

WELLINGTON FISH & GAME COUNCIL

MINUTES OF MEETING OF THE WELLINGTON FISH & GAME COUNCIL, HELD ON TUESDAY 10 OCTOBER 2023 AT 3.15PM AT CLUB WAIRARAPA, 20 ESSEX STREET, MASTERTON

1. Present:

Chairman Paul Dewar. Councillors Andrew McGregor, Aaron Passey, Jennifer Yanko, Prof. Stephen Haslett, Colin Shore, Steve Brown, Don Scott, Malcolm Francis, Jim Cook, John Hancock.

In Attendance:

Fish and Game Staff: Phil Teal, Dr Matt Kavermann, Hamish Carnachan

Licence Holders: Simon Roberston

Welcome and Confirmation of Agenda

Chairman Dewar opened the meeting and extended a welcome to all councillors and licence holder Simon Robertson.

2. Apologies:

It was noted that apologies were received from:

Councillors John Hancock (for lateness), Steve Brown, Richard McIntyre

Staff: Ami Coughlan.

Licence holders: Paul Shortis, John Pansters.

It was moved

that apologies be accepted

Jim Cook/Aaron Passey

Carried

3. Conflict of Interest

The Conflicts of Interest Register was discussed – Councillor Cook noted that he was no longer a member of the Wellington Conservation Board having not been appointed for a second term.

Councillor Passey confirmed that he was likely to appear at the Environment Court hearing as a Federated Farmers witness to consider Plan Change 2 for Horizons' Regional Plan. The 'general' conflict of interest has already been identified for this issue and recorded in the past, but it was noted that the conflict was in particular focus for this aspect. After discussion it was confirmed that the information pertaining to the hearing contained in this

current agenda was not particularly sensitive and most (if not all) was in the public arena. The material was more for Councillors' information rather than decision requirements per se. It was agreed that if a further specific decision was required by Council during discussions on this topic, then the Council would further consider if it was appropriate for Councillor Passey to abstain from voting, or potentially leave the room if any specific conflict became apparent.

Mr Teal confirmed that the Conflict-of-Interest register was updated accordingly from the previous meeting, and Conflict of Interest Management Plan was also updated with the new conflicts of interest that were identified and how Council intended to deal with managing a conflict.

4. Minutes of Previous Meeting of 8 August 2023:

Following consideration of the draft Minutes of the meeting of the Wellington Fish and Game Council of 8 August 2023 it was moved that
the Minutes of the meeting of the Wellington Fish & Game Council of 8 August 2023 be approved as a true and correct record of the proceedings of that meeting.

Malcolm Francis/Jennifer Yanko

Carried

5. Matters Arising:

Mr Teal confirmed that a letter had been sent to the NZ Council CE acknowledging the efforts of the team to achieve the legislative outcome in the new NBEA legislation relating to the retention of the protection of trout and salmon habitat which will retain Fish and Game's continued advocacy function for their habitat.

Chairman Dewar confirmed that governance training modules had been presented by an external provider and co-ordinated by NZ Council with the purpose of refreshing good principles of functions and responsibilities of governors. There were a few additional times available for those who sought to attend this webinar style training.

Feedback of the governance training was generally positive with discussion on details on specific interpretation:

- Councillor Scott didn't totally agree with the expert's interpretation of the function of the Chairman (as being too dictatorial) and not a totally good fit for Fish and Game governors who were volunteers and were passionate about their particular area of expertise and interest. Further, as the members are determined by a democratic vote, there are no guarantees of a range of management experiences or specific focus of expertise required.

- The governance training reinforced the recording style of minutes that provided a good summary of the derivation of motions.
- The agenda style could be reviewed – in particular, the size of agenda and number of pages. It was stated that agenda papers should be managed at being able to have good comprehensive of about 20 pages per hour. Consideration of agenda items in a summary form should be a matter of course – with more comprehensive documentation from which the summaries are derived, be made available for further clarification if required to back up the summarised version.
- The agenda management and prioritisation of agenda items was discussed, with it noted that items that required in-depth discussion being at the front end of the agenda.
- There was also discussion on ensuring the timing of the distribution of the agenda should allow adequate time to undertake the background reading required to meet expectations.
- The governance training was useful in getting a different perspective of other Fish and Game regions and how their meetings were conducted – including the Council’s interaction with management.

Councillor Scott sought clarification that the recommendation that there be no daily limit for perch to the Minister of Conservation regarding the 2023/2024 Anglers Notice. Discussion confirmed that many regions don’t have limits for perch take bag limit, and this recommendation specifically addressed the situation at Lake Wairarapa. It was also confirmed that harvest impacts are highly unlikely to have an effect on perch population size. Further, it was confirmed that anglers had indicated preference to be able to get multiple numbers of perch to obtain a reasonable meal for the family.

6. New Zealand Fish and Game Council Business

Councillor Haslett gave a brief overview of the Cost Optimisation project that had a budget of \$90,000. It was confirmed that the initial focus was on cost savings and cost efficiencies, with the findings potentially feeding into the considerations of the Future Finance Working Group – although the mechanism for change that could result from any findings was unclear.

Further discussion ensued on the Cost Optimisation Project - that the cost scrutiny project should apply to all regions as well as NZ Council – including how monies are devolved to other entities (such as research co-ordination internally). Councillor Passey sought clarification as to whether resource allocation for regions would be considered by the Future Finance Working Group – with it confirmed that it would be considering the information but not sure of the process for consideration or how change could result.

Discussion ensued on how NZ Council would deal with those regions that do not participate in the Cost Optimisation project - by providing access to an independent external provider the accounting data held on the Xero system. Further clarification was also sought as to how material changes that could result from the recommendations would be implemented.

Chairman Dewar confirmed that the request from NZ Council was to open up the account data to an external provider. Councillor Yanko considered that if Fish and Game wanted to consider itself one unified organisation then all aspects of budgets and costs should be open for internal scrutiny, and therefore all regions should be encouraged to participate in the project else it will devalue the exercise.

Council agreed to allow access to the Xero accounting data to the NZ Council financial consultant for the Cost Optimisation Project but wished to note the following points to NZ Council:

1. Clarify the objectives and purpose of the project and confirm scope to the regions as the objectives listed in the brief are vague. It would be useful in defining the outcomes being sought for transparency.
2. The concept of a 'financial health check' was supported by Wellington Fish and Game Council to ensure regions are using good practice. There is still an opportunity to review our financial practices and modernise them in line with the intent of the Ministerial Review (February 2021) with some element of internal control.
3. Wellington Council considered that all regional Fish and Game Councils and NZ Council should participate in the exercise – ensuring a universal acceptance of any recommendations and how changes would be implemented. There should be no exceptions to participating in this review as there is nothing to hide. There should be clear and open disclosure of all material costs of regions – this will ensure that we are not trying to save on modest costs when material costs are not transparent.
4. If there are obvious cost efficiencies identified in regions and NZ Council then these should be implemented across the country and proactively consider opportunities for saving where duplication of action is identified.
5. There is some scepticism that significant cost efficiencies can be made through procurement processes and policy implementation. Fish and Game is not of enough critical mass to justify negotiating individual contracts as a collective – as an alternative to the AOG contracts or collective purchase arrangements (provider (n3)).
6. An important component to this project is getting acceptance of regions to implement any recommendations and actions from this

exercise is to have high trust. This needs to be achieved with full transparency of process and rapid dissemination of advisories.

7. Defining a base level of service and cost structure for regional template and NZ Council operations would be useful.
8. Budgeting for national strategic objectives – what is best for the organisation – how do we prioritise NZ Council strategic priorities with regional operational priorities
9. Wellington Council suggest all findings should be generic and not focused on one region's accounting records.

Chairman Dewar consider that the Terms of Reference of the other NZ Council committees were very broad, namely:

- Future Finance Working Group.
- Future Structure Working Group.

Councillor Hancock arrived at the meeting at 3.45pm

Councillor Haslett noted that Chairman of NZ Council (Barrie Barnes), had sought to garner interest in reviewing alternative pathways to what had been recommended already – but there had been no additional evidence provided and the initiative has faded from focus.

Councillor Haslett considered that the function of the Future Finance Working Group was to look at the allocation of resources to regions, and finances to drive structural change - but there was currently no apparent clear direction on exactly what form that should be. Councillor Passey sought further clarification on how the Future Finance Working Group and the Future Structure Working Group were established. Councillor Haslett noted that the Sub-Committees were initiated by NZ Council at the beginning of the calendar year.

Discussion on the role of the Structure Review Working Group was confirmed as dealing with the structural fundamental issue of separate entities and NZ Council in a federal system. Councillor Haslett confirmed that there was little to no momentum or tangible actions from other regions (other than Taranaki and Wellington) to amalgamate fully and formally.

Councillor Francis expressed frustration at yet another review of cost analyses and potential benefits of restructuring and reducing duplication. He considered that there had been enough objective processes undertaken, and that there were more resources being spent on re-creating yet another set of potential recommendations. He was concerned that repeating these types of projects would have negative effects on perception and morale of staff. He

considered efforts should be made to move Fish and Game forward collectively given that we have enough information to progress.

Councillor Passey considered that the Ministerial Review (and subsequent Structure Review group report) provided enough direction for action, but it appears to be going around in circles and this will continue unless there are teeth to enforce change and define a mechanism for structural change.

Councillor Francis questioned the cost of doing nothing – in terms of continued direct resourcing of duplicated functions, loss of reputation, and increasing risk of potential scrutiny from external entities.

Discussion on the possible legislation changes that might occur should there be a change in Government – with the potential risks for scrutiny of the entire organisation exposed by those licence holders complaining to politicians about their perceived value (lack of) of licence fee in regions such as Hawke's Bay and Central South Island regions where there are perceived governance issues.

Councillor Haslett was requested to inform NZ Council that Wellington Council concluded for the sub-committees: Future Finance Working Group, and the Future Structure Working Group

- The Terms of Reference were very broad.
- Mechanisms for change were not obvious and do not appear to be a key focus.
- The continued cost of inaction and (re)considering how to deal with issues – and the opportunity cost associated with it.

Councillor Scott indicated that he was unsure as to whether the committees would be effective – unless there are different and innovative approaches being considered.

Councillor Haslett provided an overview of the Research Committee, confirming that it did not yet have approved Terms of Reference and its structure was ambiguous. The Research Committee was intended to be part of the Council – and therefore have a clear separate governance function with staff to provide operational support to the committee and oversee management of the research projects by providers.

Councillor Haslett was further requested to provide NZ Council with Wellington Council's feedback on the Research Committee, and for Councillor Haslett to seek getting this topic on the NZ Council agenda as a separate agenda item by distributing a paper for discussion. It was requested that clarification be given to:

- defining committee membership, (as currently it appears to be three NZ Council governors (Professor Haslett, Professor Mike Barker, and Tom Kroos) with some staff 'appointed').
- A mechanism and transparent process for appointment of members
- Clear reporting functions to either NZ Council or NZ Council CE.
- Seek a clear distinction between governance and operational arrangements and how those would be integrated (it was considered that the current structure and process were inadequate).

Further discussion occurred on Research Fund Applications with it concluded:

- There was no robust process shown for designing research brief or procuring providers. This should be defined procurement process that also deals with potential COIs
- Outputs were not well defined.
- Need to consider Cawthron Institute as a preferred provider (especially while no other tenders sought).
- It was considered that until the Terms of Reference for the Research Committee are developed – should not be in a position to recommend projects.
- Don't automatically commit to multi-year projects as this commits funds for multiple years and can reduce flexibility on addressing urgent issues.

It was moved that

NZ Council be informed of the concerns and comments outlined by Wellington Council regarding:

- 1. The draft Terms of Reference for the Future Finance Working Group***
- 2. The draft Terms of Reference for the Future Structure Working Group***
- 3. The Terms of Reference for the Research Committee informing NZ Council on research and current lack of a defined process to consider research applications.***
- 4. Cost Optimisation Project – allow access to Xero accounting data, but concerns regarding the broad nature of the brief, and getting good value from the project.***

Malcolm Francis/Jennifer Yanko

Carried

Council was concerned that the copy of minutes of the NZ Council were not available for viewing (even as unconfirmed draft meeting minutes) until after they were formally approved at the subsequent NZ Council meeting.

Discussion ensued on how Wellington Council or an individual could ask for items to be included on the NZ Council agenda – noting that this would be detailed in the standing orders on how to request placement of items on the agenda – and would likely be at the discretion of the Chairman.

Insurance Policy: Discussion ensued on the liability insurance which could deal with the potential risk of allocation of funds not authorised – where Councillors could be held liable. A PowerPoint presentation by Aon Insurance provider Edge Insurance to NZ Council (dated 18 August 2023) that gave an overview of liability insurances available to cover specific liabilities of Directors and officers – including corporate liability, statutory liability, employers liability, and general liability insurances.

It was suggested that a legal opinion be sought that provides advice on what liability situations are covered by different insurances and what Fish and Game's actual needs are. Chairman Dewar considered that it was sensible and prudent to have one policy suite to cover all of Fish and Game regions and NZ Council, and this aspect which has some current ambiguity needs to be tidied up – with NZ Council co-ordinating the gathering of information.

After brief discussion it was moved that

The report from Councillor Haslett on NZ Fish and Game Council business and meetings be received

Jim Cook/Aaron Passey

Carried

Councillor Francis thanked Councillor Haslett for undertaking the role of NZ Council appointee role with such diligence and expressed his gratitude which was reiterated by other councillors present.

7. Public forum

None.

8. Health and Safety Reporting – August 2023 to September 2023

Mr Teal confirmed that he had made the Health and Safety meetings of weekly frequency, and also provide an opportunity for more regular and timely health and safety discussions/updates.

It was moved that

Council receives the Health and Safety Report for August 2023 and September 2023

Aaron Passey/Malcolm Francis

Carried

9. **Project Reports for the 2022/2023 Financial Year**

Chairman Dewar provided an overview of the compendium of Project Reports prepared by staff (attached to agenda). After discussion it was agreed that all the reports were to be taken as read and that any points of clarification could be made as each report was individually considered.

Councillor Haslett noted that Otaki River drift dive was not completed in the Sports Fish Monitoring Report. Dr Kavermann provided an explanation relating to not having enough visibility (3m+) for extended periods over summer and having a large enough drift dive team available when an opportunity arose.

Councillor Scott sought clarification on the effects of grading rivers which not only affect the fish habitat but damage invertebrate habitat. Councillor Hancock reiterated those sentiments and considered that we could use these as a direct advocacy tool to work with the Regional Councils on the effects of flood management actions.

Dr Kavermann noted that he was currently aggregating spawning information onto GIS mapping and this information would be collated into grey literature to enable easy reference.

Councillor Haslett noted that the trout spawning mapping information was required for Auckland/Waikato and Otago for their advocacy for Regional Council planning processes. It was acknowledged that Wellington region was about five years ahead of most regions in developing the mapping output and had considered a predictive model or representation for all streams and rivers. This allowed a better predictive model of where trout spawning is likely to occur without having to physically check or see active spawning in every waterbody – but the current observations would be used to verify the predictive model or approach. Councillor Haslett noted that this type of project could be discussed by the Research Committee as a potentially good output and good bag for buck using internal staff resource support.

It was then moved that

The project reports for the the 2023 2022 financial year be excited and received

Malcolm Francis/Jim Cook

Carried

Chairman Dewar thanked the staff for the outstanding quality of reports and their diligent efforts in undertaking the monitoring programmes. – with supportive comments being reiterated by other councillors present.

10. **Legislative and Policy Review Considerations**

It was noted that the Ministry for the environment offer to assist with plan implementation to recognise NPS FM 2020 requirements was declined by Fish and Game in order to retain independence in any proceedings

- **Government Confirmation of Review of Wildlife Act**

A review of the Wildlife Act formally announced by Government on 9 September 2023. While no action is required immediately there needs to be an awareness that this review might be undertaken with urgency culminating in introduction to parliamentary processes in March 2024.

Discussion ensued on how significant the changes (and risks) were to species management governance and the potential effects on practical operations on the ground. Dr Kavermann sought clarification as to how this would affect Fish and Game regions' interactions and advice at the frontline interface. There was also a need to make sure policy staff are not disconnected from the processes for the review – as this required a political and policy response.

Wellington Council supported NZ Council to provide a comprehensive and proactive response for Fish and Game at a political and policy level to address the high risk of impact of Fish and Game operations and mandate – and attempt to ensure Fish and Game is included in influential discussions. This review was considered a critical issue to be included in the decision making an strong advocacy and representations were required.

It was then moved that

Wellington Council supports NZ Council to strongly advocate for licence holders' interests at a governance and operational level in addressing potential changes to legislation

Aaron Passey/Malcolm Francis

Carried

- **Wellington Fish and Game Council's policy review programme (August 2019) - revisit prioritisation**

Reviewing policy review progress: Discussion ensued on the future policy prioritisation and updates. It was noted that as Taranaki and Wellington were working towards amalgamating the regions, it provides impetus to have all policies the same and that external help is likely to be required. It was suggested that a provider called The Policy Place had a full suite of policy which were updated at a modest cost of under \$2000.

- **Draft Policy on Setting National Policy**

Discussion ensued on the review and update on the consultation requirements to set National Policy. This has connotations beyond having 'common' policy internally for all entities, as it becomes a requirement to follow National Policy once it is confirmed.

Wellington Fish and Game Council consider that development of National Policy needs to be transparent with open-minded consultation and supports processes that allow development of National Policy in a more timely manner.

Wellington Council considered the ability to efficiently develop and implement National Policy is an important tool to allow the organisation to modernise practices and address some of the weaknesses of the organisation's structure – including reducing duplication and inconsistency in approach.

Specific discussion focused on:

- **Providing for a reasonable time to consider and provide feedback**

Section 3.1 (e) *Following a period **one-of-at-least-two-meeting-cycles** that allows Fish and Game Councils **reasonable time** to consider and provide feedback on the draft national policy.* Wellington Council agreed that National Policy development should be able to be expedited more hastily. The current system creates a period of inertia that stifles well-timed development of policy.

- **Defining the Obligations of Consultation by NZ Council with Regional Fish and Game Councils and the Decision-Making Process**

Section 3.2 *It does not require that there be complete agreement **but-a-majority decision** by all Fish and Game Councils in arriving at that policy.*

The change removes the requirement to have a majority of regions in agreement. While from time to time there might exist divergence of views between regional and national perspectives, it would be hoped that NZ Council would not embark on developing National Policy that does not have support from the wider organisation.

Wellington Council considered that NZ Council must keep an open mind in the consultation process with regional Fish and Game Councils but there does not need to be agreement (or even a majority agreement) of regional Fish and Game Councils for the national policy to be confirmed.

Councillor Scott then sought clarification as to why National Policy could not be used to leverage active consideration of amalgamations through these processes.

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It was then moved that

Wellington Fish and Game Council would support the draft National Policy presented .

Aaron Passey/Don Scott

Carried

- **Draft policy on Conflicts of Interest**

This should be well documented to have a robust Conflicts of Interest Policy that is adhered to – or at least have good practices that can be defended if questioned.

Chairman Dewar noted that the policy was quite long and complicated. Mr Teal noted that Wellington Fish and Game additionally had a Conflicts of Interest Management Plan (that arose from the findings of the CSI Governance audit) which provides more detail on how the council will address each item specifically.

It was then moved that

the Conflict of Interest Policy be supported – with additional recommendation that a Conflicts of Interest Management Plan be used as part of good practice.

Malcolm Francis/Colin Shore

Carried

- **Draft policy on Staff Conduct**

This is a NZ Council priority to develop this policy – which is good standard HR policy.

After discussion it was moved that

the Staff Code of Conduct Policy be supported

Jim Cook/Andrew McGregor

Carried

- **Remuneration Policy (confirmed)**

Council briefly discussed the Remuneration Policy that had been consulted with regions and now confirmed – and was principally for information only.

11. Ministerial Review of Fish and Game Governance

Chairman Dewar provided a brief update of progress made to reflecting recommendations made in the Ministerial Review.

- **Update of Meetings with Regional Chairs**

Chairman Dewar noted that the last meeting was held when he was overseas and no meeting notes were taken.

He noted that other regional Chairs had been supportive of Taranaki and Wellington's approach to amalgamate operational services with a view to governance amalgamation in due course.

Recent focus of regional Chairs had been to attend governance training webinars being co-ordinated by NZ Council.

- **Terms of Reference for Shared Resources – Taranaki and Wellington Fish and Game Councils**

M Teal confirmed a Terms of Reference for councillors information only – that outlined an agreed approach to working together with Taranaki Fish and Game Council – initially on a shared resources basis.

- **Governance Review Programme**

Discussion ensued on the governance review programme with Taranaki and Wellington combined region – and the issue of whether to have 12 or 8 councillors at the next election to be discussed at a later meeting.

- **Governance Training Webinars Completed in September**

The feedback on the governance training sessions have been canvassed earlier in the meeting and it was intended that governance training webinars would be considered complete but there was demand indicated for an additional few more repeat webinars for those who couldn't initially attend.

- **Updates of any Outcomes of Lower North Island Fish and Game Councils**

A brief update on the potential amalgamation and shared resources arrangements for the lower North Island Fish and Game regions it was confirmed that approach from Hawke's Bay Fish and Game Council to Wellington Fish and Game Council to supply management services as a 'shared resource; was not pursued. The discussions had focused on a short term 10-month contract for services (until the next Fish and Game election) and had considerable constraints on operational control such as Council wanting to retain employment function and control major decisions.

It was then moved that

***the report on the Lower North Island Shared Resources proposals
be received***

John Hancock/Aaron Passey

Carried

12. Draft Sports Fish and Game Bird Management Plan

A. Developing workshop for Iwi engagement plan for Wellington Iwi

Mr Teal noted the completion of some advisory work on Mana Whenua engagement undertaken by Kahu Environmental (co-ordinated by NZ Council). Document provided for councillors – advice on how to approach consultation of iwi groups – from iwi authorities to hapu groups depending on issue. Discussion and shared which supported in principle that Fish and Game put together a list of every iwi grouping that we should interact with.

There were some points of clarification that noted consultation required payment – was not considered feasible for Fish and Game in many or any circumstances.

A. Developing workshop for Iwi engagement plan for Wellington Iwi

This is being progressed to look for external providers to give advice on tikanga and protocols to allow meaningful and respectful dialogue.

Chairman Dewar suggested that Council organise a working group to progress a strategy for engagement. This included building relationships with iwi to increase understanding and respect – and we need to be doing this anyway so it isn't contingent on having a precise plan established per se. Councillor Francis noted that the approach must be done on equal basis with iwi groupings – and this might require agreements at hapu level as well as the higher-level iwi management groupings. It was agreed to have a separate workshop at a later date early in the new year (2024).

Dr Kavermann also noted that with two significant bits of legislation relating to the Treaty Settlement around Wairarapa Moana – that the mana whenua groups will need some time to organise their priorities for governance and management. Other working examples such as the Manawatu Gorge roading project could provide a range of engagement opportunities and approaches that are fit for purpose.

B. NZ Council's approach to consistent development of Sports Fish and Game Bird Management Plans

Consultation guidelines being developed by NZ Council with a view to template development.

13. Meeting Schedule

After brief discussion it was moved that

the meeting schedule as presented be adopted noting that changes can be made during the year as long as public notification is adequate

Malcolm Francis/Don Scott

Carried

It was agreed that Councillors would consider a combined Council meeting in November with Taranaki Fish and Game Council – or at least a delegation to attend each other’s meetings.

14. Preliminary Game Season Regulation Considerations

A. Application for Upland Game Property with Special Conditions

Mr Teal noted that there was an application received for consideration of gazetting in the Game Notice for an Upland Game Property with Special Conditions. There have been no changes to the status of game preserves since the Ministerial intervention in 2018 – all ‘commercial’ game preserves are considered under schedule 3 of the Wildlife Act (Special Ministerial approval is provided to hunt on specified land parcels). There are currently 3 sites in Auckland/Waikato region that retain their status as special conditions (i.e. can harvest greater numbers than the normal daily totals) which are still gazette through the Game Notice. If a proposal is non-commercial – which can include a syndicate arrangement – then they can still apply to a regional Fish and Game Council for inclusion in that region’s Game Notice (if approved). They must still have approval from DOC to release birds into the wild.

Mr Teal noted that any recommendations to the Minister on the 2024 Game Notice would be considered at the December Council meeting – with final recommendations to the Minister are required by 1 February each year. A reasonable explanatory noted should accompany any recommendations that request material changes to the Game Notice.

Discussion ensued on the benefits and risks of approving upland game properties to release and manage upland game hunting opportunities. Councillor McGregor noted that other sites he was aware of had been run well in terms of animal welfare, as well as ethically. He further observed that other hunters benefited from the operations with birds dispersing from the property which were available for other hunters to harvest. Councillor Hancock noted that there were

some proposed initiatives to involve younger hunters which provided a controlled opportunity for recruitment. Further discussion focused on supporting the hunting culture- given the limited number of upland game opportunities within the region. In addition there were associated activities such as operating retriever dogs. The risks around animal husbandry can be easily dealt with by inspections – and it is in the operator’s best interest to maintain healthy stock.

Consideration was given to iwi engagement and consultation – which will be canvassed by the Department of Conservation in any permits to release considerations. There may be benefits for local iwi in that the feathers from pheasants are colourful and widely used in weaving projects. There may be associated benefits of predator control activities that benefit wildlife in the wider vicinity of the proposed site.

It was agreed that the Council would agree to support the concept in principle – and will consider the application as a formal recommendation for inclusion in the Game Gazette at its December meeting.

B. Preliminary Recommendations for 2024 Game Season

Mr Teal noted that this was an opportunity to summarise the key information available regarding making a recommendations to the 2024 Game Season regulations. There was consideration of the data available – and identifying any further information requirements (if available) that would be presented at the December Meeting.

Consideration of cross region variances might be appropriate – but management objectives for waterfowl should be similar if environmental drivers in areas are similar (e.g. Whanganui/Manawatu climatic zones).

It was also an opportunity to look at potential effects of botulism or avian flu outbreaks should they eventuate. It was confirmed that potential effects of botulism or avian flu were being educated to operators of wastewater treatment sites and promotion of operating a Botulism Management Plan specific to each site.

Councillor Cook noted that using radio transmitters to track birds might be useful to help explain movements of birds following aggregations in early Autumn.

15. Permit Request to Take Sports Fish

- A. Tonkin and Taylor sought to get a permit to look at the impacts of the power station in the Mangahao catchment – draft conditions have been drafted
- B. Horizons Regional Council - a straightforward application looking at new spawning streams – draft conditions have been drafted.
- C. Greater Wellington Regional Council – seek on application for permit to use for their State of Environment monitoring and reporting. This included an inventory of populations and fish passage
- D. Greater Wellington Regional Council – to undertake a proposed study on Lake Ponui (Wairarapa) – as part of the Lakes 380 research programme. There is speculation that the perch population present since the 1880s are a possible cause of an algal bloom (as per the hypothesis regarding Zealandia reservoirs – which didn't hold true) . This study is led by Cawthron Institute and GNS Science and intend to use an electric fishing boat assemblage and set nets to quantify the population.

Staff have offered to meet with Council with confirmation that this is not a fish eradication project but to research key ecosystem drivers – with perch making up to 95% of tuna. Council requested clarification be sought on the specific hypotheses being tested, what information is necessary to make an informed decision, and potential management outcomes that could be anticipated. Dr Kavermann had expectations that management actions should be backed up on science/data-based decision making and should also take into account the interests of licence holders. For context, there is currently no public access to the site, but this could be negotiated even for a short period of time. Councillor Haslett considered it important that Council seek details and undertake this in a co-operative manner. The details need to confirm the study objectives, methods, and potential management actions. He was surprised that Fish and Game were not involved in this project (as a research partner) at the outset regarding a sports fish species management. Mr Carnachan left the meeting at 5.45pm

It was then moved that

The application from Tonkin and Taylor for fish removal permit in the Mangahao River catchment be approved in line with the draft conditions proposed by staff

Malcolm Francis/Aaron Passey

Carried

It was then moved that

The application from Horizons Regional Council for fish removal permit for the summer monitoring programme in the Horizons region be approved in line with the draft conditions proposed by staff

Aaron Passey/Malcolm Francis

Carried

It was then moved that

The application from Greater Wellington Regional Council for fish removal permit for the State of the Environment Monitoring Programme in the Greater Wellington region be approved in line with the draft conditions proposed by staff

Andrew McGregor/Colin Shore

Carried

16. 16. LICENCE MANAGEMENT

A. Update on Licence Management System

Mr Teal provided an update on the Licence Management System noting that the system has been operating with no significant failures or significant faults. The contract for service provision with ESL is transitioning from 'development' phase to 'operational' phase. A list of bugs and other contractual requirements such as development of booking systems will be required before Fish and Game signs of the 'development' aspect of the contract.

There are two other functionalities – Designated Water function and Salmon Fishing Endorsement Licence - that have been developed and are in operation.

B. Research Project on Licence Category Pricing Review

Mr Teal informed Council that the review of the Licence Category Pricing project would now be undertaken in two stages - data cleansing and partial analysis. A further research brief was expected to be developed so that research providers could indicate interest in the project and provide a formal project proposal.

17. R3 MARKETING UPDATE

Mr Teal provided an overview of the activities undertaken for the early part of the 2023/2024 Fishing Season.

This included:

- Magazine articles completed for Fish Magazine 2023
- Assisting NZ Council to co-ordinate Magazine preparation with new provider (note this is a potential one-off production by provider – debate on continuation of magazine is active)
- Weekly Angling Bulletin prior to season and each week in season

18. Communications

Mr Teal gave a brief overview of the key recent communication actions. He also confirmed that Mr Carnachan was currently contracted to NZ Council for 0.2FTE (8 hours) per week to assist in preparation of press releases for NZ Council CE, as well as assisting in larger projects related to social licence campaign and management of the magazine special issue.

Meeting adjourned at 6.00pm for dinner and reconvened at 6.45pm

19. Regional Planning Updates

Mr Teal provided an overview of four regional planning projects that Wellington Fish and Game Council is actively engaged in:

A. Horizons RC – One Plan – Plan Change 2 Appeal Update

Mr Teal provided an update was be provided on the PC2 Appeal - nitrogen loss risk matrix development and use of GMP (Good Management Practices) as a principal tool for consenting. Hearing to proceed on 20 November 2023 but will consider Issues similar being discussed in Waikato Regional Council Appeal Hearing. The Ministry for the Environment Risk Matric version presentation has also been released which provides another alternative developed by leading experts.

Mr Teal confirmed that the monies set aside and approved for use by NZ Council made through the application process would be derived from Wellington Council reserves. There needs to be clarification as to why NZ Council decided to approve funding from the Council's reserves as a source, given the regional legal fund was the appropriate source of funding.

B. Horizons Regional Council – Freshwater Futures (Oranga Wai) Update

Mr Teal provided an overview of progress made in the consultation process:

- Progress has been made on identifying community values (2022)

- Identification of locations of River Users for a summer period (Feb 2023)
- Engagement with Iwi Groupings to Define Implementation and Interpretation of Te Mana o te Wai (2022 – 2023)
- Engagement with Stakeholders on defining Outstanding Waterbodies (2023)
- Engagement with Stakeholders on Water Quantity Limits (Sept 2023)
- Engagement with Stakeholders on Water Quality Limits (Nov 2023)

C. GWRC – Plan Change 1 Regional Policy Statement

Mr Teal noted that representations at the hearings on specific hearing streams was progressing. Funding was approved by NZ Council with funds derived from the Regional Legal Fund .

D. Regional Plan Approach for NPS FM 2020 Implementation

NZ Council are developing an RM Strategy which should provide some guidance on multiple regions undertaking plan changes.

Practice notes (position statements are being developed).

20. Western Region Resource Consent Applications

Mr Teal provided a brief update on the following projects:

- A. Otaki and Waikanae River Catchments** – no progress as mana whenua have not engaged with GWRC
- B. Hutt River “emergency works”** – works undertaken under ‘emergency’ provisions but sought feedback from Fish and Game before starting.

C. Hutt River – RIVER LINK project update

A substantial project intended to recontour the Hutt River for about two kilometres near Melling Bridge have resource consents granted by the Environment Court. This work will include substantial work in the river, and be prolonged (over 2 years). It is anticipated that work will start in spring 2023 for the summer construction period.

Additional drift dive planned for October 2023 – prior to commencement of works

D. Manawatu Flood Management:

Councillor Passey noted that the Pohangina/Orua flood protection schemes would be considering approaches to emergency river works and how Horizons Regional Council could potentially manage the rivers in the future.

21. Lake Wairarapa Update

A. Treaty Settlement update

Transfer of Land Titles and establishment of Statutory Reserve Board occurred on 7 March 2023. The latter is required to meet within 6 months of establishment.

Statutory Reserve Board to meet on 13 October 2023

B. Exotic Fish Management Plan Progress

- Suggestions for refinement and additions provided to consultant

C. Fish Removal Proposal

- No further updates – GWRC recommendation was to continue
- Ponui Lagoon Project

D. Jobs for Nature Project Management – Wairarapa Moana Research Funding and Restoration Plan

- Planting of trees on margins completed for season – no reports yet on survival rates

E. Engagement with Iwi regarding re-instating weir on Otakura River at JK Donald Wetland

- Meeting being scheduled

After brief discussion it was moved that

Council receive the report on Wairarapa Moana activities and management issues

Jim Cook/Colin Shore

Carried

22. Research Update

A. E-DNA Project

- Massey University researchers have completed a manuscript outlining the protocols for sampling ready for field trials and use for sampling river water samples to sample environmental DNA (eDNA) and nuclearDNA for brown and rainbow trout in spawning streams.

B. Native Fish – Trout Interaction –

- Ami Coughlan to present findings for Fish & Game public awareness items – socialising issues
- Manuscript prepared for sending to science journal

C. Research Strategy being developed by NZ Council

D. Effects of Climate Change on Trout Fisheries in NZ

- Re- engaged with Dr Canning to complete this assessment which uses NIWA hydrological modelling to assess effects of climate change (rainfall events intensity and frequency) and its effect on trout and native fish in New Zealand.

23. Licence Holder Engagement

Mr Teal provided a brief overview of initiatives to engage with licence holders including event management for:

Brief Report Summaries Provided for Each of These Events:

A. Junior Novice Fishing Days

- a. Otaki Site –some discussions on funding opportunities and the form of the event(s) for 2023
- b. Hokowhitu Lagoon – some discussions on funding opportunities and the form of the event(s) for 2023. Communications from Andrew Watt noting his preferences for changes in format and timing.
- c. Marton Reservoir – continued promotion of fisheries by District Council

- d. Capital Trout Centre– Regular Events held following drop off of fish in late August
- e. Looking at additional sites – Carterton, Kakariki, Palmerston North, Kapiti

A. Woman on The Fly Programme

- Regular casting days planned and/or completed
- Covered cost of base level website to enable bookings to be made.
- November workshop being planned and spaces are almost full – demand is high (37 out of 40 spaces already committed)

B. Report Released on Women Anglers in Aotearoa NZ: Understanding women’s perceptions and participation in freshwater angling

Considered for information. Brief discussion on key points in executive summary.

24. Access Issues – Update

Mr Teal noted that the relationship developed with the new Forest Managers Recreational Staff member had seen access to Santoft Forest (Hunting) extended for two months – to cover the upland game hunting season.

25. 24. Management Report – 1 August – 30 September 2023

Mr Teal clarified the following specific points in report:

- Survey to assess economic value of Canal Fisheries CSI region – Nationwide Survey of Anglers
- NZ Council undertaking development of template and consultation guidelines for Sports Fish and Game Bird Management Plans
- Habitat Mapping Project – Dr Adam Canning to provide service to map trout fish habitat and spawning sites for use in advocacy
- National Angler Survey 2021/2022 – final report released
- Research paper on value of perch to support eel fishery in Southland
- RiverLink costs increase from \$700 Million budgeted to \$1 Billion before any work has started.
- Treaty Settlement Process – Multiple – Western area from Porirua to Rangitikei

It was then moved that

Council receive the Management Report for period 1 August to 30 September 2023

Colin Shore/Malcolm Francis

Carried

26. Fishing Licence And Game Licence Sales

Mr Teal provided a brief overview of licence sales (up to 17 September 2023) with the end of the Financial Year reporting approaching:

Fishing:

2022/2023 fish licence sales LEQs down 261 LEQs. [2949 v 3210]

2023/2024 fish licence sales LEQs up 6.2 LEQ [456.9 v 450.7]

Game:

licences issued for 2023 season current down to previous year by 107.5 [3302.4 v 3410]

It was then moved

That the Fish Licence Sales Report for 2022/23 to 17 September and Fish Licence Sales Report for 2023/2024 to 17 September 2023 and Game Season 2023 as at 17 September 2023 be received

Don Scott/Jim Cook

Carried

27. Expenditure Report / Financial Transactions

Mr Teal provided an overview of the new dashboard.

It was then moved that

Council Receive and Accept the Expenditure Reports to 31 August 2023 and Financial Transactions for July and August 2023.

Dion Scott/Malcolm Francis

Carried

28. Correspondence / Media

The following items were briefly consider:

- Letter to Group Manager Horizons to seek meeting to discuss options for outcomes for PC2 One Plan Hearing
- Media Release NZ F&GC: Potential lake closure by Iwi in response to Golden Clams in Waikato River system
- Media Release NZ F&GC: Opening of Fishing Season Report

- Media Release NZ F&GC: response to announcement of Wildlife Act Review by Government
- Media: Northland Conservation Advocate calls for Treaty-centric Wildlife Act
- Media Release: Minister of Conservation: Announcement of intention to formally review Wildlife Act
- Media: Closure of Lake Okataina in response to placement of rahui and request for lake to be closed by local iwi

It was moved to

receive the correspondence and media items

Aaron Passey/ Steve Haslett

Carried

29. Recognition And Contribution Awards - Deferred

None presented and no further nominations received.

30. Wellington Conservation Board Liaison

Meeting was noted being on as 6 and 7 October 2023 in Palmerston North. Briefly discussed any issues that would be appropriate to discuss with Conservation Board. It was noted that no agenda provided or posted on website.

It was further noted that there had been a change in composition of Conservation Board (as a routine refreshing of members) and that Councillor Cook had been not reappointed but the Minister had thanked him for his contribution.

Council thanked Councillor Cook for this contributions to Conservation Board and his efforts to reinvigorate the relationship between Fish and Game and the Conservation Board.

Councillor Cook noted that the Taranaki Conservation Board was keen to engage with Fish and Game to meet the responsibilities of working with Fish and Game noted in the Conservation Act.

31. General Business

There was brief discussion on the Fish Futures project being driven by Cawthron Institute. It was agreed that Wellington Council should send a letter to NZ Council reiterating the potential risk to the organisation (given the policy direction development being postulated) and lack of updates from Cawthron Institute and NZ Council. Council further considered re-sending Councillor Haslett's original review of Cawthron Institute work he prepared over two years ago.

There being no further business the meeting closed at 7:45pm

Next Meeting to be held: Meeting on Tuesday, 12 December 2023 at Upper Hutt Cosmopolitan Club, Logan Street, Upper Hutt at 3pm.

Chairman _____ Date _____