

**NATIONAL SEA RUN SALMON COMMITTEE**

Sixth Meeting, 27 March 2019

10am Start Time, 3.00pm Finish Time

North Canterbury Fish & Game Office, 595 Johns Road

**AGENDA**

**Committee members**: Roy Knight (North Canterbury F&GC), Ben Sowry (Nelson/Marlborough F&GC), Matthew Hall (Central South Island F&GC), Philip Musson (North Canterbury F&GC) Rick Boyd (Otago F&GC), Rob Roney (West Coast F&GC), Paul Hodgson (NZ Salmon Anglers Association), Alan Brooks (South Canterbury Salmon Anglers Association).

**Others present**: Emily Arthur – Moore (North Canterbury F&G) as minute taker. Steve Terry (North Canterbury F&G), Ian Hadland (Otago F&G), Mark Webb (Central South Island F&G).

**Welcome**

1. Apologies - Martin Taylor (NZ F&G Council), Zane Moss (Southland F&G), Vaughan Lynn (Nelson Marlborough F&G), Dean Kelly (West Coast F&G).
2. Identify Conflicts of Interest against items on this meeting’s agenda. Phillip Musson declared he was a shareholder with Fonterra. *Moved Matthew Hall, Seconded Phillip Musson. Carried.*
3. Confirm Minutes of previous meeting – *Moved Phil Musson Seconded, Paul Hodgson – Carried*
4. Election of a Chair. Roy Knight was elected Chair. *Moved Rick Boyd, Seconded Ben Sowry. Carried.*

**Matters arising**:

1. Rick Boyd said the committee should focus on targets and not get too involved with the details which was for staff to work through. He was concerned not enough focus was given at last meeting to making sure actions lead to a reduction in salmon Harvest of 30% of the run consistently across the regions. Mark Webb believed trying to achieve consistency across regions would require too much of a reduction in harvest for the Waimakariri.
2. A discussion was had around updating the sportfish management plans for each region. It was mentioned that this was a lengthy process. No decision was reached on the topic.

**Discussion on responses from regions to letters from the Committee regarding regulation changes:**

1. The responses from the regions were considered. These included support from Nelson Marlborough, Central South Island and North Canterbury Fish & Game Councils to put forward a recommendation to reduce the bag limit for salmon to 1 per day. These recommendations were approved in principle by the councils and before any regulation change was made would still require consultation with anglers. Other regulation changes included closing the Central South Island salmon rivers in October, November and March and for winter and night fishing. The closing of the North Canterbury salmon rivers in April was also recommended. The season Bag limit of 4 required further investigation.
2. The closure of the Rangitata in October and November was discussed. While data from angler diaries collected in 2006 suggests a 3% reduction in harvest from Oct/Nov closures, strong anecdotal evidence suggests the Oct/ Nov run has been more significant in recent years and therefor the change would have a much greater impact on harvest. This closure was supported by the CSI Council. Matthew Hall said while it was a sacrifice for Rangitata anglers he felt anglers would support the change given the strong desire amongst them to halt the decline of the salmon fishery. Rick Boyd said that while the recreational opportunities of anglers must be considered, it was spelled out in the legislation that the priority of Fish & Game Councils was the maintenance of the resource.
3. There was some discussion around the effect of previous regulation changes in the Waitaki River which had cut the angler harvest by 40%. Because of this reduced harvest more spawning fish were have likely to have reached the spawning streams, but it is unclear as to what extent this has improved the run size as we do not know what size the run would have been if we had continued that harvest rate.
4. Rick Boyd noted that regulation changes would lead to changes in angler behaviour that could not be predicted ahead of time. For example, would a daily bag limit of two salmon mean anglers would just fish more days? Another example Mark Webb raised was that the fish not being caught by the angler who stops after caching one salmon may be caught by another angler.
5. A discussion was had about a season bag limit. Steve Terry said the limit of four salmon per season that he recommended was a conservative number. To get greater harvest reduction it would need to be lower, for example two. Roy Knight said early advice indicated compliance costs may be great for a season bag limit. He said we still need to look at how it could be done and what it would cost. Steve Terry said a voluntary bag limit had been in existence in Canterbury this season but anecdotal evidence suggested no one was complying with it. He believed a season bag limit was enforceable as it was used in North America. Phillip Musson was concerned this would mean there would be less anglers catching fish at the mouth which would reduce the buzz around the run and therefore lead to a drop in salmon angling.
6. Ian Hadland suggested that it should be communicated to anglers that any regulation changes would be reviewed once predetermined escapement targets were met, similar to the Waitaki policy Central South Island F&G have in place. Mark Web said there would need to be individual and combined targets because if the regulations were reversed on one river but not others this may lead to a serious shift in angling pressure.
7. Ian Hadland said the Waimakariri River was an outlier in that regulations changes would not reduce the harvest enough. Suggestion to go back to North Canterbury Fish & Game Council to ask for more restrictions to reduce harvest.
8. A table was completed showing the predicted effect of each regulation change and whether their change was supported by the councils.
9. *Motion: Staff from Central South Island and North Canterbury meet to discuss better alignment between the regions in terms of the regulations and further drop the Waimakariri harvest. Moved Matthew Hall, Seconded Rick Boyd. Carried. A response was requested within the next few weeks.*
10. A note was made to come back to a discussion on whether the harvest of fin clipped fish should be dealt with differently should a put and take fisheries be established at the river mouths. Rick Boyd suggested a put and take fishery was still some time off so should not be considered along with these regulation changes.

**Discussion on a Put and Take Fishery.**

1. Many questions about where things were at with the National Hatchery Best Practice Guidelines. Ian Hadland reported there was currently an application in for the NZ Fish & Game contestable fund for $10,000 to work on these. This would not be decided until September. Matthew Hall and Ian Hadland questioned whether it might be better for staff to work on one and have it peer reviewed given all the other hatchery best practise guidelines internationally that could be used as reference. Roy Knight said while there might be some overlap it was important any guidelines fit the New Zealand context. He did, however, support the idea of staff working on it. Mention was made of the high standard of the Tongariro DOC hatchery operations manual and how that might be used to inform the creation of the Hatchery Best Practise Guidelines.

**Discussion on draft Salmon Breeding Strategy.**

1. It was noted that the salmon breeding strategy existed in draft form but that they needed to go to North Canterbury and Central South Island F&G Council for approval before it could come to the Committee. Mark Webb said the draft breeding strategy includes recommendations from the Cawthron report on the F&G hatcheries and that some recommendations were already being implemented.

**Discussion on draft Preferred Salmon Harvest Regulation Change Survey 2019.**

1. Much discussion was held about the value of having a survey at this late stage in the regulation change proceedings. It was felt the timing was wrong and it would not be meaningful consultation. It was noted the regions would be holding consultation about any proposed regulation changes suggested, so there was a mechanism in place to receive feedback from anglers.
2. Matthew Hall suggested conducting a survey one year after the regulations had been in place to see how anglers felt they were working out.
3. Matthew Hall suggested the committee put some information up on the website about the regulation changes, namely information around how critical it was to reduce harvest and have more spawning salmon in the spawning streams and around the target of reducing harvest to 30% of the run. Also to mention the focus on rebuilding the salmon run. Phillip Musson said the website should also encourage anglers to make submissions on the regulation changes. Ian Hadland suggested the communications staff be involved in the drafting of the website content around this issue. Rick Boyd offered to work with them on it. It was agreed the content should go up at the same time as the minutes from this meeting.
4. *There was a motion to not proceed with the survey. Moved: Phillip Musson. Seconded Rick Boyd. Carried.*

**Discussion on Draft National Fish Screen Policy**

1. Paul Hodgson said there were a few gaps in the policy and it needed a bit more work. For example there was reference to following the NIWA guidelines, but that fish screens could comply with the guidelines but still be ineffective. He said poor fish screens were the biggest cause of small fish not making it out to sea. He felt the fish screen policy, when finished, needed to be incorporated into the various sportsfish management plans Fish & Game had as these policies had to be considered by decision makers for planning purposes.
2. Paul Hodgson said there needed to be wording in government policy, such as the National Environmental Standards, and local government policy/ regulations that fish removed from the river via surface water takes are returned unharmed to the river. It should include stipulation that, if harmed, they should be replaced. He reiterated that failing fish screens were the biggest issue in the South Island and the biggest risk to the salmon fishery that people were able to influence, given many factors, such as ocean temperatures, were out of our control.
3. Matthew Hall said there needed to be some reference to achieving compliance in the National Fish Screen Policy. He also said that sections six and seven of the Conservation Act referenced safe fish passage as did Conservation Orders. He said that if Environment Canterbury failed to enforce the policies that existed the NZ Fish & Game Council should consider litigating to encourage them to take action.
4. *A motion was made to recommend that the draft policy be sent to the regional Fish & Game Councils for comment in its current state and with a covering letter. Moved: Phillip Musson. Seconded: Rob Roney. Carried.*

**Next Meeting**

1. Set time and place for next meeting: **10am Thursday the 9th of May 2019; 595 Johns Road, Christchurch.**
2. Suggested meeting topics for next meeting:

* **Salmon Regulation Changes:** Report back from North Canterbury & Central South Island Fish & Game Councils on further regulation changes that could reduce the Waimakariri salmon harvest and better coordination of salmon fishing regulations between regions.
* **Put and take fisheries at Canterbury river mouths.** A discussion on reports back from North Canterbury and Central South Island Fish & Game Councils.
* **Salmon Breeding Strategy**. The draft report from staff and approved by regions will be considered.
* **Hatchery Best Practise Guidelines**. Discussion on report back from NZ Council as to what the guidelines are to cover; the contestable funding application; and how staff might better be involved to help keep costs down.
* **Salmon Symposium**: Review of all the information collected from anglers at the Salmon Symposium in 2017. Matthew Hall to table.
* **Commercial hatchery release of surplus stock.** A discussion around the practice in commercial hatcheries of releasing surplus stock. This was referenced in the Cawthron Institute report.
* **Presentation from Rasmus Gabrielsson of the Cawthron Institute.** Rasmus to report on the research topic he has been working on entitled Population Genetics of New Zealand Wild Chinook Salmon and the work he has completed on establishing a wild run on the Clutha River.
* **Protection of Salmon Habitat.** Staff to give a brief presentation on gaps in the protection of salmon habitat (freshwater).
* **Fish Screen Policy.** Draft policy was to be sent to regions for comment. To be discussed at the meeting if feedback received back from the regions in time.
* **Season Bag limit** **for Salmon**. Robert Sowman to report back on how this might be implemented and costs etc.

**Action list:**

1. Staff from North Canterbury & Central South Island Fish & Game to come up with further regulation changes that could reduce the Waimakariri salmon harvest and ways to achieve better coordination of salmon fishing regulations between regions.
2. Find out from NZ Council what the Hatchery Best Practice guidelines are to cover under the contestable funding application. Discuss with NZ Council if it might be better for staff to work on a draft and then have it peer reviewed to help keep costs down.
3. North Canterbury Fish & Game Council to consider the staff report on Put & Take fisheries, draft breeding strategy and further regulation changes to achieve consistency and reduce the Waimakariri harvest.
4. Matthew Hall to summarise feedback from the Salmon Symposium.
5. Invite Rasmus Gabrielsson of the Cawthron Institute to present at the 9th of May meeting.
6. Staff to prepare presentation on gaps in the protection of salmon habitat (freshwater).
7. Draft Fish Screen Policy to be sent to regions for comment.
8. Robert Sowman to provide report on season bag limit for salmon.
9. A table to be complied of sportsfish management plans: when they are coming up for review and if any contain reference to safe fish passage/ fish screens.