Wash/Rinse/Dry)
5. **Fine Sanding (2000 grit):** Using 2000 grit wet/dry sandpaper, sand down until you reach the pencil line. (Wash/Rinse/Dry)
6. **Final Polish (1 micron):** Using 1-micron Alum Oxide polish paper, very lightly and gently run the otolith over the paper 6-8 times. (Wash/Rinse/Dry)

Step 3: Etching and Staining

1. Place in EDTA 5% - refer to Table 1 for species- and habitat-specific times. (Wash/Rinse/Dry)
2. Place in Toluidine Blue 1% - refer to Table 1 for species- and habitat-specific times. (Wash/Rinse/Dry)

Step 4: Final Check and Troubleshooting

1. **Check Stain:** Check the otolith under a microscope.
2. **If Stain is Good:** Mount the otolith onto the centre of a new, labelled slide with the polished (stained) edge facing down.
3. **If Stain is Bad (Option 1):** Re-polish the otolith, repeating steps 5-9 from the original instructions (fine sanding, polishing, etching, and staining).
4. **If Stain is Bad (Option 2):** Re-etch the otolith by repeating steps 8-9 (EDTA and Toluidine) but only etch for an additional 10 minutes.
5. **If Staining Fails Completely:** The otolith must be processed as a thin section. Sand the opposite end of the otolith, following the "Method 2: Salmon" instructions below.

Method 2: Salmon (Chinook) - Thin Transverse Section

Salmon otoliths do not take stain well. You have two options for aging:

- Option 1: Reading the whole, unprocessed otolith.

- Option 2: Creating a thin transverse section (see steps below).

You should compare the age estimates from both options.

Steps for Creating a Thin Section

5. First Side Sanding: Follow the Trout preparation (Method 1, Steps 1-2) to mark, mount, and sand the first side.
 - When sanding with 400 grit, stay at least 2mm away from the nucleus (core). Keep checking the transverse surface as annuli begin to appear.
6. Re-mount: Once the first side is prepared, mount this "half transverse section" to the centre of a new, labelled slide. The flat, polished edge should face down on the slide surface.
7. Ensure Vertical: Make sure the otolith section is mounted perfectly vertical.
8. Second Side Sanding: Sand the second half (the un-sanded, curved side) following the same sanding process (steps 1-4 from the original instructions).
9. Fine Sanding: Once you are within 2mm of the nucleus, stop using 400 grit and proceed very carefully with the finer grits (800, 2000, 1-micron polish).
10. Check Constantly: This method requires constant microscope observation while processing until clear visibility of the annuli is achieved.
11. Flip as Needed: The thin section will need to be flipped back and forth to achieve the best visibility of the annuli.
 - The thin section is extremely fragile. When flipping, make sure the crystal bond is in a very liquid state to avoid breaking the section.
12. Completion: Continue polishing and checking under the microscope until clear visibility of the annuli is achieved.

Table 1: Summary of Techniques by Species

Species	Habitat	Staining	EDTA	Toluidine Blue	Whole Otolith	Section-Half Transverse	Thin Slice
Brown trout	River	Yes	10-15 mins	30 mins	No	Yes	Yes
Brown trout	Lake	Yes	30 mins	15 mins	No	Yes	Yes
Rainbow trout	River	Yes	10-15 mins	30 mins	No	Yes	Yes
Rainbow trout	Lake	Yes	30 mins	10 mins	No	Yes	Yes
Chinook salmon	River	No	No	No	Yes	No	Yes
Chinook salmon	Lake	No	No	No	Yes	No	Yes

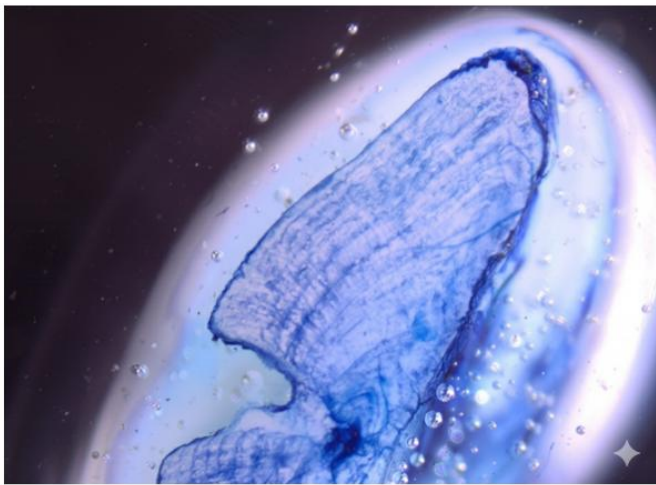
Appendix 3 – National Otolith Database

Course participants unanimously agreed that Regional Councils should maintain their own physical storage and regional databases. However, prepared otolith data should be entered into a national database cross-referenced to regional libraries. This allows for cross-regional age verification, improving dataset quality.

A database has been created to allow staff to enter records and validate others' work (Figure 7). Although regions have not yet started aging fish, samples from the clinic and a Northern Ontario reference library have been entered for practice and proof of concept.

Regional_ID 8_2024_005	Species Brown Trout	FG_Region Otago	ProjectCode 2025 Otolith Clinic
Image Type Reflected	Length (mm) 565	Weight (g) 1710	Comments Waipahi River
Contact Person Jayde Couper	Created 07/11/2025 10:35		

Otolith Image



Return to Records | Edit Record | Download Photo | Delete Record | Add Ageing | Number of Ageings: 1

Figure 7: A record from the newly created National Otolith database, showing details and a photo from a ten-year old fish caught during the 2024 Waipahi Gold Medal competition.

Paper Title	14.2 2025 Southern Reservoir Take a Kid Fishing Events & Adult Beginner Spin Fishing Classes
Author	S Dixon, Fish and Game Officer – November 2025
Purpose	For Information
Executive Summary	This report details the planning, promotion and format of events for both the Take a kid Fishing Events and the Beginner Adult Fishing Classes. For the TAKF It outlines the even attendance which changes every year and feedback survey results which this year responses were low. The report also looks at the age of participants for the Adult Beginner Fishing Classes, this can give us an understanding of where to focus our efforts when it comes to licence promoting and sales.
Discussion/Analysis	Considerations - If the trout supplies for Otago’s TAKF events are to continue in the foreseeable future it is important to keep in mind the mine life expectancy as the hatchery is only operating because of Oceana Gold. Funding for the events has been made from Otago Community Trust grants, this source of funding is not guaranteed.
Links to Previous Papers/Decisions	
Attachments (if any)	
Recommendation	That this report be received

Decision Record	Moved by: Seconded by: Carried / Lost:
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2025 Southern Reservoir Take a Kid Fishing & Adult Beginner Spin Fishing Classes



On the weekends of the 20th & 21st September and 27th & 28th September 2025, the Otago Fish & Game Council held four 'Take a Kid Fishing' (TAKF) events at the Southern Reservoir.

Planning

The DCC approved four Fish & Game Council TAKF events at the Southern Reservoir. A conditional agreement has been reached to use the venue for future events.

Sponsorship

The Otago Community Trust generously donated \$2,362.00 towards the event. The money was used for things such as toilet hire, traffic management, fish transportation.

Promotion

The TAKF day was promoted on the Otago Fish & Game Facebook page, Reel life and an email was sent out to all the Dunedin Schools.

Access

The Southern Reservoir is closed for fishing for September. This is to facilitate the liberation of trout and help improve catch-rates for the events. The reservoir was visited randomly during this month and there was no evidence of unlawful fishing.

Support

Traffic Management & Control LTD supplies and erects all the road signage for the event. Hirepool supplied the toilets for the weekends. Green Island Lions provided hot food and organised a coffee car for the events.

Entries

All entries were taken online using the Fish & Game website. This captures details of the attendees so they can be later contacted for follow up surveys.

Format of Events

There were four sessions over the two weekends (one session per day). All the sessions were held from 10 am to 12 pm. On the day of the event, participants were greeted by our friendly volunteer rangers and staff, signed in and then found a spot around the reservoir to fish.

The "Take Me Fishing" trailer was set up beside the registration table, children that didn't have a fishing rod or the rod they bought along was not suitable for trout fishing could borrow one for the event.

The TAKF trailer has 40 rod and reel sets for loan and many of the rods were used across the four sessions.

Stocking of the Southern Reservoir

Approximately 600 two-year-old rainbow trout with weight ranging from 900gm – 4kg were set aside at the Macraes Trout Hatchery for the event. Three hundred fish were transported and released into the reservoir 5 days before the first event. Another 300 fish were released into the reservoir 5 days before the second event.

Events attendance

The Southern Reservoir is a small water body with limited access and child numbers from 110 – 120 are preferred. This number is achieved by over registering each event by 25 – 35%.

The *no-show rate* fell from 48% last year to 30% this year, this can probably be attributed to the weather conditions. Last year three out of the four events were cold, rainy and windy whereas this year it was the complete opposite with all four events being fine with light winds.

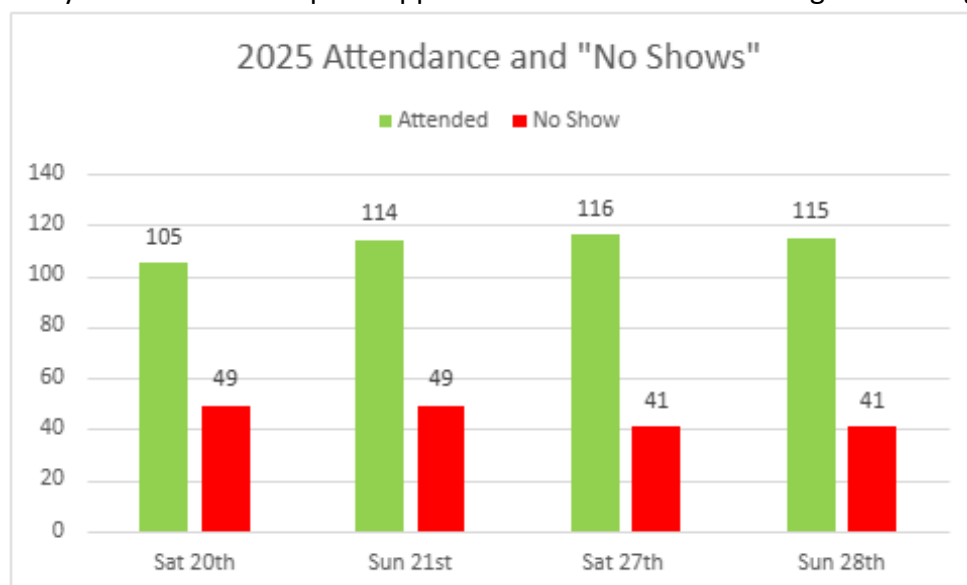


Figure 1: Attendance rates for all 4 sessions which include extras

Date	Registered	Extra	No show	Total attend
Saturday Sept 20 th	152	2	49	105
Sunday Sept 21 st	164	7	57	114
Saturday Sept 27 th	155	2	41	116
Sunday Sept 28 th	147	9	41	115
Total	618	20	188	450

Figure 2: Total registered & total attended

Take a Kid Fishing Survey Results and feedback

Three hundred & twenty-four invitations were sent out to all attendees via email to gather information about the event and there were only 39 completed responses.

Some of the questions asked were:

- How many fish did you take home?
- How many fish did you return?
- Do you have any suggestions for future TAKF events?

Out of the completed responses:

11 fish were harvested (across the 4 days)

5 fish were caught and returned to the reservoir (across the 4 days)

Note: The survey response is not a reflection of how many fish were caught, kept or released. Approximately 50 fish were gutted at the table by staff and rangers.

Participants were also asked if they had any suggestions for future events. All responses are summarised in appendix 1 below.

Children that caught fish were able to keep the fish if they wished which were gutted and cleaned by Fish & Game rangers.



Mark Barrett shows how to gut and clean a trout

Beginner Adults Fishing Class

For the last 12 years, Otago Fish & Game Council has been running adult beginner fishing classes. In Dunedin this year we ran four theory classes (1st – 4th Sept) three mixed classes and one woman only class and on Sat 6th Sept there was a practical lesson for all attendees at the Southern Reservoir.

There was one theory class in Cromwell (5th Sept) and a practical lesson at Molyneux Pond on Sat 6th Sept.

Advertising was by way of the Fish & Game web site and on Facebook.

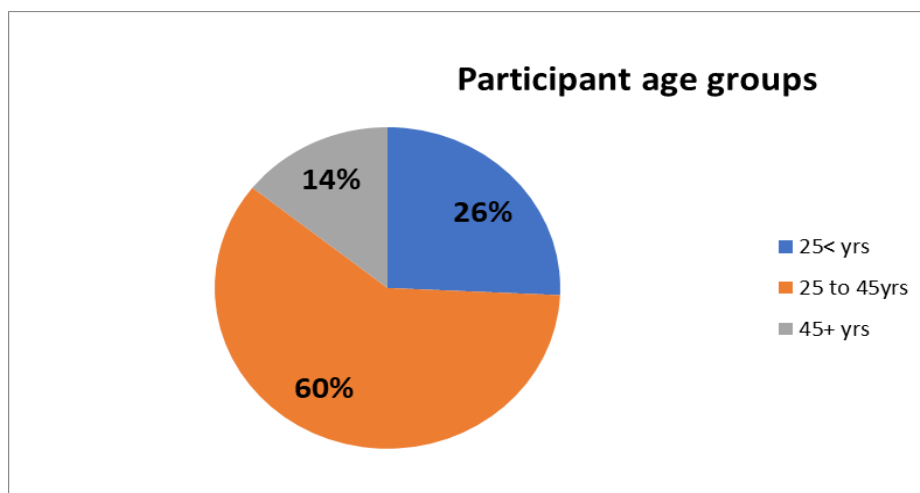


Figure 3: Relative percentage of participants across age groups

Dunedin classes – there was a 2hr theory session (held in the Dunedin office boardroom) with a PowerPoint presentation on equipment, knots, fish species, where fish can be found, licences etc and on Saturday 6th Sept the classes were combined and a 1.5hr practical session was held at the Southern Reservoir. There were 49 registrations for the Dunedin classes. Thirty-eight beginner anglers came to the fishing lesson at Southern Reservoir on September 6th. One fish was landed and kept, and several fish were hooked and self-released. Fun was had by all.



Participants of the 2025 Adults Beginner Fishing Class

Cromwell class - Sixteen participants took part in the Cromwell adult beginner fishing class, held on September 5th and 6th. The course began with an evening theory session in the Bannockburn Room at the Cromwell Presbyterian Church, followed by a practical fishing session at Molyneux Pond the next morning.

The practical session produced excellent fishing, with many trout landed and participants thoroughly enjoying the opportunity to learn about freshwater sport fishing. Attendees honed their casting skills, experimented with different methods, and gained valuable hands-on experience.

A total of 21 fish were landed, with almost every participant catching at least one. It was a great learning experience that included not only hooking fish but also practising fish fighting and netting techniques. Seventy-five trout from the Macraes Flat Trout Hatchery were released into Molyneux Pond for this event.



Mason Court hard at work during the Cromwell theory class

Acknowledgements

Otago Community Trust, DCC, Macraes Oceana Gold, Traffic Management & Control LTD, Green Island Lions, Hire-pool

Volunteers/Rangers

Mike Teasdale, Geoff Dee, Dan Natter, Mark Barrett, Leon Watson, Robbie Natter, Tim Gibson, Mike Weddell, Murray Smart

Fish & Game staff

Steven Dixon, Sharon Milne, Ian Hadland, Jayde Couper, Mason Court, Jamie Ward, Cole Briggs, Bruce Quirey

Recommendations

That this report is received.

Steven Dixon - Fish & Game Officer

Appendix 1: Suggestions for Future Events

the event can be hold every month
Organise spots around the reservoir to have enough space for each
No. All good. We had a great experience—thank you very much.
Pretty good as is
No. It was fantastic!
No. It was good fun.
Bit crowded
No, it's great
Fun event. The chocolate fish was a nice idea for the kids afterwards.
Less people more days
Well organised, very helpful volunteers who were happy to answer questions, help with broken lines etc.
We thought it was great
No great day out
No, it was great the way it was.
Release more fish.
No it was a really great day!
was a good family outing boy enjoyed the event
Great event once again well done Steve and crew!
No, it was well catered for including parking, coffee etc
My son was pretty squashed in where we were fishing, maybe marker pegs to keep groups separate
No
Easier to catch fish please!
just keep them going each year. We never caught anything, but did enjoy the fishing
No keep it as it is. Great event.
I love these events, can be overcrowded with people. The staff and volunteers are amazing

No
No - we would love to attend next year
I noticed that one of the kids was hooking a lot of fish but lost them all because he didn't play them. I'm sure if a volunteer had been there the correct advice would have been provided but you can't be everywhere. And he would've learned something.
Just to make sure it's all about the kids and having fun. Keep trying to get the kids who have never fished to give it a go.
Was well set up. Didn't see many people catching fish, so maybe some more fish put into the reservoirs beforehand??

Game Gazette Update

Proposed Changes for the 2025/2026 Gamebird Season for Otago

Overview of Proposed Changes:

Otago Fish & Game is proposing the following changes for the 2026 gamebird season:

1. **Paradise Shelduck – Main Season:** Increase the bag limit from 12 to 15 birds, effective from the first weekend in May 2026.
2. **Paradise Shelduck – Special Season:** Increase the nine-day special season limit from 5 to 15 birds (from the first weekend in March 2027), aligning it with the main season limit. The current exemption would still apply should the paradise shelduck moult count drop below 16,000, in which case the summer season will be cancelled.

Note: *Paradise shelduck bag limit changes will be subject to data obtained from the January trend count flights.*

Rationale:

In-depth reasoning for these proposals was tabled at the 23 September Council meeting in the Triannual Gamebird Management Review document. A brief summary of the rationale for the proposed changes is provided below.

The paradise shelduck bag limit was originally intended to increase to 15 in 2025 after the population exceeded the threshold set in 2023; however, this was postponed due to an avian botulism outbreak in East Otago. Aligning the nine-day special season limit with the main season simplifies the regulations and provides more meaningful hunting opportunities, consistent with hunter survey feedback.

Consultation:

Stakeholder feedback and consultation have been requested widely to ensure a comprehensive perspective (Appendix 1). This included iwi and Māori entities: Te Rūnanga o Ngāi Tahu, Te Rūnanga o Otakou, Te Rūnanga o Hukanui, South Otago Rūnanga, Kāti Huirapa Rūnanga ki Puketeraki, Te Whānau o Otokia, Moturata Taieri Whānau, Te Rūnanga o Moeraki, and Kāi Tahu ki Otago. Input was also obtained from neighbouring Fish & Game regions (Central South Island, Southland, West Coast). Other key stakeholders contacted were Department of Conservation, Ministry of Tourism, Land Information New Zealand, Game Animal Council, NZ Professional Guides Association, retail partners and agents, local gamebird/gun clubs including Central Otago Gun Dog Club, Wanaka Gun Club, West Otago Gun Club, Dunedin Clay Target Club, NZ Deer Stalkers, and North Otago Gun Dog Club.

Feedback:

To date, only one formal submission has been received, from the NZ Professional Guides Association, supporting all proposed changes. Consultation with Te Rūnanga o Moeraki regarding potential for cultural harvest is ongoing, with feedback potentially tabled at this council meeting.

Next Steps:

- Direct email to Otago licence holders informing them of proposed changes and inviting feedback.
- Public notice in the *Otago Daily Times*.
- Once all feedback is received, a summary report will be presented to Council at its January meeting for final consideration.

Appendix 1: Submission from NZ Professional Guides Association

Mason Court

From: Chris McCarthy <chris@haweia-hunting.co.nz>
Sent: Wednesday, 5 November 2025 8:51 pm
To: Mason Court
Subject: Re: New Form Entry: NZPHGA Contact Form

CAUTION: This email originated from outside of the organization. Do not click links or open attachments unless you recognize the sender and know the content is safe.

Hi there,

After a quick consult with our executive we 100% agree with all increases.

Regards
 Chris McCarthy
 President
 027 3490 393

On Wed, 5 Nov 2025 at 4:23 pm, <no-reply@weebly.com> wrote:

You've just received a new submission to your [NZPHGA Contact Form](#).

[Mark as Spam](#)

Submitted Information:

Name

Otago Fish&Game

Email

mcourt@fishandgame.org.nz

Comment

Afternoon,

Otago Fish & Game is currently undertaking its triennial review of gamebird regulations. As part of our regulation-setting policy, we seek consultation with stakeholders.

We are proposing the following changes for the 2026 gamebird season:

1. Increase the paradise shelduck bag limit from 12 to 15 birds for the main season (From first weekend in May 2026).
2. Increase the special season (from first weekend March 2027) paradise shelduck limit from 5 to 15 birds, aligning it with the main season limit.

The paradise shelduck limit was originally intended to increase from 12 to 15 last year, following the population exceeding the threshold set in 2023. However, due to an avian botulism outbreak in East Otago, the Council postponed the change. Aligning the nine-day special season limit with the main season simplifies the regulations and provides more meaningful hunting opportunities, based on hunter survey feedback.

We welcome any thoughts or feedback on these proposed changes or any of our current regulations. Feedback would be appreciated by 28th November.

The full draft of the triennial review is available on request.

Regards,

Mason Court | Fish & Game Officer - Cromwell

Otago Fish & Game Council

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E mcourt@fishandgame.org.nz W www.fishandgame.org.nz

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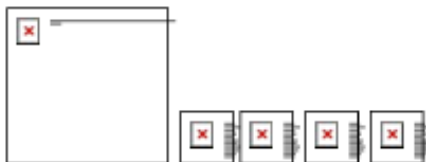
Chris McCarthy - Outfitter & Guide

Lake Hawea Hunting Safaris

116 Hawea Back Road

Lake Hawea, South Island NZ

Lodge + 64 3 443 7282 | Cell + 64 27 3490 393



15.0 General Business

16.0 2025 Annual General Meeting

**Annual General Meeting
of
Otago Fish and Game Council**

**3pm, Tuesday 2nd December 2025
Otago Fish and Game Council Office,
5 Hazlett Road, Mosgiel**

Agenda

- 1. Present and Apologies**
- 2. Approve minutes of 2024 AGM**
- 3. Presentation of 2024/25 Annual Report**
- 4. Questions from the floor**
- 5. Adoption of Annual Report**

Moved/Seconder:

16.1 Minutes of 2024 AGM

Held Thursday 28th November 2024 at Office of Otago Fish and Game Council Cnr Hanover and Harrow Streets, Dunedin

1.0 Present and Apologies

Present: Adrian McIntyre (Chair), Mike Barker, John Cruden, John Highton, Vicky May, John Preedy, Blair Trevathan, Colin Weatherall.

In attendance: Ian Hadland (CE), Bruce Quirey.

The AGM opened at 3.35pm.

2.0 Approve minutes of 2023 AGM

Moved (Cr May/Cr Barker)

That the minutes of the Otago Fish & Game Council AGM held on 30th November 2023 be confirmed as a true and correct record.

Carried unanimously.

3.0 Presentation of 2023/24 Annual Report

Cr Weatherall, the previous chair, said it had been an interesting and challenging year. The Cromwell acquisition, progress towards the sale of Wanaka land, the sale of the Dunedin property and moving towards development in Mosgiel were milestones for the council. The projects were well planned with minimal direct cost on licence holders. The financial position of the Council was strong and healthy. The region had extremely good natural resources.

He noted the Council's greenhouse gas emissions programme and the communications strategy as highlights.

He said the Council was proud of the staff, the work they had achieved, and the positivity they had gained from interactions with licenceholders and supporters.

He acknowledged outgoing councillors Ian Cole, Rick Boyd and Ray Grubb for their contributions, collectively more than 100 years of service to the organisation.

He said a small challenge now was the numbers on Council, and the question whether to leave it as it is or fill a vacancy.

Cr Weatherall thanked the CE, and acknowledged the contribution of the Ngāi Tahu representative, Paulette Tamati-Elliffe. He also thanked Cr Barker for his representation on the NZC.

Finally, he acknowledged the clean auditor's report but criticised the auditor for failing to meet its own prescribed deadline.

Moved (Cr Weatherall/Cr May)

That the annual report be adopted.

Carried.

Cr Trevathan noted his attendance at Council meetings was left out of the report and Cr Weatherall said that would be amended.

4.0 Questions from the floor

Nil.

The Chair declared the AGM closed at 3.45pm.

16.2 2024-2025 Annual Report