**Minutes of the Fish & Game NZ, Southland Region Council meeting held at the Te Rau Aroha Marae, Cnr Henderson & Bradshaw Street, Bluff on Thursday 19th October 2017.**

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

Paul Stenning Russel Graham

Dave Harris Chris Frisby

Corey Carston Cyril Gilroy (Te Runanga o Ngai Tahu)

Ray Waghorn Ken Cochrane

Bevan McNaughton. (Co-opted).

**In attendance:**

Gail Thompson (Southland Conservation Board)

Z Moss (Manager). J Smyth, E Garrick, C Stewart. (Officers).

C Mason (Minutes).

**Members of the public:** Matt Garrick.

**Welcome:**

The Chairman opened the meeting at 6.30pm and welcomed those present with a special welcome to Bevan McNaughton, co-opted to the Council.

The Chairman thanked Cyril Gilroy, Gail Thompson & all their helpers for the warm welcome onto the Marae and the wonderful hospitality & food provided for the Council.

**Apologies:**

***Resolved Harris/Frisby that apologies be received & sustained from Fred Inder, Bill Jarvie & Mike Hartstonge*** Carried.

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

The Chairman recorded to the meeting his possible Conflict of Interest, in regards to the Kiwi Anglers First correspondence & discussion to be held later in the meeting.

**Health & Safety:**

The health & safety report for the period 1st August – 3oth September 2017 was attached to the agenda for consideration.

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

Staff referred to the #5, minor incident report and noted that the hazard no longer applied to staff as that particular property entrance won’t be used anymore. There was another entrance that was to be used instead.

Bevan McNaughton queried what the Health & Safety briefing was for outside people using the Boardroom for meetings, should a register be signed.

The same protocol that our Council meeting used would apply, with the Chairman briefing any meeting about exits and evacuation points etc. before each meeting began.

With the small size & number of any external meetings that may be held it was suggested that a signed register was unnecessary, but would be looked into.

***Resolved Graham/Stenning that the Health & Safety Report to 30th September 2017 be received***. Carried.

**Minutes of the meeting held 10th August 2017.**

***Resolved Waghorn/Frisby that the minutes of the meeting held 10th August 2017 were a true and accurate record.*** Carried.

**Matters arising from Minutes:**

**ICC Resource Consent application:**

Cr Graham queried how the global consent (35yrs) application from ICC to discharge storm water was progressing. Jacob replied that the consent was granted for a period of 15yrs as opposed to 25yrs, abridged during the hearing from 35yrs. However subsequent to the decision an appeal had been made by a group of farmers whose perception was about the inequity of how urban discharges were treated versus agricultural discharges.

**Waituna spawning:**

Cr Waghorn asked what caused the die off of 100’s of trout about a month ago in Waituna Creek.

Zane replied he had a report from ES about some trout dying there but was unaware there were 100’s involved. Some deaths were expected after spawning due to post spawning infections etc. but Zane needed to look at the photos that the landowner had, before commenting on what may have happened. Zane would follow up on this with ES & the Landowner concerned.

**Administration Reports:**

The accounts paid, direct credit/debit list & automatic payments since the last meeting, correspondence reports and the draft 2017 Financial Statements, subject to Audit, were attached to the agenda for Council’s consideration.

After consideration of the payments list:

Cr Graham asked if the GPS cat collars were reusable. The answer was unfortunately not. We could get them re-serviced but it was not much cheaper than buying new. The GPS collars were reimbursed by the NZ Council Research Fund. The intention was to try and refurbish them ourselves.

Cr Owen queried where the P&L report was for income earned. It was explained that as it was the end of financial year 2017, instead of the normal Profit & Loss report the draft Financial Statements for the year, subject to Audit, were included with the Agenda which showed the breakdown of the years income earned.

Cr Waghorn asked what the trout nets were for. Zane explained it was for lakes fishery research as per the Operational Work Plan to monitor trout productivity in lakes Te Anau, Manapouri, Monowai and Mavora in order to provide information that could lead to a change in angler harvest, spawning tributary or lake level management.

Staff would be determining the age structure, growth rate, size and relative CPU of trout populations of our main lakes, compared to a non-hydrologically controlled lake with limited harvest (Lake Poteriteri). Staff would also be looking at invertebrate productivity of Lakes Te Anau & Manapouri compared to Lake Poteriteri, which was not hydrologically controlled. The research methodology had been liaised on with the Cawthron Institute and would begin the first week of December.

**Draft Financial Statements 2017.**

The draft Financial Statements 2017, subject to Audit, were attached to the Agenda for Council to consider.

The Audit was underway and nearly completed.

***Resolved Stenning/Graham that the draft Financial Statements 2017 be accepted & approved, subject to Audit, for the Chairman & the Manager to sign.*** Carried.

**Staff Report:**

The staff report was attached to the agenda.

**Mallard Research - Cat tracking project:**

An unexpected set back in obtaining animal ethics approval for the project had occurred delaying work progressing. One panel member had rejected our application wanting more information to address concerns, while three other panel members had approved it. We were effectively replicating work that the Committee had previously approved for a PhD study, using the same protocols and the same student. We had been led to believe that approval would be a formality, so this rejection was very disappointing. We have re-submitted the application, with detail addressing the concerns & hope to obtain approval at the Committee’s meeting held tomorrow, (20th) so we can continue this study.

**Proposed Southland Water & Land Plan:**

In response to the ES Staff Report in relation to the proposed Southland Water & Land Plan, Fish & Game staff, in support of their original submission, compiled detailed technical evidence and filed that in May 2017. Since then detailed legal submissions were drafted to complement technical evidence filed on behalf of Fish & Game.

Jacob, Cohen & Zane all presented evidence at the Hearing held on 28th September 17 and were commended for their evidence. The project had been a huge body of work and Jacob was recognised for his outstanding contribution to that.

Jacob added that the decision probably won’t be released until June/July 2018. However this was not the end of the proposals with interim limit setting to come. This would involve the setting of catchment limits in relation to nutrients, nitrogen & phosphorus.

The Chairman reported that Federated Farmers had some angst about the Plan & were not happy with Fish & Game’s stance on the matter. He had discussions with Alan Baird, Federated Farmers concerning that and had invited him along to a meeting with the Council at a later date. Mr Baird was keen to put the FF view to the Council.

Cr Cochrane referred to Environment Canterbury and how they already had their rules in place, with soil types and conditions etc. Southland seemed to be very far behind, surely they could use the Canterbury models to speed things up.

Jacob replied that ES did really good science work in terms of looking at the risk posed to water quality throughout Southland through geology, soils etc. to really understand what the risk factors were associated with various land uses and different physiographic zones. This had been done on a finer scale than what had been done in Canterbury and Otago. It really was NZ leading science and a credit to them. There was some resistance to it from people who wanted everyone to be treated the same way. But not everyone’s activities had the same result. Some activities had more adverse effect on water quality than others.

When setting limits we had to decide what the values were we wanted to provide for e.g. ecosystem health, water ecology etc. A lot of work had been done in identifying risks but not in identifying the values. Nationally we had to maintain water quality as a minimum. ES were saying that through the Water & Land Plan they were endeavouring to maintain water quality, as it was in this point in time, in anticipation of setting catchment limits, while recognising the need to improve water quality as well.

Federated Farmers & Fish & Game didn’t really disagree on the overall long term objective we only disagreed on what we do about it and the time frames to do it in.

Zane commented that there was a lot of science that suggested that farmers could make as much money by reducing stock numbers, particularly on dairy platforms, so there was hope. There was more recognition now within the industry itself and Central Government that we had reached a peak and even exceeded it in a lot of places, so changes to approaches had to be made.

**Mallard Research:**

Cr Cochrane said it was 5yrs since the mallard research began. He had received phone calls and believed there was an increasing concern from licence holders about the money being spent and where it was leading to, where were we going from here? What had we learned?

Cr Stenning said that the research had a lot of benefit. The findings had been well reported on all media forms. Before the research the main concern was that dairy farms had an impact on the populations. We know now that was not the case which was important to know. Paul noted that $34,000 was going to gamebird research every year from the game licence sales

All modern forms of communication (digital, magazine, social media etc.) were used regularly, but communication with licence holders generally was an ongoing issue for Fish & Game in terms of getting information & research outcomes out to them. For many the messages were still not being received or retained.

Zane reported that Jen Sheppard had just submitted her PhD on the mallard research and that there would be management outcomes from that. Those outcomes along with recommendations would be disseminated nationally and given out to pro-active landowners and licence holders.

Southland’s predator study, which followed Erin’s Master’s research, would give us a better understanding of the likelihood of a trapping programme at a landscape scale being effective and what we would need to consider in implementing that.

The biggest outcome of the mallard research in Zane’s opinion was that predation was far more significant than first thought. We know from the research a lot of waterfowl are reared within a kilometre or two of the pond, the importance of ephemeral water was now known, and we know what good pond habitat was. This would all help in encouraging motivated land owners & hunters on the land to do landscaping predator control and enhance waterfowl habitat.

**Upper Oreti beat signage:**

Cohen had erected the Upper Oreti beat signage & backcountry licence requirement signage prior to the start of the new fishing season there. Feedback so far had been positive on the signage.

**Fish in Schools:**

This project was ongoing with teachers expressing interest in being involved again next year. Schools would be releasing their fish before the Xmas break.

**Willow control:**

Cohen had positive talks with ES staff on the ecosystem and fisheries values of willow while recognising that some dead willow removal was required. It was agreed that non-problem willows would be left intact during planned ES willow removal work. F&G would like ES to keep using willows, however they had many issues with crack & hybrid willows and were now looking to going to native plants instead of willow, which may create different issues.

The Chairman noted that working with ES & QE11 there were a lot of good native riparian planting examples in Southland, which encouraged landowners to plant more native.

**Water quality issues & drone flights.**

Management were considering getting staff certified to fly drones over private land. It appeared that through Civil Aviation this was possible. Zane gave an example of continuous serious water quality issues that was ongoing for many years, unfortunately the evidence was hidden from view. A drone flight would immediately allow compliance on those certain properties and broaden our use of this tool.

**Pond surveys:**

There was still plenty of interest in creating ponds and Erin was kept busy continuing this work.

**NZ Council Issues:**

Cr Stenning reported he was unable to attend the last NZC meeting held in Wellington on the 29th September 2017. The one day meeting was also Bryce Johnson’s, Chief Executive, final meeting.

Cr Stenning said he had some correspondence on the issue of rearing captured mallards.

Zane said that legality of that was something that needed to be confirmed and the NZC was obtaining a legal opinion from Sir Geoffrey Palmer on that.

A report by Dr Murray Williams on the topic said that there were no real biological implications but there were ethical concerns.

Jacob gave the meeting a quick background on the legal aspects that he had researched so far.

**General Business:**

Matt Garrick left the room.

**Public excluded session of the meeting:**

**Resolved Watson/Stenning that the meeting move into Public Excluded Session. (7.25pm).**

*Section 48, Local Government Official Information and Meetings Act 1987*

**That the public be excluded from the following parts of the proceedings of this meeting to discuss:**

**A Licence Agent application.**

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| **REASON UNDER THE OFFICIAL INFORMATION ACT** | **SECTION** | **PLAIN ENGLISH REASON** | **WHEN CAN REPORT BE RELEASED** |
| To protect the privacy of natural persons | Sec 9 (2) (a) | Information discussed identifies a person or can easily be connected with a particular person | Once the person to whom the discussion relates to consents to its disclosure |

**Resolved Graham/Stenning that the meeting move out of public excluded session of the meeting (7.35pm).**

Matt Garrick came back into the meeting room.

**Kiwi Anglers First:**

The Chairman had declared a possible conflict of interest on this matter and did not take part in the discussions.

Correspondence had been received (Copy in Agenda) from Kiwi Anglers First, David Linklater, asking for a letter of response to his visit to the Council meeting in April 17.

Cr Cochrane said that Mr Linklater had attended the April Council meeting looking for support from the Southland Fish & Game Council for Kiwi Anglers First.

Cr Cochrane told Mr Linklater at that meeting that Kiwi Anglers First needed to have a strategy in place for the pathway forward for Southland F&G to consider their proposals further. Without a strategy in place the Council were not in a position to either support them or not support them. Until such time that they formed a public lobby group, and had a strategy & direction on where they wanted to go the Southland Council could not support them.

Cr Harris said that Mr Linklater also spoke to the Sthld Fly Fishing Club, who had a number of their Australian members at that meeting, so did not get a lot of support from the Club.

Zane asked the Council for a firm direction of response to the letter. We had given an undertaking to respond to his visit by letter, after further discussions. He suggested that until we resolved the guides licence issue we could not reassess our priorities at this time.

Cr Stenning noted that we don’t have the regulatory path at present to put resident licence holders ahead of non-residents.

Cr Cochrane said that to change central government policy was a huge task and until a lobby group was formed with strategies we had to remain neutral, as we don’t know on what basis we would be supporting it. Kiwi Anglers First may not get off the ground and to the next level where they should be, to lobby government.

Jacob queried what legal advice they had taken to what they were proposing. Any decision the Council made essentially still had to be ratified by the Minister of Conservation.

Otago Fish & Game Council had approved the idea and were happy to support the Group further.

After discussions, generally the Southland Council members agreed with the sentiment of Kiwi First Anglers and would like to be there for the conservation values, for the value of the fisheries, for sustainable management etc but they were very cautious of giving their support at this stage until they knew what the actual strategies of the Group were and how they were going to implement them. The Council wanted to focus on getting the guides licence through first with Central Government, so agreed that at this stage they would remain neutral, neither supporting or not supporting the Group.

**AGM in Te Anau.**

The meeting was reminded that the AGM would be held in Te Anau this year on Friday 15th December 2017. Those who wished to stay overnight would be able to do so and the Council would cover bed and breakfast costs.

**Duck Eggs:**

Cr Stenning reported he had been receiving complaints again from licence holders about mallard duck eggs being stolen by different ethnic groups, and what were Fish & Game doing about it.

He suggested a pamphlet or poster, in their language, showing it was not allowed, be prepared and distributed to dairy farms and employers that the people were working for to put on their Health & Safety boards.

Cr Owen suggested the Church was another place that a poster would reach a lot of people of the ethnic groups involved. Supermarket notice boards was another suggestion as well.

Zane agreed it was timely to contact the dairy farms again regarding this and to distribute information about it to various places as we did a couple of years ago.

**Items for next Council meeting 15th December 2017.**

There were no items suggested for the next meeting.

There was no further business and the meeting was closed at 8.00pm.

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