

WELLINGTON FISH & GAME COUNCIL

MINUTES OF MEETING OF THE WELLINGTON FISH & GAME COUNCIL, HELD ON TUESDAY 11 FEBRUARY 2025 AT 3.05PM AT HOTEL COACHMAN, 140 FITZHERBERT AVENUE, PALMERSTON NORTH.

1. **Present:**

Chairman Paul Dewar, Councillors Aaron Passey, Jennifer Yanko, Steve Brown, Prof. Stephen Haslett, Damon Taylor, Ben Hancock, Jim Cook, Terry Inglis.

In Attendance:

Fish and Game Staff: Phil Teal

Licence Holders: Colin Shore

Welcome and Confirmation of Agenda

Chairman Dewar opened the meeting and welcomed Councillors (including Councillor Haslett via video link), staff, and public.

2. **Apologies:**

It was noted that apologies were received from:

Councillor Andrew McGregor, Richard McIntyre, Jim Cook (lateness), Ben Hancock (lateness).

Staff: Dr Matt Kavermann, Hamish Carnachan, Ami Coughlan

It was then moved that

the apologies received be accepted

Terry Inglis/Jennifer Yanko

Carried

3. **Conflict of Interest**

The Conflicts of Interest Register was discussed with no additional items identified and therefore no amendments were required to the register and no specific items that needed to be identified for the current agenda.

Mr Teal confirmed that the current Conflict-of-Interest register, and the Conflict-of-Interest Management Plan would remain unaltered.

4. **Minutes of Previous Meeting of 10 December 2024**

Following consideration of the draft Minutes of the meeting of the Wellington Fish and Game Council of 10 December 2024 it was moved that

the Minutes of the meeting of the Wellington Fish & Game Council of 10 December 2024 be approved and confirmed as a true and correct record of the proceedings of that meeting.

Steve Brown/Aaron Passey

Carried

Councillor Cook arrived at the meeting at 3:15pm.

5. Matters Arising:

Mr Teal referred to the Action List resulting from the 10 December 2024 meeting, noting actions progressed relating to the following items:

- A response was developed in response to answers sought to questions from Minister for Hunting and Fishing (dated 4 November 2024) on options for potential changes to Fish and Game.
- Wider consultation process has been undertaken regarding the simplification of fishing regulations – with the intent to consult all angling clubs in the region regarding the principles and implications – including the Wairarapa Fish and Game Club.
- Jim Cook received support in nomination as a potential Conservation Board member and that his name was submitted at the opportunity for vacancies on the Wellington Conservation Board.

6. New Zealand Fish and Game Council Business

A. Update from NZ Fish and Game Council Appointee

Councillor Haslett confirmed that there had been a meeting of NZ Council on 13 and 14 December 2024 and referred to the NZ Council's CE's Summary of the Meeting and provided additional specific commentary.

New Zealand Fish & Game Risk Register:

The Risk Register was presented to the Council. Risks were highlighted around:

- Risk identified in organisational culture and cohesion, wellbeing, and resilience remain high despite the establishment and implementation of a significant body of work over the last 2 years to address these risks.
- support for the financial management of NZC especially for implementing the Zero-Based Budget process being pursued by NZ Council. The discussion confirmed that budgets were based on historical configurations, and a review of the approach and bulk funding was necessary. ZBB aimed to provide NZ Council with greater budget transparency, identify operational efficiencies, and potentially recalibrate bulk funding.

HPAI (Avian Influenza) Response:

Councillor Haslett provided an overview of NZC's response to the HPAI monitoring and response to undertaking day-to-day management activities.

1. Adhere to PPE level 1 protocols for activities involving bird handling.
2. If H5N1 is detected and Phase 3 of the Risk Framework Protocol is declared, suspend routine wild bird handling operations, and PPE level 3 protocols must be followed for necessary contact with wild birds.
3. Do not issue permits for disturbing or culling wild birds to address HPAI transmission concerns.
4. NZC also adopted the HPAI Communications Plan.

Councillor Passey noted that Fish and Game were considering with DoC the regulatory process to enable a quick response to potential actions should HPAI be notified in NZ. Further discussion confirmed that it was essential Fish and Game needed to be able to quickly react to changes – noting the unique response required in 2020 to COVID movement restrictions. The implications for revenue were discussed and noted that central Government were made aware of these potential issues. It was further clarified that MPI compensation would only be considered if a response was directed by MPI – as per other recent biosecurity responses.

RMA/Legal Fund Update & Applications:

Councillor Haslett confirmed that due to the new government's proposed wholesale reforms to the RMA and reviews of the Biosecurity Act, Conservation Act, Arms legislation, and freshwater framework, there is significant work ahead. It was acknowledged that this is a critical area for Fish & Game – and it was difficult to budget for due to how and when issues arise. In response a relatively large amount is provisioned for allocation, but no clear budgeting item can be identified for specific actions given uncertain timelines.

Licence Holder Survey 2024:

Councillor Haslett provided a brief overview of the recent survey on licence holders' priorities, value, and perceptions of Fish & Game NZ. It was acknowledged that the strength of the inferences being made sometimes went beyond the quality of the data – but nevertheless provided useful direction and insight. Key priorities for licence holders include access to waterways, ecological and fish population monitoring, and advocacy for healthy freshwater habitats. Younger (under 45) and female respondents prioritized environmental concerns, while older (65+) male respondents focused more on access.

Councillor Brown led discussions on access issues – noting that the pressure on access to waterways was only increasing – and noted that he supported the approach by Auckland/Waikato Fish and Game Council to secure access to the Whakapapa River rather than being captured by guides for exclusive use. He further postulated that there was potential for establishment of an access fund dedicated to providing public access (specifically to assist anglers and hunters). It was further suggested that a letter be sent to NZ Council to support the establishment of a fund for securing access – by buying land and potentially using legal mechanisms to put access provisions on the legal title and then sell the land to maintain enough capital expenditure quantum.

Councillor Hancock arrived at the meeting at 3:22pm.

It was noted that the Licence Holder Survey focused only on licence holders and did not provide data on a significant group of potential licence holders i.e. 'not yet licence holders'.

NZIER Economic Contribution of Freshwater Angling Report

Councillor Haslett noted that the NZEIR report was tabled at NZ Council into the economic contribution of recreational angling and an assessment of the wellbeing impacts. The report estimates that domestic and international Fish & Game licence holders spend a total of \$113 - \$139 million per year across their angling trips and supports between 952 – 1,168 jobs around the country. The report also found evidence that freshwater angling enhances physical and mental health outcomes.

It was noted that some specific clarification was required to ensure that guiding operations were included in the assessment. Following this, an appropriate release time to the open public/media will be considered.

Health and Safety Committee

Brief discussion ensued on the Health and Safety committee established by NZ Council involving regional staff and co-ordinated by NZ Council. Mr Teal provided an overview of the expectations of outputs and outcomes from that group – in supporting regional policy update and review, and hopefully giving consistency in approach and priority.

After further brief discussion it was moved that

The report from Wellington Council's appointee Councillor Haslett on NZ Fish and Game Council business and overview of the NZ Council meeting 14 December 2024 be received

Terry Inglis/Aaron Passey

Carried

Chairman Dewar confirmed that further discussion relating to establishing an access fund would be deferred as a topic in General Business in this meeting.

7. Public Forum

An opportunity was afforded to members of the public to discuss specific issues with Council.

Colin Shore provided some comments in support of Councillors to address key issues and acknowledge the work of staff in continuing and undertake monitoring programmes.

8. Regional Governance – Chairman’s Report

Chairman Dewar provided a brief overview on regional governance matters.

1. Chairman’s Report for Previous Period

There were no specific issues that needed to be highlighted that were relevant to governance functions but provided an overview of key operational outcomes where appropriate.

2. Response to Letter from Minister of Hunting and Fishing 4 November 2024

Chairman Dewar provided an overview of the feedback letter by Wellington Council to the Minister. He noted that there had been no response back from the Minister other than receipt of acknowledgement.

3. Feedback on Governance Training Workshop

Brief discussion on the level of training received and potential additional training opportunities. There was support for further governance instruction and potentially more on-line cost-effective options if and when available.

Brief discussion ensued on the development and confirmation of KPIs for the Chief Executive and the need to follow this up.

After brief further discussion it was moved

that the Chairman’s verbal report on regional governance issues be received.

Jim Cook/Jennifer Yanko

Carried

9. Inter-regional Business - Governance

A. Regional Chairs’ Forum Update

Chairman Dewar provided confirmation that there had been one Chair’s Forum at the end of January attended by nine Chairs. The NZ Council Chair

also attended to provide thoughts on the new Minister for Hunting and Fishing.

Chairman Dewar confirmed that another topic of discussion at the Chairs' Forum (online in January) was the consideration of the Future Finance Report and why it hadn't been actively progressed by NZ Council. Auckland/Waikato Chair was advocating for re-evaluating the findings of that report and the draft Cost Optimisation report – although it was noted that they did not participate in the provision of data or commentary on the latter report development.

Chairman Dewar confirmed that there was a scheduled Governance Chairs' Forum in early March to discuss Zero Based Budget implementation process amongst other items. It was noted that Chairs would have the responsibility to present NZC with the budget and provide explanation if required for clarification.

Chairman Dewar that the regional Chairs present at the online meeting had accepted the ZBB approach and there was no opposition to using that approach moving forward. It was considered that the transition approach would most likely accept as an interim – the same budget as previous years but confirming that the contestable fund process was not intended to be used.

Chairman Dewar noted that the Chairs had also discussed the response to botulism outbreak in Otago – which provided a link to discussions on regional Fish and Game responses to potential HPAI incursions and potential impacts on revenue.

B. Shared Resources Update

Chairman Dewar provided a brief update on the operations of the shared resources arrangements between Wellington and Taranaki Fish and Game Councils – with no material issues that needed to be brought to the attention of governors.

It was then moved that

Council receive the update report presented the Chairman on Inter-regional Business – Governance for the previous period since the last meeting of Council.

Jim Cook/Steve Brown

Carried

10. Strategic Matters

A. Strategy Discussion

Council considered confirming strategic direction in terms of responding to strategic planning – both formal and informal processes – that will assist in defining strategic priorities for 2025/2026 and additional resources required for project delivery. Key elements will include implementation of organisational strategic priorities and outcomes.

Chairman Dewar noted that there was a compendium of strategic documents appended to the agenda to provide guidance on defining strategic direction and assisting with prioritising outcomes and actions.

The organisational strategy had been used to define regional outcome statements – and this needed to be considered as the Annual Report now acknowledged the Outcome Reporting process – the “Why are we doing this action and are we having an impact on angling and hunting (and wider society).”

Being in the early part of the triennial Fish and Game electoral cycle it was also appropriate to define where do we want Fish and Game Wellington to be on progressing specific outcomes in 3-5 years.

Wide discussion occurred including the following points:

- Most effective monitoring – robust and relevance, accuracy, variation, and strategic relevance
- Most efficient monitoring approach – frequency, overlapping regions
- Most economical ways to undertake monitoring – better ways of doing it
- Importance of environmental management – we must have a quality resource (habitats) to be able to successfully undertake pursuits
- The changing nature of recruitment – that used to be a focus for clubs taking that role – and is now an active consideration for Fish and Game (under the R3 programme).
- Acknowledgement of the legislative requirements
- Fish and Game’s ability to influence population dynamics and variance
- Acknowledging changing situation (climate change effects)
- Need to do monitoring “you can’t manage what you don’t monitor”
- Maintaining Fish and Game relevance – social licence
- Managing the revenue requirements (licence sales and R3)
- Ensuring access to the resource
- Uncertain political environment – resource management, fisheries and game governance
- Feedback on value for the licence – “what do ‘I’ get for the licence fee?”
- Priorities identified from Licence Holder Survey indicate that environmental management and access are the two key priorities.

- Mana whenua engagement – what level of emphasis for engagement – local issues on case-by-case basis – establishing relationships with all iwi groupings is ambitious considering resources available to Wellington Fish and Game. Actively look for opportunities for engagement with mana whenua in key resource areas.
- Recruitment dynamics of licence holders – and the current retention of ageing population of licence holders. Need to find out information from licence holders on their motivations, their regular or itinerant use.
- The strategic outcomes are all integrated – must have resource to have licence holder use then follows other outcomes. Top priorities should continue to focus on (Outcome #5) **healthy habitats and ecosystems** and (Outcome #4) **public perception and legitimacy**
- It was acknowledged that there was currently a culture developing within young teenagers the fishing is a great experience – independently occurring to Fish and Game efforts – but we need to look at strategies to assist and maintain that interest – social media or communications plan – noting that this might be a self-generating social media culture.
- The ZBB approach will help to identify ‘a need to do’ project vs a ‘nice to do’ project.

Mr Teal acknowledged the draft 2025/2026 budget process and Operational Work Plan would be developed – but noted that they did appear to be a material shift in priorities or activities based on the main points of these discussions.

B. Risk Management Issues

Mr Teal referred to an early update and discussion on risk management issues associated with Avian influenza H5N1 Strain (HPAI – High Pathogenic Avian Influenza) – noting that there had been no formal change to risk level

C. Iwi Engagement

Mr Teal noted that he is actively developing a strategic approach to engaging with Mana Whenua and how to incorporate a co-operative process in decision-making. He outlined the development of a detailed register of interest in Mana Whenua groupings and contacts – and rohe (areas of interest).

11. Policy and Legislation Considerations

Key legislation relating to Fish and Game activities were briefly discussed:

A. Wildlife Act Review

Mr Teal noted that the formal review of the Wildlife Act was still under active consideration but there had been no update as to the priority or timetable made public.

B. Resource Management Act Review

Mr Teal confirmed that the review of resource management law was continuing under the new government:

- The Resource Management (Consenting and Other System Changes) Amendment Bill part of a phased overhaul of the resource management system, was introduced in December 2024 and will become law by mid-2025. This Bill is part of Phase 2, which focuses on targeted changes before Phase 3, leading to a new Resource Management Act. Submissions on the Bill closed 10 February 2025, with implementation expected by mid-2025. The amendments address five key themes: infrastructure and energy, housing growth, farming and primary sector, natural hazards and emergencies, and system improvements.
- The Bill changes discharge rules under section 70 of the RMA, allowing regional councils to permit discharges if adverse effects on aquatic life already exist and standards are set to reduce those effects over time.

C. Fast Track Approvals Bill

Fast Track Approvals Act is now active legislation.

D. Arms Act Review

The Government is reforming firearms law and regulations to provide for greater protection of public safety and simplify regulatory requirements to improve compliance.

From 13 January to 28 February, they are inviting public submissions to help guide the rewrite of the Arms Act 1983.

It was agreed that Wellington Fish and Game Council would make its own submission – in addition but consistent with NZ Fish and Game Council's submission.

It was also agreed that licence holders be provided with a simple consultation response on which to base and amend a submission.

E. Other Active Legislative Changes

- Treaty of Waitangi Principles Bill was actively being considered by the Justice Select Committee.
- Submissions to the Regulatory Standards Bill closed on 13 January 2025 and it was noted that this was an overarching legislation over other legislation based on objections on financial grounds – and potentially it could preside over grounds for objection based on environmental issues. An awareness of the potential implications of changes in legislation need to be considered on the influence on other legislation but it was not actively submitted on by Fish and Game.

F. Organisational Policies

Mr Teal indicated that he was continuing to liaise with NZ Council and regions regarding defining best practice policy for operational and governance applications.

Council had previously considered the Draft HR Policy – Managing Fatigue in the Work Place - which outlines causes and risks of fatigue, and responsibilities to implement suitable control measures to reduce the risks of fatigue. This was a policy required by the Marine Safety Authority for operations of boats for Fish and Game.

It was acknowledged at the Governance Workshop in January 2025 that there was additional policy required on managing long-term fatigue or burnout – which had the potential to be a greater health and safety risk.

It was then moved

That Wellington Council reconfirm support the draft HR Policy – Managing Fatigue in the Work Place

Aaron Passey/Jim Cook

Carried

12. Health and Safety Report November 2024 and December 2024.

Councillor Passey noted that reference to actively managing for COVID-19 can be removed as for most workplaces, COVID-19 is not a risk arising from their work that needs to be managed from a health and safety perspective.

Councillor Passey also noted that outcomes from the Health and Safety meetings could be included as a summary in the Health and Safety Bi-Monthly Report. Mr Teal noted that this information was also being forwarded to NZ Council to compile a NZ-wide summary of reporting –accidents, near-misses, proactive actions

After discussion it was moved that

Council to receive staff report on Health and Safety for November 2024 and December 2024

Aaron Passey/Jim Cook

Carried

13. Species Management

A. Research Update

Mr Teal provided a brief overview of the research undertaken and the progress on publishing papers in scientific journals:

- **Trout – Native Fish interactions** – a paper had been re-submitted for publication in a scientific publication following peer review by referees. Awaiting formal acceptance by journal.
- **Potential effects of Climate Change on Trout Distribution and other Native Fish Distribution** – accepted for publication, and published in *Canadian Journal of Fisheries and Aquatic Sciences* - Canning A.D.,

Zammitc, and Death 2025. *The implications of climate change for New Zealand's freshwater fish*

B. Game Notice Considerations

Staff had previously presented the data and analysis of the mallard transect counts which indicated a trend downwards – but noted that it still falls between a ‘normal’ season range.

Staff had also previously circulated information from the trend counts for paradise shelduck and black swan counts undertaken in January 2025. The recommendations were confirmed by the majority of councillors before 29 January 2025 – the deadline for getting recommendations to the Minister via NZ Council.

After brief discussion it was then moved that

The draft recommendations to the Minister of Hunting and Fishing for Game Season 2025 be confirmed as the basis for season regulations.

Paul Dewar/Aaron Passey

Carried

Councillor Inglis considered that the extent of distribution and number of grey teal were increasing and sought clarification of the processes required to get a limited harvest. Mr Teal provided a brief overview of the process undertaken in 2005-2008 that despite enough evidence indicating their wide distribution and sufficient numbers for a limited harvest at that stage – there would be a requirement by DOC for wide consultation with mana whenua and other stakeholders to progress.

14. Habitat Advocacy and Management

Mr Teal provided a brief summary of activity in November and December 2024 related to resource management advocacy:

A. Regional Planning advocacy

- Horizons Regional Council are continuing with the Oranga Wai consultation – the next generation of Regional Plan changes to reflect NPS FM 2020 – focusing on water quantity and water quality parameters. The timetable to complete the Plan Change public notification has been revised to September 2027.
- Horizons Regional Council are continuing with their Plan Change 2 of the Regional Plan (One Plan) to introduce an additional tool – Nitrogen Loss Risk Scorecard - to deal with nitrogen leaching from intensive farm use. Awaiting decision from Environment Court. Feedback was sought from

the Environment Court as to whether the participants saw value in pursuing the legal arguments given pending changes to RM legislation.

B. Resource Consent advocacy

- Mr Teal noted the range of activities undertaken by staff in the months of November and December 2024.

15. Participation

Mr Teal provided an overview of activities undertaken by staff in November and December 2024 including:

A. Access Management

- Updating access sign inventory.
- An overview was provided of the Access Charter launched by Minister of Hunting and Fishing
- Updating access sign inventory.
- Active management of access requirements to multiple sites undertaken – request for assistance for hunter access at Wairarapa wetland
- Supporting NZ Council initiated campaign with an access focus.

B. Information to Clients

- Newsletter Fishing – Early Summer produced and distributed.

16. Public Awareness/Communications

Mr Teal provided a brief overview of activities that had involved staff regarding public awareness and communication in November and December 2024:

A. Iwi Engagement

- Sought clarification from Kahungunu ki Wairarapa on visions and management of Wairarapa Moana

B. Public Awareness

- Club sponsored fishing days supported.

C. Communication

- Publicity Releases on Children's (Family) Fishing Opportunities at Hokowhitu Lagoon

D. Promotions

- Children's Fishing Day promotion event – Hokowhitu – preparation and attendance in late November/early December.

- Otago Promotion of Celebrating 150 years of Trout Fishing Licence. Mr Teal noted that he had issued bonafide actual day licences as part of the promotional campaign in addition to the Otago certification option.

17. Licence Sales and Licence Management System

Mr Teal provided a brief summary of licence sales up until 31 October 2024:

- A. Licence Sales Report for 2024/2025 Fishing Season YTD– until 31 December 2024** – Confirmation of licence sales indicating YTD – comparison with previous year.
- LEQ sales down to previous year 3.5% (2261 c.f. 2344)
 - Total Number of Sales of licences similar to previous year (2805 c.f. 2806)
 - Nationally licence sales value LEQ is down 1.1% (55,551c.f. 56,178).

It was moved that

Council receive Licence Sales Report for 2024/2025 Fishing Season YTD (up to 31 December 2024)

Jim Cook/Terry Inglis

Carried

B. Licence Management System – November and December 2024

Mr Teal provided a brief overview of the Licencing Management System Monthly Performance Reports for November 2024 and December 2024 noting that the provider was performing well with no issues of continuity of service.

It was then moved

Council receive the update report for November and December 2024 for performance of provider of services to manage the licensing platform and database management.

Jennifer Yanko/Ben Hancock

Carried

18. Operational Summary 1 November 2024 to 31 December 2024

After discussion and clarification it was moved

Council to receive the staff report on Operational Summary for November and December 2024

Aaron Passey/Terry Inglis

Carried

19. Financial Statements to 31 December 2024 and Financial Transactions for November and December 2024

After discussion it was moved that

Council receive Financial Statements for Year-to-Date for the 2024/2025 Financial Year –Income Statement up to end December 2024 and Financial Transactions for November and December 2024.

Jim Cook/Steve Brown

Carried

Council authorised Mr Teal to look at feasibility of options for leasing office premises including a different location.

20. Correspondence and Media

Mr Teal referred to the response from GWRC in explaining their position in providing advice to give rise to a recommendation made by the Kapiti Whaitua Committee to list sports fish including brown trout as a possible contributory to water quality issues and potentially included in a fish removal plan. Council requested further information and engagement with GWRC:

- a copy of the advice that GWRC had provided to the committee to enable them to make an incorrect decision;
- a list of consultation undertaken with Fish and Game as the statutory managers for the species; and
- an explanation as to how the GWRC saw their role as kāwanatanga as Crown agents to represent other parties (including statutory bodies) in their deliberations and management – so as not to become an insular group.

There were no additional specific items of correspondence that had not already been addressed in the meeting.

After discussion it was moved that

Council receives correspondence from GWRC regarding Kapiti Whaitua Committee recommendations and seek further information

Terry Inglis/ Aaron Passey

Carried

21. Recognition Awards

Councillors were requested to bring forward names of those contributors to the management or governance of the fish and game resource that were worthy of specific recognition.

22. Conservation Board Liaison


Discussion ensued on the potential discussion points that could be a focus for attendance at the next Conservation Board meeting scheduled. Confirmed that Jim Cook had been nominated and supported for the Wellington Conservation Board.

23. General Business

Councillor Brown reiterated the concept of establishing a fund or legal mechanism such as setting up a Trust to enable buying of land to guarantee access rights to hunters and anglers and public into the future. He considered that privatisation of access will only become progressively more of an issue with land being locked up for private paying anglers. Discussion ensued on looking at nationally how to develop a fund that could be used to secure wetlands, access to rivers, and establish partnerships with other agencies or sponsors such as the Walking Access Commission – with a view to achieving results in a ten year time frame. It was agreed to write a letter to NZ Council to actively identify legal mechanisms - either already in use or that could be developed - to establish a specific purpose fund so that the monies were not used to 'fund' the Fish and Game system. Any legal structures and approaches would need to be developed to encourage donations and support for the concept.

There were no further specific items of general business, the meeting closed at 6.15pm.

Next Meeting to be held: Tuesday, 11 March 2025 at Upper Hutt Cosmopolitan Club, 11 Logan Street, Upper Hutt at 3.00pm.

Chairman  Date 12.3.25

