

WELLINGTON FISH & GAME COUNCIL

MINUTES OF MEETING OF THE WELLINGTON FISH & GAME COUNCIL, HELD ON TUESDAY 13 FEBRUARY 2018 AT 3.00PM AT COACHMAN HOTEL, 140 FITZHERBERT AVENUE, PALMERSTON NORTH

1. **Present:**
Chairman Strato Cotsilinis, Councillors Dan Waechter, Marc Flaws, Jim Cook, Paul Shortis, Malcolm Francis, Chris O'Meara, Simon Muckley, Andy Tannock, Don Scott, Andrew Morris.
2. **In Attendance:**
Staff: Phil Teal (Manager), Hamish Carnachan, Matt Kavermann, Adam Canning (part).
3. **Apologies:**
Councillors Eric Neumann, Brad Johnson.
Staff: Peter Wilson.

It was then moved that:

the apologies be accepted.

Malcolm Francis/Dan Waechter

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 5 December 2017**
After a brief discussion it was clarified that Marc Flaws seconded the motion relating to item 9 Health & Safety and then it was moved that:
the Minutes of the Meeting of Wellington Fish & Game Council of 5 December 2017 be approved as a true and correct record of the proceedings of that meeting.
Paul Shortis/Dan Waechter
Carried
6. **Matters Arising**
Mr Teal confirmed that the expert planners had undertaken conferencing on issues relating to the One Plan, but had substantially clarified their differences in approach to nutrient allocations.

It was confirmed that Fish & Game would be seeking a meeting with Palmerston North City Council in late March to discuss possible options for establishing a permanent fish out pond.

It was also confirmed that it was still planned to produce an article on key spawning characteristics that needed protecting to help landowners understand an awareness of water quality issues.

Mr Teal gave a brief overview of actions undertaken from the previous meeting principally dealing with season conditions.

7. NZ Council Business

Councillor Morris gave a further update of the NZ Council meeting held on 24 November 2017. He noted that the NZ Council was very impressed with the field trip of Wellington region. It was noted that there was considerable interest by Wellington councillors in attendance which was appreciated by NZ Council. He also thanked the staff for professional and informative presentations on many aspects during the field trip.

Discussion ensued on the recent press release that gained national attention on television and social media (Facebook) relating to small farm dumps and regional council compliance efforts that had received considerable farmer backlash. It was acknowledged from a regional Fish & Game Council perspective that it would be useful to understand the national strategy regarding water quality and farmer responsibility. It was acknowledged that hunters and anglers appreciated the access to the resource afforded to many participants and Fish & Game should not be unduly perceived as 'anti-farming'. Chairman Cotsilinis considered it relevant for regional Fish & Game Councils to understand a clear policy to ensure public awareness efforts were consistent. It was further considered that if a different direction is pursued then implementation at a regional level would assist the communication of the messaging in different media.

After further discussion it was moved that

A letter would be drafted to NZ Fish & Game Council requesting clarification of the communications strategy for public awareness of clean water quality and communications strategy for managing relationships with landowners to maintain access.

Malcolm Francis/Paul Shortis

Carried

Councillor Morris noted that there had been some restructuring at NZ Council office with finance position for NZ Council outsourced.

It was then moved that

The report by Councillor Morris on the NZ Fish & Game Council meeting held on 24 November 2018 and subsequent NZ Fish & Game Council matters be received.

Malcolm Francis/Chris O'Meara

Carried

8. Public Participation

Chairman Cotsilinis invited members of the public to speak on any particular issues – and there were no speakers forthcoming.

9. Health & Safety Update

Mr Teal provided an overview of the Health & Safety reporting. There was nothing new to report. After further discussion it was moved that

The Health and Safety Report overview for December and January be received

Paul Shortis/Dan Waechter

Carried

10. Recommendations for Hunting Season Conditions for 2018 Game Season

Dr Kavermann provided a brief overview of the information on the trend counts provided for the telephone conference of 31 January 2018 had been confirmed - with additional information now at hand for black swan counts from Nelson/Marlborough confirming the recommendations.

It was then moved to

reconfirm the recommendations for harvest regulations for black swan (three per day for the waterfowl season) and paradise shelduck (eight per day for the waterfowl season) for the 2018 Game Season

Chris O'Meara/Jim Cook

Carried

11. Policy Review Timetable

Mr Teal noted that Wellington Fish & Game Council has a number of policy and position statements that have been considered in the past, many of which are still appropriate. The Audit Report for 2016/17 Financial Year indicated that it would be good governance practice to review each policy document to ensure they are considered with up to date legislative requirements and national Fish & Game policies.

It was moved that

Wellington Fish & Game Council would endeavour to consider a review of at least one policy/position at each meeting based on most urgency

Jim Cook/Paul Shortis

Carried

It was agreed that Mr Teal will compile a list of policies (including dates adopted) to allow Council to regularly consider policy review (or reiterate policy).

12. Application for Exception to Application of Policy – Maimai Allocation

Councillor Tannock outlined the issues regarding allocation of hunting stands at Lake Wairarapa. He noted that although hunters had a vested interests in a site, other licenced game bird hunters can use the site as per normal occupancy (after 7.30am on any day during the game season). He considered that there wasn't a huge amount of hunting pressure on all of the sites all of the time but there was an impression amongst some hunters that they would be missing out. He interpreted that those with a long term vested interest in a site wanted to continue to maintain their connection and contribute to the reserve management. He further postulated that there could be some performance criteria regarding contribution to be considered with the privilege, which could be audited every three years and then could be rolled over if criteria were met.

Discussion ensued on potential outcomes of actions to be considered in the performance criteria such as: maintaining hunting stand (maimai) to a reasonable standard, complying with regulations, maintaining access to hunting stand, turning up on opening weekend to use site, and consistently undertaking ethical practices. This review could be undertaken at a formal request for change of tenure or every three years (with inspections being undertaken).

Discussion considered the similar concepts relating to rotation of residents in State Housing sector where there were risks with new clients with no connection to a site, or feeling of ownership with traditional and long term investment in maintaining a site.

Discussion ensued on possible ramifications if stands are surrendered if the original ballotee is no longer hunting at the site – including whether the older hunters would still continue to hunt if they had been at the site for many decades. The value of those hunters was considered important with experience of management of the sites, active management actions, and positive hunting ethics and expectations. Further options were considered to accommodate the existing hunters at a site for three year reassessment or replacement with public ballot with existing sunset clause.

Further discussion ensued on potential benefits of safeguarding the stands for the future if they are looked after and potentially handed down to demonstrably interested parties.

Councillor Morris considered it prudent to talk with iwi and develop policy with their potential input to ensure acceptability to continue with existing hunters with affinity and history of looking after the environment at the sites.

It was agreed to develop policy regarding stand allocation to potentially incorporate some succession method that could be considered on a case by case basis - noting specifically:

- Regular Reviews - to set a standard to maintain access to stands –
- Up keeping of maimai and surrounds etc
- Potential generational transfer – including “well established” hunting partners – but generational use can show continual use over a long period of time.

It was agreed to defer further discussion until the daughter and grandson of Grahame Hamilton had been afforded an opportunity to present their views (for later in meeting).

13. Application to Kill Sportsfish for Research

Alton Perrie arrived at 4.05pm and presented the findings of his pilot study to date. Various points of discussion and clarification were made during his presentation.

Councillor Shortis expressed that while Fish & Game supported good research, there was some reservations about how this data could be used for anti-introduced species movement.

Specific comments were made on the Waitawa lakes coarse fisheries with various water quality issues, with it postulated that several drivers might be implicated to some extent – including sewage discharge, dairy farm run-off, and exotic fish presence.

Adam Canning arrived at 4.20pm

It was noted that there may be a perceived relationship between perch biomass and eel biomass, with the former being a prey species to eels.

Mr Perrie was thanked for his presentation and left at 5.05pm

After brief discussion on some aspects of the data, consideration of issues was then deferred.

14. Application for Exception to Application of Policy – Maimai Allocation (continued)

Chairman Cotsilinis welcomed Jo Bengston and Jordan Bengston and outlined to them that Council had decided to consider developing a new policy that may allow for succession with scope and restrictions to be considered in due course.

Jo Bengston related her experiences of attending working bees with her father Grahame Hamilton for the last 40+ years. It had created a sense of place for the family and indicated that her three children had all been hunting at the site from a young age and wanted to keep doing so.

Jordan Bengston (grandson of Grahame Hamilton) confirmed that he had been hunting at the site from seven years of age and had established a hunting tradition and memories at the site. He considered that he had a connection with the site and local environs, respected the site, and considered it an important part of his life. He noted that Grahame Hamilton had encouraged others out hunting and had set the 'standard' for work necessary to maintain the site.

Councillor Tannock gave further background of stability of the permit holders and this provides an example of managing a site (also involving the wider family) for the benefit of other people and future generations.

15. Captive Reared Mallard

Council considered an email from Jeff Nibblet regarding a submission he had made to NZ Fish & Game Council referring to the memorandum *Release of Captive Reared Mallards* (undated but prepared for the NZ Fish & Game Council meeting in November 2017) developed by Robert Sowman (Policy and Planning Manager, NZ Fish & Game Council) and Andy Garrick (Manager, Eastern Region Fish & Game Council).

Council reaffirmed the positions defined at the Wellington Fish & Game Council meeting on 5 December 2017.

16. Upland Game Properties – Update

Mr Teal confirmed that three sites wished to continue with releases and operations.

Mr Teal provided an overview of Rathmoy Game Preserve and noted that the adjoining neighbours had now confirmed their preference for no further releases to avoid interaction with birds on their property. An option to release a very limited number of birds (500) was agreed to as a variant to the

application for this year – as there appeared to be no issues with the adjoining landowner at this level of release. There was concern expressed that there was social media comment that Mr Grace was “no longer the owner of Rathmoy”.

It was confirmed that Mr Teal would clarify the ownership and operations of Rathmoy before progressing any application, and obtain reaction from adjoining landowners to a limited release of 500 birds.

17. One Plan Implementation - Update

Mr Teal gave a brief overview of the expert planner conferencing and the request for release of the notes from this meeting.

He also outlined the four workstreams that Horizons Regional Council were progressing to deal with nutrient allocation but he had not had any feedback on progress or focus and resourcing of each workstream.

It was then moved

That the update report on the One Plan implementation be received

Jim Cook/Dan Waechter

Carried

18. Wairarapa Water Update

Councillor Shortis gave a brief summary of recent Wairarapa Water’s media reports had continued to focus on promoting ‘environmental benefits’ of flushing flows and social benefits in securing municipal supply. Currently Fish & Game were still waiting to see how the new Government would view these issues, with the expectation that Water Wairarapa was continuing with their equity raising investigations.

It was then moved that

That a previous motion be reiterated to prepare a brief of a strategy to deal with the potential issues relating to intensification from irrigation dam proposed by Water Wairarapa, and establish budgetary requirements to progress an action plan

Jim Cook/Malcolm Francis

Carried

19. Wairarapa Moana Update

Further discussion continued on the application by Mr Perrie to kill sportfish for research.

There was concern expressed as to when sampling would take place, with strong preference to not have sampling undertaken at Boggy Pond and Matthews Lagoon in April (prior to the duck hunting season).

Further discussion ensued on concern that the sports fish captures were not sufficient to meet the needs for Mr Perrie's research objectives and specific hypotheses to be tested.

This was highly relevant for the age class structure aspects of the proposed research and was only achieved at Lake Pounui for perch and also for the interactions between sports fish and other species. It remained unclear to the Council how this will be achieved with so few brown trout captured at each site.

The following were specific comments were discussed from the initial pilot trial results:

- What were the initial conclusions on species richness in relation to sampling effort?
- Were there too few sports fish being captured to achieve the current aims of the research?
- Sports fish only make up a very small proportion of total captures across most sites with the exception of the Northern Lake Wairarapa site. How would the proposed research measure sports fish impacts on the freshwater systems sampled in regards to food webs, trophic cascades, eutrophication or predation given their sparseness given the limited sample size?
- Is the species richness (the variety of sports fish captured) sufficient to achieve the current aims of the research?
- Pest fish (rudd and goldfish) were making up a large proportion of non-sports fish captures across sites most sites. How will the impact of these fish be assessed against that of sports fish?

Site specific comments included:

- Is the Lake Wairarapa system too big for any meaningful results to be collected or bio-manipulation to be undertaken?
- The native fish community at Lake Pounui site appears to be sparse made up of only three species (long and shortfin eel and common bully). Would this not be a good site for an additive manipulation using perch?

While not relating to the direct assessment of the application, other issues were briefly discussed:

- Concern about past negative comments by the researcher regarding sportfish – which were not backed up by robust research;

- If the value of this research to define fish community structure is high value then Fish & Game should consider this as a research project internally;
- Concern that the sponsorship funders to enhance indigenous biodiversity may drive research objectives and outcomes.

Council were reluctant to permit a continuation of the research given that from the pilot study he had not yet defined a fish community structure or how he would test hypotheses relating to trophic cascades.

Council acknowledged that Mr Perrie's application still needed to be considered in terms of science robustness and clear propositions in terms of the Freshwater Fisheries Regulations criteria.

Further discussion continued including:

- objectives of study and specific hypotheses were not well defined - yet a reasonable number of sportsfish were being killed (in at least one instance);
- reiterating the reluctance to allow sampling around duck hunting season;
- uncertainty of value of the extent of data obtained to support the continuation of research;
- potential request for full completion of pilot study.

It was moved that

Council were reluctant to issue an extension to the permit to include Pencarrow lakes, Waiorongomai Lake, and Matthew Lagoon and Boggy Pond pending further supporting information for assessment of permit in terms of Freshwater Fisheries Regulations criteria

Malcolm Francis/Dan Waechter

Carried

Mr Teal provided a brief overview of the willow spraying programme undertaken by the Department of Conservation and Greater Wellington Regional Council - with the time frame noted to hunters discouraging some work being undertaken (due to precautionary statements in advisory).

It was then moved

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

Malcolm Francis /Chris O'Meara

Carried

The meeting was adjourned at 6.05pm for dinner and reconvened a 6.50pm

20. Application for Exception to Application of Policy – Maimai Allocation (continued)

Council confirmed that following earlier discussions that in recognition of the good stewardship in management of the site at Lake Wairarapa that the family of Grahame Hamilton be offered the site for this game season would be confirmed subject to policy development on succession.

21. Mallard Research Project

Mr Teal indicated that a summary of the mallard research would be provided by Dr Kavermann for the Pre-Game Season Fish & Game Magazine. It was also confirmed that there should be considerable efforts to leverage off the findings for future communications to hunters and wider public.

After discussion it was moved

To receive the update on the mallard research

Malcolm Francis/Chris O’Meara

Carried

22. Junior Angler Promotions

Councillor Waechter informed Council that RSA were interested in sponsoring a fish tank for the Fish in Schools project and Korauui School would be an excellent site for such.

Mr Carnachan noted that Fish & Game should endeavour to involve schools involved in the Fish in Schools programme in Fish Out Days to complete the water quality – harvesting food source component of the programme.

Chairman Cotsinilis noted that it would be valued to have an education tank available for the Fish Out Site at the Capital Trout Centre as there are numerous groups already going through the site each month.

Councillor Shortis gave a brief overview of the proposal to re-establish the historic Masterton hatchery as an education/research facility.

After discussion it was moved

To receive the update on the novice fish and hunting programmes

Chris O’Meara/ Dan Waechter

Carried

23. Proposal for Fish Farm - Spirulina

Council considered the application to farm spirulina (a cyanobacteria) which required a permit from MPI for fish farming.

Council considered the pond proposed near Himatangi posed low risk:

- the proposed pond site was relatively isolated from significant water courses; and
- even in if catastrophic event occurred, with contingencies it posed low risk.

There was a concern regarding potential public perception that it could be seen as Fish & Game encouraging farming of aquaculture but it was considered that there were no problems with the protocols or wider implications of allowing this particular 'fish farm' permit.

Council considered it best practice to inform other regions that Wellington Fish & Game Council had received a request for a fish farm permit, and that there were no concerns that should be alerted to Ministry of Primary Industries.

24. Access Issues

Mr Teal briefly outlined issues at:

- **Otaki River Mouth** – that additional signage would be required to satisfy local residents of informing hunting was being undertaken in area.
- **Waitawa Lakes** – informed by new leasees of Forest Lakes Camp that they wished to restrict access to Hutt Valley Coarse Anglers only
- **Iwi-owned wetlands – Manawatu/Rangitikei** – formalising arrangements to continue hunting at sites now that the Treaty Settlements are complete and transfer of land being formally completed.
- **Forest Blocks** – possible requirements for public liability insurance in future

25. Management Report 1 December 2017 – 31 January 2018

Mr Teal provided a brief overview of Fish & Game's offer to assist the regional council deal with the mass stranding of native fish near Hokio lake – but no sports fish were noted as being stranded.

After further discussion it was moved that

The management report for 1 December 2017 – 31 January 2018 be received.

Don Scott/Dan Waechter

Carried

26. Fish & Game Licence Sales

Mr Teal referred to the summary in the project report documents noting that licence sales for fish were now the same as previous year's sales. Fish licence sales were tracking higher than last year until early January when poor weather most likely the reason for sales now being on par with last year at similar time.

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

Councillor Francis commended staff for the excellent marketing and publicity this year in creating considerable more local interest from anglers which was also reflected in membership of the local angling club.

After further discussion it was moved

The Fish Licence Sales report as at 31 January 2018 be received

Dan Waechter/Chris O'Meara

Carried

27. Expenditure Report

After brief discussion on the Income and Expenditure Summary Report, Mr Teal confirmed that a cash flow statement of income and expenditure that matched sources and applications of funds would be provided at subsequent meetings. There were some issues in mixing inputs from the current reports that were cash based and GST exclusive figures with those that were accrual based.

It was moved that

the Expenditure Report for 31 December 2017 and Financial Transactions for November and December 2017 be approved

Jim Cook/Don Scott

Carried

28. Contribution Awards

Council reiterated and confirmed the basic criteria for considering recognising contributions to the Wellington Fish & Game Council organisation or wider fish and game resource.

It was considered that four names (but not limited to four) would be considered for potential recipients at the meeting two months preceding the next meeting venue where the award would be presented.

Further consideration was given on how to best publicise these awards and leverage positive publicity.

It was also considered appropriate for clubs to provide nominations for outstanding contributors to the fish and game resource, which could be considered by Council.

Councillor Muckley left the meeting at 7.46pm

29. Correspondence and Media

There was brief discussion on media and correspondence.

Concern was expressed regarding the emphasis placed on the potential negative impacts of brown trout following publication of a compendium on brown trout.

It was agreed to reply to Mr Woodley's letter acknowledging the good discussion points and update him on the potential development of succession with the standholder allocation policy. In the interim, he would be allowed to transfer the name of the hunting partner as principal standholder subject to the policy being confirmed for subsequent years.

It was moved that

the Correspondence and Media Report be received

Andrew Morris/Marc Flaws

Carried

30. General Business

Councillor Francis confirmed that he would prefer an electronic copy of the agenda be made available prior to the meeting – including any key policy documents that might be available prior to assembly of the final agenda.

Councillor Waechter noted that from several accounts that there continued to periods where lack of inspection for transfer of didymo via interisland ferries. Mr Teal would further contact Ministry of Primary Industries to check resourcing and whether any additional actions are required.

Council briefly discussed potential conflicts between local and overseas anglers in terms of: long term focus on the environment by local anglers,

differing cultures and etiquette, and how guides can potentially dominate local waters.

There being no further business the meeting was concluded at 8.00pm.

Next Meeting to be held: Upper Hutt Cosmopolitan Club, 11 Logan Street, Upper Hutt Tuesday 27 March 2018 at 3.00pm.

Chairman _____ Date _____