

WELLINGTON FISH & GAME COUNCIL

MINUTES OF MEETING OF THE WELLINGTON FISH & GAME COUNCIL, HELD ON TUESDAY 24 MARCH 2020 AT 3.05PM HELD ON ZOOM VIDEO CONFERENCING.

1. **Present:**
Chairman Strato Cotsilinis, Councillors Malcolm Francis, Jim Cook, John Hancock, Aaron Passey, Don Scott, Paul Shortis, Andy Tannock, Richard McIntyre
2. **In Attendance:**
Staff: Phil Teal (Regional Manager), Dr Matt Kavermann, Hamish Carnachan, Dr David Pontin, Nathan Field
3. **Apologies:**
Councillors Chris O’Meara, Andrew McGregor, Colin Shore

It was moved

that apologies be accepted

Malcolm Francis/Andy Tannock

Carried

Welcome and Confirmation of Agenda

Chairman Cotsilinis welcomed the Council in what was the first conducted using video conferencing – necessitated by the COVID19 restrictions. It was agreed that only urgent items would be discussed as a priority.

4. **Conflict of Interest**
There were no additional conflicts of interest that were identified specific to the agenda.

Councillor Shortis noted that he was currently the Chair of the Strategic Finance Committee for NZ Fish and Game Council and would be making recommendations on budgets in that forum from an organisational perspective.

5. **Minutes of Previous Meeting of 11 February 2020:**
After brief discussion it was moved that
the Minutes of the meeting of the Wellington Fish & Game Council of 11 February 2020 be approved as a true and correct record of the proceedings of that meeting.

Paul Shortis/Malcolm Francis

Carried

6. **Matters Arising:**

Mr Teal provided a brief overview of the actions undertaken since the 3 December 2019 Council meeting. Councillor Shortis noted that there needed to be a rationalisation of actions noted from previous meetings as some were considered redundant or were no longer relevant.

7. **NZ Fish and Game Council Business**

Councillor Shortis noted that there had been some correspondence sent to NZ Council Chairman from South Island Chairs collective, regional managers (11 of 12), and staff (65 of 78). There were some discussions held in public excluded session which may result in a motion for election of officers at the next NZ Council meeting but there was now uncertainty as to when this would occur due to travel restrictions under COVID19 Alert Level 3 and 4. It was also intended to have a strategy session at the next NZ Council meeting, with some issues for consideration deferred until that takes place. It was NZ Council's intention to focus on statutory obligations being carried out correctly during the management COVID19 pandemic.

Councillor Scott noted that the strategic planning session would be worthwhile in helping define the overall plan and strategic direction for the organisation. Councillor Shortis noted that it was difficult to get a combined and consensus view with so many stakeholders. It was also noted that Fish and Game needed to be discussing common goals with other organisations. It was noted that there were good relationships with other organisations being developed at regional levels but these should not be compromised by contrasting messaging delivered by NZ Council. It was further discussed that these relationships needed to be fostered at all levels of organisations to allow difficult conversations to be progressed.

8. **Health and Safety Reporting**

After brief discussion on the COVID19 Level 4 restrictions meant that staff would be based from home, and that regular communication would continue. This would also have implications for most field activities being limited, as well as Council meetings being held via videoconferencing. It was moved that

Council receive the Health and Safety Report for February and March 2020

Malcolm Francis/Jim COok

Carried

9. **Annual Budget – Draft Operational Workplan**

Dr Kavermann clarified that limited numbers of two-year old trout would be available from the Ngongotaha hatchery this calendar year and confirmed lower numbers are available for Manawatu and Wellington fish out events

but none currently available for the Otaki site (this will be reviewed later in year once other orders are dispatched).

Councillor Shortis noted that the NZC CFO is preparing a set of scenarios modelling the potential effect of the COVID19 pandemic on income via licence sales. For example, it was envisaged that 80% - 90% of overseas (non-resident) anglers would not be licence purchasers in the 2020/21 fishing season given the current predictions.

It was noted that the senior planning role was still an important core role for regional advocacy representation.

Chairman Cotsilinis noted that the COVID19 restrictions could have the most immediate effect on the upcoming hunting season and therefore licence sales income.

Councillor Scott requested that the Manager investigate the wage subsidy offered by the Government as emergency funding to assist with cashflow to retain staff, given the probable downturn in game licence sales in the short term.

It was agreed that, under the current cashflow predictions resulting from the uncertainty of licence sales, no contestable fund applications would be made.

It was moved that

The draft annual budget for the 2020/2021 Financial Year be recommended to the NZ Council

Jim Cook/Malcolm Francis

Carried

10. Communications Strategy

Discussion ensued on the NZ Council draft Communications strategy and additional paper requested by Wellington F&GC to provide alternative ways of looking at the Communications Strategy from a wider organisational perspective including from a regional perspective (developed by Hamish Carnachan). It was agreed that the latter was more fit for purpose approach for a communications strategy for regional and wider organisational use.

The alternative paper was seen as a positive alternative that focused on organisational co-ordination rather than control of communications. This also considered issues of conflicting messages and outcomes – such as continually highlighting poor water quality (advocacy) v promoting a quality angling experience (licence sales). It was noted that it was not a preferable option to have all communications for the organisation limited to a central

spokesperson. Council considered that experts in their fields should be able to make media statements and commentary. It was also agreed that one significant weakness of the NZ Council draft strategy was an absence of internal communications to governors and staff. The strategy document also should clearly identify licence holders as being a principal stakeholder to be accountable to. It was agreed that the alternative communications strategy be presented to a subsequent NZ Council meeting to highlight expertise available from within the organisation.

It was agreed that

The alternative draft communications strategy document be presented to NZ Council to provide alternative ways of looking at the Communications Strategy from a wider organisational perspective including from a regional perspective at the first available NZ Council meeting (with supporting commentary)

Malcolm Francis/Jim Cook

Carried

11. Draft Sports fish Game Management Plan

Deferred

12. Management Report – 1 February 2020 to 14 March 2020

After brief discussion it was moved that

Council receive the Management Report for period 1 February 2020 to 14 March 2020 be received.

Jim Cook/Malcolm Francis

Carried

13. Licence Sales report

Mr Teal noted that the fishing licence sales were up slightly compared to the same period last year.

Concern was expressed on the high uncertainty for game licence sales given the COVID19 restrictions. It was agreed to proactively seek supplementary funding via the Government's initiatives to the purpose to 'keep doors open not to add to profit'. A brief discussion ensued on preparing contingency plans for the hunting season being delayed or totally curtailed.

It was then moved that

Fishing Licence Sales Report up until 29 February 2020 be received.

Jim Cook/Malcolm Francis

Carried

14. Expenditure Report

Mr Teal noted that currently the income was close to budget but this would change given the lower expectations for game licence sales for the hunting season given the disruption of the COVID19 restrictions and their timing. Expenditure was also close to budget.

Discussion ensued on the potential contingencies for a delayed start to the hunting season and potential effects on mark-up provisions for early April which will occur under full lockdown provisions. It was noted that hunting would not occur under Level 4 COVID19 restrictions, but clarification would need to be made at appropriate time for Level 3 restrictions when that arises. It was agreed that efforts needed to be made to get the Government to provide certainty for licence holders that a season would proceed to ensure that potential hunters would purchase a licence.

Councillor Shortis noted that NZ Council had made a collective statement with NZ Deerstalkers and Big Game Council relating to adhering to the 'stay at home' rules in the Health Notice to avoid risks to search and rescue providers – if in fact the services will be provided under lockdown provisions.

It was agreed to provide quality up-to-date information to hunters as the discussion progressed but to maintain positive messaging that there is an expectation that the season is going ahead (if this is looking possible to proceed).

Discussion ensued on the potential restrictions that might apply to hunting under differing COVID19 levels.

It was noted that a ten-day lead-in time before opening day for hunters to dress maimais and organise gear at retailers was desirable.

It was also requested of staff to look at the possibilities of extending the season given any scenarios that might arise from a delayed start.

It was noted that the relevant legislation and gazette notice had already be processed and changes to season dates would need assistance from DoC with an extremely short turn around required (if it is possible at all).

It was emphasised that Fish and Game need to make sure hunters complied with the COVID19 restrictions as it could affect the public perception of hunters – which may result in public discussion of the social licence to hunt particularly when the 'country' (public) have been required to stay home.

Mr Teal noted that there were suggestions that to cover mark-up provisions that 2019 mark-up tags would remain valid for this 2020 season also. This may leave a small portion of stands which may be technically available but appear to be marked up – however it is a potentially pragmatic solution for most hunters not having to physically mark up the stand prior to early April under Level 4 lockdown provisions.

It was clarified that under COVID19 Alert Level 4 that the Ministry of Health is requiring self-isolation and only essential travel, and although clarity was going to be provided by the Government by the end of the week. It would not allow for hunting or mark-up activities.

It was moved that

Expenditure Reports to 29 February 2020 and Financial Transactions for January and February 2020 be received

Don Scott/Richard McIntyre

Carried

15. General Business

Councillor Scott provided an update of a project he had been involved with to organise a fishing course for young people as a Fish and Game project. He noted that all participants had a fishing licence as part of the promotion, and material provided by the local Manawatu Freshwater Angling club. He noted that he had sought assistance from NZ Council R3 advisor but had not received any support or correspondence.

A brief discussion ensued on the recent NZ Council generated survey (Colmar Brunton) of 138 governors views on advocacy – with several councillors noting that they could not undertake the survey as it was closed off or they were not able to fully complete the survey.

Mr Teal noted that Dr Kavermann had been successful in obtaining funding for habitat creation from the Billion Trees Fund via the Game Bird Habitat Trust. This was expected to be \$360,000 over three years depending on how the works were undertaken – with the projects to be distributed around the country. The Council wish to thank Dr Kavermann for his efforts and getting an outstanding outcome to supplement wetland habitat creation. Acclamation.

Mr Teal was acknowledged for thirty years' service with Fish and Game – starting in 1990 with over 17 years in the Auckland/Waikato region and nearly 13 years in the Wellington region. He was presented with an acknowledgement of this service. Acclamation.

There being no further business the meeting was closed at 4.35pm.

Next Meeting to be held: ***To be advised. Meetings will be required by video conferencing in the foreseeable future.***

Chairman _____ Date _____