

**Agenda For The Meeting of Otago Fish & Game Council
On Tuesday 17th March 2026
At Cromwell Presbyterian Church Rooms
10 Elspeth Street, Cromwell
Starting 11.45am with a light lunch**

Timetable	Council Meeting
11.45 am	Lunch
12.15 pm	Councillor Only Session
12.30 pm	Meeting Begins
1.00 pm	Public Excluded Session
2.30 pm	Open Meeting Resumes
2.45 pm	Afternoon Tea
3.00 pm	Public Forum
5.00 pm	Meeting Ends

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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
Saturday 24th January 2026
At Otago Fish & Game Council Office,
5 Hazlett Road, North Taieri, Mosgiel**

The meeting began at 12.30pm

1.0 Present, Apologies and Declarations of Interest

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

In attendance: Ian Hadland (Chief Executive), Jamie Ward (Operations Manager), Bruce Quirey (Communications Officer).

Apologies:

None received.

Moved: Cr Barker, Cr Cruden

That apologies be accepted.

Carried

Declarations of Interest: None

2.0 Election of Officers

Chair

The Chief Executive chaired the Chair election.

Moved: Cr Barker, Cr Weatherall

That Cr Adrian McIntyre be elected as Chair.

Carried

The Chair thanked councillors for their support.

Moved: Cr Weatherall, Cr Preedy

That nominations be declared closed.

Carried

NZC Appointee

Cr Weatherall advised that Cr Mike Barker had been appointed as NZC appointee for the duration of the Council term while organisational reform is underway. Cr Barker confirmed his willingness to continue. The Chair thanked Cr Barker for his contribution.

Executive Committee

It was noted that the NZC delegate is ex officio a member of the Executive Committee and that good governance practice requires the Executive to remain below 50% of total Council membership.

Moved: Cr Trevathan, Cr Highton

That Cr Weatherall and Cr Barker be elected to the Executive Committee.

Carried

Deputy Chair

Moved: Cr Preedy, Cr Cruden

That Cr Trevathan be elected as Deputy Chair.

Carried

The Chair thanked councillors for standing again and noted the year ahead would be challenging.

3.0 Matters To Be Raised Not On The Agenda

Cr Highton queried the timing of governance training previously discussed for mid-2026. It was noted that training had been deferred, with no resolution on how it would be delivered. Councillors discussed whether legislative change would alter governance fundamentals, noting that while processes and manuals may require updating, core principles remain unchanged.

The Chief Executive advised that Cr Vicky May's resignation requires consideration under statutory processes, and this item was added to the agenda.

4.0 Confirmation of Previous Minutes

Moved: Cr Highton, Cr Barker

That the minutes of the Council meeting held on 2nd December 2025 be confirmed as a true and correct record.

Carried

5.0 Matters Arising from the Minutes

None.

6.0 Health and Safety Report

Council discussed fire risks associated with lithium batteries, with the Chair requesting staff investigate appropriate fireproof storage options.

The CE gave an undertaking to investigate options for safe storage of batteries.

Wording in the Health and Safety Policy was also discussed, with concern expressed about whether the language reflected a strong enough commitment to staff safety. The Operations Manager noted that the current wording aligns with legislative requirements.

Moved: Cr Preedy, Cr Highton

- **That the health and safety report for December 2025 to January 2026 be received.**
- **That Council confirm and sign the OF&GC Health and Safety Policy 2026.**

Carried

7.0 Items Requiring Decisions

7.1 ORC Navigational Safety Bylaws – Jet Boat Association Submission

Council considered a proposal from the Otago Jet Boat Association seeking amendments to ORC Navigational Safety Bylaws to adjust and extend speed uplifts on several rivers. Discussion focused on the extent to which existing arrangements already operate without issue, potential effects on angling and spawning, and the Association’s generally constructive engagement with Fish & Game.

Concerns were raised about jet boat activity on certain rivers, particularly where non-affiliated operators may already be operating outside current rules. Improved signage and clarity at access points was suggested as one mitigation. The Chief Executive clarified that a “no objection” position would allow the proposal to proceed to public notification rather than representing endorsement of all potential outcomes.

Moved: Cr Barker, Cr Cruden

That the Council offers no objection to the proposed amendments to be put forward by the Otago Jet Boat Association as amendments to the Otago Navigational Safety Bylaws.

Carried

7.2 Game Gazette – Paradise Shelduck Season

The Chief Executive reported that the paradise shelduck aerial count has been completed. The Operations Manager specified the count was 26,591 birds. This exceeded the previously agreed 23,000 population thresholds for increasing bag **limits**.

The proposed changes are:

- **General season bag limit: increase from 12 to 15 birds (2026 season).**
- **Nine-day special season bag limit: increase from 5 to 15 birds (from March 2026-2027)**

Cr Trevathan and Cr Preedy both agreed with increasing the limits.

Councillors discussed the rationale for timing of counts, population trends, and broader feedback on other species, including pukeko and shoveler. Concern was expressed about the use of the term “pest” in relation to paradise shelduck, with agreement that they remain a valued game bird. It was also expressed that they could become “pests” if their population was not controlled.

The CE noted that increasing bag limits was a proportionate response to population growth and defensible to stakeholders.

Moved: Cr Highton, Cr Trevathan

- **That this report be received.**
- **That the proposed changes outlined in the Draft Game Gazette be confirmed and provided to Fish & Game National Council for recommendation to the Minister.**

Carried

The Chief Executive, with the Chair's agreement, requested that the move to public-excluded session be delayed until 2pm to allow completion of open meeting business.

8.0 Move to Public Excluded Session

The meeting moved into public-excluded session at 2pm.

Moved: Cr Weatherall, Cr Preedy

That the meeting move into public-excluded session with authority to allow the Friends of Bullock Creek representative to join for relevant items.

Carried

[Public-excluded items 8.1-8.5 were discussed — see separate Public-Excluded Minutes]

The meeting returned to open session at approximately 3.30pm.

9.0 Financial Report

The Chief Executive responded to questions on the financial report, including clarification around annual leave liabilities and requirements for staff to take regular leave.

Moved: Cr Highton, Cr Trevathan

That the financial report be received.

Carried

10.0 Chief Executive's Report

The CE clarified that NZ Council had requested contributions to a national access database. Staff have contributed data showing both lost and gained access, with significant gains through cycle trails. Ongoing negotiations with landowners continue to secure additional access points.

Discussion covered access issues associated with cycle trails, Walking Access Commission involvement, and specific access matters on the Clutha River and Lake Dunstan. The Operations Manager outlined recent engagement with LINZ about controlled access to the eastern side of Lake Dunstan near Bendigo Wildlife Management Area, including responsibilities for site management.

An Otago access report was suggested as this is a major Council objective.

Councillors emphasised that access is a major concern for licence holders. There was discussion whether cycle trails benefited hunters, and the potential value of closer engagement with the Walking Access Commission.

It was noted that with tenure review, hunting access has potentially been lost for upland areas that have become DOC-managed land.

Moved: Cr Trevathan, Cr Highton

That the Chief Executive's report be received.

Carried

11.0 RMA Planning and Consents Report

The CE said this report is for Council's information, noting Santana Minerals' fast-track application was encountering difficulties.

Council enquired about the Regional Policy Statement. Surprise was expressed that planning work continues given such processes were stopped by government directive. The CE explained that while mediation is essentially concluded, parts of the RPS may be incorporated into new combined planning frameworks under proposed legislation reform.

Moved: Cr Cruden, Cr Barker

That the RMA Planning and Consents report be received.

Carried

12.0 Committee & Delegate Reports

12.1 New Zealand Fish and Game Council

Cr Barker reported on recent NZ Fish & Game workshops relating to legislative reform, highlighting both gains and significant risks for hunting, fishing, habitat protection, and Fish & Game's statutory role. He emphasised that wider RMA reform may have greater long-term implications for the organisation than the Fish and Game Act review itself.

Under proposed legislation changes, there are few environmental safeguards, no protection for trout and salmon, wetlands are unprotected, and Sports Fish and Game Management Plans (SFGMP) do not have to be referred to. There is heavy reliance on national instruments, ministerial discretion, and significant uncertainty with future planning processes.

It was noted that the RMA reform legislation will likely be adopted.

The Chair confirmed details of an upcoming RMA workshop open to all councillors.

12.2 Clutha Mata-au Sports Fish and Habitat Trust

The Chief Executive reported on Trust activities including investment policy, access improvements, and an upcoming non-migratory galaxiid strategy workshop, as well as discussion about collaboration with other trusts.

The next Trust meeting is scheduled for January 28th.

12.3 Ngāi Tahu

No report received.

12.4 Otago Conservation Board

It was noted that the Conservation Board met earlier the same day. Council discussed opportunities to strengthen representation and engagement, including encouraging nominations to current vacancies.

12.5 Clutha Fisheries Trust

The Chief Executive reported that the Trust is awaiting Ministerial confirmation of appointments. Cr Barker advised that his NZ Council nomination is likely to be confirmed, while the DOC appointment remains uncertain.

12.6 Tiaki Maniototo

Cr Highton reported that the previous governance meeting minutes had been circulated by email. He discussed catchment group funding challenges, ongoing planning work in the Upper Taieri, and a range of water management and habitat issues. He noted the Taieri Wai River Festival was cancelled due to weather, and highlighted a potential Tākitakitoa visit.

He said the Styx Creek gravel bar issue was raised again by Maniototo Irrigation Company. Fish & Game and ORC's position against removal of the gravel bar has frustrated some local farmers. The issue raises questions about prioritising relationships versus environmental protection. It was noted that gravel removal is also a significant issue in Southland.

ORC is applying a five-year global consent for minor gravel removal. Farmers say supplementary irrigation flows created persistent elevated water levels in the Upper Taieri and associated wetlands. The gravel bar further elevates these levels. Its removal would reduce wetland water levels, though farmers consider the effects minor due to ongoing supplementary flows.

The Chief Executive clarified that Fish & Game's role has been limited to raising concerns with ORC about impacts on a regionally significant wetland. He noted ORC's global consent does not allow interference with such wetlands and that a resource consent application would be required. The CE cautioned that reduced flows could result in the wetland drying out entirely.

It was noted that staff have followed proper process and the matter ultimately rests with ORC. The CE warned that closer Fish & Game involvement risks misdirected blame. Fish & Game had suggested diverting the stream to avoid the issue, but this was rejected as too difficult. A practical option of installing a small weir to manage water levels was discussed as a potential solution through the consent process.

Moved: Cr Weatherall, Cr Preedy

That the Committee and Delegate reports be received.

Carried

13.0 Correspondence

13.1-13.4 General Correspondence

The Chair criticised the proposed national crop depredation policy as overly complex, contrasting it with Otago's simple and effective approach: a farmer contacts the Chair, the issue is confirmed, and Fish & Game staff issue a permit to disturb birds and, if needed, to kill a small number to move them on.

He noted the proposed policy involves eight steps, which he considers impractical, particularly given high bird numbers and the need for rapid permit

turnaround. Concerns raised by Federated Farmers in Southland about difficulty obtaining permits were also noted.

The Chief Executive agreed the policy is overly complex, poorly structured, and developed without sufficient practitioner input, with potentially high costs (including requirements for Fish & Game to maintain bird-dispersal devices). The flow diagram was the only useful element identified.

Discussion followed on whether Otago should formalise its two-step process (disturb, then kill if necessary) into a written policy and provide it to NZ Council. Despite concerns this may frustrate NZ Council, Councillors agreed a practical alternative would be valuable.

It was agreed the Chief Executive will both critique the proposed policy and develop a written Otago-based alternative to present to NZ Council, with the Chair raising the matter at the upcoming NZ Council meeting.

Moved: Cr Weatherall, Cr Trevathan

That the correspondence be received and noted.

Carried

Recognition of Vicky May's Service

The Chair acknowledged Cr Vicky May's service to the Council. He noted she has been an outstanding councillor and the Council's only female member. She consistently advocated for reduced licence fees and licences for mobility impaired, often standing alone on these issues. She has done an excellent job and has decided to retire from Council.

There was discussion about an appropriate gift and it was suggested that a duck stamp signed by all councillors and staff would be meaningful to Cr May.

BDO Audit Response

Cr Weatherall enquired whether a response had been received from BDO regarding previous correspondence. The Chief Executive said NZ Council was supposed to be responding collectively on behalf of regions. Cr Barker confirmed he raised this issue at the last NZ Council meeting.

The CE noted that NZC has made some contact with either the Auditor General's office or BDO. Central South Island were preparing to write to the Auditor General expressing dissatisfaction. The CE has a letter ready to send if Council wishes.

The CE confirmed the Council had received some explanations from BDO to its concerns. The Chair noted Fish & Game has been chasing BDO every year. It was discussed whether changing auditors would improve the situation.

The CE that Fish & Game is assigned its auditor and doesn't have a choice but could write to the Auditor General requesting the option to choose a different auditor.

The Chair asked the Chief Executive to write to the Auditor General's office regarding this matter.

14.0 Items to be Received or Noted

14.1 Otago Fish and Game Council Audit Completion Report

Received.

14.2 Anglers Notice Update

The Chief Executive said the Anglers Notice process is underway and noted questions about whether Fish & Game is consulting licence holders adequately. Council has been using the licence holder database to distribute information, excluding those who have opted out of receiving communications. The CE considers this appropriate, as it respects individuals' stated communication preferences. He advised that emailing all licence holders regardless of preferences would require a specific Council motion, as it would depart from standard operating procedures. Approximately one-third of licence holders have opted out of receiving communications.

Cr Barker referred to correspondence between the CE and Rick Boyd, noting Mr Boyd's view that the Anglers Notice review is part of a formal legal process affecting all licence holders, and that there is arguably a statutory obligation to advise all licence holders of proposed changes and how to contribute.

The Chief Executive disagreed, stating there is no statutory obligation to consult licence holders by email and that this obligation could be met through public notification, such as a newspaper notice. He emphasised a professional obligation to respect how people choose to engage with Fish & Game, noting that some licence holders provide an email address solely to receive licences electronically and explicitly opt out of further communications.

Cr Barker argued Council should seek as much feedback as possible and that excluding a group risk missing valuable input. Cr Trevathan questioned whether people are being excluded if they have actively chosen not to receive information. The Chief Executive reiterated his desire for clear Council direction, given the risks of departing from established procedures.

It was suggested that, for future years, the licence purchase system should better differentiate between promotional communications and important regulatory information, with Cr Highton and Cr Weatherall supporting this approach.

Moved: Cr Highton, Cr Barker

That the Chief Executive write to NZ Council requesting changes to the licensing system to allow licence holders to choose which types of communications they wish to receive (e.g., regulatory changes, Anglers Notices, versus newsletters and promotional material).

Carried

The CE confirmed that for the current Anglers Notice process, emails will be sent only to those who have agreed to receive communications, and he will write to NZ Council about changing the licensing questions for the future.

14.3 Otago Regulations Setting Policy

The Chief Executive noted this policy is included in the papers.

Cr Trevathan requested that Federated Farmers be added to the list of stakeholders to be consulted, as shown on page 104.

This was agreed by Council.

14.4 2025 Licence Holder Engagement Survey Report

The Communications Officer presented the 2025 Licence Holder Engagement Survey, noting the strategic objective of improving perceptions of value for money by increasing licence holders' understanding of Fish & Game's role. Engagement surveys have been conducted since 2019 (with one exception), tracking value perceptions on a 1–9 scale.

Key findings showed game bird hunters' perceptions of value have steadily improved into positive territory, while anglers' perceptions remain stable. Senior loyal anglers were the most satisfied group, while whole season anglers showed lower satisfaction. Game bird licence holders continue to rate value lower than anglers overall.

Understanding of Fish & Game's role remained relatively stable, with hunters showing the strongest improvement in 2024–25, potentially linked to the high-performing regional hunting newsletter. Analysis confirmed understanding drives value perception. Strong support was expressed for local advocacy and regional autonomy.

Cr Highton highlighted the survey finding that suggested a focus on visible outcomes is a key to satisfaction.

14.5 Greenhouse Gas Emissions Inventory for the 2024/2025 Financial Year

The Chief Executive presented the greenhouse gas emissions report, noting a 19.5% reduction from the 2022–23 baseline and that Fish & Game remains on track to meet the 30% reduction target by 2030. Most easily achievable reductions have been completed, with further gains expected from the new building's more efficient heating and cooling systems.

Vehicles and fossil fuel use remain the largest contributors, with staff commuting and the hatchery pump included in calculations. Older fridges and freezers at Cromwell were identified as an emissions issue due to age and refrigerants. Council also discussed potential benefits of solar-supported EV charging and the limited scope to reduce air travel.

Moved: Cr Weatherall, Cr Highton

That these reports be received and noted.

Carried

15.0 General Business

No additional to items covered.

The Chair thanked everyone for their attendance and contributions.

The meeting closed at 5.35pm.

5.0 Matters Arising from the Minutes

6.0 Health and Safety Report

Health and Safety Report February - March 2026

Events/Work Requiring OHS Planning – Job hazard sheets complete

- Acoustic Surveys of Central Lakes
- Wetland planting planning
- Drift Diving
- Summer boat ranging and creel surveys
- Duck trapping for Ministry for Primary Industries
- Bullock Creek Hatchery Springs Wetland work (QLDC with Fulton Hogan as lead contractors – FH responsible for H&S).
- Wheelchair maimai (W Hamilton and SouthRoads sponsoring, doing most of the work and managing H&S, OFGC staff inducted to sites).

OHS Audits - Internal

Completed audits:

- Cromwell and Mosgiel office audits
- Cromwell and Mosgiel workshop audits

Next audit areas:

- Main Hazard Register – ongoing -but awaiting new National Council H&S review/policy
- Vehicle hazards and safety equipment

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

- One staff member on long term stress related leave. Staff were reminded that EAP is available to them at any time and that it is best to reach out early. Reminder that workplace stress/burn out noted as a hazard
- Continued near misses with holiday traffic, not on their own side of the road or general dangerous driving. Staff to be vigilant and we will look again at suitable driving courses. Discussion on cameras in vehicles.
- Concern noted on width of Cromwell boat being towed with acoustic equipment – hazard.
- Cromwell 3.2L Ford Ranger needs tyres replaced.
- A contractor of Fulton Hogan hit a gate post at Bullock Creek Hatchery Springs and split it. This was remedied to a functional state for later full repair and no injuries.

Training Completed

- One staff member boat practical training and Boat Masters written and oral passed.

General Discussions, Actions

- Reminder to sign in all visitors and extra papers for trade contractors
- Gas problems at Glenorchy hut. To be fixed. Gas not in use in the meantime.
- New personal face fitting mask for staff members required to do wetland weed spraying.
- Discussion on a Councillors safety running and information and questions session over the weekend in the Mosgiel office. A CERT trained staff chaperone would be required for safety.
- Staff have discussed the concept of a staff Health and Safety Representative. This has since been superseded (08Mar2026) by a request from National Council that each region elects a H&S rep to join a national H&S committee.

Recommendation

- 1. To receive the health and safety audit report and February/March update report**

Jamie Ward
Operations Manager
09 March 2026

7.0 Items Requiring Decisions

7.1 Councillor vacancy

Item Number	Management of Council Vacancy
Author	Ian Hadland, CEO
Purpose	For Decision
Executive Summary	Following the resignation of long-standing Councillor Vicky Whyte, Council needs to decide whether to fill the vacancy or to continue with the current seven (7) members.
Discussion/Analysis	<p>The Council currently has 7 members in office (out of 9 possible seats).</p> <p>Under Section 26ZA of the Conservation Act 1987, the Council has the discretion to appoint a replacement or leave the seat vacant.</p> <p>Key Points: Legal Standing: Decisions remain valid despite the vacancy (s 26ZD(6)). Quorum: The quorum is now 4 members (a majority of the 7 members in office).</p>
Links to Previous Papers/Decisions	<p>Conservation Act – Term of office members for Fish and Game Councilors</p> <p>https://www.legislation.govt.nz/act/public/1987/0065/latest/DLM105765.html</p>
Attachments (if any)	
Recommendation	<p>That the Council:</p> <ol style="list-style-type: none"> 1. The Council notes the resignation of Vicky Whyte and, 2. pursuant to Section 26ZA(5)(b) of the Conservation Act 1987, resolves to continue with the current membership of 7. Or: pursuant to Section 26ZA(5)(a) of the Conservation Act 1987, resolves to fill the vacancy having achieved feedback from a majority of voters to support that decision. 3. The Council further notes that, in accordance with Section 26ZD(3), the quorum for future meetings shall be 4 members."
Decision Record	<p>Moved by:</p> <p>Seconded by:</p> <p style="text-align: right;">Carried / Lost:</p>

7.2 Anglers Notice

Paper Title	Anglers Notice Consultation for the 2026/2027 Season – Summary Report		
Purpose	For Decision	Author	Jayde Couper
Executive Summary	<p>This report details the consultation findings for the 2026/2027 Anglers Notice as part of the Otago Fish & Game Triennial Review. Following a comprehensive management review, 15 regulatory proposals were put to stakeholders and licence holders to improve rule consistency and fishery sustainability.</p> <p>Feedback was received from 321 licence holders and nine key stakeholders. Results indicate strong support for simplifying regulations and increasing winter fishing opportunities in estuarine waters. While most proposals were met with approval, feedback on bag limit reductions in Lake Wānaka and the upper Taieri was mixed. Consequently, staff recommend a middle-ground approach for those waters.</p> <p>The final marked-up Anglers Notice will be presented to the Council in May 2026 for approval before it is progressed to the Minister.</p>		
Discussion/Analysis	<p>The consultation revealed a clear preference for regulatory consistency, with high support for removing local possession rules and aligning urban fishery regulations. Licence holders strongly backed the removal of the Clutha River gaff exemption, reflecting a shift toward standardising regional landing methods.</p> <p>Proposals to allow soft baits and remove hook restrictions in Designated Waters were well-received, as anglers prioritised the removal of technical barriers and the use of standard retail gear. While some stakeholders raised concerns regarding angling pressure on the Lochy River and Lake Wānaka, the majority of respondents supported the proposed management adjustments.</p> <p>Where feedback on specific bag limits varied staff have advised middle grounds to address conservation needs while maintaining angling opportunity.</p>		
Links to Previous Papers/Decisions	<p>2024 Regulations setting policy and procedure.</p> <p>2025 Anglers Notice Management Review and Issues and Options</p>		
Recommendation	That the recommended changes in Table 2 are adopted.		
Decision Record	<p>Moved by:</p> <p>Seconded by:</p> <p>Carried / Lost:</p>		

***Anglers Notice Consultation for the 2026/2027
Season – Summary Report
March 2026***

Background

This report represents part 5 of the Otago Fish & Game Anglers Notice Triennial Review Procedure with staff compiling feedback from the consultation process. In May, Council will be and provided a marked-up version of the Anglers Notice for approval. The following stages are to provide the amended notice to the Minister via the NZC and finally provide a summary back to stakeholders, submitters and licence holders.

Following a full management review, staff provided a number of recommendations with Council providing a further two changes, namely the reduction of bag limits in the upper Taieri River and Lake Wānaka. The following 15 potential changes were put out for consultation following the process and principles agreed to in the Otago Regulation Setting Policy:

Region wide rule change proposals:

- Removing the Otago-based exemption to allow continued fishing once having hit the bag limit, to simplify and align with other regions and proposing to end the "zero bag limit" on the upper Lochy and Routeburn rivers.
- Removing rules about how many fish you can have in your possession when travelling between fisheries or fishing multiple days.
- Allowing soft baits and scented lures in any area where spin fishing is already allowed.
- Removing restrictions on treble and multiple hooks in Designated Waters.

Lower Clutha & Catlins:

- Tautuku Estuary: Proposal to officially list this area as a fishery that is open all year to boats and all fishing methods.
- Tahakopa River: Proposal to allow boat fishing and year-round access in the lower sections.
- Lower Clutha gear restrictions: A proposed ban on using gaffs to better protect fish, while removing the ban on using floats.

Central Lakes:

- Proposal to open Lake Dispute year-round.
- Close Diamond Creek during May to protect salmon during their spawning season.
- Remove Lake McKellar from the Greenstone Designated Waters and Controlled Fishery.
- Lochy River: Allocate the entire river as a Designated Water, aligning the upper and lower river rules.
- Lake Wānaka: Reduce the salmon bag limit from four to one.

Taieri & Leith:

- Leith regulations: A proposal to make the rules for the Upper Leith and Lindsay Creek the same as the Lower Leith.
- Upper Taieri: Reduce the bag limit from four to one in the Upper Styx Basin.

There were also several minor changes, which were not put out for consultation but were approved by Council:

Minor Changes not going to consultation:

- Remove the restriction on fishing near captive fish as this rule now had nowhere it applied
- Remove Lake Tewa from the listed waterways as access is now limited and the lake is no longer stocked
- Change Reid Lake to Lake Reid, its officially recognised name
- Add West Eweburn to listed waterways to recognise its status as a fishery
- Add Tautuku Estuary to listed waterways to recognise its status as a fishery and to provide a path for adjusting its season.

Second Round Consultation Process

Following the Otago Regulation setting policy consultation was requested from Otago Whole Season licence holders who opted in to receive information and key stakeholders: Moeraki, Puketeraki, Ōtākou, and Hokonui runaka, Aukaha, Te Ao Mārama, Te Rūnanga o Ngāi Tahu, Southland Fish & Game, CSI Fish & Game, Otago DOC, New Zealand Federation of Freshwater Anglers, LINZ, New Zealand Professional Fishing Guides Association, Tourism NZ and any active Otago and Northern Southland fishing clubs for which contacts were available.

Results from Consultation

Key Stakeholders

A total of 9 submissions were received from key stakeholders, the New Zealand Federation of Freshwater Anglers (NZFFA), Te Ao Mārama Runaka, Teviot Angling Club, three from the New Zealand Professional Guides Association (NZPFGA) , Central South Island Fish & Game (CSI F&G), Otago DOC and the upper Clutha Angling Club who also provided a pdf submission, provided in the appendices. A summary is shown in Table 1, while their comments are provided in the appendix which is available on request.

Table 1: Responses from key stakeholders, Support shown as green tick, non-support as a red cross, and neutral or skipped responses as a yellow dash. Abbreviated names are detailed on previous page.

Proposed Change	NZFFA	Te Ao Mārama	Teviot Angling Club	NZPFGA-1	NZPFGA-2	NZPFGA-3	CSI F&G	Otago DOC	Upper Clutha Angling Club
Allow soft baits in spin waters	✓	—	✓	✗	—	✗	✓	✓	—
Remove Designated Water multiple hook rule	✗	—	✓	—	—	✗	✓	✓	✗
Remove the continue to fish once hit bag limit exemption	✓	—	✗	—	✗	✗	✓	✓	✓
Remove local possession rules	✓	—	✓	—	—	✗	✓	—	—
Open the Leith and Lindsays	—	—	—	—	—	—	✓	✓	—
Reduce upper Taieri bag	—	—	—	—	—	—	✓	✗	—
Remove Clutha gaff exemption	—	—	✓	—	—	—	✓	✗	✓
Remove Clutha float ban	—	—	✗	—	—	—	✓	✓	—
Open the lower Tautuku	—	—	✓	—	—	—	✓	✓	✓

Proposed Change	NZFFA	Te Ao Mārama	Teviot Angling Club	NZPFGA-1	NZPFGA-2	NZPFGA-3	CSI F&G	Otago DOC	Upper Clutha Angling Club
Open the lower Tahakopa	—	—	✓	—	—	—	✓	✓	—
Reduce Wānaka salmon bag	✓	—	✓	—	✓	✓	✓	✗	✓
Designate the entire Lochy	✓	—	✓	—	✓	✓	✗	✗	✓
Close Diamond Creek to winter fishing	✓	—	✓	—	✓	✓	✓	✗	✓
Remove Lake McKellar from the Designated Waters scheme	—	—	✗	—	—	✗	✓	✓	—
Open Lake Dispute year-round season	✓	—	✓	—	✓	✓	✓	✓	✓

Submissions were mixed across most proposals, however, liberalising the regulations for Leith and Lindsays, Tautuku, Tahakopa and Lake Dispute had no stakeholders vote against the proposals.

Licence holders

Proposals Ranked by Percentage Support

Numbers inside bars indicate number of respondents (N=321)

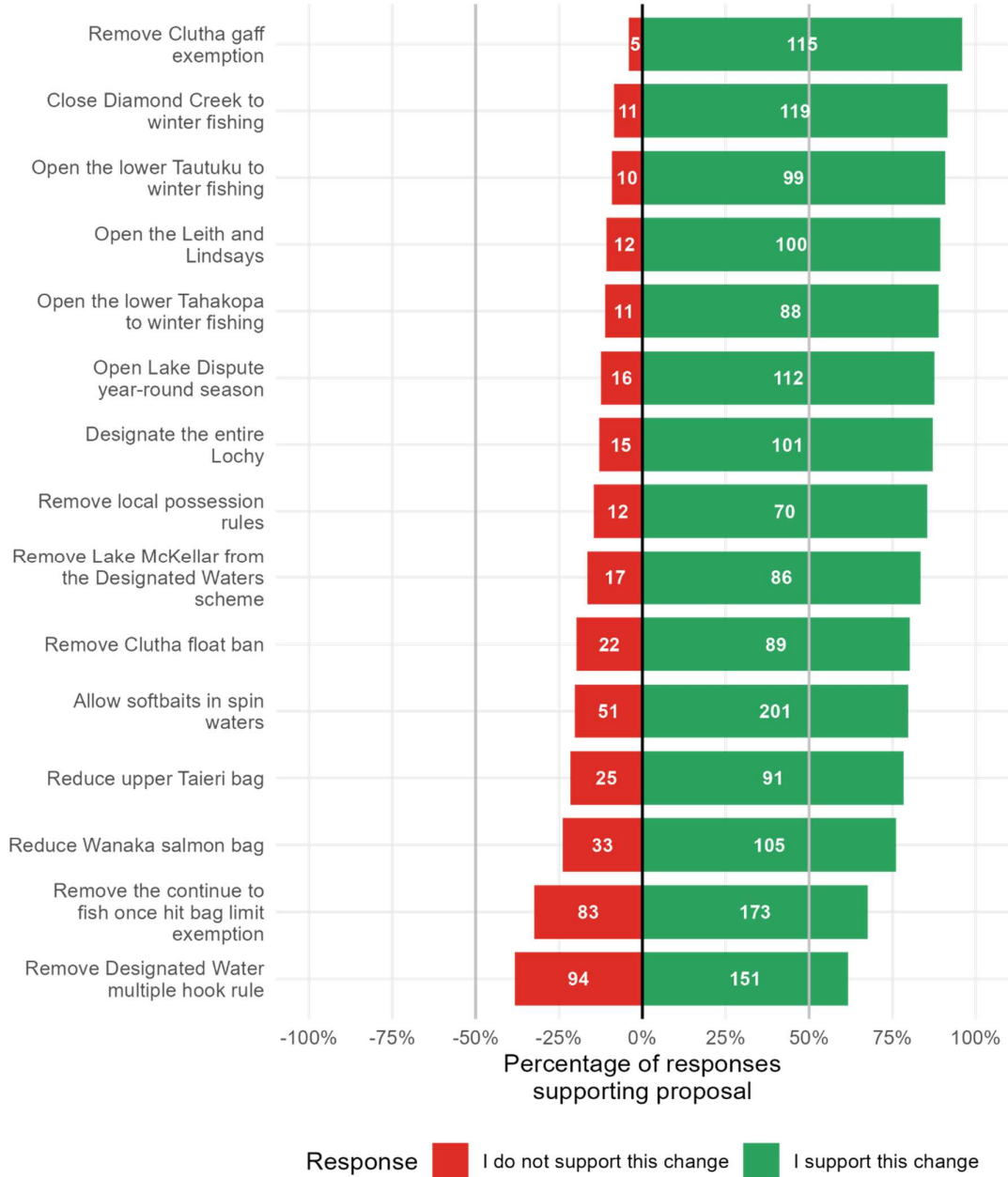


Figure 1: Results from the consultation survey with proposals ordered by percent support. People who gave a neutral response or opted out of the question have been removed. Grey vertical lines indicate where a proposal with balanced support for and against would sit.

A total of 321 responses were received from licence holders (Figure 1), of these 313 were from direct mailouts to Otago licence holders who had opted in to receiving information, while the remaining 8 were licence holders that had opted not to receive information, or non-Otago licence holders who received the survey via other means, most likely via the weekly fishing report.

Responses were positive to all proposals ranging from 62 per cent support for removing the multiple hook regulations in Designated Waters through to 96 per cent support to remove the gaff exemption on the lower Clutha.

Summary of feedback

The following are summaries of the feedback. A large language model has been used in places to help avoid author bias in the summarising of the comments. Consequently, reviewing the full list of the comments which are in the appendix which is available on request. is recommended.

Removal of the "Continue to Fish" exemption and removal of zero bag fisheries.

Support Metrics: Stakeholder 57% | Licence Holder 68%

Themes for the Proposal Proponents argue that catch-and-release is not a neutral act and that once an angler has secured their bag limit, the ethical choice is to cease fishing to prevent further physiological stress on the fish population. Supporters also note that this change simplifies the rules for both the public and compliance officers by removing the "grey area" of whether an angler is still actively targeting fish after their limit is met.

Themes Against the Proposal The opposition highlights the impact on the "enjoyment" of the sport, particularly for those who travel long distances. Critics argue that a skilled angler might reach a low bag limit very quickly, effectively ending their day of recreation within an hour. There is a strong sentiment that catch-and-release should be permitted to continue as long as fish are handled gently. Some respondents would prefer that the zero bag fisheries are given a slot limit similar to the Nevis rather than increased to a bag limit of one.

Removal of Local Possession Rules

Support Metrics: Stakeholder 75% | Licence Holder 85%

Themes for the Proposal Proponents saw value in keeping regulations simple and sensible.

Themes Against the Proposal Feedback against this proposal were largely irrelevant, talking about perch and making every waterway a limit of one fish.

Allow Soft baits in Spin Waters

Support Metrics: Stakeholder 67% | Licence Holder 80%

Themes for the Proposal Supporters point out that many other regions already permit soft baits, and aligning Otago with these standards reduces confusion for visiting anglers. From a practical standpoint, proponents argue that distinguishing between "scented" and

"unscented" lures is increasingly difficult for both fishers and rangers, as manufacturing processes often blur these lines. Many respondents also believe this change provides a more accessible and successful entry point for junior anglers, encouraging recruitment into the sport.

Themes Against the Proposal Dissenting views are rooted in the concern that scented lures act too much like bait, which could lead to over-harvesting in sensitive fisheries. Critics argue that adding chemical attractants is "unsporting" and may cause fish to ingest lures more deeply, leading to higher mortality rates for those intended for release. There is also a technical concern regarding environmental health, with some respondents opposing the introduction of artificial chemicals and toxic mixtures into pristine aquatic environments. Finally, some feel that making fishing "too easy" via scents could eventually diminish the skill-based satisfaction of the sport.

Remove Multiple Hook Restrictions in Designated Waters

Support Metrics: Stakeholder 50% | Licence Holder 62%

Themes for the Proposal Commenters supporting the change primarily focused on simplicity and the removal of technical barriers. They noted that distinguishing between hook types can be confusing and that many lures come standard with trebles, making compliance difficult for casual or less-technical anglers. Some supporters cited personal experience or referenced the data provided in the review, suggesting that hook type does not significantly impact fish mortality. For these respondents, clear and unambiguous laws hold more value than specific gear restrictions.

Themes Against the Proposal Opposition was deeply rooted in concerns over physical fish welfare and "sportsmanship." Many commenters argued that while mortality might be low, the physical damage to a fish's mouth, jaw, and gills is significantly higher with treble hooks, especially when "foul hooking" occurs. There is a strong sentiment that Designated Waters are sensitive, low-density fisheries that require higher protection. Critics also felt that multiple hooks take longer to remove, increasing handling time and stress. Some respondents dismissed the provided research, arguing that observations from their local daily fishing show that treble hooks are inferior compared to single-hook methods.

Open the Lower Tautuku to Winter Fishing

Support Metrics: Stakeholder 100% | Licence Holder 91%

Themes for the Proposal The comments for this proposal are highly focused on regulatory consistency. The theme is that the Tautuku Estuary should be standardized to match other estuarine and tidal waters in the Otago region.

Themes Against the Proposal The minimal opposition is centred on the principle of seasonal rest.

Open the Lower Tahakopa to Winter Fishing

Support Metrics: Stakeholder 100% | Licence Holder 89%

Themes for the Proposal The feedback for the Tahakopa centres on regional consistency and increasing winter opportunity. One respondent explicitly stated they would "utilise winter fishing here" if the section were opened to boat and shore fishing year-round. One respondent supported the opening season, but not the allowance of boat fishing.

Themes Against the Proposal Dissenting feedback was minimal but emphasized a "rest period" for the fishery. Even though spawning primarily occurs in the upper reaches, these commenters believe the resident and sea-run populations benefit from a seasonal break from angling pressure.

Remove Clutha Gaff Exemption

Support Metrics: Stakeholder 75% | Licence Holder 96%

Themes for the Proposal The comments characterize gaffing as an inhumane practice that is fundamentally at odds with modern angling ethics and the promotion of catch-and-release. Supporters noted that landing nets have become the standard for responsible fish handling and that the current exemption is a reputational risk for the sport.

Themes Against the Proposal One respondent argued for the utility of the gaff when landing exceptionally large "trophy" fish intended for harvest, claiming it is a practical tool for heavy fish.

Remove Clutha River Float Ban

Support Metrics: Stakeholder 67% | Licence Holder 80%

Themes for the Proposal The theme among supporters is that current restrictions on floats are unnecessary.

Themes Against the Proposal Opposition to the change is tied to concerns regarding declining fish populations. The Teviot Angling Club noted that salmon numbers returning to spawn have dropped significantly, and any change that potentially increases the efficiency of the harvest is viewed as a risk.

Open Lake Dispute Year-Round

Support Metrics: Stakeholder 100% | Licence Holder 88%

Themes for the Proposal The primary theme for support is the standardization of seasons for stocked fisheries. Commenters noted that because the lake is regularly stocked by the Council, it is logical to allow year-round access as is common for similar waters. Proponents viewed the change as a "sensible choice" that simplifies the regional calendar and creates more consistent opportunities for local anglers.

Themes Against the Proposal Opponents expressed concern that year-round access would increase spin-fishing pressure, which they believe leads to higher harvest rates and a decline

in the success of summer dry-fly fishing. Several commenters noted that fish populations in the lake already appear to be in decline. There is also a perception that the lake has not been a priority for stocking in recent years, leading to concerns that the fishery cannot sustain increased pressure without a guaranteed, yearly stocking regime.

Close Diamond Creek to Winter Fishing

Support Metrics: Stakeholder 86% | Licence Holder 92%

Themes for the Proposal The feedback reflects a strong conservation priority, with commenters viewing the closure as "very sensible" for protecting vulnerable spawning runs. Supporters emphasized that spawning salmon and trout are far more valuable for the fishery's long-term health than the short-term opportunity provided by a May season. There is a general consensus that the creek has been "over-fished" and that closing it is necessary to sustain the resource and prevent the "abuse" of fish during a critical life stage.

Themes Against the Proposal Opponents focused on the loss of access for families and "young anglers," who often target the creek in May due to the high catchability of the fish. These commenters argued that because salmon die after spawning, there is little harm in allowing a limited harvest or catch-and-release opportunity. Some dissenters questioned the scientific basis for the change, labelling the concerns over catch-and-release mortality as "speculation" and suggesting that a one-fish bag limit would be a more appropriate middle ground than a full closure.

Remove Lake McKellar from the Designated Waters Scheme

Support Metrics: Stakeholder 50% | Licence Holder 83%

Themes for the Proposal Commenters supporting the change view it as a logical adjustment for a remote location. It was also noted that anglers carrying spin rods in the Greenstone catchment may make compliance harder.

Themes Against the Proposal Some commenters believe that because fish numbers in the upper Greenstone are low, the lake should remain protected to ensure the natural stocking of the river downstream remains undisturbed.

Designate the Entire Lochy River

Support Metrics: Stakeholder 71% | Licence Holder 87%

Themes for the Proposal The feedback indicates a widespread perception of declining fish numbers over the past decade. Supporters emphasize that the river is under excessive pressure from guided parties and helicopter-based access, which often displaces local anglers. A theme in the comments involves environmental degradation; respondents noted that cattle grazing has damaged riparian zones and destabilized stream banks, making the remaining trout population more vulnerable to angling pressure.

Themes Against the Proposal Dissenting commenters argue that the Lochy's geographical isolation requiring a boat or significant travel, serves as a natural deterrent to over-fishing. Critics expressed concern that the "Designated Water" status creates an unnecessary

financial and administrative barrier for New Zealand residents. Some respondents characterized the move as speculative, suggesting it favours high-end international tourism over local access and lacks sufficient evidence that pressure on the lower river currently warrants such a high level of restriction.

Reduce Lake Wānaka Salmon Bag Limit

Support Metrics: Stakeholder 86% | Licence Holder 76%

Themes for the Proposal Commenters overwhelmingly support this change as a proactive conservation measure. The central theme is that the current four-fish limit is unsustainable given the low numbers of landlocked salmon presently in the lake. Proponents argue that reducing the limit to one fish per day ensures the long-term viability of the fishery and spreads the available harvest more equitably. Many respondents noted that since salmon are often a "by-product" of trout fishing, a one-fish limit still allows for a meal without depleting the core breeding population. A number of anglers requested a reduction to two salmon.

Themes Against the Proposal Dissenting feedback primarily consists of two distinct groups. The first group believes the proposal is insufficient, with several commenters advocating for a zero-bag limit for at least five years to allow the population to recover fully. The second group argues that a one-fish limit is too restrictive for those who travel long distances or use boat trolling methods, suggesting a two-fish limit as a more balanced "standard." Some respondents also suggested that the Council should prioritize restocking and improving genetics rather than relying solely on harvest restrictions.

Open the Leith and Lindsays

Support Metrics: Stakeholder 100% | Licence Holder 89%

Themes for the Proposal The feedback for this urban fishery is overwhelmingly positive, focusing on recruitment and accessibility. Commenters highlighted that opening these streams provides a vital "pathway for young people" and local families to participate in the sport within the city limits. Many respondents expressed nostalgic support, noting they learned to fish in these waters as children, and they view the change as an excellent way to introduce a new generation to angling without the need for extensive travel.

Themes Against the Proposal Dissenting views are rooted in concerns over the sustainability of a small, urban catchment. Commenters argued that the Leith and Lindsays are short systems that could easily be over-fished, given their proximity to a large population. Specific concerns were raised regarding the potential for "foul hooking" or "snagging" fish in public pools, with several respondents noting that such illegal activities already occur. Opponents suggested that if opened, the fishery would require strict bag limits and a consistent ranger presence to remain viable.

Reduce Upper Taieri Bag Limit

Support Metrics: Stakeholder 50% | Licence Holder 78%

Themes for the Proposal Proponents focus on the long-term sustainability of the headwaters, arguing that the current four-fish limit is unsustainable for a sensitive catchment. Comments suggest that a reduction to a one-fish bag aligns with a "conservation ethic" and ensures a more equitable distribution of the catch among the angling community. Supporters noted a personal observation of declining fish numbers and believe that headwater fisheries should not be targeted for high-volume harvest. A number of respondents requested a bag limit of two.

Themes Against the Proposal The opposition primarily advocates for a "middle ground," suggesting that a one-fish limit is unreasonably low given the significant travel time required to reach the Styx basin. A recurring theme in the feedback is that a two-fish limit would be more appropriate, allowing for a harvestable meal while still providing a 50% reduction in allowed take. Dissenters also argued that environmental factors, such as land use and water quality, have a far greater impact on fish populations than angler harvest, suggesting the regulation change targets the wrong cause of decline.

Recommendations

Table 2: Recommendations.

Number	Recommendation	Notes
1.	Remove the Otago based exemption to allow continued fishing once having hit the bag limit	
1.1.	Increase the trout bag limit on the upper Lochy to 1	Was included as part of consultation for recommendation 1, as zero bag limits do not work under a regime in which fishing ceases once the bag limit is reached.
1.2.	Increase the trout bag limit on the Routeburn to two	As above
2.	Remove the Otago-based possession between waterways and across days exemptions	
3.	Allow actively fished scented soft baits in waterways that allow spin fishing	
4.	Remove restrictions on treble and multiple hooks in Designated Waters	
5.	Open the Tautuku Estuary to year-round, boat fishing allowed, all methods allowed.	
6.	Open year-round season on the Tahakopa River below Tahakopa Valley Rd. Allow boat fishing	
7.	Ban use of gaffs on the lower Clutha / Mata Au	
8.	Remove the ban on floats on the lower Clutha / Mata Au	
9.	Open Lake Dispute year-round	
10.	Close Diamond Creek during May	
11.	Remove Lake McKellar and above from the Greenstone Designated Waters and Controlled Fishery	
12.	Lochy River: Allocate the entire river as a Designated Water.	
13.	Lake Wānaka: Reduce the salmon bag limit from four to two.	Note: Council recommendation was four to one. However consultation was mixed. Two proposed as a middle ground
14.	Open the Leith and Lindsays Creek, aligning regulations with the lower catchment.	
15.	Reduce the upper Taieri above Styx Weir Bridge trout bag limit from four to two	Note: Council recommendation was four to one. However consultation was mixed. Two proposed as a middle ground

Appendices not included for brevity, copies will be available at the meeting or on request.

7.3 Draft OWP and 2026/27 Budget

Paper Title	Draft Budget and Operational Work Plan 2026/27
Author	Jamie Ward
Purpose	For Decision
Executive Summary	<p>The draft OWP was workshopped by staff following the Council 25 January Strategy Session. The OWP was developed accounting for likely disruption caused by reform, allowing flexibility to support the two Clutha Fisheries Trusts, incorporating Council strategy, while maintaining business as usual, but not over-extending staff.</p> <p>Budgeting was done using the new NZC zero-based budgeting spreadsheet, with consideration for Council directed spending from reserves to continue our currently level of delivery. NZC wants the budget by 14 March, but we will deliver it late so Council can have input.</p>
Discussion/Analysis	There will be spending from reserves investing in equipment and infrastructure to allow us to deliver to our core roles in monitoring, management and habitat protection as well as act on important Council identified risks.
Links to Previous Papers/Decisions	[Links to previous papers (or last years) if any, and if published online]
Attachments (if any)	[List or reference any supporting documents or appendices.]
Recommendation	<ol style="list-style-type: none"> 1. That Council adopts the draft OWP and budget. 2. That Council confirms the proposed spending from Reserves. 3. That Council approves submission of the budget into the National budget review process.

Decision Record	<p>Moved by:</p> <p>Seconded by:</p> <p style="text-align: right;">Carried / Lost:</p>
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Operational Workplan and Budget overview 2026-2027

Attached to this agenda is the draft workplan and budget for the Councils consideration. If approved the budget will be provided to the New Zealand Councils (NZC) for their consideration in setting the licence fee.

If our budget is confirmed and the licence fee is set, the operational work plan can be adopted at the July meeting.

NZC guidance on budgets

New Zealand Council has provided a Zero-Based Budget template and instructions. It has been used to generate this budget. The spreadsheet has a number of errors still, but it is evidently only the summary page which is required by NZC. (rather than the 60 printable pages of workings which sit behind it)

Otago undertake a zero-based budgeting process every year to properly assess the costs of doing the basics. Our relatively no frills OWP has been costed out at more than last year's bulk fund. That shouldn't come as any surprise when you add in depreciation which hasn't been previously budgeted for. Most of the obvious savings have already been made over the years and against a background of rising costs it is impossible to reduce the budget in any substantial way unless cuts are made to monitoring projects or staffing. (75% of total proposed budget expenditure is in staff costs)

Timing

The NZC adopted a tight schedule for draft budgets meaning that draft budgets need to be with that office by the 14th March 2026. Ours will be running late as I feel it is important that Council has meaningful input into the budget process.

No policy guidance for assessing budgets

There is still no national policy for how regional and NZC budgets will be assessed. Staff are unsure how the merits of projects at a regional level and national level will be compared and what might happen if zero based budgeting doesn't result in regional savings.

New legislation may provide guidance, but this may not be in place before April when budgets and the licence fee need to be finalised internally.

2023-2026 Strategic priorities - confirmed

At the January planning meeting, Council confirmed its three-year priorities with minor amendments. (see Appendix 1).

One of the bigger areas of work is the continued roll out of the **Otago Communications Strategy** which has been making ground. It covers a number of the strategic priorities agreed by the Council, particularly around relationships, advocacy and recruitment and retention of licence holders. Rerunning the stakeholder survey at the end of the strategic plan period was agreed.

Climate change was also a strong topic with change in emphasis to mapping potential effects on smaller waterways critical to sports fish life cycle such as spawning streams.

Other themes from the planning meeting

Several themes emerged from the planning workshop:

Long term monitoring of sensitive species – A particular focus on salmon in the Upper Lakes and also shoveler (harvest)

Maintain liaison with the rural community – Delivered via the Communications Implementation Plan. Engaging with active catchment groups, support for riparian and wetland work.

Maintenance of Council owned properties – the need to undertake maintenance and development of land parcels owned by F&G (particularly Waitapeka and Wanaka Hatchery site) was highlighted.

Support for partner trusts – Continue support for the Clutha Trusts and other bodies undertaking F&G related work.

DRAFT 2026/27 OWP development

There has been a shift in staff hours towards meeting the objectives around these themes. They all align with the Council's strategic objectives.

Apart from this, the OWP has a lot of '*Business as Usual*'. I have taken the opportunity to simplify and refine the OWP because:

- There will be a degree of upheaval with the potential implementation of the F&G reforms which could create disruption and draw staff away from key projects.
- There is a need to remain flexible to take up opportunities with either of the Clutha Trust's work (which isn't confirmed at this point)

Risk management

Some of the projects are obviously linked to addressing risks identified in the risk management plan which was agreed at the January meeting.

Potential removal of the Wanaka Hatchery building is being priced and has not been brought into this budget as yet. It will need to be funded from reserves anyway.

Business case – projects over \$30,000

At this stage, we do not have any individual projects that meet this threshold.

Additionally, there is no requirement to prepare a business case for expenditures from our own dedicated reserves.

Budget

Integrating these priorities into a coherent budget is a challenging task. Despite attempts to simplify the process, the standard national budget system remains overly complicated, and the newly introduced system is even more complex.

Major differences from last year

- Some projects will be dependent on funding from Otago Reserves. They are noted in the comment section of the budget. These can simply be notified to NZC.
- Increases in costs for insurance and rates
- Removal of asset replacement in fund in favour of Depreciation (NZC request)
- Removal of rent costs as in own building now.
- Small increase in salaries budget to ensure compliance with National Remuneration policy

Proposed spending from Otago Reserves

Project	Description	Reserve	Funding
1112	Salmon spawning – aerial support and eDNA	Non-Resident Reserve	\$10,000
1113	Purchase Acoustics equipment	Non-Resident Reserve	\$100,000 ¹
1115	Salmon diet research – isotopic analysis	Non-Resident Reserve	\$10,000 ²
1116	Drift Diving Designated waters – Aerial access	Non-Resident Reserve	\$7,000
1141	Fish Raising – Additional pontoon in Lone Pine Reservoir at Macraes hatchery	Otago Property Reserve	\$20,000
1222	Waitapeka Wetland – Report on options for enhancement	Otago Property Reserve	\$20,000
1231	Advance Clutha lagoon restoration – Water level and temperature data loggers	General Reserve	\$15,000
1321	Designated waters monitoring	Non Resident Reserve	\$18,000
1433	Repeat stakeholder survey – use of third-party provider	Communications Reserve	\$16,000 ²

Other spending from Otago Property Reserve

Two other items not covered in projects above were discussed. They were the **replacement for the Wanaka staff quarters** and the **demolition of the old Hatchery building**. These are presently being priced so may get underway this financial year. For that reason, and the fact that they can be decided by Council at any time, they have been left out of the budget.

Recommendation

¹ Estimate – Pers.comms, Jayde Couper

² Not priced yet. Placeholder

That the Council:

- Adopts the draft OWP and budget
- Confirm the proposed spending from Reserves
- Submits the budget to NZC to feed into the national budget process

Ian Hadland
Chief Executive
24th February 2026

Appendix 1: Strategic Priorities 2023-2026 – (Edited Jan 2026)

Sportsfish/gamebird species and habitat maintained and improved

- Produce plans to mitigate climate change impacts on critical habitat and species abundance and distribution.
- Long-term monitoring programmes are established for sensitive sportsfish and gamebird species/populations
- *RMA/NBEA planning documents recognise fish and game bird values and protect and restore the habitats that they depend upon. (on hold)*

Strategic relationships and advocacy enhanced

- Public and stakeholder perceptions (social licence) of Otago Fish & Game as a valid and respected organisation are improved.
- Alliances are formed with like-minded bodies for mutual benefit. (eg Industry groups, Game Animal Council)
- Landowners see F&G Otago as a valuable partner organisation in habitat protection, species management, and in fostering access to those resources.
- General public understand and value trout, salmon and game birds as public resource, and how angling and gamebird hunting contributes to the communities wellbeing, heritage and kiwi way of life.

Recruitment and retention of licence holders improved

- Licence holders see tangible 'evidence of service'.
- Increased knowledge of Otago F&G role and activity by licence holders results in improved perceptions of value for money in a licence.
- Barriers to participation such as cost, regulation complexity, skill level and access are managed or reduced as far as possible.

Tangata Whenua/Mana whenua engaged

- Iwi and Otago F&G aspirations agreed and shared. To together achieve greater protection of freshwater and wetland values through RMA/NBEA processes
- Enduring and meaningful partnership formed with tangata whenua

8.0 Public Excluded Items

8.1 Minutes of Public Excluded Meeting 24th January 2026

8.2 Rocky Point Management Agreement

8.3 Mata-Au Sportsfish & Habitat Trust Trustee

8.4 Friends of Bullock Creek Agreement QEII costs

8.5 Wānaka property update

9.0 Financial Report

Finance and Licence Sales to 28th February 2026

9.1 Finance Reports

Without our administrator leaving the finance report is very much paired back for this period. Full accounts, liabilities, debtors and equity in reserves were not available at time of agenda preparation.

The financial Profit and Loss report and Balance Sheet for the period from 1st September 2025 to 28th February 2026 for the 2025/26 financial year are below.

Profit and Loss

Income

Licence Income

Fish licence revenue from the profit and loss statement 28th February 2026 totals \$1,958,118 (Fish sales \$1,720,257 + Designated Water licence \$26,956. The budget for fish licence sales is \$1,916,868 YTD and \$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 314 Sea Run Salmon endorsements with a value of \$1,365 (GST excl). These funds will be returned to them at years end.

All designated water funds from other regions sold by Otago region will be distributed to regions and ours returned at the end of the season.

There were a few game licenses sold totalling \$163, these may be erroneous as they were purchased September-December long before the summer special season.

Other Income

Total other income to 28th February 2026 is \$26,533.

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.
- Diversion – Is income from compliance
- Sundry – Primarily from unbudgeted MPI avian influenza testing project
- Fishing competition rentals
- Surplus post-move equipment sales (Trade Me)

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 28th February for the 2025/26 financial year is \$1,309,086 against a year-to-date budget of \$1,361,077.

The main reasons for any variances against budget beyond those previously reported are:

- Acoustics survey, expense, equipment rental and insurance
- Aircraft costs for moult counts and designated water ranging activities
- Expenditure associated with MPI avian influenza testing project
- Council meetings are above budget
- Vehicle fuel and insurance are below budget
- The biggest single item is being 18% below budget on wages and salaries

The profit and loss for the 6 months ended 28th February shows a surplus of \$717,861, ahead of the budgeted surplus YTD of \$572,441.

Budget Variance

Otago Fish and Game Council
For the 6 months ended 28 February 2026

	SEPT 2025-FEB 2026	SEPT 2025-FEB 2026 OVERALL BUDGET	VARIANCE	VARIANCE %	SEPT 2025-FEB 2026	SEPT 2025-FEB 2026 OVERALL BUDGET	VARIANCE	VARIANCE %
Trading Income								
Designated Water Licence Sales	26,965.21	-	26,965.21 ↑	- —	26,965.21	-	26,965.21 ↑	- —
Diversion - Habitat Enhancement and Research Fund	2,640.00	-	2,640.00 ↑	- —	2,640.00	-	2,640.00 ↑	- —
Fines - Fishing & Game Offences	-	246.00	(246.00) ↓	-100.00% ↓	-	246.00	(246.00) ↓	-100.00% ↓
Fish Licence Sales	1,958,118.32	1,916,868.00	41,250.32 ↑	2.15% ↑	1,958,118.32	1,916,868.00	41,250.32 ↑	2.15% ↑
Fishing Competitions	811.30	-	811.30 ↑	- —	811.30	-	811.30 ↑	- —
Game Licence Sales	162.61	-	162.61 ↑	- —	162.61	-	162.61 ↑	- —
Interest Income	15,167.75	12,654.00	2,513.75 ↑	19.87% ↑	15,167.75	12,654.00	2,513.75 ↑	19.87% ↑
Rent Received	3,000.00	3,750.00	(750.00) ↓	-20.00% ↓	3,000.00	3,750.00	(750.00) ↓	-20.00% ↓
Sundry Income	17,670.14	-	17,670.14 ↑	- —	17,670.14	-	17,670.14 ↑	- —
Total Trading Income	2,024,535.33	1,933,518.00	91,017.33	4.71%	2,024,535.33	1,933,518.00	91,017.33	4.71%
Gross Profit	2,024,535.33	1,933,518.00	91,017.33	4.71%	2,024,535.33	1,933,518.00	91,017.33	4.71%
Other Income								
Donations ,bequests and other Fundraising	2,412.00	-	2,412.00 ↑	- —	2,412.00	-	2,412.00 ↑	- —
Total Other Income	2,412.00	-	2,412.00	-	2,412.00	-	2,412.00	-
Operating Expenses								
Access Issues	-	246.00	(246.00) ↓	-100.00% ↓	-	246.00	(246.00) ↓	-100.00% ↓

	SEPT 2025-FEB 2026	SEPT 2025-FEB 2026 OVERALL BUDGET	VARIANCE	VARIANCE %	SEPT 2025-FEB 2026	SEPT 2025-FEB 2026 OVERALL BUDGET	VARIANCE	VARIANCE %
Advertising	-	400.00	(400.00) ↓	-100.00% ↓	-	400.00	(400.00) ↓	-100.00% ↓
Advocacy Statutory	-	246.00	(246.00) ↓	-100.00% ↓	-	246.00	(246.00) ↓	-100.00% ↓
Agent Liaison	122.01	246.00	(123.99) ↓	-50.40% ↓	122.01	246.00	(123.99) ↓	-50.40% ↓
Annual Reporting/Audit	23,150.83	19,650.00	3,500.83 ↑	17.82% ↑	23,150.83	19,650.00	3,500.83 ↑	17.82% ↑
Approved Reserve Expense	46,373.49	-	46,373.49 ↑	- —	46,373.49	-	46,373.49 ↑	- —
Bank Charges	304.59	246.00	58.59 ↑	23.82% ↑	304.59	246.00	58.59 ↑	23.82% ↑
Cleaning/Security	2,767.49	3,996.00	(1,228.51) ↓	-30.74% ↓	2,767.49	3,996.00	(1,228.51) ↓	-30.74% ↓
Club Liaison	-	498.00	(498.00) ↓	-100.00% ↓	-	498.00	(498.00) ↓	-100.00% ↓
Communications Strategy	973.26	-	973.26 ↑	- —	973.26	-	973.26 ↑	- —
Computer and Software expenses	3,624.01	3,498.00	126.01 ↑	3.60% ↑	3,624.01	3,498.00	126.01 ↑	3.60% ↑
Council Meetings and Agendas	11,781.31	8,499.00	3,282.31 ↑	38.62% ↑	11,781.31	8,499.00	3,282.31 ↑	38.62% ↑
Depreciation	23,841.21	-	23,841.21 ↑	- —	23,841.21	-	23,841.21 ↑	- —
Drift Diving	3,750.44	5,500.00	(1,749.56) ↓	-31.81% ↓	3,750.44	5,500.00	(1,749.56) ↓	-31.81% ↓
Dunedin Office Expenses & Rent	33,457.32	-	33,457.32 ↑	- —	33,457.32	-	33,457.32 ↑	- —
DW BC Fisheries	2,890.00	4,998.00	(2,108.00) ↓	-42.18% ↓	2,890.00	4,998.00	(2,108.00) ↓	-42.18% ↓
Eyede Charges No GST	19,909.85	-	19,909.85 ↑	- —	19,909.85	-	19,909.85 ↑	- —
Eyede Charges - Inc GST	2,053.84	-	2,053.84 ↑	- —	2,053.84	-	2,053.84 ↑	- —
Field Equip -Purchases (Under \$2,000)	217.39	996.00	(778.61) ↓	-78.17% ↓	217.39	996.00	(778.61) ↓	-78.17% ↓
Field Equipment Hire/Rental	-	150.00	(150.00) ↓	-100.00% ↓	-	150.00	(150.00) ↓	-100.00% ↓
Field Equipment Maintenance	882.32	1,500.00	(617.68) ↓	-41.18% ↓	882.32	1,500.00	(617.68) ↓	-41.18% ↓

	SEPT 2025-FEB 2026	SEPT 2025-FEB 2026 OVERALL BUDGET	VARIANCE	VARIANCE %	SEPT 2025-FEB 2026	SEPT 2025-FEB 2026 OVERALL BUDGET	VARIANCE	VARIANCE %
Fish and Game Huts	83.03	800.00	(716.97) ↓	-89.62% ↓	83.03	800.00	(716.97) ↓	-89.62% ↓
Fisheries Monitoring	5,130.30	6,000.00	(869.70) ↓	-14.50% ↓	5,130.30	6,000.00	(869.70) ↓	-14.50% ↓
Game Bird Control compliants	-	500.00	(500.00) ↓	-100.00% ↓	-	500.00	(500.00) ↓	-100.00% ↓
Hatchery Macraes	3,482.47	4,998.00	(1,515.53) ↓	-30.32% ↓	3,482.47	4,998.00	(1,515.53) ↓	-30.32% ↓
Hunting and Fishing Events Our	1,165.26	100.00	1,065.26 ↑	1,065.26% ↑	1,165.26	100.00	1,065.26 ↑	1,065.26% ↑
Insurance - General	3,207.30	1,100.00	2,107.30 ↑	191.57% ↑	3,207.30	1,100.00	2,107.30 ↑	191.57% ↑
Insurance Offices	10,702.06	17,000.00	(6,297.94) ↓	-37.05% ↓	10,702.06	17,000.00	(6,297.94) ↓	-37.05% ↓
Kiwi Saver	15,276.21	14,046.00	1,230.21 ↑	8.76% ↑	15,276.21	14,046.00	1,230.21 ↑	8.76% ↑
Legal General	355.25	1,500.00	(1,144.75) ↓	-76.32% ↓	355.25	1,500.00	(1,144.75) ↓	-76.32% ↓
Liaison DoC Unin Govt CFT IWI	-	498.00	(498.00) ↓	-100.00% ↓	-	498.00	(498.00) ↓	-100.00% ↓
Liaison Inter Council F&G Regional	-	246.00	(246.00) ↓	-100.00% ↓	-	246.00	(246.00) ↓	-100.00% ↓
Licence Commission on Sales	40,859.82	66,088.00	(25,228.18) ↓	-38.17% ↓	40,859.82	66,088.00	(25,228.18) ↓	-38.17% ↓
Mallard Tests MPI	1,448.02	-	1,448.02 ↑	- —	1,448.02	-	1,448.02 ↑	- —
Monitor key fisheries/Research Liaison	-	750.00	(750.00) ↓	-100.00% ↓	-	750.00	(750.00) ↓	-100.00% ↓
NZ Fish & Game Levies	569,705.22	569,700.00	5.22 ↑	0.00% ↑	569,705.22	569,700.00	5.22 ↑	0.00% ↑
Office Equip Purchases (Under 2,000)	502.50	996.00	(493.50) ↓	-49.55% ↓	502.50	996.00	(493.50) ↓	-49.55% ↓
Office Equipment Maintenance	-	498.00	(498.00) ↓	-100.00% ↓	-	498.00	(498.00) ↓	-100.00% ↓
Office Equipment Rental/Lease	270.36	-	270.36 ↑	- —	270.36	-	270.36 ↑	- —
Office Maintenance	1,078.53	2,496.00	(1,417.47) ↓	-56.79% ↓	1,078.53	2,496.00	(1,417.47) ↓	-56.79% ↓
Photocopying	906.36	750.00	156.36 ↑	20.85% ↑	906.36	750.00	156.36 ↑	20.85% ↑

	SEPT 2025-FEB 2026	SEPT 2025-FEB 2026 OVERALL BUDGET	VARIANCE	VARIANCE %		SEPT 2025-FEB 2026	SEPT 2025-FEB 2026 OVERALL BUDGET	VARIANCE	VARIANCE %
Postage/Courier	236.04	996.00	(759.96) ↓	-76.30% ↓		236.04	996.00	(759.96) ↓	-76.30% ↓
Power Offices	3,316.46	3,000.00	316.46 ↑	10.55% ↑		3,316.46	3,000.00	316.46 ↑	10.55% ↑
Prosecutions	-	9,500.00	(9,500.00) ↓	-100.00% ↓		-	9,500.00	(9,500.00) ↓	-100.00% ↓
Public Advocacy	24.78	-	24.78 ↑	- —		24.78	-	24.78 ↑	- —
Put and Take Fisheries/Gas	564.89	668.00	(103.11) ↓	-15.44% ↓		564.89	668.00	(103.11) ↓	-15.44% ↓
R3 Campaigns activity	-	2,400.00	(2,400.00) ↓	-100.00% ↓		-	2,400.00	(2,400.00) ↓	-100.00% ↓
Ranger Support and Equipment	19.95	750.00	(730.05) ↓	-97.34% ↓		19.95	750.00	(730.05) ↓	-97.34% ↓
Ranger Training	472.76	3,000.00	(2,527.24) ↓	-84.24% ↓		472.76	3,000.00	(2,527.24) ↓	-84.24% ↓
Rates All	3,855.45	12,528.00	(8,672.55) ↓	-69.23% ↓		3,855.45	12,528.00	(8,672.55) ↓	-69.23% ↓
Rental Expenses	991.30	39,730.00	(38,738.70) ↓	-97.50% ↓		991.30	39,730.00	(38,738.70) ↓	-97.50% ↓
Reserves Works & Management	3,090.80	4,998.00	(1,907.20) ↓	-38.16% ↓		3,090.80	4,998.00	(1,907.20) ↓	-38.16% ↓
RMA Consents	1,836.31	-	1,836.31 ↑	- —		1,836.31	-	1,836.31 ↑	- —
RMA Planning	-	498.00	(498.00) ↓	-100.00% ↓		-	498.00	(498.00) ↓	-100.00% ↓
Signage	584.84	1,746.00	(1,161.16) ↓	-66.50% ↓		584.84	1,746.00	(1,161.16) ↓	-66.50% ↓
Spawing Surveys	-	1,250.00	(1,250.00) ↓	-100.00% ↓		-	1,250.00	(1,250.00) ↓	-100.00% ↓
Species Interaction	-	2,510.00	(2,510.00) ↓	-100.00% ↓		-	2,510.00	(2,510.00) ↓	-100.00% ↓
Staff Allowances	337.39	996.00	(658.61) ↓	-66.13% ↓		337.39	996.00	(658.61) ↓	-66.13% ↓
Staff Clothing Branded	159.86	498.00	(338.14) ↓	-67.90% ↓		159.86	498.00	(338.14) ↓	-67.90% ↓
Staff Employment Expenses	869.57	996.00	(126.43) ↓	-12.69% ↓		869.57	996.00	(126.43) ↓	-12.69% ↓
Staff Expenses	7,102.44	4,500.00	2,602.44 ↑	57.83% ↑		7,102.44	4,500.00	2,602.44 ↑	57.83% ↑

	SEPT 2025-FEB 2026	SEPT 2025-FEB 2026 OVERALL BUDGET	VARIANCE	VARIANCE %	SEPT 2025-FEB 2026	SEPT 2025-FEB 2026 OVERALL BUDGET	VARIANCE	VARIANCE %
Staff Training	6,280.84	4,998.00	1,282.84 ↑	25.67% ↑	6,280.84	4,998.00	1,282.84 ↑	25.67% ↑
Stationery	237.97	150.00	87.97 ↑	58.65% ↑	237.97	150.00	87.97 ↑	58.65% ↑
Subscriptions Associations FWSC RMLA	402.93	498.00	(95.07) ↓	-19.09% ↓	402.93	498.00	(95.07) ↓	-19.09% ↓
Take A Kid Fishing Our	1,829.51	1,500.00	329.51 ↑	21.97% ↑	1,829.51	1,500.00	329.51 ↑	21.97% ↑
Telephone/Computer Data	4,092.80	5,250.00	(1,157.20) ↓	-22.04% ↓	4,092.80	5,250.00	(1,157.20) ↓	-22.04% ↓
University of Otago Research Grant	5,000.00	-	5,000.00 ↑	- —	5,000.00	-	5,000.00 ↑	- —
Vehicle Fuel & RUC	12,268.87	15,000.00	(2,731.13) ↓	-18.21% ↓	12,268.87	15,000.00	(2,731.13) ↓	-18.21% ↓
Vehicle Insurance	8,860.38	11,000.00	(2,139.62) ↓	-19.45% ↓	8,860.38	11,000.00	(2,139.62) ↓	-19.45% ↓
Vehicle Maintenance	5,856.84	6,000.00	(143.16) ↓	-2.39% ↓	5,856.84	6,000.00	(143.16) ↓	-2.39% ↓
Vehicle Registration	853.98	996.00	(142.02) ↓	-14.26% ↓	853.98	996.00	(142.02) ↓	-14.26% ↓
Wages & Salaries - Contract	13,054.19	9,000.00	4,054.19 ↑	45.05% ↑	13,054.19	9,000.00	4,054.19 ↑	45.05% ↑
Wages & Salaries - Office & Field	384,146.06	468,186.00	(84,039.94) ↓	-17.95% ↓	384,146.06	468,186.00	(84,039.94) ↓	-17.95% ↓
Waterfowl Monitoring	8,172.17	5,000.00	3,172.17 ↑	63.44% ↑	8,172.17	5,000.00	3,172.17 ↑	63.44% ↑
Web Site/E-zines	624.00	-	624.00 ↑	- —	624.00	-	624.00 ↑	- —
Weekly Fishing Reports/ social media	2,555.00	3,498.00	(943.00) ↓	-26.96% ↓	2,555.00	3,498.00	(943.00) ↓	-26.96% ↓
Wetland Reserve Ballots	121.27	-	121.27 ↑	- —	121.27	-	121.27 ↑	- —
Wetland Training Event	-	502.00	(502.00) ↓	-100.00% ↓	-	502.00	(502.00) ↓	-100.00% ↓
World Wetlands	-	200.00	(200.00) ↓	-100.00% ↓	-	200.00	(200.00) ↓	-100.00% ↓
XXX Accountancy Support	994.00	-	994.00 ↑	- —	994.00	-	994.00 ↑	- —
Total Operating Expenses	1,309,085.70	1,361,077.00	(51,991.30)	-3.82%	1,309,085.70	1,361,077.00	(51,991.30)	-3.82%
Net Profit	717,861.63	572,441.00	145,420.63	25.40%	717,861.63	572,441.00	145,420.63	25.40%

Balance Sheet

Bank Funds Position at 31st December 2025

Bank	Value
ANZ 00 Account	\$147,075
ANZ 70 Account	\$723,813
ASB Account	\$35.57
Cash On Hand	\$50.00
Total	

Term Investments

Investment Bank	Amount	Rate	Maturity
ANZ 1002/1006	\$416,890.98	3.75%	22 th Sept 2026
ANZ 1005	\$509,787.13	3.95%	10 th Oct 2026
ASB 81	\$221,752.90	4.00%	2 nd Nov 2026
ASB 82	\$527,551.67	3.90%	10 th March 2026
ASB 84	\$400,000.00	3.55%	22 July 2026
Total	\$2,075,982.68		

Various dates, not all information available to ACE at time of writing.

9.2 Licence Sales

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

See table following for fish licence sales numbers and categories for the 2025/26 and 2024/25 season sales to the 28th February 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.

In summary, 2025/26 fishing licence sales, in whole season licence equivalents (LEQs), 14,131, LEQs this season compared with 14,070 LEQs for last season, to the 28th February - 61 LEQs ahead of last season, which is a strong recovery of 221 LEQ from the December deficit of 160 LEQ.

Resident family fishing license numbers have decreased by 413, likely due to NZC changes in criteria of family licence participants, this may have been partly offset by 250 extra full-season adult licences, but this can't be easily proven as other categories have also increased. There has now been a strong increase in non-resident licences over last season, with 58 more full-season, 448 more day, and 106 more designated waters licences sold to non-resident anglers.

Recommendations

- 1. That this report be received.**

Jamie Ward

Acting Chief Executive

11/03/2026

2024 - 2025																					
Sales	FWFA	FWA	FWNA	FSLA	FLAA	FLBA	FSBA	FDA	FDNA	FWJ	FWNJ	FDJ	FDNJ	FWC	FWNC	FDNC	SRSE	DWLR	DWLN	Total	Fish LEQ
Public	1964	2544	525	361	404	39	374	2083	1857	739	48	293	107	2000	22	66	0	1532	504	15462	7,794
Agency	1753	2575	164	814	155	19	99	321	467	432	16	43	32	48	7	24	380	1150	197	8696	6,275
Total	3717	5119	689	1175	559	58	473	2404	2324	1171	64	336	139	2048	29	90	380	2682	701	24158	14,070
2025 - 2026																					
Sales	FWFA	FWA	FWNA	FSLA	FLAA	FLBA	FSBA	FDA	FDNA	FWJ	FWNJ	FDJ	FDNJ	FWC	FWNC	FDNC	SRSE	DWLR	DWLN	Total	Fish LEQ
Public	1686	2732	574	428	454	48	342	2120	2227	790	59	278	159	2169	38	105	0	1449	615	16273	7,925
Agency	1618	2637	173	856	163	13	69	243	545	382	20	33	44	45	0	52	314	1197	192	8596	6,206
Total	3304	5369	747	1284	617	61	411	2363	2772	1172	79	311	203	2214	38	157	314	2646	807	24869	14,131
Difference	-413	250	58	109	58	3	-62	-41	448	1	15	-25	64	166	9	67	-66	-36	106	711	61

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

10.1 SPECIES MANAGEMENT

Paradise shelduck and black swan monitoring

Gamebird monitoring flight counts were reported at the last meeting and the Paradise shelduck report is on the current agenda. Paradise shelduck numbers have exceeded the count from 2025 and as recommended by Council main and summer season bag limits have been raised to 15 per day for the 2026 season. This was approved by the Minister in the Game Gazette 03 March 2026. Swan numbers are higher than 2025, but lower than the 2024 peak.

Shoveler have been identified as a priority sensitive species in the Council strategic planning workshop and extra monitoring has been included in the 2026/27 Operational Work Plan (OWP).

Acoustic Surveys of Upper Lakes

The acoustic surveys of Lakes Hāwea, Wānaka and Wakatipu salmonids were completed in a week and a half this year and all went very smoothly. Extra preparation was put in to ensure smooth sailing. Mason Court was trained as the back-up to Jayde Couper, while North Canterbury staff were also shown the technique. The surveys also included a sheep rescue on Lake Hāwea. Thank you to Jayde, Mason and Cole Briggs for getting this very important work completed so well in very changeable weather conditions.

Regulations

Anglers Notice

Licence-holder and stakeholder consultation has concluded with good feedback received. A report is included in the current agenda as Item for decision 7.2. The Council has the opportunity to make their final decision on the Anglers Notice early, as we still have the May meeting before it needs to be with National Council.

Game Gazette

Game Gazette Notice from Otago was with NZC on time and our regulation changes were all accepted by the Minister as noted above.

Bird Flu monitoring

The Ministry of Primary Industry (MPI) contract to capture wild mallards for HPAI was successfully delivered. There were insufficient mallard numbers found in around North-East Otago around poultry farms, so a site further South had to be used near Lake Waipouri. The trapping was very successful with more birds (380) trapped in a single day than the 325 required by MPI for mouth and cloacal swabbing on 16 February. This was the third and final batch of testing with North Canterbury and CSI already completed. Thank you to all Otago, CSI, and Southland staff and ranger that assisted. Huge thanks to Shane Hildred for allowing us access to his farm for trapping and sampling.

10.2 HABITAT PROTECTION AND MANAGEMENT

RMA update

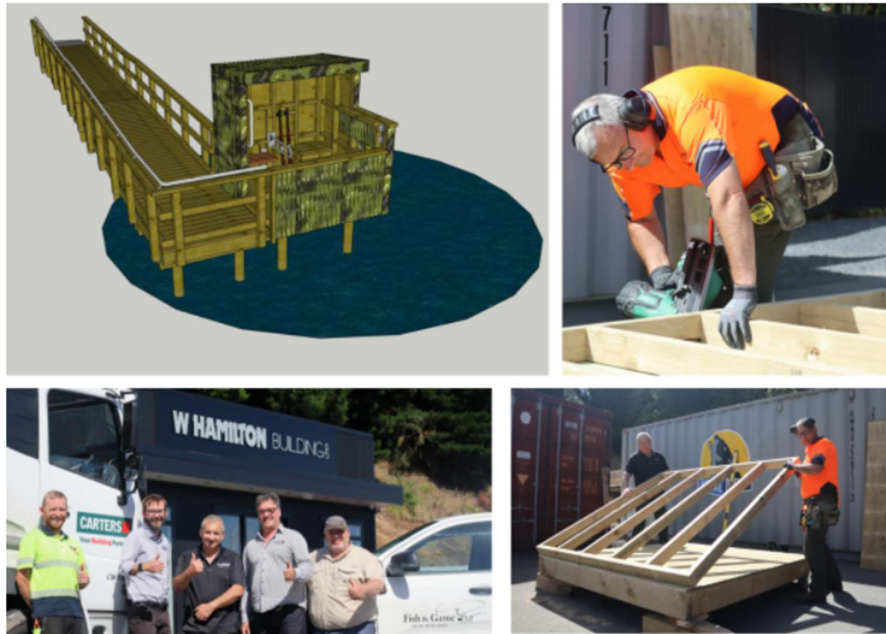
[See separate report under 11.0]

Clutha Trusts

Staff continue to work alongside the two Clutha Trusts. Cromwell staff passed several project ideas to Clutha Fisheries Trust for their meeting, particularly around joint access. They facilitated contractors poisoning willow on the Dunstan Lake front and provided boat (OFG7) and skipper for a Wildlands bird survey. The acting CE attended the Mata-Au Trust meeting and presented both project updates for currently contracted work and a series of project concept sketches for future work. Team to workup and cost a selection of these projects before June meeting. Mata-Au Trust Chair has stepped down, and the Trust are now looking for input from OFGC and Contact Energy on individuals who would be suitable and preferred as an independent chair.

Wheelchair maimai

Work on the wheelchair maimai is well underway with sponsoring partners W Hamilton Building and SouthRoads making progress happen very quickly. By next week the piles should be driven for the installation. Steve Dixon has been working with our partners, and the project is being regularly updated on our social media and with press releases based on a media plan agreed by all parties.



Drone mapping

Staff have been training with our drone by mapping some of our wetlands outside airport zones. The Paerau wetland has been mapped, and parts of Bendigo Wildlife Management Reserve have also been aerially imaged. The drone has also been used to collect imagery for various media outputs.



ArcGIS map of the Otago Fish and Game Paerau wetland area, from drone images collected using a mapped flight-path stitched together to provide high-resolution GIS imagery.

10.3 USER PARTICIPATION

Access

Staff have been reviewing signage replacing and updating to ensure we are offering the maximum opportunity for anglers to comply. Cromwell staff have identified areas where joint signage could be installed with the Clutha Fisheries Trust, along with other enhancements for anglers.

The Operations Manager has negotiated an access arrangement to a piece of LINZ land on the shore of Lake Dunstan. There will be a need for an agreement to maintain the site but it does have good access to the Bendigo Reserve and the upper lake area.

Recruitment

The Lake Hāwea Family Fishing Classic has held on Waitangi Day. Officer Mason Court attended as the weigh-in official and also collected salmon heads for the Mata-Au Trust for otolith and/or DNA analysis. There was strong interest in OFGC and Mata-Au Trust projects on salmon.

The day prior Mason attended the Alexandra District Clubs' Take a kid fishing event; 53 families were in attendance. We had stocked the pond with ~70 Macrae's Hatchery 2-year-old rainbow trout in spring. The trout appear to have thrived all 34 fish caught were in very good condition the heaviest was 1.67 kg, representing an excellent catch-to release rate of ~50%. Thank you to Mason for attending both important outreach events.

Maimai ballots for OFGC maimai were drawn in February and all winners will be inducted into their maimai very soon.

There has been a recent surge in community groups requesting group licences, which is very positive for interest in angling and recruitment.

We are supporting and promoting the Women of the Fly female anglers' event on 29 March, along with Otago Angling Club and our press release was picked up by the ODT.

Publications

The Gamebird edition the F&G magazine should be out very soon, Bruce has experimented with a new format for our Otago pages with three focus stories and sidebars. Weekly fishing

reports and monthly ezines for angling are being distributed and our social media has had a steady flow of posts.

10.4 PUBLIC INTERFACE

Advocacy

Two staff attended Mataura on the Fly to support Southland Fish and Game delivering to the important Southland Angling event. Backyard bass was in full swing, young hatchery rainbow trout were on display and these were then donated to Southland for release in Lake Thomas put-and-take fishery in the Te Anau Basin. Notes of thanks was received from Southland Fish and Game Council and Gore District Council.

Cromwell staff delivered an electric fishing and freshwater ecology demonstration and education activity to Te Kura O Take Kārara school Year 5/6 during their overnight camp. Several stunning, but small brook char were fish during the demonstration, delighting children and parents alike.

Catchment Groups

Staff and Councillors are still attending various catchment group meetings but are focussing efforts.

The species interaction project with the Lowburn Catchment group had a big win with a new population of Clutha Flathead galaxiids found during an electric fishing survey by ORC and OFGC staff, Pete Ravenscroft, Mason Court and Cole Briggs. Our staff took the opportunity to mine Pete's wealth of knowledge during the project prior to his upcoming retirement.

10.5 COMPLIANCE

Ranging and Prosecutions

Compliance has improved and is now running at around 97%. The current caseload is almost cleared by the compliance team. Most offences now have been fishing without a licence. Staff and rangers continue to be very active in the field as the weather has become more settled with many anglers seem to be taking advantage of this, lower flows and cicada season.

10.6 LICENCING

Licence sales are now 61 licence equivalents ahead of 2025/25 season in Otago to 28 February, 2% ahead of sales budget (see finance report). This has been led strongly by an increase in Non-Resident sales, with full season up 58, day up 448, and designated waters up 106, reflecting other positive improvements noted by the wider tourism sector. The family licence is down 413, perhaps partially compensated by 250 more full season adult licences.

The 2026 game bird licences are going on sale 12 March and Mark-up (pegging) day is early on 29 March.

10.7 COUNCIL

Staffing

Our long-serving Administration Officer Sharon Milne officially finished on 27 February, with staff holding a small late afternoon and evening celebration of her time and contribution. Quite a few tears were shed, as Sharon has been an institution to our licence-holders and agents for almost 3 decades. The office administrator role is critical to team and OFGC success and a recruitment agency was engaged to employ a temporary replacement in the medium term (6 or more months), until it is clearer what the regional administration roles will entail after reforms associated NZC efficiency reviews are completed. A well-qualified replacement has been selected, and they will begin on Monday 16th March at the Mosgiel Office.

Property Update

The contract has been agreed for Cromwell office meeting room and joinery ordered. Once aluminium joiner is manufactured most of the trusses will be manufactured offsite and the build onsite will happen in the space of 3-weeks, so should be complete before the May Council meeting.

Work is ongoing in Bullock Creek Hatchery Springs wetland lead by QLDC to further mitigate negative impacts of stormwater overflow into Bullock Creek. The lead contractor is Fulton Hogan (FH) and Patersons are providing the site Engineer. The first week involved site preparation and exotic tree removal. We have had good cooperation with FOBC particularly with transplanting of some native plants that were in the way of the modifications. There was good public notification and engagement by the QDLC and FH media teams and we have not received any negative press like we did last year. The contractors have been managing Health and Safety and walkway access, aiming to maximise access. The

Operations Manager was involved in the initial site meeting but has mostly been hands off since.

10.8 PLANNING AND REPORTING

Audit Management Report

On 20 February we received a response from the Auditor General's Office (AGO) regarding the Council concerns about our audit (in correspondence). That response was largely unfavourable to our concerns as the AGO considered that the audit timing and fees were within guidelines and that individual regions and NZC should have raised concerns about new reporting requirements prior to implementation.

Operational Work Plan 2026/27

Guided by Council's strategy workshop and 2023-2026 strategic plan staff workshopped the 2026/27 Operational Work Plan (OWP). This work plan was costed using the new NZC zero-based budget spreadsheet. Speculative (external project and/or contract) income was not included in the budget as it has not been realised to date in the current year as anticipated. We have still included room for staff to be flexible to take on projects or contracts which provide revenue and value to licence-holders. (Item for decision 7.3).

Next Council Meeting

The next Council meeting is in Mosgiel on the 19th May 2026. This will be the Council's opportunity to review the NZC licence fee recommendations, and also to approve the Anglers Notice, if not done at the March meeting.

Recommendation

That this report be received

Jamie Ward

Acting Chief Executive

March 2026

11.0 RMA Planning and Consents Report

Paper Title	Planning and Consenting Report
Author	Nigel Paragreen, Environmental Officer March 2026
Purpose	For Information
Executive Summary	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Otago Regional Policy Statement: Mediation sessions have concluded; remaining work involves finalising paperwork. • Bendigo-Ophir Gold Project: Legal and ecology advisors engaged. Key issues include contaminant discharges to downstream waterbodies, tailings dam stability, long-term resourcing for closure and maintenance, and decision-making under uncertainty. Fish and Game comments to be completed by end of March 2026.
Discussion/Analysis	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Homestead Bay Fast-Track Application: Approvals granted. Fish & Game successfully improved conditions relating to wetland compensation funding. • Mahinerangi Windfarm Fast-Track Application: Under review. Submission due 30 March 2026; no expenditure beyond staff time anticipated. • Fairfield Closed Landfill: Submission resolved through negotiation; consent conditions improved to align with current and future estuary vision and objectives. • ORC Navigation Safety Bylaw Review: Submission lodged supporting retention of a 5-knot general speed limit on rivers and no opposition to Otago Jet Boat Association proposals.
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>

Planning and Consenting Report

14 January – 6 March 2026

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. This job has been ongoing for quite some time but progress has been made and the team expects it to wrap up soon.

Bendigo-Ophir Gold Project

Since the last Council meeting, staff have engaged Sally Gepp and Kate McArthur to provide legal and ecology advice respectively. In February, councillors would have received a briefing paper detailing the updated issues, proposed timetable, expenditure proposals and key risks. Unfortunately, we were not able to secure the proposed groundwater hydrology expertise proposed in that briefing paper.

The project team is working with other parties to fill information and expertise gaps that we have not been able to resource within the Otago and New Zealand Fish and Game joint case budget. It looks as if there will be expertise available to cover the main topics of concern to Fish and Game.

As discussed in the February briefing paper, Sally has advised that Fish and Game will legally be required to be invited for comment, so the team has begun work on the comments. The issues that have been identified broadly remain as the ones flagged to the Council at the beginning of this process:

1. The impact of contaminant discharges on downstream waterbodies, the Lindis, Clutha/Mata-Au and Lake Dunstan.
2. The stability of the tailings dam and properly addressing the risks of failure
3. Ensuring there is resourcing not only for closure and post-closure activities, but also future repairs, maintenance, and natural hazard responses into the long and very long (perpetual) term
4. How the panel should factor uncertainty into their decision making, given it is such a common theme in the application

I note that with the advice from Kate, we are beginning to narrow the focus on issue #1 to the lower Lindis river as the principal area of impact over the next century. Due to the supporting role the Lindis plays to the upper Clutha and Lake Dunstan fisheries as a source of recruitment, this is likely to have flow on effects to those fisheries.

The team is looking to complete the Fish and Game comments by the end of March.

I appreciate the flexibility the Council has shown in adapting to this Fast-Track Approvals Act process, the compressed timeframes and uncertainty built into the Act has made it difficult for project management and governance oversight.

Homestead Bay Fast-Track Application

The Homestead Bay Fast-Track application has been decided, with the approvals being granted.

Fish & Game had initially raised concerns about the potential for discharges of sediment, nitrogen and other contaminants into Lake Wakatipu; the monitoring and response required for the discharge of sediment; and for the destruction of nationally threatened wetlands. Nitrogen issues were resolved via expert conferencing but concerns around the response time for sediment discharge were not. Similarly, despite noting likely inconsistency with the National Policy Statement for Freshwater Management, the destruction of threatened wetlands was enabled to go ahead with compensation provided as an offset. There was little meaningful analysis of whether the offset would be adequate to compensate for the loss.

In response to the draft decision and draft conditions, staff took a pragmatic approach. Leaning into and attempting to improve the proposed conditions to require immediate action after sediment discharge and to better ensure that funds for wetland compensation were spent on their intended purpose. The latter was adopted.

This decision provides meaningful experience for the organisation in navigating the Fast-Track Approvals Act processes, especially in light of the investment made in the Bendigo-Ophir Gold Project.

Mahinerangi Windfarm Fast-Track Application

The New Zealand Fish and Game Council has received an invitation to provide comment on the Mahinerangi Windfarm Fast-Track Application. If approved, this would see an expansion of the existing windfarm in terms of turbines, area and turbine height.

Staff are reviewing the application and its potential to affect anglers, hunters and the fish and game resource. If a submission is required, it will need to be received by the panel by 30 March 2026. At this stage, it is not expected that any submission on this application will require expenditure outside of staff time.

Fairfield Closed Landfill

In 2025, staff submitted on a publicly notified application to manage discharges from the closed Fairfield Landfill. This site is a historic landfill sited in the Kaikorai estuary, which does not benefit from modern landfill practices and has the potential to discharge leachate to the estuary. Fish and Game submitted seeking that the landfill discharges be reduced over time, such that they contribute to the achievement of the RPS set vision for the estuary, which requires a restoration within a generation.

Since the last reporting period, the applicant approached staff seeking to achieve Fish and Game's relief and (presumably) avoid a hearing. Since submissions had been made, they had had substantial discussions with iwi which had resulted in greatly improved consent conditions. Staff negotiated minor amendments to the proposed conditions that would consider the achievement of the current and future vision or objectives for the estuary, which was accepted by the applicant. With this, Fish and Game's relief has been addressed, and the submission resolved. This agreement was passed onto the consenting authority.

ORC Navigation Safety Bylaw Review

Staff have submitted on the ORC's navigation safety bylaw review. The submission included a statement of no opposition to the Otago Jet Boat Association Proposals and support of the retention of a general speed limit of 5 knots on rivers.

Current Notification Processes

Applicant	Activity	Outcome
Otago Regional Council notifications		
Hawksbury Village Management Ltd	To discharge treated wastewater from Hawksbury village wastewater treatment plant onto pasture via spray irrigation, in circumstances where it may enter water.	Fish and Game submitted in a neutral capacity, drawing attention to the worsening cumulative effects of nutrients in the catchment and the potential alternatives of connecting the wastewater treatment plant to existing Dunedin City Council plants.

Written approval provided during the period

Applicant	Activity	Outcome
Otago Regional Council applications		
The Department of Conservation	To discharge treated wastewater to land in circumstances where they may reach the Routeburn.	Staff reviewed the application and provided written approval.
Queenstown Lakes District Council		
Reel Charters Wanaka	To operate a commercial sports fishing charter business	Staff negotiated a condition for the operator to avoid other anglers, with a buffer of 50m. On agreement, affected party 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

Nigel Paragreen
Environmental Officer
6 March 2026

12.0 Committee & Delegate Reports

12.1 New Zealand Council

Delegate's report

Note. Submissions on the Natural Environment Bill and Planning Bill (submitted on February 13) and the Arms Bill (submitted on February 16) have already been shared with all F & G Crs

Summary of NZC Meeting 180

Governance workshop

The New Zealand Fish & Game Council had met at the North Canterbury Fish & Game office in Christchurch on 5 December 2025 to develop a governance workplan for 2026/27. The main outcomes of the workshop were to create a plan that focused council on its core governance imperatives, was largely future focused, and would ensure that board time was utilised efficiently and effectively.

The workshop then focused on the Councils baseline requirements for meeting its statutory functions, along with reviewing the proposed Fish & Game legislative changes to identify additional priority matters for the Council in 2026/27 to support modernization of the organisation and implementation of legislative reform. This was achieved through presentations by Ms Corina Jordan

The summary outcomes of the workshop were presented at the February meeting which included:

Councils Strategic Priorities 2026/27 (see table following)

Key risk areas for consideration

Key Strategic Risks to the Organisation identified as High

- Organisational Culture
- Organisational Strategic Plan Implementation
- Effective R3 (Recruitment, Retention, Reactivation) Organisational Implementation
- Climate Change and Biosecurity
- Financial management and planning
- Modernising licencing system and creation of a digital ecosystem
- Fish & Games Reputation
- Recognition and protection for sportsfish and gamebird habitats including through legislation

Summary of things that NZ Crs were concerned about :

- Gamebird and Sportsfish Monitoring
- Everything should be done on Xero rather than spreadsheets
- Board papers
- Agenda size
- Enduring and accepted strategic priorities no matter who is leading the country
- Communication
- Staff summary papers
- Supporting information to be added in separately
- Staff development opportunities
- Bulk funding model to reduce budget lost time
- Utilisation of staff, our people throughout NZ on nationally based projects
- Budgeting
- NZ Councillors
- Use of systems and processes that provide ease of application and approval
- Crs selected for their expertise
- Governance vs management (delegation)
- Performance reporting for the regions, and for NZC
- Develop national project framework

NZC Crop Depredation Policy

Following feedback from Councils which almost universally concluded that the draft policy circulated to regions was unworkable, the policy is to be redrafted and reconsidered at meeting #181 in April.

Staff are to review the current authorisation from section 53, 54, 56 of Wildlife Act and the legality of F&G being able to issue permits to disturb or kill game birds causing nuisance impacts on crops and provide an update paper to the next meeting including policy advice.

Resource Management Funding Legislation Policy

The Resource Management Policy sets out criteria for applications to the National Legislation Fund (RM fund), by regions and their consideration for approval along with ongoing case reporting conditions.

These requirements are:

- The application must be provided in the prescribed form:
- If a decision is needed urgently, a workshop can be held and a decision recommended, to be confirmed at the next NZC meeting;
- Case theory and case plan along with communications and engagement plan are to be provided to NZC for review and approval with the application;
- The Council that applied for funds will report back to NZC at least twice annually on implementation of the case theory and any changes to the case that is predicted to arise through for example presentation of evidence, expert conferencing, mediation, or decisions.
- The Council that applied for funds will also report at least two annually milestones and expenditure against budget.
- At the end of the process, key learnings from the case will be presented to NZC and the RM team along with the decision and other key documents
- Unused funds must be returned to the advocacy fund.

Noted that as of 31 January 2026, the RMA fund has committed funds of \$409,399.

Available funds have increased due to returned funds and now \$224,708 is available for new cases.

Health and Safety

Following H & S reviews of 4 regional councils in late 2025 a new Health & Safety (H&S) framework is to be implemented across NZ Fish & Game

The Health and Safety Framework outlines the obligations of Fish & Game and the obligations of elected members, staff, contractors and volunteers

- Agreed to send the draft Policy H&S Framework and Policy and ToR NZ F&G H&S Committee to regions for formal consultation and feedback by 27 March
- Noted that the obligations outlined in these policies are required as a result of Government H&S Legislation
- This will be a binding policy for all Regions for adoption.
- Agreed to the HR Manager moving forward with implementation of a H&S committee ahead of regional consultation with a representative from each region to be elected by their peers.
- Regional Budget Process

Advise the regions that Fish and Game is operating in a fiscally constrained environment and will provide financial constraints requirements through meeting communique (including licence forecast, REM/ CPI increase, variance report).

Established a budget preview working group to pre-review regional budgets, seek additional information, where required, and bring complete budgets plus information back to NZC for decision making

Accepted nominations from Barrie Barnes, Mike Barker, Mark Sceats, Romon Sargeson, Dave Harris and Debbie Oakley to form the working group

Note meetings/ workload for the working group anticipated to be in the last week of March.

COO Report

Mostly covered the firearms submission mentioned earlier

Clutha Fisheries Trust

M. F. Barker appointment to Trust - ratified

Bendigo Mine Fast Track Submission

Summary presented to Council.

NZC Finance Report December 2025

Received the NZC Finance Report for the 4 months ended 31 December 2025 with a deficit of \$154,460

National and Regional Reserves as at 31 August 2025

- Received the information
- Noted the forecast 31 August 26 organisational reserves status as \$8,586,745
- Noted the action for NZC staff to develop an Asset Replacement/Depreciation Policy
- Reminds regions of policy around general reserve usage, particularly the need to consider general reserve use in their budget and the requirement to seek approval from NZC to allow general reserve expenditure.

Remuneration Update paper Received the information on the recommended remuneration movement data that will be used for budgets for the 26/2027 budget process

Recommended NZC staff to write to each regional council with the outcome of the remuneration movement from Strategic Pay and outline process for performance management/ remuneration setting

Game bird population monitoring policy

- Receive the feedback from the regions and provide to Proteus to allow Proteus to collate and provide advice
- Following Proteus' collation/ advice NZC staff to host a workshop with internal/ external technical experts to discuss the Proteus report and draft policy
- NZC to synthesise all the above information into a paper for following Council meeting with the Final Draft Policy

Licence review

- Requested NZC staff undertake a full review of all licence-types and opportunities to streamline these, in order to maximise licence sales and ensure the best opportunities for hunting and fishing.
- Noted that this is to include a financial analysis of the Family Licence changes, and consequential licence-type shifts.
- Noted that future analysis on possible changes to the family licence must include the likely outcomes of those changes in terms of finances and licence-type purchases.

12.2 Clutha Mata Au Sports Fish and Habitat Trust

Applicable content from unconfirmed minutes from meeting 03 March 2026

Correspondence

Easement/access for anglers to access the Talla Burn through Contact Energy land.

Andy updated, Contact is still formalising the grazing licence with Beaumont Station with the plan to include provision for fishing access in the licence. Contact Energy has a new legal person that will work through this when she is fully on board. Andy advised that this is unlikely to happen before the end of July.

Trustees agreed that there needs to be clarification around the type of access that is required and granted, i.e. licensed anglers.

Water Quality for Hatchery

Consult with Mark Gillard from Aquaculture Direct on the water quality and water source question. Chinook Salmon Hatchery Intake Water Specifications attached as appendix 2.

Trustees discussed water quality and agreed bore water may be a solution but perhaps not an adequate volume for what would be required for a Hatchery. Options need to be further investigated before they can be discounted.

Website – Tania advised that the website is now live.

Awanui Development Inc Ltd-Salmon Farm proposal on the Clutha

Keri Limmer (Project Manager) and Shaun McLellan (Director) from Awanui Developments Inc. Ltd joined the meeting via Teams to discuss their proposal for a Salmon Farm on the Clutha.

The presentation included an overview of the complete project and an outline of their Feasibility Study that is due to be completed in 2027. Given appropriate approvals and consents the project could be started as early as 2030 with an aim to be self-sufficient and harvesting salmon by 2035.

Project Updates

Jamie from Fish and Game Otago updated the Trust on the following work projects. Report attached as appendix 4. discussed work projects including;

- Roxburgh Dam Creel Surveys
- Salmon Head collection and storage
- Back Stream Weir Removal
- Upper Lakes Salmon Spawning
- Lower Clutha Salmon Harvest Survey
- Pomahaka River eDNA
- Masters Project
- 2026/27 Financial Year Operational Planning

2026-07 Lower Clutha fish - PhD

Mike advised that this project is on track. Riki Parata has completed a draft project proposal which still needs some tidy up. The next stage is with the assessment committee. There will be a small increase in fees but the project will still be well within budget.

2026-04 Crookston Burn

Morgan explained that a restoration site has been identified. The Landowner is keen to make progress with the work and will be involved in scoping the project however it is uncertain whether the project will be completed within this financial year.

2026-01 Manuka Island

Manuka Island habitat restoration work is largely completed and a project report has been received from Glen Riley which has been circulated to Trustees for their information.

Rick advised that he would like to see long term protection for the site, perhaps something on the title. Morgan advised that recent work has provided both access and amenity value. Options for covenants could be QEII Trust, DOC or walking access NZ but in the first instance

it would be good to understand current ownership. Trustees agreed that they would start by getting recognition by the landowner and work towards getting some protection in the future. Other interests are represented via LINZ and Fulton Hogan. Morgan will follow up with the landowner.

This project will require maintenance funding in the program of work for next year.

2026-03 Lower Clutha Lagoons

Rick advise that no progress has been made on this project and suggested that this project not be progressed any further as it is too much out of the control of the Trust. The things that would need to occur would involve significant ORC decisions and the Trust could do other work with the funding.

Trust Progress Review

Rick explained that he felt that the Trust has done well on most projects but not so well on progressing the Hatchery project. The Trust has yet to answer the question of water supply and he feels that a Project Manager is required to progress the hatchery development and suggested that funding could be re-directed from other projects to engaging a Project Manager.

Following discussion Trustees agreed to engage a Project Manager for the Hatchery and agreed that Andy would follow up with both Gareth Taylor from Collaborations Christchurch and Brian Blanchard to test their interest in the opportunity and will report back to the Trust.

Election of Chair

Rick stood down as Chair as he had advised he would be doing at the December meeting. A replacement Chair was discussed however there were no nominations from around the table. It was agreed that the Trust would have a revolving Chair until a permanent solution was found. Rick suggested that consideration should be given to appointing a Trustee from outside the current board with a background in governance and/or business.

Work Planning

2027-10 - Upper Clutha Salmon Research a priority for the Trust and for Fish and Game. Fish and Game to put together a project proposal that identifies the work for 2027

Other Fish and Game projects that could be considered are in the material provided by Jamie. Trust may be able to fund 2 – 3 projects that align with the Trust. Jamie to prioritise and cost 3 projects and provide to the Trust for consideration by the end of April. It was suggested that it would be useful for one or two Trustees to sit down with Fish and Game staff to discuss potential projects that the Trust might fund.

Habitat Restoration

Morgan explained that he considers the best value for money is to target better riparian buffers to protect streams from sediment and the Trust could also consider asking farmers to share in cost. There were areas in the Leithen Burn where buffers would be valuable.

Morgan to come up with some reasonably specific areas of work and provide a budget that the Trust can target for next year.

12.3 Ngai Tahu

12.4 Conservation Board

12.5 Clutha Fisheries Trust

No notable updates since last report, besides those noted in Acting CE report.

13.0 Correspondence

13.1 NZC to Otago

13.2 Otago to NZC

13.2.1 Feedback National Policy – Gamebirds Causing Damage

17 February 2026
New Zealand Fish & Game Council
Via Email; COO - rcosgrove@fishandgame.org.nz

Re; Feedback on National Policy – Gamebirds causing damage

Thank you for the opportunity to provide feedback on the draft National Crop Depredation Policy.

Otago Fish and Game Council has considered both the draft policy and the accompanying background material.

Council supports the intent of establishing a nationally consistent framework. However, it remains of the view that any national policy must clearly distinguish between policy, procedure, and operational guidance, and must provide clear statutory and governance “rails” rather than detailed methods.

Council’s view is that the original draft would have benefited from earlier engagement with operational staff across regions. A small working group of Regional Managers and staff who regularly administer crop depredation permits would likely have strengthened the policy, improved practicality, and reduced legal and operational risk.

At Council’s request, we have drafted an alternative, significantly shortened policy for consideration. This version reflects how Otago currently manages crop depredation while recognising that operational contexts vary between regions. It is offered as a contribution to the national discussion rather than as a prescriptive model for adoption.

A key feature of the Otago approach, and one we consider important from both a legal and risk perspective, is the explicit two-step escalation framework:

1. **Disturbance (non-lethal) as the default first response**, supported by advice and, where required, a permit to disturb under section 54 of the Wildlife Act 1953; and
2. **Permits to kill considered only after verification of ongoing damage and demonstrated failure of non-lethal measures**, with clear limits, conditions, and reporting.

Council’s view is that this approach better reflects the statutory test under section 54 of the Wildlife Act, which requires the Director-General to be satisfied that injury or damage is occurring. In our view, that obligation logically extends to those exercising delegated authority on the Director-General’s behalf. Issuing permits to kill without verification that damage is occurring and that lesser measures have been ineffective presents legal and reputational risk for the organisation.

We acknowledge that some regions currently operate differently, including issuing permits to kill without inspection in certain circumstances. While we understand the practical drivers behind that, Otago Council’s position is that a national policy should set a clear, defensible standard that aligns with the statutory threshold and supports consistent, auditable decision-making.

The attached draft policy (Appendix A) is deliberately principle-based and underpinned by:

- Clear reference to the Wildlife Act 1953

- A structured two-step response model
- Explicit recognition of animal welfare obligations
- Clear permit, accountability, and monitoring expectations
- Separation of policy from operational methods, which are better addressed through SOPs and guidance

We offer this as a basis for further refinement through national collaboration. Otago Council would support the establishment of a small cross-regional working group to help finalise a policy that is both legally robust and operationally workable across the country.

Yours sincerely

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

Adrian McIntyre
Chair
Otago Fish and Game Council

Appendix 1

National Fish and Game Policy - Crop Depredation

1. Purpose

This policy establishes a consistent, lawful, and proportionate framework for responding to damage to crops and pasture caused by game birds. It provides clear decision-making principles, statutory boundaries, and escalation thresholds, while ensuring that responses balance landowner interests, animal welfare, and Fish and Game's statutory responsibility to manage game bird populations for the benefit of all New Zealanders.

2. Scope

This policy applies to:

- All Regional Fish and Game Councils
- All Fish and Game staff involved in responding to crop depredation complaints
- All permits issued by Fish and Game relating to disturbance or killing of game birds causing damage

This policy applies only to game bird species managed by Fish and Game under the Wildlife Act 1953. Damage caused by non-game species falls outside this policy and must be managed under relevant alternative statutory frameworks.

3. Statutory Authority

This policy is made under the authority of the Wildlife Act 1953, including but not limited to sections 53, 54, and 56, and any delegations or authorisations issued by the Minister of Conservation or the Director-General of Conservation.

Nothing in this policy limits or overrides statutory requirements under:

- The Wildlife Act 1953
- The Animal Welfare Act 1999
- Relevant health and safety, firearms, and environmental legislation

4. Policy Principles

Fish and Game responses to crop depredation shall be guided by the following principles:

1. **Early Intervention**
Early engagement and action are critical to preventing escalation of damage.
2. **Proportionality**
Responses must be proportionate to the scale, duration, and severity of damage.
3. **Non-lethal First**
Non-lethal disturbance is the preferred and primary response.
4. **Escalation Only When Necessary**
Lethal control may be authorised only where non-lethal methods have demonstrably failed.
5. **Animal Welfare**
All authorised actions must minimise suffering and comply with animal welfare standards.

1. **Consistency and Accountability**

Decisions must be consistent, documented, and defensible.

2. **Shared Responsibility**

Landowners retain responsibility for ongoing crop protection, supported by Fish and Game advice and oversight.

5. Two-Step Response Framework

Step 1 – Disturbance (Non-Lethal)

Where a landowner reports crop or pasture damage by game birds, Fish and Game shall:

- Assess the complaint to confirm that damage is occurring or imminent.
- Make a site visit if considered necessary
- Provide advice on appropriate non-lethal disturbance methods
- Where required, issue a permit to disturb under section 54 of the Wildlife Act 1953

If the complaint falls inside the hunting season, the first remedial action recommended will be hunting by licence holding gamebird hunters. Daily bag limits for the region will apply. Disturbance permits may authorise activities including, but not limited to, scaring with gas guns or other firearms, human activity, or other non-lethal methods. Disturbance (when outside of the gamebird season) is the default and expected first response.

Step 2 – Escalation to Lethal Control

A permit to kill game birds may be considered only where all of the following criteria are met:

- A site visit or equivalent verification has confirmed the ongoing damage
- Non-lethal disturbance has been implemented and has demonstrably failed
- The proposed killing is necessary to achieve effective dispersal
- The scale of killing is proportionate to the issue
- The action complies with animal welfare requirements
- If inside the hunting season, where hunting cannot be undertaken in the first instance (ie urban area)

Permits to kill shall specify:

- Species and maximum numbers
- Timeframes and locations
- Approved methods
- Reporting requirements

Permits to kill are discretionary and not automatic.

6. Permits and Conditions

All permits issued under this policy shall:

- Be issued under the appropriate section(s) of the Wildlife Act 1953
- Include standard conditions set by Fish and Game
- Be time-limited and purpose-specific
- Require post-activity reporting by the permit holder

Fish and Game may decline, restrict, or revoke permits where conditions are not met or where risks outweigh benefits.

7. Roles and Responsibilities

- Fish and Game Councils set policy direction and ensure consistency
- Regional Managers (or delegated staff) are responsible for permit decisions, compliance, and oversight
- Landowners are responsible for implementing approved measures and complying with permit conditions

8. Compliance and Monitoring

Fish and Game shall:

- Monitor compliance with permit conditions
- Maintain records of permits issued and outcomes
- Take enforcement action where breaches occur, including declining future permits or pursuing prosecution where appropriate

9. Conflict Resolution

Where disputes arise regarding damage assessments or permit decisions, Fish and Game will:

- Engage with affected parties in good faith
- Seek practical resolution consistent with this policy
- Escalate unresolved matters internally in accordance with delegated authority

10. Review

This policy shall be reviewed periodically to ensure:

- Ongoing legal compliance
- Consistency across regions
- Alignment with best practice and operational experience
- Compliance with any legislation change

Note:

Operational procedures, disturbance methods, permit templates, and guidance material shall be maintained separately from this policy.

11. Appendices

Appendix A – Draft Permit to disturb

Appendix B – Draft Permit to Kill

Appendix C – DG’s delegation to F&G Councils

13.3 General Correspondence In

13.3.1 John Castel Concern Shotgun Wads

Sharon Milne

From: John Castel <berrystreet@hotmail.co.nz>
Sent: Monday, 2 February 2026 6:04 PM
To: Otago
Subject: Shotgun Ammunition plastic wads V biodegradable wads

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.

Hello panel

I have been very concerned that the NZ rivers lakes and foreshore are being polluted by plastic shotgun wads

I exercise myself and my dog on the beach in the Clutha District

I have been walking my dog and I for around five years in the same area for around 5years or so

I noticed a lot of rubbish on the beach so I decided as part of my exercise program to start picking the rubbish up during my walks on the beautiful coastline

I pick up a variety of rubbish including many Plastic Shot ammunition wads from the firing of a shotgun (duck shooting perhaps)

I find that these wads on the beach have come from the lakes and rivers all over this area and when it floods in these areas the water levels rise and the plastic wads are flush out to sea by the rivers and they wash up all over the beaches of New Zealand leaving this plastic pollution on most of the shores of New Zealand

There is a quick solution to this problem and it costs nothing

You may say how so

Well just like how lead shot was phased out over time that is what I am proposing today for the phase out of shotgun ammunition plastic wads of today to be phased out the same way as lead shot was eradicated or stopped and now steel shot used

This could happen with plastic wads being phased out and on Biodegradable wads phased in

Oh you may say its to expensive to change

Well since this plastic things are polluting our rivers lakes and foreshore I would say that this needs urgent discussion with fish and game and the government

I would like to see all shotgun Ammunition in New Zealand move to have Biodegradable wads not both as is the case at the moment

This would solve this problem of plastic wad pollution in our river lakes and foreshore of New Zealand as with biodegradable wads they breakdown where as the plastic ones don't pollute the environment and are also eaten by fish in the sea

1

Thanks very much hope to see changes happen for the best for New Zealand

Kind regards john

13.3.2 Pete Dormer Concern Tree Planting near rivers of significance

From: Pete Dormer <pete@dormer.co.nz>
Date: 23 February 2026 at 3:35:52 PM NZDT
To: point.farm@outlook.co.nz
Subject: Tree planting near rivers of Significance

Good afternoon

Thank you for the time on the phone today

I would like to come and introduce myself with regards to getting Central Government to have a set back zone from any river of significance for tree planting in New Zealand. In particular , South Island.

This would then allow rivers to have a buffer zone and help minimise soil erosion into the water zone this being better for a fishery.

We are all conversations in New Zealand. We only need to make some simple fine tuning changes to rules and regulations as to make things better and this is what I would like to push for over the next year.

Would you be able to reply to this email please and I will come and see you in a few weeks time

Regards and thanks

Pete Dormer

Pete Dormer
Managing Director



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13.3.3 Office of the Auditor General – Response to OFGC Correspondence 27 Jan 2026

fee equal to or below \$100k, auditors can directly seek a fee recovery from the entity for up to \$15,000 without prior OAG approval.

The fees to be recovered must be reasonable, the matters that caused the additional costs must have been raised with the entity as soon as they became apparent, and no recovery can be sought for audit costs caused by auditor inefficiencies.

We consider that the \$2,000 fee charged in this instance was reasonable. The fee related to financial reporting assistance to ensure compliance with the newly implemented Tier 3 (PS) Standard. This additional work was not included in the scope of the approved Audit Proposal Letter, and included:

- Engaging the BDO Quality team.
- Consulting and obtaining approval from the OAG Audit Quality team for the approach taken.
- Providing multiple mark-ups to the draft financial statements to ensure corrections were made.

We have also seen correspondence from BDO confirming that the new Tier 3 (PS) Standard was raised with several F&G entities, including head office, in August 2025. Therefore, individual F&G entities and head office had the opportunity to discuss the new reporting requirements with BDO and the OAG ahead of implementation.

Thank you again for raising your concerns with us.

Nāku noa, nā

Mohan Singh
Senior Sector Advisor – Parliamentary Group

13.3.4 Allan Kelly - Submission on the Hunting and Fishing Legislation (via e-mail 27 Feb 2026)

Submission on the Hunting and Fishing Legislation

Introduction

I am making this submission in relation to the forthcoming Hunting and Fishing legislation.

I have been an active participant in hunting and fishing in New Zealand for over five decades. I have hunted ducks for 65 years and held a fishing licence for 55 years. My comments are based on long personal experience, observation of regulatory change, and concern for the sustainability and future enjoyment of these resources for coming generations.

1. Game Bird Hunting

I have primarily hunted in the Southland region.

Historically, duck bag limits were set based on bird counts conducted in January (and later March) prior to the opening of the season. In my view, this method did not adequately account for the southward migration of birds from Canterbury and Otago following the grain harvest. As a result, local bird numbers at opening often differed significantly from the earlier survey data.

I strongly recommend that a more robust, science-based and nationally coordinated methodology be applied when setting bag limits across all Fish & Game regions. There should be consistency and transparency in how limits are determined, and they should reflect migration patterns and regional population dynamics.

For example, the variation in opening weekend limits — Canterbury (50), Otago (25), Southland (25) — highlights the need for clearer scientific justification and better inter-regional coordination.

2. Freshwater Fishing – Salmon

My wife and I began fishing together in 1972. On our first evening fishing the Oreti River, our licences were inspected by a Fish & Game Ranger. This was a positive early experience that reinforced the value of compliance and good management.

In the 1970s and 1980s, the daily salmon limit on Canterbury rivers was four fish per day. In the early 1990s, this was reduced to two per day. Today, the limit has effectively reduced to one salmon per year in many areas.

This dramatic decline has not only reduced recreational opportunity but has also had significant economic impacts on the Canterbury and Otago regions, where salmon fishing once attracted anglers from across New Zealand and overseas.

Key Concern: Fisheries Act 1996 and the Quota Management System

A major change occurred with the Fisheries Act 1996 and the operation of the Quota Management System (QMS). Salmon, as an introduced species, are not afforded the same protection as native species. As a result:

- Modern commercial fishing vessels are highly capable of targeting offshore schools of salmon.
- There appears to be little effective constraint on the commercial take of sea-run salmon.
- There has been limited transparency regarding the origin of processed salmon — whether farmed or wild.

There have long been rumours within the angling community that wild salmon have been processed in Timaru factories alongside farmed salmon. If this has occurred, it warrants proper investigation and public reporting.

I believe that greater oversight from MPI (Ministry for Primary Industries) inspectors is necessary. If wild salmon were being commercially processed in significant quantities, this should have been reported and addressed transparently.

Given the ownership and scale of major commercial operators such as Sealord, Sanford, and Talleys, it is reasonable to question whether sufficient checks and balances exist to ensure recreational salmon fisheries are not being undermined by commercial activity.

I feel that both Fish & Game and the Government have not adequately protected this fishery.

3. Trout Fishing

I have fished for trout for 55 years.

Didymo

The spread of Didymo has had a significant impact on many South Island rivers. Ongoing management and prevention efforts remain essential.

Mackenzie Basin Canal Fisheries

The development of canal fisheries in the Mackenzie Basin has, in some respects, compensated for the loss of sea-run salmon opportunities. While there were early concerns about sockeye salmon survival following canal development, changes in farming practices in the Mackenzie Basin over the past 15 years appear to have supported a significant increase in this fishery.

Given current stock strength, consideration could be given to increasing the bag limit from the current two fish per day to four fish per day, subject to sound scientific assessment.

4. Governance of Fish & Game Councils

Over many years, I have observed significant variation between regional Fish & Game Councils in:

- Financial reporting
- Staffing levels
- Administrative expenditure

While regional autonomy has value, inconsistencies suggest inefficiencies and potential wastage of licence holder funds.

I recommend the following reforms:

1. **Clear statutory boundaries**
The governing Act should define clear operational parameters within which all councils must work.
2. **Shared services model**
Administrative functions such as accounting, payroll, and reporting should be centralised to reduce duplication and improve efficiency.
3. **Standardised salary bands**
Salary structures should be consistent nationwide.
4. **Standardised public reporting**
Financial and operational reporting should follow a uniform national template and be readily available for public inspection.

Licence holders deserve transparency and assurance that funds are being used efficiently and effectively.

Conclusion

Hunting and fishing have given me immense enjoyment throughout my life. I have attached a video of catching a trout — the tears of joy reflect what these activities mean to me personally.

My hope is that my great-grandchildren will have the same opportunities and pleasures that I have experienced through hunting and fishing in New Zealand.

That will only occur if legislation, governance, and resource management are guided by sound science, transparency, accountability, and long-term stewardship.

Thank you for considering my submission.

Allan Kelly

13.4 General Correspondence Out
13.4.4 OFGC Response to NZJBA



January 26, 2026

Otago Jet Boat Association (OJBA)

Via Email:

Subject: No Objection to proposed Speed Uplift Amendments for Navigational Safety Bylaws

Dear OJBA Team,

I am writing to formally advise that the Council has reviewed your proposal for speed (5-knot) uplift changes as outlined in our recent discussions.

Following an assessment by our staff, the Council offers no objection to the proposed amendments you intend to submit to the Otago Regional Council (ORC) as part of their Navigational Safety Bylaws review.

Basis for Decision

Staff analysis indicates that these proposals are unlikely to negatively impact recreational angling or fish spawning. This conclusion is supported by several factors:

- **Minimal Impact:** Most changes are extensions of existing uplifts or occur during high flows when rivers are typically unsuitable for angling or spawning.
- **Proven Track Record:** There have been no logged complaints from anglers regarding current uplifts (in the ORC jurisdiction), and jetboat events remain well-notified.
- **Collaborative Relationship:** The Council remains committed to maintaining positive relationships with all river users.

Summary of Supported Amendments

The Council supports the following specific changes to the bylaws:

Manuherikia River

- **Current uplifting:** August/September when flow at Ophir gauge is between 10–45 cumecs
- **Agreed:** Add July to current parameters and October to march if above 20 cumecs

Upper Taieri

- **Location:** Pukerangi Road Bridge to Hyde Gravel Pit
- **Current uplifting:** August/September, flow above 20 cumecs at Waipiata gauge
- **Agreed:** Add October, November, and December to current uplifting period

Lower Taieri

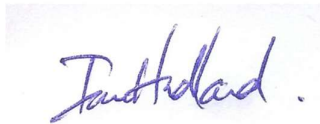
- **Location:** Confluence of Waipori River to Outram
- **Current:** 15 July to 15 August, flow >30 cumecs at Outram gauge
- **Agreed:** Closed April/May and September/October; open the rest of the year with flow above 20 cumecs

Lindis River

- **Current:** Closed
- **Agreed:** Open July, August, and September when above 20 cumec

We appreciate the OJBA's proactive engagement on this matter. We believe these adjustments provide a balanced approach that respects both jetboat enthusiasts and the river environment.

Yours sincerely,


A handwritten signature in blue ink that reads "Ian Hadland". The signature is written in a cursive style and is positioned above the printed name and title.

Ian Hadland

Chief Executive

14.0 Items to be Received or Noted

14.1 Paradise shelduck moult counts report.

Item Number	Paradise Shelduck Moults Counts Report
Author	Mason Court, Otago Fish and Game Officer
Purpose	For Decision / Information
Executive Summary	<p>In early 2026, a record 26,591 moulting paradise shelduck were counted across the Otago Fish & Game Region, exceeding the management band of 16,000–23,000. As a result, the Council increased the main season bag limit from 12 to 15 birds and aligned the special season limit to 15. Last year’s count also exceeded the band, but changes were postponed due to an avian botulism outbreak in East Otago.</p> <p>Long-term trend analysis over 36 years indicates that paradise shelduck populations in Otago are generally stable, with modest increases in recent decades. This year’s growth was observed across most subregions, particularly Maniototo, Queenstown, South Otago, and Strath Taieri, with Maniototo gaining over 1,000 birds. Declines occurred in the East Coast, Upper Clutha, Ida, Manuherikia, Dunstan, and West Otago, with the East Coast losing over 700 birds. These subregional changes largely reflect differences in counts at individual ponds, so comparisons between subregions should be interpreted cautiously.</p>
Discussion/Analysis	Council has already voted to increase the paradise shelduck limits for the 2026 season and the 2027 in the previously tabled triannual game bird review.
Links to Previous Papers/Decisions	 250228_Gamebird_Moult_Counts_MC.c
Attachments (if any)	N/A
Recommendation	That this report be received
Decision Record	Moved by: Seconded by: Carried / Lost:

Paradise Shelduck Moult Count
M Court
March 2026



Figure 2: High densities of paradise shelduck on the edge of a pond, South Otago. Photo – M Court

Introduction

The endemic pūtangitangi/ paradise shelduck (*Tadorna variegata*) congregates every year to moult on large bodies of water all around New Zealand in late January/ early February. The birds take around three – four weeks to replace all their flight feathers (Williams, 1981), leaving them flightless and vulnerable to predation. During this period the typically scattered species is mobbed together on particular waterways, providing a valuable opportunity for Fish & Game to survey numbers in the lead-in to the game bird hunting season.

As additional dams continue to be constructed over time, and considering the widespread distribution of moulting sites, a full population count (census) is not possible, however by counting a large number of sites it is possible to reliably discern long term population trends, particularly for paradise shelduck.

Methods

Moult sites are circled at low level in a fixed-wing light aircraft, typically a Cessna 172 due to its low stall speed and high mounted wing which make it easier for observers to count waterfowl. Low density mobs of waterfowl are counted while circling. If high densities are spotted from the plane, estimates are made at the time and the mobs are photographed (Figure 2). Counts are then carried out later using computer software. Due to airspace restrictions around Queenstown airport, a small number of sites are counted on foot with binoculars and spotting scopes. This year there were 96 total moult sites counted (Figure 3).

Despite efforts to maintain consistency in the annual survey, such as using the same aircraft, having the same observers, surveying the same sites, and conducting the count at the same time every year, variations in the total bird count may occur due to external factors such as new pond constructions, staff changes, and inclement weather preventing access to all survey sites. These variations mean that the total bird count does not always fully explain trends in populations.

To account for changes in the monitored sites the data has also been analysed using route regression which is a Fish & Game standard operating procedure (Teal, 2003). Route regression minimises the effects of yearly variation, by averaging the long-term trends of natural logged counts at each monitored site over defined time periods (Stevens, 2021). Counts are natural logged to prevent variation in very prolific moult sites from overwhelming the data. A full scientific review by Sauer & Droege (1990) showed that “route-regression methodology is most efficient in the estimation of long-term (>5 year) trends and tends to provide conservative results for low-density species”.

Figure 3 shows the location of the monitored sites and the subregional breakdown of the Otago Fish & Game Region which is broken down into eight subregions.

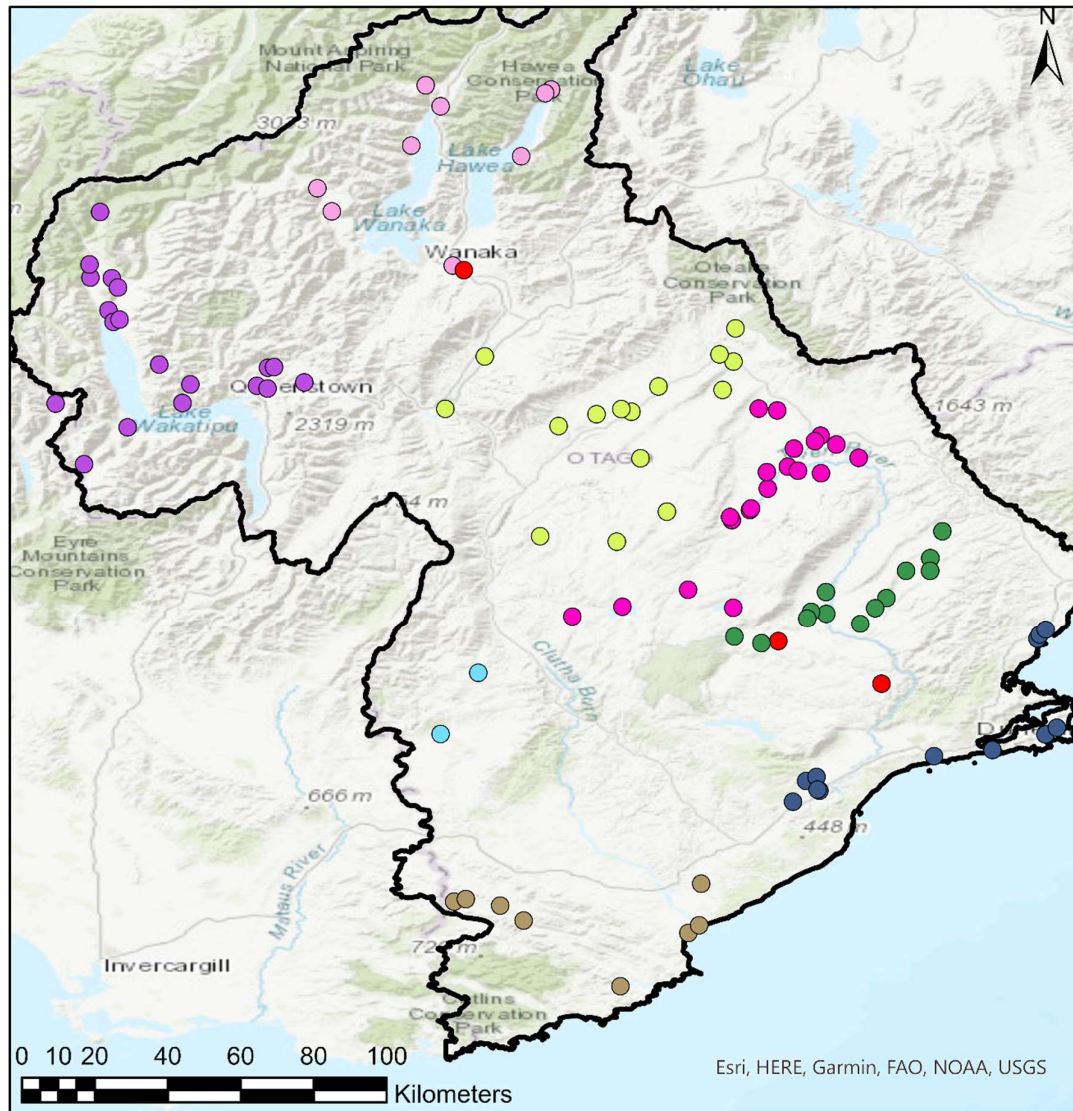


Figure 3: Map of currently and previously counted moult sites. Otago Fish & Game boundary in black.

Results

Total Count

Figure 4 shows the long-term total counts for paradise shelduck as well as the linear trend for the period.

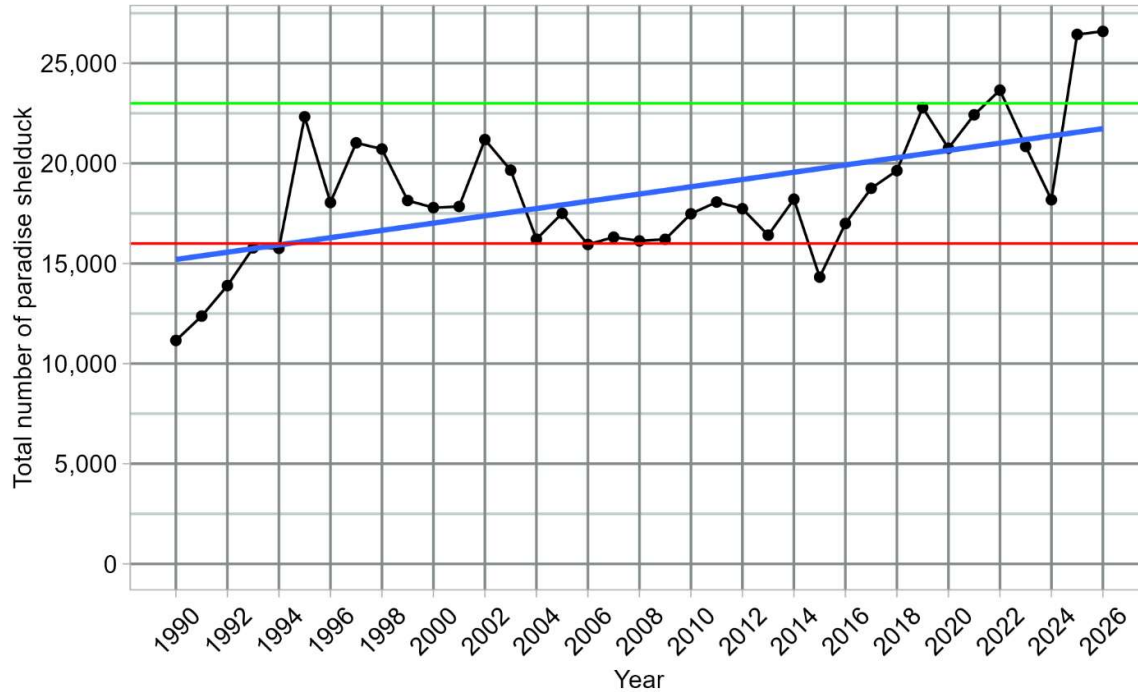


Figure 4: Long-term (1990-2025) count totals for paradise shelduck. Long-term linear trend shown in blue. The management bands of 16,000 and 23,000 shelduck shown in red and green respectively.

The paradise shelduck count increased this year to a record high of 26,591, up from 26,437 last year after dropping to a low of 18,181 in 2023 (Figure 3). Total moult counts show a statistically significant increase over time ($p = 0.005$), although this trend should be interpreted with caution as monitored sites have changed and increased over the same period.

This year's count again falls outside (i.e. above) the management band of 16,000–23,000 outlined in Priest (2023). As a result, the Otago Fish and Game Council has increased the main season paradise shelduck daily bag limit from 12 to 15 as well as increase the summer season limit from 5 to 15. Although last year's count was also outside this band, the Council maintained the existing limit due to an avian botulism outbreak in East Otago and the potential risk of HPAI H5

Route regression

Figure 5 depicts the output of the route regression (details in methods). It shows changes in shelduck populations over several extended time frames in terms of a percentage change over time. It suggests that long term, the paradise shelduck populations in the Otago Region are notably stable.

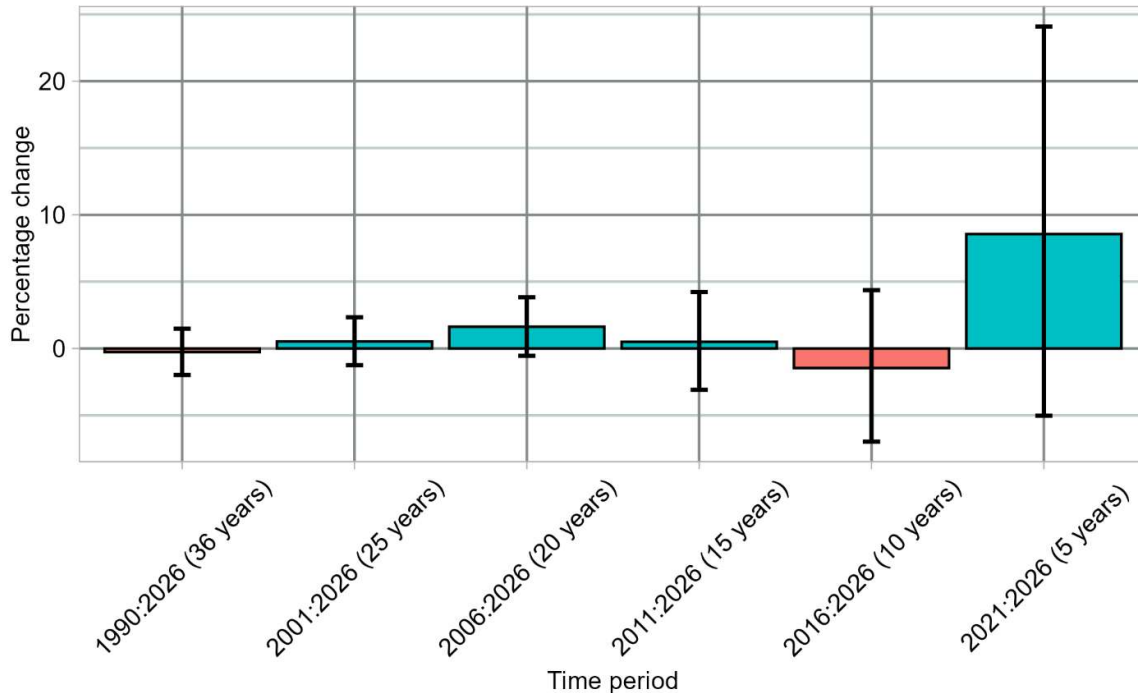


Figure 5: Proportional change in paradise shelduck numbers over varying periods with 95% confidence intervals. Increasing trend for period shown in blue, decreasing trend in red.

The route regression indicates little overall long-term change in paradise shelduck moult counts. Over the full monitoring period (c. 35–36 years), the trend is very close to zero, indicating no significant population-level change. Monitoring suggests that, with 95% confidence, the population may have declined by no more than about 3%, and the relatively narrow confidence intervals provide strong confidence that there has been no substantial long-term change in numbers.

Across most assessed time periods (5, 15, 20, and 25 years) the estimated trends are positive, suggesting a generally increasing population. However, some shorter-term estimates—particularly the 10-year and parts of the recent period—indicate a slight decline. In these cases, the confidence intervals include zero, meaning there is a small probability the population decreased, though any decline would likely have been minor.

Overall, the results suggest long-term stability in paradise shelduck numbers, with indications of modest increases in recent decades, although uncertainty is greater when interpreting shorter time periods.

Regional paradise shelduck counts

Figure 6 illustrates the short-term changes in the total number of paradise shelduck at each moult site in the eight subregions of Otago.



Figure 6: Total numbers of paradise shelduck per moult site broken down by subregion. Current year shown in orange.

Subregional count totals showed less consistent trends over time compared to the aggregated data for the Otago Region. While the overall total count increased this year, increases were observed in the Queenstown region, South Otago, Strath Taieri, and Maniototo, whereas declines occurred in the East Coast, Upper Clutha, Ida, Manuhereikia, Dunstan, and West Otago subregions.

The largest increase occurred in the Maniototo, with over 1,000 more birds counted, while the East Coast experienced the largest decrease, with over 700 fewer birds.

Figure 5 highlights the primary driver behind this year's higher count: a substantial increase in the average pond counts in Maniototo, along with smaller increases in Queenstown, South Otago, and Strath Taieri.

Since each subregion's ponds are distinct and unique, comparisons between subregions should be made with caution.

Site trends

Figure 7 presents a geographical representation of the long-term trend at each monitored site.

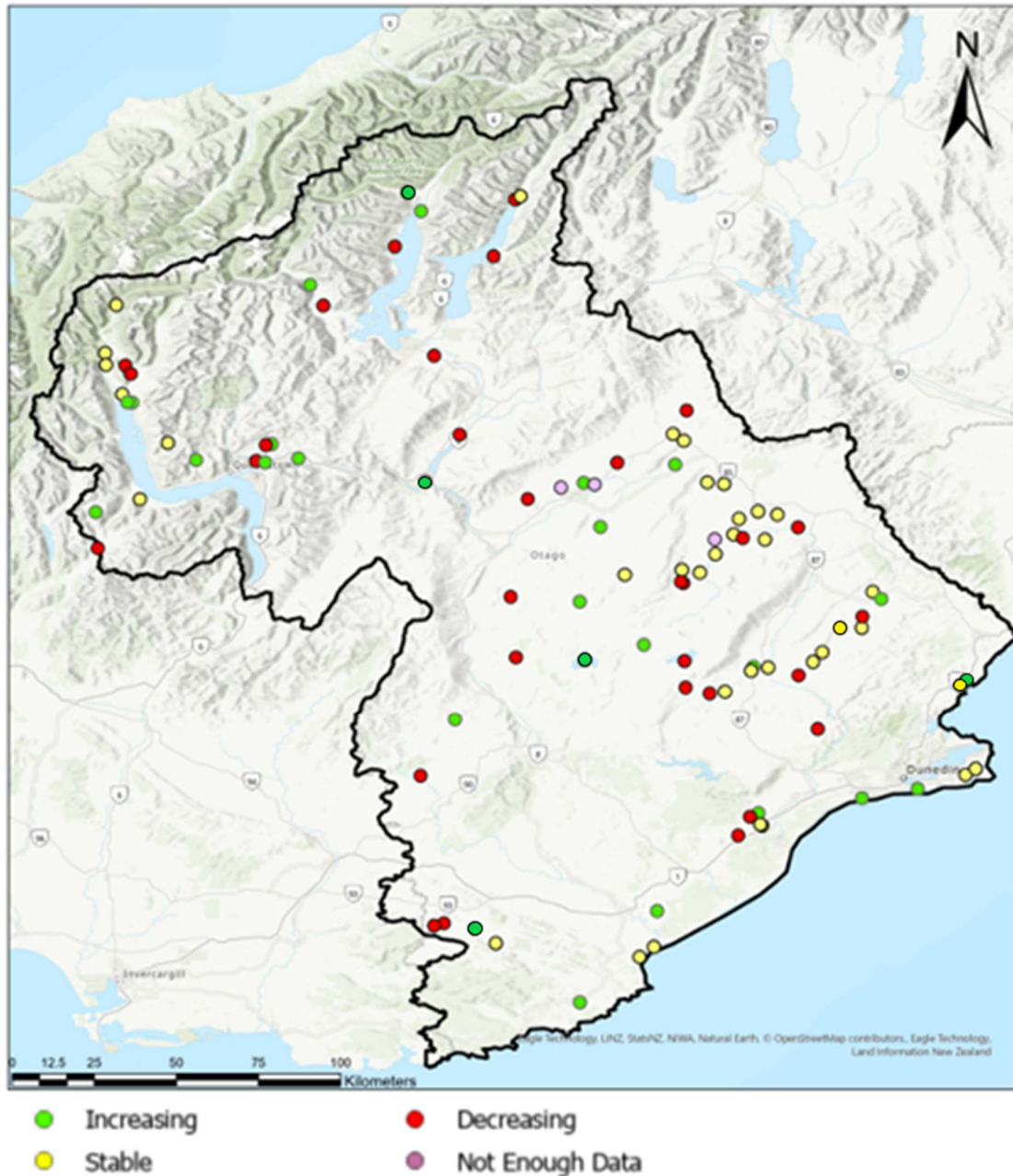


Figure 7: Paradise shelduck long term trends at each monitored moult site.

Individual site trends over the 35-year monitoring period were analysed using a Sen's slope estimator, which calculates the median slope between all possible data point pairs. This method was selected for its ability to handle highly variable data and datasets with missing values. Only sites with at least four counts were included in the analysis. Across the Otago Region, trends were evenly distributed among the three categories: increasing, decreasing, and stable. No strong geographical patterns emerged.

Discussion

Following a 2022 count of over 23,000 paradise shelduck, the Council expanded the traditionally junior-only March season to include adult hunters. At its December 2022 meeting, the Council set a new management threshold, voting that the daily bag limit could increase to 15 shelduck if the population exceeded 23,000 again. However, the 2023 count fell short at 20,800 birds, and the daily bag limit remained unchanged.

At the December 2023 meeting, the Council adopted staff recommendations (Priest, November 2023) to formalize this threshold-based management approach: if the trend count exceeded 23,000 birds, the daily bag limit would increase to 15 per day; conversely, if counts fell below 16,000 birds, the summer season would be suspended for the following year. The 2025 count recorded 26,473 paradise shelduck, surpassing the threshold for a bag limit increase. Despite this, the Council opted to maintain the status quo due to an outbreak of avian botulism at the Waikouaiti sewage plant, one of the monitored moulting sites. This outbreak resulted in the death of over 1,500 birds, with concerns that the disease could spread to other moulting sites. As a precautionary measure, the Council postponed regulatory changes despite the high population count.

This year's count of 26,591 marks the highest recorded paradise shelduck moult count in Otago, continuing a period of consistently high counts over the past five years (excluding 2024), all exceeding 20,000 birds. This is despite losing >1500 birds to avian botulism at Waikouaiti Sewage site in 2025. In response to this high count, the Otago Fish & Game Council has increased the main season bag limit to 15 birds per day and aligning the nine-day summer season limit with the main season, increasing it from five to 15 for March 2027. The limit increase was originally planned for last year, following the population exceeding the 23,000 threshold, but the avian botulism outbreak in East Otago delayed the change. Aligning the bag limits across main and summer seasons not only simplifies regulations but also provides more meaningful hunting opportunities, reflecting feedback from hunter surveys. The Minister for Hunting and Fishing has approved these changes, which will be implemented in the coming season. The lower management band of 16,000 birds will remain in place, ensuring the summer season is suspended if populations drop below this level.

Increases in counts were observed across multiple sites, including Maniototo, Taieri River, Speargrass Dam, Mathersons Dam, Waipahi, Dunstan Rd, Rocklands, and Hawksbury Lagoon, with pond counts recording 600–1,200 more birds than their respective long-term averages. Maniototo and Taieri River in particular saw the largest increase, with over 1,100 more birds than last year. The largest decline occurred at Waikouaiti Sewage, consistent with the last years botulism outbreak which result in the death of >1500 birds ; bird scaring

and netting have now been deployed to deter birds from the site, which likely contributed to higher counts at the nearby Hawksbury Lagoon.

Between 1990 and 2026, the number of irrigation storage dams and moulting sites in Otago has increased substantially. To maintain adequate coverage of the moulting population, new sites have been added to the annual survey. However, rising costs and staff time constraints limit the number of additional sites that can be included. While expanding survey sites has been necessary to track changes in the landscape, it may have inflated total bird counts, potentially masking underlying population declines. To address this, a route regression analysis was conducted alongside total counts, providing an alternative assessment of long-term population trends, indicating a long-term stable population.

Balancing hunting opportunities with sustainable populations remains a key goal of game bird management. The route regression analysis confirms long-term stability in paradise shelduck numbers, suggesting that the Council's harvest and habitat management strategies have been effective. Furthermore, the high confidence in these trends validates Otago Fish & Game's significant investment in data collection over the past 36 years, highlighting the importance of long-term monitoring. Looking ahead, the New Zealand Fish & Game Council is reviewing standard operating procedures for game bird monitoring, which may further refine survey methodologies and improve the accuracy of future population assessments.

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Acknowledgments

A huge thanks to Jamie and Cole, who successfully fought off nausea while assisting me with the aerial counts, and to Cole for conducting the ground surveys and helping Jamie and me count the large number of paradise ducks captured in the photographs. Special thanks to Jayde for providing the R code and assisting with the statistical analysis, which was a great help.

Recommendations

1. **This report is received.**

Mason Court
Fish & Game Officer
March 2026

15.0 General Business