**Minutes of the Fish & Game NZ, Southland Region Council meeting held at the Council Office, 17 Eye Street, Invercargill on Thursday 10th August 2017.**

**Present**: Graeme Watson (Chair) Chris Owen

 Paul Stenning Russel Graham

 Dave Harris Chris Frisby

Michael Hartstonge Cyril Gilroy (Te Runanga o Ngai Tahu)

**In attendance:**

 Gail Thompson (Southland Conservation Board)

 Z Moss (Manager). W Jarvie, E Garrick, C Stewart. (Field Officers).

 C Mason (Minutes).

**Members of the Public:** Len Prentice.

**Welcome:**

The Chairman opened the meeting at 6.30pm and welcomed those present.

The Chairman gave a Health & Safety briefing to the meeting, pointing out all emergency exits etc.

**Apologies:**

***Resolved Hartstonge/Harris that apologies be received & sustained from Fred Inder, Ken Cochrane, Ray Waghorn & Jacob Smyth.*** Carried.

Cory Carston was also absent.

**Conflicts of Interest with items on the agenda:**

There were no conflicts of interest advised to the Chairman.

If any conflicts should arise during the meeting Councillors were to let the Chairman know before any discussion began.

**Health & Safety:**

The health & safety report for the period 1st June – 31st July 2017 was attached to the agenda for consideration.

All known hazards were listed in the Southland Health & Safety Plan.

***Resolved Stenning/Owen that the Health & Safety Report to 31st July 2017 be received***. Carried.

**Minutes of the meeting held 8th June 2017.**

***Resolved Owen/Harris that the minutes of the meeting held 8th June 2017 were a true and accurate record.*** Carried.

**Matters arising from Minutes:**

There were no matters arising from the minutes that were not already dealt with in the agenda items.

**Administration Reports:**

The accounts paid, direct credit/debit list & automatic payments since the last meeting, budget to actual report to 26th July 2017, licence sales progress to 25th July 2017, and correspondence reports were attached to the agenda for Council’s consideration.

**Licence sales:**

Southland Fish licence sales as at 25th July were 2017 2.6% up on last year at the same time and Game Sales were -2.0% down on last year at the same time.

Nationally fish licence sales were down -2.3% and game sales up 1% on last year at the same time.

**Correspondence:**

The Chairman referred to the email circulated from Councillor Kevin Fiveash, notifying the Council of his resignation as the Gore Ward member of the Southland Fish & Game Council, effective from the 4th July 2017, due to other commitments.

The Chairman asked the Council if they wished to call a by-election, co-opt someone else, or co-opt the next highest polling person at the last election or do nothing and wait for the next election. He noted that the next Council elections were to be held on 12th October 2018.

Discussion followed with some Councillors happy to wait for the next election, which was only 12 months away, while others were happy to co-opt another member until the election. A co-opted member had the right to engage in discussions but could not vote on resolutions.

 Cr Owen noted that with Cr Fiveash’s resignation and the absence of Cr Inder due to illness recovery, he suggested that a co-opted person may be a good idea. It would give that person some experience on the Council before the elections to see if they enjoyed it or not.

Several of the Councillors were generally keen to have another Gore member co-opted, as they saw it as very important that the Gore area was represented. Others thought that the next highest poller from the last election should be co-opted, as they were already interested.

Gail Thompson suggested two members be co-opted, a Gore member and the last election next highest poller. Councillors all supported Gail’s suggestion.

After discussions it was agreed that Council wait until the next meeting and in the meantime try to find an interested person in the Gore area who would like to be co-opted onto the Council and also contact the last elections’ next highest poller to see if they were interested in being co-opted as well.

**Staff Report:**

The staff report was attached to the agenda.

**Cat tracking project:**

GPS tracking collars would be deployed on 4 x feral cats in September during the mallard brood rearing period. The feral cats would be difficult to trap and it was hoped that the baiting of the live capture traps beforehand would prove successful in attracting the cats to the traps and feeding before we set the triggers. Cameras set at the traps have shown a number of different feral (and domestic) cats using the traps as well as stoats and possums. Lincoln University was supplying funds for one of the collars and they had identified a student who will work with us on the project.

A PhD student from Massey, who had completed a field study on feral cats, was familiar with the methodology, accredited and keen to assist with sedating the cats and attaching the collars.

The student was able to progress the project through the Massey Animal Ethics Committee, a requirement under the Animal Welfare Act, which would have been very difficult for Fish & Game to do as we have no access to a Committee for that. She will fly down and assist us, saving us from identifying and using an appropriately experienced vet.

**Waituna spawning:**

Staff had caught 100 spawning trout in the Waituna Creek as part of the Waituna trout monitoring. They were very impressed with the excellent quality of the fish caught this year. Spawning surveys would be continued as flows allowed over the next couple of weeks.

**Upper Waiau Rainbow trout spawning:**

Little rain in Fiordland had kept lake levels low and river flows low, so the placing of redds by fish this year in the Upper Waiau were in sites that should not be vulnerable to subsequent dewatering.

**Pond creation:**

Pond surveys were continuing with plenty of interest after the game season.

**Upukerora Road:**

After Southland District Council & DOC declined to contribute to the degraded state of the Upukerora road leading to the Upukerora river mouth, Te Anau Earthworks graded the entire length of the road, without charge. Fish & Game staff were now approaching Te Anau Earthworks to upgrade one consistently muddy patch at our cost, prior to highlighting their generous contribution in local media.

**Monowai Jetty:**

Staff had received a number of complaints about the relatively recent works at Lake Monowai boat ramp, particularly the new rock face of the dam, which posed a danger to people getting on and off boats. A proposal to build a new jetty was being undertaken by staff with pressure on Pioneer Generation to contribute. However at this stage they did not see it as their issue. The proposal once designed and costed would be taken back to Pioneer Generation for their consideration and funding contribution. Monowai was a popular lake and this was a good project for F&G, for their lake anglers, with funding contribution to come from the angler access fund.

The staff report was stopped while Dr Phil Lyver gave his presentation.

**Dr Phil Lyver – Landcare Research.**

Dr Phil Lyver, Landcare Research, joined the meeting (6.55pm) to present a research proposal case study on kaitiakitanga based approaches and practises associated with gamebird and wetland management with particular focus on the influence of kaitiakitanga and management on black swan population and habitat.

This work was being conducted with Ngai Tahu, as the primary stake holder looking at contaminants in black swans around the South Island. They were looking at the contaminants in the female black swans and what they were transferring to their eggs.

This was all part of the larger project to facilitate the application of customary approaches and practises within the contemporary legislative, ecological and social context to help reverse the decline of New Zealand’s biodiversity and support the connection of Maori communities with their environments.

There were four basic themes to the programme:

**Theme 1:** Conservation reforms and amendments – there were a lot of legislative barriers & challenges to applying kaitiakitanga.

**Theme 2:** Focussing on kaitiakitanga itself. (The knowledge and practises that underpin Maori world view in managing the environment). Understanding what the principles were in guiding that and the underlying values and what it looked like in practise.

**Theme 3:** Population and ecosystem responses to kaitiakitanga and management.

**Theme 4:** Public attitude towards the application of kaitiakitanga. What are the wider stakeholder responses to Maori management of the environment?

Dr Lyver said we needed to gather greater support around the resource, and look at alternative ways of looking at the value of the resource. Not only Black Swans but biodiversity generally across New Zealand and the cultural integrity that went with it.

**Theme 3**: Influence of kaitiakitanga and management on black swan population & habitat.

Black Swans at Te Waihora, (Lake Ellesmere), Canterbury, have been subject to a range of management actions from cultural harvest management strategies to commercial egg harvest in the 50’s & 60’s, seasonal harvest by game bird hunters and adult bird culls. Populations there had declined from around 70,000 birds in the 60’s to around 5,000 birds in 2016. As this bird was an important native waterfowl species both ecologically and as a food species, there was a need for robust assessment of its management.

Three questions asked were:

1. How are the swan population dynamics affected by kaitiakitanga, including the harvest component?
2. How do you manage a resource that is highly mobile and uses different types of habitats over the year?
3. Understand food security - Black swan & eggs are a food source for both Pakeha & Maori. As a harvested species there is a need to understand the safety of the food to consumers.

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The programme over three years would bring together a range of demographic variables – adult survivorship, aerial census of breeding colonies with camera systems, monitoring of egg and fledgling survival from nests where eggs were harvested, annual juvenile survival rates, cygnet survival - colour coded fish tags attached to loose skin on chicks neck.

The programme would look at the habitat the birds were using, gain data on adult bird movement among waterbodies with 90 x GPS trackers attached to dorsal feathers on the back of individual birds, monitor 30 per year post moult adults, how to relate the population densities to environmental parameters like size of lakes, water quality influences, nesting habitat etc.

How does the relationship with habitat change over the year with food sources and how they would be affected by population changes, e.g. macrophytes, juvenile flounder, Koura nurseries.

What was the food security risk associated with eating eggs & the birds. Cadmium, lead, mercury and other heavy metals would be tested for. They would assess the levels of heavy metals in female parent birds (feathers) and then amounts found in their respective eggs.

Field work would commence this season in Te Waihora, Canterbury as the primary study area and in Awarua & Waituna Lagoon, Southland, next breeding season for contaminants and spatial comparisons.

The goal was for a healthy population of black swan that sustained an annual egg harvest & a seasonal take of adults by duck hunters. To determine how Maori customary approaches and practices contribute towards protecting and restoring ecosystem resilience, where humans are an integral part of an ecosystem. The research would also contribute towards reconnecting Maori communities with their natural environment and support the growth and integrity of traditional knowledge and family health & function.

Dr Lyver asked if staff knew how to tell the sexes of swan apart looking at them. He also wanted to know if F&G had data on the harvest of swans over a thirty year period. He asked if the Southland Council would have an interest in doing a population assessment in Southland of black swan, without the tracking component, for the development of the population model. Zane replied that we would like to do that for all our species, but we were limited with resources.

In reply to Dr Lyver’s question Cyril & Gail did not know of any swan egg harvest occurring in Southland.

Dr Lyver was thanked for his presentation and he then left the meeting (7.25pm).

**Staff report continued:**

**Resource Consents:**

The ICC R/C application for global consent for 35yrs to discharge storm water to various surface waterways flowing into the Oreti Estuary was opposed to by F&G, on a number of grounds, and a hearing was held today on that. Jacob Smyth attended the hearing.

Zane Moss commented that it was important that F&G submit consistently in opposition to things we thought inappropriate from a water quality and habitat perspective.

The Chairman commented that he had attended a water symposium recently in Queenstown, organised by Otago University, where storm water discharge to waterways was a topic in relation to high heavy metal contents being discharged to the waterways.

**Science Monitoring Strategy:**

Zane explained the Science Monitoring Strategy for the region. The process was being managed by ES, but involved a diverse participation of stakeholders to try and develop a multi-agency Science & Monitoring Strategy for the Southland Region to achieve better environmental & community outcomes.

ES were wanting to ensure that the science that was completed was accepted more broadly and recognised as monitoring community values and expectations.

**Otago/Southland Staff meeting:**

A combined Southland/Otago staff meeting for joint discussions was scheduled in October. Refreshers for the power boat level two training, required before December and joint compliance training would occur at the same time.

A combined Ranger Training course was also scheduled for November, hosted by Southland, probably to be held in Tautuku.

**Fish in Schools programme:**

Generally the programme continued to go well with only one or two setbacks in a couple of schools. Otatara School who couldn’t have salmon eggs because of renovations would now get brown trout eggs that would arrive on Tuesday. Teachers at the School were engaged & working on extending and changing aspects of the curriculum, which was great, as it was a work in progress.

**Staff Conference:**

The recent national staff conference, organised and hosted in Dunedin was very successful with a highlight being a skype presentation from Rob Southwick, a North American researcher, internationally acclaimed for his work on “R3” – Recruitment, Retention & Reactivation. His excellent presentation highlighted just how much information was available internationally to assist Fish & Game prioritise any activity in these areas, showing incredible similarities to what we observe in NZ. Ian Hadland, Otago would be attending a conference with Mr Southwick overseas in a couple of months time. Interestingly it showed that retention was the area that F&G needed to work on the most.

**NZ Council Issues:**

Cr Stenning reported the last NZC meeting was held in Wellington on the 22nd & 23rd July 2017.

He was a day late due to flights being cancelled because of bad weather.

A public excluded session was held to discuss the Chief Executive position.

Unfortunately he could not name the new CE yet, as lawyers were still finalising matters.

The new CE was due to start on the 6th November 2017.

Paul said he was impressed with the well thought out and transparent process that had occurred and the excellent calibre of the new CE.

Another public excluded session occurred with Sir Geoffrey Palmer and Elana Geddis re the not for profit status of Fish & Game NZ, alternative funding opportunities and legal status of sports fish.

* The report back on the staff conference held in Dunedin on 5-7th July 2017 was very positive.
* An update on the salmon symposium scheduled for November in North Canterbury was circulated. Salmon issues were important to Fish & Game particularly in respect to the impact on licence sales in North Canterbury.
* Approval was given to North Canterbury for the purchase of a real time nitrogen logger from the North Canterbury reserves.
* DG of Conservation attended the meeting with issues raised previously raised again.
* The NZ Council had contracted Electionz.com to act as the Returning Officer for the regional elections to be held October 12th 2018.
* The complexity of the Anglers Notice was discussed at length. This really needed to be sorted out to get consistent and simple rules that could be applied across all Fish & Game regions. We were trying to encourage people to go fishing and at present with all the different regional rules in the regulation book we made that very hard for them. It needed to be made overall simpler throughout the country.

The next NZC meeting would be held on 29th September 2017, and would include Bryce Johnson’s official send off. Paul would not be able to make that meeting but others from Southland would be attending Bryce’s send off, so we would be well represented.

**Guides licence:**

A Guide’s licence proposal was submitted to the Minister on the 9th November 2016.

The Minister had replied in June 2017 declining to adopt the NZ Council recommendation for the Guides licence. There were two points of concern and NZC had 15 months to reply to her letter with alternative proposals.

The Minister was seeking a convincing argument to convince her Cabinet colleagues that a regulatory solution was the best option.

NZ Council resolved to:

1. Refine the list of problems to be addressed by a Guide’s Licence.
2. Revise the proposal addressing the two primary concerns raised by the Minister for consideration at the November 2017 NZ Council meeting.

**Cyril Gilroy – Iwi perspective of Fish & Game matters.**

Cyril Gilroy welcomed everyone and addressed the meeting noting that Iwi also had serious concerns at the state of our rivers & waterways. Their watercress was disappearing along with fresh water Koura. We all wanted to be able to swim in the rivers again. We needed to clean up the waterways and he was pleased to see funds put into Waituna as a good start. It was important to Iwi that their cultural traditions and practises could be enhanced. On the question by Ngai Tahu of whether Iwi representatives needed to be at the Fish & Game table he believed that yes they did. It was important that any cultural issue was bought up when necessary on Fish & Game matters, and that was what the Iwi representative could do. Their particular interest was native game birds and he referred to the Pukeko nil bag limit and was proud that the Iwi perspective had driven that. Generally he was happy that he could be part of the Council and bring forward Iwi perspective’s to the table and advise on native game birds.

Cr Stenning referred to the Oreti Conservation Order hearing and said he was very impressed with the evidence given by Iwi at the hearing on the importance of water to them and the spiritual values of it. It was a defining part of the hearing, in his view.

Cyril suggested that Council should visit the local Marae sometime to hear the cultural views of Iwi. We were all passionate about our waterways but we came from different views & perspectives and it would be good for Council to hear the Iwi views & cultural values.

With this in mind it was agreed that Council have a meeting at the local Marae and perhaps the Bluff Marae at a later date. The Chairman & Cyril Gilroy would liaise over that for the next Council meeting to be held in October.

Gail Thompson asked the Council if they knew the history of how a Te Runanga o Ngai Tahu representative came to the Fish & Game table.

Gail circulated a copy of the Deed of the Te Runanga o Ngai Tahu Claims Settlement Act 1998 and the provisions within it. Part of the Crown’s agreement was that a Ngai Tahu representative be appointed to each Fish & Game Council as a Statutory Adviser, particularly in relation to any decisions on native game birds under the Wildlife or Conservation Acts and that Councils must have particular regard to that advice. Four key species were specifically mentioned in the Act being, Grey duck, Pukeko, Paradise shelduck and Shoveler.

Gail commented that Iwi and Fish & Game were allies on many levels in the Environment Court Appeals and shared many common goals.

There was a brief discussion on how Pukeko numbers had declined with no real answer as to why this had happened. Changes in habitat were mentioned but no one really knew the cause of depressed numbers.

Feathers of pukeko were greatly prized by a group in Bluff making traditional Maori cloaks and staff were asked to advise the local Runaka if they found access to feathers from other regions that had bags allowed on Pukekos.

**General Business:**

**2017 Annual General Meeting:**

The 2017 AGM venue was discussed with the Chairman suggesting it be held in Te Anau this year.

Councillors suggested that the AGM be held on a Friday night so those wishing to stay the weekend and fish could do so and it would save the long drive back late at night.

Council agreed unanimously that the AGM be held in Te Anau on Friday December 15th 2017.

**Policy on Controlling Sensitive Expenditure:**

The policy on controlling sensitive expenditure was adopted by Council on the 17th December 2009 and was now due for review. A copy was attached to the agenda for Council’s consideration.

With the advent of a more digital age with more online purchasing e.g. motor registrations, road user charges etc the credit card expenditure of the policy needed updating.

Zane Moss referred to Appendix IV, number 6, - W*hat the credit card could be used for.*

Nowadays the reality was we needed to use the credit card for more online purchases than back in 2009. It was still part of a fully audited process but just needed expanded to allow us to purchase RUC and registrations etc online for work purposes, so we were not at odds with the policy.

Zane would draft a paragraph for that part of the policy. Council agreed that the Executive Committee could view & approve the change to Appendix IV, number 6 when it was presented to them, and in the meantime approved the review of the rest of the policy.

***Resolved Watson/Stenning that the policy on Controlling Sensitive Expenditure was reviewed with one change required in respect to credit card use– Appendix IV, Number 6, to be approved by the Executive Committee at a later date.*** Carried.

**Game Licence dispensations:**

With increasing requests for complimentary & compassionate licences for both fish & game it highlighted to everyone that a policy on the issue was required. The Chairman gave a recent example of a request. Unfortunately there was currently no national policy on the matter & with each region treating requests differently, Southland Council would like to see a national policy implemented. It was very hard for staff to evaluate one disability from another when it came to compassionate grounds requests. All licences given out had to be paid for by the issuing regions, this included complimentary & compassionate licences.

Zane would bring this up at the next managers meeting to get more clarity on it and read out to the meeting a paragraph on what the World Health Organisation’s definition of a disability was. He then read out another paragraph where he said that the aim of that was that a policy could go by the Ministry of Health & ACC’s rigorous testing of a disability support. If they approved it then we could use that system and issue a compassionate licence on those grounds.

After discussion the meeting generally agreed that it should be a national policy and with that in mind Zane would talk further with Robert Sowman and submit to NZ Council a draft policy wording with an explanation of why we needed it. NZ Council would then send that out to regions for consultation. This would hopefully speed up the process of getting a national policy on the issue.

Gail asked if dispensations would include social reasons e.g. homeless people. Zane replied it would not.

**National Budget Policy:**

The National Financial Review Committee had made recommendations for a National Budget Policy so all regions financial management recording and reporting was the same.

Changes required for this were:

1. All expenditure from reserves and the bulk fund needed to be approved as part of the budget round.
2. The Asset Replacement Reserve was exempt from requiring approval but still needed to be advised as part of the budget process.
3. Total equity would be broken down to three categories.
4. Accumulated Funds.
5. Dedicated Reserves.
6. Restricted Reserves.

***Resolved Hartstonge/Owen that Southland Council received and accepted the National Financial Review Committee’s revision of existing budget policy and note that these policies will be adopted as Fish & Game NZ’s national policy.*** Carried.

Council agreed that it was a good thing that all regions managed their funds the same way. This would help with any ambiguity of regions during budget rounds, contestable funding applications, regional top ups & use of reserves.

**Code of Conduct for Sports Fishing:**

Helen Trotter, Otago F&G, had prepared an update paper on *Code of Conduct* *for Sports Fishing* with the intention it be finalised & published to support the practise of ethical angling. NZ Council had sent it out to regions to consider and provide feedback on. The current sports fishing regulations Code of Conduct was attached to the back of the paper. The Code of Conduct would be distributed in the regulation book and on the website, magazine and any app that came along.

Len Prentice noted that in his experience as a Ranger on the river bank, there were many anglers who did not fully understand the better way of releasing fish and overseas anglers definitely needed a Code of Conduct as well – particularly in relation to cutting in on other anglers. Some guides also needed to look at their angling ethics. It would be very useful to have a Code of Conduct pamphlet to give out on the river bank to those anglers Ranger’s came across who needed to read it, even though it was in the regulation book.

During consideration Council noted that, with the underlying documents, the following:

1. With all South Island regions able to use treble hook lures – under #1 that needed to be taken out.
2. Promote the hooking and landing per angler of no more the 6 fish per day. The number 6 needed to be questioned.
3. Never leave fishing gear unattended - this was a rule and not a Code of Conduct. Should be removed.

Cr Stenning commented that in regards to perception, Bryce had stressed that over time we had to lose the catch & release mentality, there had to be a sustainable harvest element in the sport.

After consideration Council supported the example summary for the regulation book outlining the four key responsibilities and the underlying 12 principles. This was enough and simple and people would read it. The rest of the document should just be the underlying documents to support the Code of Conduct. The 3 items discussed above would be passed on to NZ Council.

**Items for next Council meeting 12th October 2017.**

* Alan Baird & Geoff Young – (Southland Federated Farmers, President & Vice President).

There was no further business and the meeting was closed at 8.50pm.

Chairman\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_Date\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_