



AGENDA

AUCKLAND/WAIKATO FISH AND GAME COUNCIL

18th March 2023

AUCKLAND/WAIKATO FISH & GAME

A Meeting of Council will be held at the Waikato Deer Stalkers Hall, Wairere Drive, Hamilton on Saturday 18 March 2023 commencing at 11 a.m.

AGENDA

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* Denotes attachments

N Juby
Chairman

01/03/23

AUCKLAND/WAIKATO FISH & GAME



Minutes of a Meeting of Council
held at the NZ Deerstalkers Hall, Wairere Dr, Hamilton
on Saturday 25th February 2023 commencing at 11:00am.

PRESENT:

Chairman: N. Juby
Councillors: E. Williamson, D. Cocks, P. Shaw, C. Sherrard, G. Annan, M. Barker, B. Barnes, T. Clark.
Staff: B. Wilson, A. Daniel, D. Klee
Visitors: P. Hardy (DOC), R. Hardy-McKnight (DOC)

1. APOLOGIES:

G. Dickey, J Dyer

It was moved;
that apologies be accepted.

Annan/Shaw – CARRIED

2. POSSIBLE CONFLICTS OF INTEREST ARISING FROM MEETING AGENDA:

Nil.

3. MINUTES OF PREVIOUS MEETINGS OF 10th December 2022:

Councillor Annan reported that he had attended meetings at the Te Awamutu and Hamilton Fish & Game clubs and hadn't heard any concerns expressed over the game regulations.

The Chairman informed the meeting that the Waikato River was closed to boat traffic in the vicinity of the new bridge being constructed near the Hamilton Gardens.

It was moved;
that the minutes of the previous meetings of the 10th of December 2022 be accepted as true and correct records.

Annan/Sherrard – CARRIED

4. MATTERS ARISING FROM PREVIOUS MINUTES:

Nil.

5. COUNCIL CORRESPONDENCE:

A letter was tabled from Mr Ken Parker and Mr Bruce Street regarding the game regulations. The Chairman recommended that at the next game regulation review, licence holders were informed as to Council's policies and procedures regarding the game regulations.

6. CHIEF EXECUTIVE'S BI-MONTHLY REPORT AND FINANCIAL STATEMENTS:

6.1 Bi-monthly Chief Executives Report

Mr Klee provided an update on the botulism outbreak in the Whangamarino wetland:

- DOC were spending one day a week in the wetland and were contributing \$5,000 towards employing contractors.
- Waikato Regional Council had contributed \$5,000 to the cleaning efforts.
- Fish & Game staff were spending 3-4 days a week on the outbreak.
- Another large fish kill had recently occurred in the Maramarua River.
- There were still healthy birds in the upper Maramarua, and this population was being regularly monitored.

In reply to a question, Mr Klee stated that it was the worst outbreak in the Whangamarino Wetland in living memory.

Ms Renee Hardy-McKnight reported that DOC were keeping local iwi fully informed on the outbreak. DOC were considering increasing funding and expected the Waikato Regional Council to match any funding. DOC's main concern was Bitterns, but expected these birds to have moved elsewhere with the rising water levels.

Councillor Barker requested a brief summary of the biology of botulism and what was the ideal scenario for dealing with an outbreak. Mr Klee summarised what was known about botulism, emphasising that it was strain C which was specific to birds.

Councillors requested an update on the duck banding programme. In reply, Mr Klee stated that the total number of ducks banded was likely to be down by a third, mainly due to the difficulty of attracting birds to the cages as they weren't interested in eating maize due to the abundance of natural foods. He emphasised that total numbers caught in the banding programme didn't reflect overall population levels.

Mr Wilson confirmed that the submission on the Waitomo District Plan included a request for conservation and access benefit lots.

Dr Daniel updated Councillors on the proposals for the boat ramp in the upper reaches of Lake Arapuni.

The Chairman thanked Mr Dyer for his efforts on the firearms legislation.

Councillor Cocks emphasised that the high cost of firearms licence renewals would affect the ability of hunters to control pests.

6.2 Financial Report

Mr Wilson informed Councillors that there was \$12,000 in reserves to replace the telephone system, but the actual cost of converting to voice over internet was less than \$3,000.

It was moved;

that the Chief Executive's Bimonthly Report and Financial Statements be accepted.

Cocks/Shaw – CARRIED

7. NZ COUNCIL MEETING:

An update from the NZ Council meeting on the 10th and 12th February was distributed to Councillors.

The Chairman congratulated Councillor Barnes for being elected as Chairman of the New Zealand Fish & Game Council.

Councillor Barnes observed that there were several vacancies at the National Office, and positions were currently being advertised. In reply to a question, he agreed that National Office employees did not have to live in Wellington.

Councillor Barnes warned Councillors that there were many challenges facing Fish & Game at a national level especially regarding F&G's 'social licence'.

Councillor Sherrard requested a list of the NZ Councillors.

Disappointment was expressed by Councillors over the decision by the NZ Council to seek a one-year phase out of lead shot for .410.

Councillor Cocks expressed his concerns over the current Government review of the wildlife Act.

Councillor Barnes informed that a new national committee had been formed to look at overall funding opportunities. The future finance committee included Councillor Juby.

The meeting rose for lunch at 1:10pm and resumed at 1:40pm.

8. NZ GAME BIRD HABITAT TRUST BOARD NOMINATION:

It was moved;

that Councillor Williamson be nominated to the Game Bird Habitat Trust.

Cocks/Annan – CARRIED

9. LAND & WATER HABITAT TRUST:

It was moved;

that the Annual Performance Report for the Land & Water Habitat Trust 2021/22 be accepted.

Annan/Shaw – CARRIED

10. MEDIA SURVEY:

Dr Daniel introduced his report. He highlighted that YouTube was the most favoured media platform. Councillor Barnes noted that the NZ Council would be preparing a communications strategy when they had the staff capacity available.

It was moved;

that Dr Daniel report be sent to the NZ Council with the recommendation that it is placed on the agenda of their next meeting.

Williamson/Cocks – CARRIED

Mr Wilson agreed to provide for the proposed expenditure in the draft 2023/24 budget.

11. OSH UPDATE:

It was moved;

that the OSH report for February 2023 is accepted.

Cocks/Sherrard – CARRIED

12. GENERAL BUSINESS:

Councillor Barnes spoke on the Governance Review emphasizing that it was up to the regions to implement the review. A working group had been set up to look at matters that will benefit Fish & Game that will require legislative change, including the amalgamation of regions.

Councillor Williamson expressed his view that he didn't see any benefit from the review, and he did not support amalgamating with Northland.

It was moved;

that funding is sought from the NZ Council for Governance training.

Barker/Annan – CARRIED

Councillor Clark expressed disbelief that any region would support the phase out of lead shot for .410 shotguns.

It was moved;

that the other Fish & Game regions be requested for their position on the proposed phase-out of lead shot for .410 shotguns.

Williamson/Clark – CARRIED

Councillor Barker stated that he had been approached by one of the organisers of the recent national secondary school clay target competition, noting that the Auckland/Waikato girls had won the Fish & Game shield and enquiring whether Fish & Game was still funding free licences for the winner. Mr Wilson agreed to contact the National Office about funding.

It was agreed that a letter of thanks should be sent to volunteers who assisted in the botulism clean up.

There being no further business the meeting concluded at 2:44pm.

UNCONFIRMED

Bi-Monthly Chief Executive’s Report

March 2023

OUTPUT 1: SPECIES MANAGEMENT

Project 1111: Drift Diving

Drift Diving: Although most river have been extremely high the Blue Spring (upper Waihou) drift dive was completed 8 Feb. 2023 just before Cyclone Gabrielle. The results were outstanding with plenty of large fish recoded. The drift diving programme is behind schedule and river levels are being evaluated daily to try to squeeze in dives before April. The most concerning area in terms of cyclone damage will be the Ohinemuri River that peaked at over 800 m3/s. Electrofishing and crawl dives would be a good idea in some of the Coromandel streams post spawning in late 2023.

Project 1112: Banding/Shoveler Counts

Duck Banding. Banding remains problematic this year. Observations suggest the heavy rains have flooded paddocks and the ducks prefer to feed on the flooded worms and such like. Wellsford (25/26 February) is the last throw of the dice for this year. The farmer reports “more ducks on the dam than he has ever seen”. However, as the days tick by and yet more rain is predicted, it’s not clear if these will still be there on the banding weekend. On the plus side, we’ve got good control of the endless turkeys at this site this year, that otherwise intimidate the ducks away from the maize.

As discussed in the last report and council meeting this year’s banding programme has been severely disrupted by the extreme weather leading to the complete cancelation of the AkaAka and 1 of the Te Awamutu site and very low catches at Wellsford and the Opuatia. In the end given the situation we are relatively satisfied with the total catch of 2001 ducks for the summer.

Number banded year & Location	
Location	2023
Helensville, Parakai @ Youngs	1038
Netherton@1244 Hauraki Road	619
Ohaupo, Paterangi Rd @ Shaw pond	314
Opuatia, @ Sherrard pond	7
Wellsford, Whangaripo Valley Rd @ Brouwer	23

Project 1121: Harvest Assessment: Fish

Trout tag returns: Despite the impacts of Cyclone Gabrielle there have been tag reports from the Mangatutu and Lake Arapuni. The Lake Arapuni fish are reportedly in poor condition, but this is to be expected due to the low water clarity.

Project 1122: Harvest Surveys

Northern Summer Season: We don't issue diaries for the Northern Paradise Shelduck Season hunters, but the feedback has been that numbers of birds on ponds was well down and harvests proportionate. The expected number of birds were there during the trend count, so the recent cyclone rainfall is likely to have dispersed them since onto floodwaters, just as it has at our banding sites.

OUTPUT 2: HABITAT PROTECTION/MANAGEMENT

Project 1211 RMA

Healthy Rivers: Mediation has been on hold since the Commissioner has been on leave. Starts again in mid-March. We've been using the "break" to discuss strategy with our independent experts, especially Dr Adam Canning from the University of Queensland who specialises in water quality and river ecology, and Dr Ngaire Phillips who specialises on lake water quality.

Lumbercorp and Max Birt Consents, limited public notification: These consents have been notified. Clare and David attended a recent stakeholder meeting and are working on a submission. The recent wet conditions have meant the ponds at both sites have been discharging almost continually since June 2022.

Whangamarino Weir Section 128 Review; Weir and Whangamarino Gate site visit: Optioneering workshop: David attended the optioneering workshop held by Stantect to discuss alternative structures to regulate water in Whangamarino Wetland.

Project 1221: Council Wetlands

Cocks Wetland: John has 3x visited this F&G wetland and as many of the ponds and drains as possible, (where boat access remains practical in the floods), to remove sick and dead mallards, grey teal, grey ducks, shoveler, swan, also 2 cormorants as well as dead coarse fish. The latter can also spread this disease. The sick birds have been delivered to Bird Care Aotearoa who put them on an immediate drip to try to rehydrate them since their ability to swallow and their entire gastrointestinal tract has been knocked out by this toxin. Some of the past recovery birds from there have been banded by John and others, (to see how these survivors fare afterwards), and released at either our Bethell's F&G Wetland or nearby Forest & Bird's Matuku Link wetland. The flood damaged road to these 2 sites is currently closed except to residents. Arguably, as landowners there we could stretch a point if need be.

Project 1231: Other Land

Whangamarino Fish Kill and Botulism Outbreak. Staff have spent a huge amount of time and effort trying to combat the outbreak. The wetland experienced another large fish kill at the start of February after cyclone Gabrielle and the number of dead fish must be seen to be believed. David managed to secure \$5000 of funding from DOC and WRC in order to pay for contractors to help manage the outbreak as the size and extent is so large it was too much for staff alone to cover. These contractors picked up 600 birds in a single day. DOC have also been assisting by sending out a crew one day a week to recover sick and dead birds. David also took out representatives from the WRA who assisted in retrieving dead birds and got to witness the situation first hand.

The epicentre of the outbreak which appeared to have the highest concentration of dead birds was centred around the Raeo Arm and adjacent ponds. With receding water levels this site is getting more difficult to access with boats, but there are fewer fresh carcasses being recovered. Unfortunately, there are also very few healthy living birds in this part of the wetland and we can only hope that some of thousands that were living there a month ago found refuge elsewhere.

At the time of writing there have been reports of birds deaths further up the Maramarua River towards the coal bucket line which is an area that was previously unaffected and holding lots of birds. Surveillance has increased in this area.



Project 1235: Trees

Project 1241: Assessment/Monitoring

River users and local have been contacted for key streams like the Awakino, Whakapapa and the Ongarue. All reports received have indicated that A/W were largely spared from the Cyclone damage.

OUTPUT 3: PARTICPATION

Project 1311: Access Negotiation

Parkinson Lake: Adam has been building an access platform to replace an existing platform on Parkinson Lake. The platform will be installed when conditions all for access.

Project 1331: F&G Newspapers

John's latest article on pest control tips given to F&G publicity for the F&G website.

Due to poor weather staff are way behind on gathering photographs and article for next year magazine. It will take a targeted effort to collect enough material to produce good articles.

OUTPUT 4: PUBLIC PROMOTIONS

Project 1431: Liaison Advocacy

John banded a brown teal at Auckland Zoo, recovered from the Omaha Watercare Wastewater Treatment plant by management who handed it on to a local Omaha Shorebird Protection Trust member. She took it to a Warkworth Vet who cared for it overnight around New Year, then the SPCA drove it to Auckland Zoo. It has since recovered and there is now the question of where to release it so it doesn't go straight back to the infected site. For instance, several hundred mallards captured at a Silverdale site not so long ago where then taken 2-hours drive away but all turned up again at the very same catch-up paddock the next day. Because they had all been banded beforehand, there was no doubt about which birds these were. The rescue of this brown teal, "Patricia", was covered by the Rodney Times in good article with photo, however John points out that, having examined the bird closely since, Patrick would be a better name!

40 brown teal were released over a decade ago at Tawharanui Open Sanctuary about 10km from Omaha. Their progeny has since colonised a stormwater pond on the immediate south side of Omaha, John's recent count was an exceptional 35 brown teal there. Also, good numbers of mallard/greys, shelduck and 2 swans. However, botulism has spread there and 3 brown teal and 8 shelduck have so far died. These were on 2 visits bagged by John and removed for burial. The Jones Road Watercare management along with the aforementioned Omaha Shorebird Protection Trust helper, their predator trap guy onsite and also Auckland Council's Senior Ranger for Open Sanctuaries are now all working together at John's suggestion, to each week monitor this Omaha situation and remove and bury any more dead or sick birds to protect those remaining. Interestingly DoC's Area Office is about 15-minutes' drive away, but despite several requests they could not spare any staff to do this for these brown teal under threat, an endangered species found only in NZ that numbers only around 2,000 in the wild, if that.

Adam fished with approximately 15 youth on the Whakapapa River and demonstrated drift diving for the Taumarunui Community Kokiri Trust. The fishing swimming and snorkelling were well received by the children who had a great afternoon out. To make the fishing more successful Adam will need to come down in advance to train staff on how to prepare and look after the fishing gear.

Adam has been asked to assist the Kaitiakitanga Trust to teach a youth group how to fish the upper Waipa on the Oliver's property.



OUTPUT 5: LAW ENFORCEMENT

Project 1511 Ranging

Adam conducted ranging three anglers on the Waikato River (Karapiro dam and the Cambridge boat ramp) and all were licenced.

OUTPUT 8: PLANNING REPORTING

Project 1841: National liaison

John produced a report for NZF&GC regarding the values of retaining the lead exemption for .410" bore shotguns. This is likely to also be used in the Special Edition of the F&G magazine.

John also did a personal submission on the proposed new Police Arms Act fee hikes. Among these is the Police proposal to charge \$540-590 for anyone wanting to import ammunition. There is no breakdown on how they arrived at this figure, or indeed, any of their other substantial proposed firearms licence and other fee hikes. John's submission pointed out that, such a cost is a new barrier to anyone who might try to import non-toxic ammo for the .410" bore. The market for such high-priced (e.g. bismuth), ammo would not be large and the new import fee would have to be recovered *pro rata* on every box sold. At some point the high cost would kill off any demand and hence any supply. These shotguns are typically weak break-open actions, and their choke is usually "full" to cope with their weak patterns. So, steel shot, (even if anyone made it), is most unlikely to be a suitable option for many of these small-gauge shotguns. They most certainly do have a place training kids, also for use on smaller lifestyle blocks were a .22LR ricochet could be dangerous.

Adam has been investigating the biosecurity risk of Wake Boats transporting invasive aquatic plants out of the Waikato to other parts of NZ. Modern wake boats hold up to 4000 L of water and are not filter. Boats have the potential of transporting pest plants and fish. Lake Karapiro alone has

three ski clubs that hold multiple competitions annually that attract competitors from around the country.

B. Wilson,
Chief Executive