

WELLINGTON FISH & GAME COUNCIL

MINUTES OF MEETING OF THE WELLINGTON FISH & GAME COUNCIL, HELD ON TUESDAY 11 MARCH 2025 AT 3.05PM AT UPPER HUTT COSMOPOLITAN CLUB, 11 LOGAN STREET, UPPER HUTT.

1. **Present:**

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

Video Link: Councillors Kieran Bell, Richard McIntyre (part)

In Attendance:

Fish and Game Staff: Phil Teal

Welcome and Confirmation of Agenda

Chairman Dewar opened the meeting and welcomed Councillors and staff.

2. **Apologies:**

It was noted that apologies were received from:

Councillor Terry Inglis, Andrew McGregor, Richard McIntyre (lateness), Aaron Passey (lateness).

Staff: Dr Matt Kavermann, Hamish Carnachan, Ami Coughlan

It was then moved that

the apologies received be accepted

Steve Brown/Ben Hancock

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 11 February 2025**

Following consideration of the draft Minutes of the meeting of the Wellington Fish and Game Council of 11 February 2025 it was moved that ***the Minutes of the meeting of the Wellington Fish & Game Council of 11 February 2025 be approved and confirmed as a true and correct record of the proceedings of that meeting.***

Steve Brown/Jim Cook

Carried

5. **Matters Arising:**

Mr Teal referred to the Action List resulting from the 11 February 2025 meeting, noting actions progressed relating to the following items:

- Wellington Fish and Game Council made its own submission on the Arms Act Review – in addition to, but consistent with, NZ Fish and Game Council’s submission. In addition, licence holders were provided with a simple consultation response to the Arms Act Review on which to base (and/or amend) a submission.
- NZ Council was informed that Wellington F&GC support the draft HR Policy – Managing Fatigue in the Workplace noting additional policy was required on managing long-term fatigue or ‘burnout’ – which had the potential to be a greater health and safety risk.
- NZ Council was informed of the confirmation of draft recommendations to the Minister for Hunting and Fishing as the basis for season regulations for the Game Season 2025.
- Jim Cook received support as a nomination for a potential Conservation Board member, and this 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 28 February 2025 and 2 March 2025. He briefly outlined the key topics covered at that meeting:

- **Health and Safety and Wellbeing:**

The Health and Safety and Wellbeing Act defines ‘health’ to include both mental and physical well-being and there are obligations on employers to take reasonable steps to prevent psychological harm and support employees with mental health issues or disabilities. The NZ Council CE will host a webinar on health, safety, and well-being obligations for staff and governors, with a dedicated wellbeing paper to be presented at a future NZC meeting.

The Council discussed the renamed Health, Safety and Wellbeing Team (an internal advisory group) supporting the HR Manager and Chief Executive with insights for an organisation-wide view. The Council requested that the H&S System requirements be finalised (pending expert input) and presented at the June meeting, following a workshop with Regional Managers/CEs.

The NZ Council agreed on the need for a clear time-in-lieu policy that balances timely completion of critical work with safeguards against ‘burnout’ and unfair expectations.

- **Risk Register**

The full organisational risk register was presented to NZ Council, with key risks highlighted by the Chief Executive. These included financial pressures on the national office, the absence of a research function, and the threat of HPAI entering New Zealand. The high workload of NZC staff was identified as a major risk, exacerbated by budget constraints and gaps in core roles such as research and senior finance, limiting organisational capacity.

- **Advocacy and RM Advocacy**

NZC had submitted on several key reforms, including the Biosecurity Act, Conservation Law Reform, Resource Management Amendment Bill, Local Government (Water Services) Bill, MPI's Crown Land tree planting RFI, and the Arms Act Review submission (which was due on the first day of the Council meeting).

The Council approved the draft Resource Management & Legislation Fund policy for regional consultation - the policy sets criteria for prioritising funding applications and outlines case management and reporting requirements.

- **Access Strategy and Advocacy Campaign**

In November 2023, following identification of key access issues, the Access Strategy was developed to better coordinate efforts and engage key stakeholders – with this strategy now being under review.

The concept of purchasing land for access and habitat enhancement and reselling was favourably discussed as a potential option to be considered in the strategy.

- **Supporting Women Anglers**

NZ Council reviewed the findings of a report commissioned to Otago University to study key barriers faced by women anglers which included limited access to resources, cultural norms, lack of women in leadership, and safety concerns in remote areas.

Regional Fish and Game Councils will be asked to consider how they could support actions that deliver education tailored to women anglers, and how to support networks for women anglers (e.g. clubs, social media).

- **R3 Strategy - Retain, Reactivate, Recruit (R3)**

A report to the NZ Council was provided on Fish & Game's R3 strategy

to boost participation in hunting and fishing and raise organisational awareness. NZC will request feedback from regional Fish and Game Councils on how actions within their R3 implementation programmes will support these goals.

- **Zero Based Budget Process Update**

It was noted that there were significant delays in providing a ZBB budgeting tool template to regional Fish and Game Councils – and it was concluded that there would be acceptance of regional budget presentations in either the 2024/25 budget template or the new ZBB Tool Template.

Councillor Aaron Passey arrived at the meeting at 3:15pm.

- **North Canterbury Operational Proposal**

North Canterbury F&G Council Chair presented a proposal for an alternative operating model. They were seeking approval to further investigate a more detailed and fully costed proposal that contracted services from NZC including the staff management and back-office services and other services – but retaining an Operations Manager rather than a Regional Manager/Chief Executive.

This was progressed as an alternative to the Taranaki and Wellington option for shared resources for operational functions – and it was concluded that considering an alternative operational model would complicate both regional operations at this stage.

It was noted that NZC would not stand in the way of other collaborations of a similar nature with other regional Councils. Hawke's Bay (and potentially Northland) expressed some interest in investigating this option, while other regions were less likely to support this operating model. It was noted that North Canterbury and Hawke's Bay regions currently don't have a regional manager, so it was not such a disruptive change management concept.

It was noted that the NZ Council Chair had sent e-mails to all governors noting concerns about the potential liabilities of health and safety as a PCBU – in contrast to the situation of not employing staff as a PCBU. Chairman Dewar questioned whether regions could contract themselves out of health and safety responsibilities – especially if they were still directing what staff do.

Further discussion ensued on the uncertainty in the proposal based on cost savings – as it was viewed that the outcome was likely to be

transferring the operational cost to NZ Council. It was questioned whether this was simply trying to pass responsibilities onto NZ Council and what the requirements were to adequately resource this option. It was noted that if NZ Council was contracted to provide services to complete regional operational plans that it could lead to major organisational structure change.

It was clarified that NZ Council was asked not to stand in the way of a potential precedent for change. During Wellington Council's discussions it was postulated that this could lead to reducing leadership from regional councils and being more akin to an Advisory Board style in approach.

It was considered that if the organisational response to the proposal was not unified then this might indicate to the Minister for Hunting and Fishing the inability of the organisation to come to a consensus of approach.

- **National Finance Report**
The expenditure items and financial reports were approved but it was noted that the Chief Financial Officer was confirmed as departing the role.
- **Licence Management System Update**
NZ Council will engage in the process of confirming a two-year extension to the existing licence agreement contract with ESL, and will implement an open market process to investigate building CRM, Executive Dashboard, and Digital Ecosystem functionalities.
- **Research Committee Report**
Currently in the process of considering research proposals – noting that research needs and proposals need to follow the process with considerations to be managed by the current Co-Chairs.

It was noted that while the Fish Futures Survey undertaken by Cawthron Institute appears to be for Fish and Game's benefit, there was no communications brought to the Research Committee (or wider organisation) for approval prior to implementation action. It was further noted that there had been a lack of updates and communication on the progress of various workstreams in the wider Fish Futures programme.

It was then 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 28 February and 2 March 2025 be received

Jim Cook/Aaron Brown

Carried

B. NZ Council Budgeting Process Update

Further to previous discussion it was confirmed that there had been significant delays in providing a ZBB budgeting tool template to regional Fish and Game Councils. It was clarified that there would be acceptance of regional budget presentations in either the 2024/25 budget template or the new ZBB Tool Template.

Councillor McIntyre arrived at the meeting by zoom at 4:00pm.

C. HPAI Response by NZ Fish and Game Council

Mr Teal provided an update of the HPAI (Highly Pathogenic Avian Influenza) confirming that:

- There has been no detection of HPAI strain H5N1 in the sub-Antarctic islands of New Zealand nor the mainland – so the risk level is unchanged.
- There also continues to be no sign of HPAI H7N6 strain extending beyond the property in Otago – where an incident of this strain was detected in December 2024.

The risk to human health remains low and there are no food safety concerns.

Fish and Game staff operated at Level 1 of the Risk Framework and utilised appropriate PPE gear for banding activities – to ensure good hygiene protocols in handling birds, and use of eyewear and gloves.

7. Public Forum

An opportunity was afforded to members of the public to discuss specific issues with Council. There were no issues brought forward.

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 significant issues that needed to be highlighted that were relevant to governance functions but provided an overview of key operational outcomes where appropriate.

2. Scheduled Meeting with the Minister for Hunting and Fishing

Chairman Dewar confirmed the meeting with Minister for Hunting and Fishing on 11 March 2025 would occur via videoconference after the conclusion of current meeting. He indicated that several suggested topics for discussion had been provided to the Minister. He confirmed that there would be an opportunity to have a pre-meeting discussion with councillors to confirm priority discussion and emphasis – prior to the on-line meeting with the Minister.

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 an overview of the Chairs/(Governors' workshop held in Wellington and noted the key discussion topics:

There was a presentation made by a governance advisor on the federal structure and the interpretation of legislation of what NZ Council can and cannot do – including the use of national policy to require regions to do things. One legal opinion referred to supported the principle of National Policy being used to require certain actions to be carried out by regions in implementing a policy but some regions may not necessarily accept this opinion.

The workshop split into discussion groups with the topics focusing on 'how to make Fish and Game better' – which provided a diversity of views including:

- disagreement to impose things on regions. Examples of trying to implement SOP (Standard Operating Procedures) centrally on a NZ wide basis – with arguments proffered for using a different approach for different regions where a nuance approach was appropriate.
- It was acknowledged that regions can have input into what was developed into National Policy – but there was little guidance in the potential consequence of not following National Policy.
- There were differing opinions provided on the budgeting structure and the tension that this created – with those regions that 'paid' levies considering unfairly treated, and those regions who 'received' grants considered somewhat subservient. The concept of a 'national' licence was discussed – as this was logically derived from the total budget of the organisation.
- Following each group's presentation there were some conclusions:

- Better communication was required both internally and externally.
- SOPs were supported but current structures can't tell regions what to do.
- Most considered that all regions and NZC needed to do things 'better' but that most weren't particularly unhappy with the current situation.

Following the Chair's presentation, discussion was held on key SOPs that were required to ensure a robust and consistent framework.

The concept of developing good policy (exemplar policy) to get a consensus of approach and become 'the' option for regions to adopt. The use of a robust SOP was accepted as a good principle – as long as it was created in consultation with regions. Discussion continued on the consequences of not following SOPs and what happens if they are not implemented – with an example of monitoring data not being robust enough and fit for purpose – if a NZ wide robust approach is required that is open for critique.

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

Aaron Passey/Ben Hancock

Carried

10. Draft Annual Budget and Project Plan

Mr Teal provided an overview of the draft budget and operational work plan:

- Budget provided using existing template to provide indicative budgets
- Budget template for Zero Based Budget approach not available within timeframe – this will be completed using the indicative budgets as a basis.
- Project listed and outputs are indicative and will be completed in final Operational Work Plan for August Council meeting approval.

He also outlined the key changes to the Operational Work Plan following interpretation of the strategic discussions held at the 11 February Council Meeting:

- a. **Increased/reallocation of time resources for:** iwi engagement, Sports Fish and Gamebird Management Plan review, Access campaign, monitoring SOPs.
- b. **Additional (\$) resource requirements for:** species monitoring (aircraft hire cost), R3 Initiatives, staff salary adjustments, back filling shared resources.

Councillor Brown sought discussion on critiquing the species monitoring programmes to ensure they were still fit for purpose and remain cost efficient – including frequency of monitoring required. Discussion ensued on the priority of these work programmes to be able to detect changes in resource holding capacity for populations and what is causing those changes.

It was considered that there are considerable external funding opportunities for physical resource enhancement – if projects are a collaboration such as providing advice rather than physical works. It was noted that monitoring data and findings provided strength to approach other resource managers such as regional council river management – to promote changes in their actions to reverse river degradation.

There was acknowledgement of the legislative requirements to undertake monitoring including to be able to provide robust decision-making on regulations. The strategic value of monitoring data to assess or model other external influences such as climate change are only possible with long term robust data sets.

It was recognised that main component to the monitoring programme is staff resources rather than external cost savings. Further comments supported the retention of the current monitoring programmes as it was considered that licence holders expected us to have robust monitoring data and to be able to react to changes in population.

Discussion noted that the suggested adjustments to staff salaries may be too conservative at 1% - and that they should reflect the same percentage as the Strategic Pay assessments (or CPI level noted in staff contracts). CPI is estimated at about 2%,

It was then moved

That subject to the changes suggested to the draft budget and draft Operational Work Plan that this be accepted as the basis for presentation of budget to NZ Council as part of the budgeting process (in the previous year's style template format)

Paul Dewar/Aaron Passey

Carried

11. Strategic Matters

A. Risk Management Review

Mr Teal reiterated the previous update that there had been no change to the risk level for avian influenza H5N1 Strain.

B. Iwi Engagement

Mr Teal provided an overview of the presentation that he would make to the Wairarapa Moana Statutory Reserve Board on 14 March 2025. He confirmed that NZ Council CE would also attend.

12. Policy and Legislation

A. Wildlife Act Review

Mr Teal confirmed that there has been no update as to the priority or timetable, but confirmation received that DOC are actively progressing this review.

B. Resource Management Act Review

Mr Teal confirmed that a second RMA amendment bill was introduced to Parliament in December and is due to become law in mid-2025. The Resource Management (Consenting and Other System Changes) Amendment Bill (the Bill) was introduced to Parliament on 9 December 2024.

The Bill amends the scope of discharge rules under section 70 of the Resource Management Act (RMA), in response to recent Court findings and in alignment with the Resource Management (Freshwater and Other Matters) Amendment Act 2024. The new Bill seeks enables regional councils to permit such discharges if those adverse effects already exist and there are standards that contribute to a reduction in adverse effects over a specified time period.

C. Arms Act Review

Mr Teal confirmed that Wellington Fish and Game Council made a submission on 28 February 2025 regarding reforming firearms law and regulation to provide for greater protection of public safety and simplify regulatory requirements to improve compliance.

13. Health and Safety Report

Mr Teal provided a brief overview of the Health and Safety report for January 2025 and February 2025 – noting that there had been no accidents or notable incidents are reported that are required to be brought to the attention of Council.

He further noted that there was currently a review of Health and Safety policies being co-ordinated by NZ Council.

After consideration and discussion of the Health and Safety Report, it was moved that

Council to receive staff report on Health and Safety for January 2025 and February 2025

Jim Cook/Ben Hancock

Carried

14. Species Management

Mr Teal provided a summary of two current research projects:

1. Trout – Native Fish interactions – this update from first peer review was sent to an alternate reviewer who has requested further changes to the paper.
2. Potential effects of Climate Change on Trout Distribution and other Native Fish Distribution – this has been completed and published. Consideration has been given as to how to publicise these results and the implications of management response.

15. Habitat Advocacy and Management

Mr Teal provided a brief overview of activity for Habitat Advocacy:

A. Regional Planning advocacy

Horizons Regional Council are continuing slowly 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 for public notification is September 2027.

No further update on progress of the Environment Court case for Plan Change 2 of the Regional Plan (One Plan) for Horizons Regional Council – seeking to introduce an additional tool – Nitrogen Loss Risk Scorecard - to deal with nitrogen leaching from intensive farm use.

B. Resource Consent advocacy

Mr Teal noted that the Territorial Local Authorities had been seeking public comment on up to two options for water management collectives and approaches to collaborative municipal water management.

16. Participation

Mr Teal provided a brief overview of activity for participation function and licence holder communications and engagement:

A. Access Management

- Updating access sign inventory.

- Considering additional layer of aerial photo on website access (additional cost considerations).
- Other options being considered to improve fishing access layers on WAMS site
- Active management of access requirements to multiple sites undertaken – request for assistance for hunter access at Wairarapa wetland

B. Information to Clients

- 2025 Game Season Magazine articles prepared.
- Newsletter – Early Summer produced and distributed.
- Weekly Lowdown report continuing until April 2025

C. Licence Holder Engagement

- Engaged with hunting licence holders regarding submission to Arms Act Review

17. Public Awareness/Communications

Mr Teal provided a brief overview of activity for participation function.

A. Iwi Engagement

Clarification was sought from Kahungunu ki Wairarapa on visions and management of Wairarapa Moana

18. Licence Sales and Licence Management System

Mr Teal provided a brief summary of licence sales up until 17 February 2025:

A. Fish Licence Sales Update – until 17 February 2025

- Licence Sales Report for 2024/2025 Fishing Season YTD:
 - Confirmation of licence sales indicating YTD – comparison with previous year:
 - **LEQ sales down to previous year 4.2% (2,581 c.f. 2,693)**
 - **Total Number of Sales of licences up 1.9% to previous year (4,663 c.f. 4,575)**
 - **Nationally licence sales value LEQ is similar to previous year 0.1% (64,313 c.f. 64,281).**

It was moved that

Council receive Licence Sales Report for 2024/2025 Fishing Season YTD (up to 17 February 2025)

Jennifer Yanko/Aaron Passey

Carried

B. Licence Management System – January and February 2025

Mr Teal provided a brief overview of the Licencing Management System Monthly Performance Reports for January 2025 and February 2025 noting that the provider was performing well with no issues of continuity of service.

It was then moved

Council receive the update report for January and February 2025 for performance of provider of services to manage the licensing platform and database management.

Ben Hancock/Jim Cook

Carried

19. Operational Summary 1 January 2025 to 28 February 2025

After discussion and clarification it was moved

Council to receive the staff report on Operational Summary for January 2025 and February 2025

Ben Hancock/Jennifer Yanko

Carried

20. Financial Statements to 28 February 2025 and Financial Transactions for January and February 2025

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 February 2025 and Financial Transactions for January and February 2025.

Aaron Passey/Jim Cook

Carried

Mr Teal confirmed that he was still looking at the feasibility of options for leasing office premises including a different location, and also vehicle replacement – but neither would be progressed until presented to Council.

21. Correspondence and Media

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

22. 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.

It was agreed that Corina Jordan should be formally recognised with a recognition award for the commitment of outstanding service to Fish and Game (particularly for contributions to Wellington and Taranaki regions), and over recent years as the Chief Executive of NZ Fish and Game Council.

After further discussion it was then moved to

Send a letter to Corina Jordan to express appreciation for her outstanding commitment to Fish and Game and the professionalism shown in recent years as Chief Executive of NZ Fish and Game Council.

Paul Dewar/Jim Cook

Carried

Further discussion ensued on the explanation provided by the NZ Council Chair via email regarding Corina's resignation, which inferred some governors and staff acting poorly may have contributed to her decision to resign. It was suggested that a letter be sent to NZC Chair requesting more detail to enable any potential poor behaviour to be identified and addressed and/or called out.

23. Conservation Board Liaison

Discussion ensued on the potential discussion points that could be a focus for attendance at the next Conservation Board meeting scheduled.

It was confirmed that Jim Cook had been nominated and supported for the Wellington Conservation Board, but anticipating any appointments may be mid-year.

24. General Business

There were no items of general business noted before or during the meeting that were required to be addressed.

Councillor Bell noted that there was a potential resource advocacy issue with the proposal to establish Huriwaka Wind Farm - a 60 turbine wind station - near Moawhango – with establishment of service roads likely to have some effects on the Hautapu Catchment.

There were no further specific items of general business, the meeting closed at 6.10pm.

Next Meeting to be held: Tuesday, 27 May 2025 at Hotel Coachman, 104 Fitzherbert Ave, Palmerston North at 3.00pm.

Chairman  Date _____