

WELLINGTON FISH & GAME COUNCIL

**MINUTES OF MEETING OF THE WELLINGTON FISH & GAME COUNCIL, HELD ON
TUESDAY 22 AUGUST 2017 AT 3.10PM AT HOTEL COACHMAN, 145 FITZHERBERT AVE,
PALMERSTON NORTH**

1. Present:

Chairman Strato Cotsilinis, Councillors Andy Tannock, Andrew Morris, Jim Cook, Marc Flaws, Chris O’Meara, Don Scott, Dan Waechter.

2. In Attendance:

Staff: Phil Teal (Manager), Hamish Carnachan, Matt Kavermann, Peter Wilson (part), Sue Wray (part), Adam Canning (part)

Licenceholders: Graeme McKenzie, Barry Jones, Colin Shore (Honorary Ranger), Jim Rainey (Honorary Ranger, Wellington Conservation Board), John Beattie (Honorary Ranger), Ross Bailey (Honorary Ranger)

3. Apologies:

Councillors Eric Neumann, Paul Shortis, Malcolm Francis, Simon Muckley, Brad Johnson.

It was then moved that:

the apologies be accepted.

Marc Flaws /Chris O’Meara

Carried

4. Conflicts of Interest

A list was available for viewing of the existing declarations of Conflicts of Interest. No new conflicts of interest were declared.

5. Minutes of Previous Meeting of 6 June 2017

After a brief discussion it was moved that:

the Minutes of the Meeting of Wellington Fish & Game Council of 6 June 2017 be approved as a true and correct record of the proceedings of that meeting.

Don Scott/Marc Flaws

Carried

6. Matters Arising

Mr Carnachan confirmed that all schools were made aware of their responsibility of schools to ensure all electrical equipment used in the Fish in Schools programme would be checked and tagged by a registered electrician.

7. **NZ Council Business**

Councillor Morris provided an update of the NZ Council meeting held on 21-23 July 2017.

Councillor Morris confirmed that Martin Taylor had been appointed as the Chief Executive of NZ Fish & Game Council.

Councillor Morris noted that NZ Council had received a summary presentation on the recently held Staff Conference including an overview of the Australian experience of managing hunter and game birds given by an Australian counterpart.

Councillor Morris informed that a symposium to discuss salmon management in New Zealand was supported with North Canterbury and Central South Island Fish & Game Councils to fund the event (from reserves if necessary).

Councillor Morris noted that the Director General of Conservation had attended the meeting and made comment on the issues at Wairarapa Moana and was to look at why DoC representatives do not regularly attend all regional Fish & Game Council meetings.

Councillor Morris gave an overview of discussions relating to regional Fish & Game Council elections including confirmation of the contracted Returning Officer (Electionz.com) and how to involve more hunters and anglers in each election.

Councillor Morris informed that NZ Council were developing positions on hunting and fishing ethics including viable alternatives to plastic wads, options for consistently limiting shotgun capacity, approaches to catch and release of trout (a worldwide issue), and continued practice of pre-feeding ponds for waterfowl.

Councillor Morris outlined discussion on simplifying the Anglers Notice to five categories of fishing restrictions to make it easier for anglers to understand and comply (an example of Taranaki region was used as a discussion focus).

Councillor Morris outlined a brief discussion of licence sales patterns in other regions including the impact and importance of the South Island salmon run.

It was moved that:

the report by Councillor Morris of the Meeting of NZ Fish & Game Council of 21-23 July 2017 be received.

Adam Canning arrived at 3:30pm.

Mr Teal provided a draft itinerary for NZ Council field trip for their November Meeting including Lake Wairarapa management overview, Manawatu River regional plan issues, and research being conducted in the Rangitikei catchment.

8. Public Participation

Chairman Cotsilinis invited members of the public to speak on any particular issues – with Barry Jones outlining his concerns emanating from recent experiences in travelling between the South Island and North Island and the perceived lack of vigilance for didymo checks. He noted that for return trips coming back from the South Island on the Interisland ferries that he had not been checked for didymo.

Dr Kavermann had confirmed from MPI that their checking regime in the summer period was from 8am to 7pm and for the winter period from 10am to 7pm so there were some sailings that don't get covered at all. Mr Jones was concerned that MPI needed to be contacted to ensure checking coverage is complete. He also questioned the efficiency of the checking system. It was noted that Bluebridge ferries had also been contacted and while there was interest in opportunities to promote vigilance to protect spread of biosecurity risks, no brochures were evidently available from MPI. He concluded that there was an opportunity to contact ferry operators to assist in information exchange to the public, but ultimately it was MPI's responsibility to undertake this task.

Dr Kavermann also briefly outlined that there had been a 'false positive' from testing in the Greater Wellington region but GWRC staff didn't get an appropriate reactive response from MPI when informed. Discussion ensued on the surveillance programme and the suitability of a response if a positive test is detected. The alternative could be to spend resources on research rather than on sub-standard surveillance. Councillor Waechter noted that there are proposals (e.g. Doug Stevens had publicised a proposal to several fishing clubs) for NIWA to undertake research (estimated \$500,000+) and opportunities to fund this: those discussed included a tick box proposal on electronic fishing licence purchase, licenceholders contributions (e.g. \$5 donation), clubs and agents, \$10 contribution from non-resident licence (~20,000 anglers), other grants are available – to potentially be set up in an independent trust. The consideration of alternative ways to fund this type of research should be actively pursued by MPI and NZ Fish & Game Council.

Further discussion ensued on who was the best point of contact within MPI – when MPI did present to fishing clubs they were knowledgeable but resourcing of material such as up-to-date information pamphlets appears to be lacking.

It was then moved

That Wellington Fish & Game Council write a letter to Ministry of Primary Industries (copied to Ministry of Tourism) outlining the concerns of licenceholders regarding the performance of the biosecurity efforts to stop the spread of didymo to the North Island

Marc Flaws/Jim Cook

Carried

Alton Perrie and Peter Wilson arrived at 4:00pm

9. Application for Sports Fish Capture for Research

Mr Perrie outlined his background as a fisheries scientist for GWRC and his proposal to undertake a PhD on the trophic interactions between exotic and indigenous fishes in shallow lakes within the Wellington region. This involved looking at high level questions regarding the influence of exotic fish on water quality, biodiversity of indigenous fauna, and food web modification. He was undertaking the research part-time over an expected six year timeframe and was proposing to start the fish capture at the end of this year. He identified his immediate needs to trial catching fish in nets of varying mesh size to establish their efficiency at catch different age classes, and then his intention to develop the formal PhD proposal within twelve months. The former action would be carried out at one specific trial site over a two night period.

Mr Perrie confirmed that he needed to obtain permission to catch sports fish, sought suggestions from Fish & Game on where sites wouldn't be preferred, and he would guarantee the openness of the data to Fish & Game. He was also aware of the other necessary approvals such as animal ethics approval, permits from MPI and DoC, and approvals from Iwi groups.

Councillor O'Meara noted that Fish & Game may want to retain the right to cancel the permit should study objectives materially change.

Dr Kavermann provided an overview of possible variations to the proposal including use of electric fishing for collection, and whether this study proposal had been appraised by the University of Waikato ethics committee when appropriate. He further discussed how this research could support the

Fish & Game mandate by providing information on sports fish populations but also that better information on algal blooms and competitive interactions needs to be collected to be able to make robust assertions. It is of potential interest to Fish & Game to understand the habitat quality, the effects on fisheries values and the management actions that could result.

10. 2017 - 2018 Annual Plan

After discussion on the change in equity section of the draft Annual Plan it was moved that

The draft Annual Plan for the 2017 – 2018 Financial Year Annual Plan for Wellington Fish & Game Council be approved and adopted

Chris O’Meara/Andrew Morris

Carried

11. Health & Safety Update

Mr Teal provided an overview of the Health & Safety report, and after brief discussion it was moved that

The Health and Safety Report for April and May be received

Andy Tannock/Dan Waechter

Carried

12. Code of Conduct for Sports Fishing

Council considered and discussed the paper prepared by Robert Sowman (NZ Council Policy and Planning Manager) dated July 2017 entitled “***Code of Conduct for Sports Fishing***”. Discussion ensued on previous proposals to limit capture of number of fish to six per day – whether catch and release or consumption. Chairman Cotsilinis noted that there is difficulty in dealing with ethical issues that seek to introduce a quasi-regulation style statement but not include in the fishing regulations (e.g. if there is not support for use of treblehooks then can include a specific regulation). Discussion ensued on the principle of potentially limiting catch and release under the section “take no more than our immediate needs” – with it considered more detail is required to be acceptable to anglers.

It was agreed that a small working group (comprising Dr Kavermann, Councillors Scott, Waechter, Francis, and Cotsilinis) be convened to discuss the paper in detail to provide feedback to NZ Council.

13. Budget Policy for Consultation as National Policy

Discussion ensued on the paper prepared by Alison Lyall (Finance and Administration Manager NZ Council) entitled ***Budget Policy for Consultation***

as National Policy dated July 2017. There were no specific comments contrary to the general intent of modifying national policy on dealing with approvals and use of reserves. It was noted that funding and use of Dedicated and Restricted Reserves is normally for a specific purpose and therefore approvals for expenditure would normally be determined by the regional council for those specific purposes.

It was then moved that

The paper Budget Policy for Consultation as National Policy dated July 2017 be received and feedback provided to NZ Council

Don Scott/Jim Cook

Carried

14. Application to Hold Sports Fish

The merits of an application by the Foxton Wildlife Trust to establish an educational and tourist centre in Foxton was discussed, with particular focus on their request to hold sports fish to inform students, tourists, and the general public. It was concluded that authorisation be given to hold sports fish contingent on Fish & Game having control of the wording associated with the display and would make a modest financial contribution to the promotional display.

15. Application to Control Sports Fish in Karori Reservoir – Zealandia Wildlife Trust

Zealandia Wildlife Trust have requested permission to remove perch eggs from the lower reservoir at Karori Sanctuary, Wellington. Discussion ensued on the scientific rigour considered by the applicant and the likelihood of success of this as a management option, given that perch had been in the reservoir for decades. Discussion also occurred on consideration of active management of fisheries at another site if there is removal of sports fish from a known or fishing site with potential.

It was considered that a response be given based on the scientific merits of the proposal, noting concerns regarding the scientific rigour of the proposal.

Chairman Cotsilinis thanked Dr Kavermann' in providing scientific overview of the proposal and identifying issues for consideration.

Further discussion ensued on the need for a wider debate and discussion within the Fish & Game organisation on how to deal with requests to remove, control, or conduct research on sports fish.

It was then moved that

Wellington Fish & Game Council send NZ Fish & Game Council a letter requesting wider discussion on how to process requests for sports fish research, removal, or control - with a view to NZ Fish & Game Council developing national policy

Chris O'Meara/Dan Waechter

Carried

16. GWRC Western Rivers Global Resource Consents

There was brief discussion on the submission for the resource consent applications for the global consent GWRC (Flood Protection) which covered the Hutt, Wainuiomata, Otaki, and Waikanae rivers. Peter Wilson gave a brief overview of the meetings held to-date with the Fishing Clubs and a consultant acting for GWRC. The next meeting was scheduled for 31 August 2017 at which representatives of the applicant are expected to attend also.

It was moved that

The report on the GWRC Western Rivers Global Resource Consents be received

Dan Waechter/ Marc Flaws

Carried

17. One Plan Implementation - Update

Mr Teal gave a brief overview that the regional council were considering partial Plan Changes to the regional plan. It was apparent that the regional council had commissioned some work by planners and an agricultural economist to provide an economic and planning perspective.

It was then moved

That the update report on the One Plan implementation be received

Jim Cook/Andrew Morris

Carried

18. Wairarapa Water Update

Mr Carnachan gave a brief overview of recent media releases and confirmed that the GWRC Council have been formally considering the issue of continued funding for Wairarapa Water by the Crown Irrigation Funder from MPI. The decision on whether to proceed and (re)apply for additional funding from MPI would be made after the end of September.

He noted that Wairarapa Water's media strategy had now changed focus from economic focus to promoting the 'environmental benefits' of flushing flows.

Chairman Cottilinis commended the work of Mr Carnachan in undertaking the media responses to this issue.

It was then moved that

That the update report on the Wairarapa Water Project be received
Dan Waechter/Chris O'Meara

Carried

19. Lake Wairarapa Moana Update

Mr Teal gave an overview of the Treaty Settlement process which had not further involved Fish & Game NZ.

It was further emphasised that structures on the lake bed and wetlands would come under increased scrutiny and that a proactive approach is taken to dealing with issues associated with such.

It was then moved

That the report on the update to Lake Wairarapa management be received

Marc Flaws/Chris O'Meara

Carried

Jim Raney left the meeting at 5:50pm

20. Mallard Research Project

Mr Teal gave a brief overview of progress of the study based on work at the Waikato and Southland sites –and it is still anticipated that this would be finished by the end of August. Discussion ensued on how the findings from this work could be strategically communicated to hunters and socialised

After discussion it was moved

To receive the update on the mallard research

Chris O'Meara / Marc Flaws

Carried

21. Junior Angler Participation – Fish in Schools

Mr Carnachan gave a brief overview of project that had involved eight tanks in operation at various schools. He noted that it was dependent on teacher commitment and had some excellent examples of success where this project was leveraged for wider curriculum use. Mr Carnachan was requested to

determine from the schools what support was required to make Fish in Schools a successful project.

Mr Carnachan indicated that there was a rural school near Taihape that have indicated an interest and would be good to get a geographic spread with this school in the Rangitikei catchment.

Mr Carnachan reiterated that the electrical safety of all components was a school mandatory requirement and half the schools have confirmed that they are compliant. It was confirmed that this responsibility would be re-emphasised to schools and if necessary Fish & Game would consider funding electrical safety checks at the start of each year.

There was brief discussion on the success of the Lake Omanu novice hunter programme and how this could be extended at other sites. It was considered that prior to involvement at other sites an overview report be provided that defined options for safe and reliable hunting opportunities.

After discussion it was moved

To receive the update on the novice fish and hunting programmes

Don Scott/ Jim Cook

Carried

22. Draft Sports Fish & Game Bird Management Plan

Mr Teal confirmed that it was intended to advertise the consultation process for the Draft Sports Fish & Game Bird Management plan towards the end of the year.

23. Management Report 1 June – 31 July 2017

Mr Teal noted that Cawthron Institute had provided an overview of where to sample for trout otoliths in the Rangitikei and Hutt catchments – which will allow this to be incorporated into a summer field programme.

Mr Teal noted that there had been little progress in reinstating the weir at the JK Donald Wetland site.

After further discussion it was moved that

The management report for 1 June – 31 July 2017 be received.

Jim Cook/Andrew Morris

Carried

24. Governance Policy Review

Deferred until later meeting

25. Balloting and Hunter Access

Mr Teal provided an overview of regular feedback from hunters seeking to have improved access to balloted sites. It was noted that Fish & Game retains a database of standholders to improve communication and that there could be opportunities to increase use of sites by itinerant hunters during the season using website booking. No decisions were made but it was agreed to have a wider discussion on this topic.

26. Fish & Game Licence Sales

Mr Teal gave overview of the licence sales for fish were approximately 7% down on previous year's sales and game licence sales were slightly up.

It was also confirmed that the 'trial' of different licence categories is at year 3 of 3 before a more substantial review would take place.

Mr Teal also provided a brief overview of the efforts being made regarding marketing opportunities being discussed to influence recruitment, retention, and re-engagement.

After further discussion it was moved

The Fish Licence Sales report and Game Licence Sales Report as at 9 August 2017 be received

Andy Tannock/Marc Flaws

Carried

27. Expenditure Report

After brief discussion it was moved that

the Expenditure Report for 30 June 2017 and Financial Transactions for May and June 2017 be approved

Jim Cook/Don Scott

Carried

28. Correspondence and Media

Mr Teal noted that he intended to meet with Rob Stone from DoC to discuss possible involvement in Predator Free NZ initiatives.

Mr Teal noted a recent request from Girl Guiding NZ asking for assistance to offer a fishing opportunity for up to 40 girls on 8 January – this would involve assistance with mentoring, equipment, and licencing. It was agreed to seek further information on the exact logistics and availability of helpers at that time of the year.

29. Recognition of Contributions – Honorary Rangers

Chairman Cotsilinis presented a merit award to each of the honorary rangers present with greater than five years service and acknowledged the significant contribution they made to compliance and the Fish & Game system. This included: Jim Rainey (presented at 5:10pm), John Beattie, Colin Shore, Maurice Reid, Ross Bailey. Acclamation.

The meeting was suspended at 6:30pm for dinner and reconvened at 7:45pm.

30. Presentation – Influence of Trout and Periphyton on the Hutt River Food Web - Adam Canning

Mr Canning gave a presentation on food web modelling using energy throughflows of systems. He concluded that an increase in algal biomass increased food web robustness to random species extinction but increased population variability and interspecific competition. He also found that an increase in trout had no influence on the robustness, population variability or total energy flow, but did increase competitions between trout and native fish.

31. General Business

Councillor Scott provided an overview of his report on a recent visit to Otaki and Waikanae reservoir fisheries and confirmed their significant potential for establishing fisheries including novice fish out day. The Otaihanga East pond site (Otauroa Reserve) was possibility for a fish out site for the Kapiti Coast with Kapiti Coast DC keen to engage.

Further discussion was held on balloting of sites at Lake Wairarapa with it emphasised that the rule regarding must be occupied be strictly enforced (unless submitted to Fish & Game prior to start of season) and be unambiguous. There will be a certain aspect of peer review regarding marking up. Discussion on the possibility of having a photo database of marked up sites each year to be submitted – named and tagged electronically - must use or nominate someone else to use for opening weekend. It was noted that for itinerant hunters (especially from Wellington – 2 hour drive) that a high degree of confidence of availability is required to go to some of these sites at Lake Wairarapa. Mr Carnachan undertook to promote Lake Wairarapa in the next game newsletter.

Mr Wilson gave a brief overview of GWRC Proposed Regional Plan with an update of modeling undertaken – to maintain ecosystem health, nitrogen for the Ruamahanga catchment is fully allocated (slightly over allocated).

Evidence was being developed to show this is economically and ecologically achievable.

Councillor O'Meara noted that NZ Council was still pursuing a proactive approach to looking at alternatives to plastic wads and pinned multi-shot shotguns – but it was confirmed that any changes would have to go through a normal process of consideration by the wider organisation.

Councillor Waechter requested that a letter be sent to a student a Kanaunui School who provided an overview of what students had learnt regarding the Fish in Schools project.

There being no further business the meeting was concluded at 8.55pm.

Next Meeting to be held: RSA Club, Masterton, Tuesday 10 October 2017 at 3.00pm.

Chairman _____ Date _____