

AUCKLAND/WAIKATO FISH & GAME NEWSBRIEF

If you require further elaboration or clarification of items contained herein, or any other matters relating to F&G business, please don't hesitate to contact your local ward councillor or the office.

Matters arising from Council Meeting of 20 February 2021

1. It was agreed that the limit for the 2022 Special Shelduck Season north of the Auckland Harbour bridge be increased to 15 per day.
2. The Chairman reported on his recent visit to the Lake Pupuke Quarry which he considered to be an ideal spot for releasing catchable size trout. Councillors discussed potential sponsorship for the trout releases such as charitable grants. Staff were asked to investigate the options for sponsorship of the Lake Pupuke trout releases.
3. A letter was received from Mr Gary Fraser, Chairman of the Blythen Wetland Society Incorporated was tabled. Mr Frasier reported on the successful predator programme carried out on the Blythen Wetland by members and enquired of Council whether the surrounding wetlands were undertaking similar predator control programmes. The members felt that while they were making good progress within their wetland it was only creating a void for predators to enter from neighbouring properties. In reply, Councillor Cocks noted that Council had no control over those surrounding wetlands that were not owned by Council. A successful predator control programme was being carried out on Council's Dean Wetland.
4. A letter was tabled from Mike O'Donnell, Secretary of the Upper Piako Wetland Management Association, observing that the last duck breeding season had been poor which had contributed to a low duck population. They recommended that the limits for the 2021 game season should be reduced to 6 ducks per day after the first week of the season. In reply, Councillors noted that it would usually be extremely difficult to implement changes to the game regulations after January. Councillors also agreed that the proposed change would have little impact on harvest based on Mr Klee's 2019 report on the impact of game regulations on harvest. It was agreed that staff should prepare a comprehensive report on the Mallard population and harvest regulations for the new council.
5. Councillor Juby summarised the main points from the recent NZC meeting. He indicated that the report from the external ministerial review was unlikely to be available until mid-April. Until the review was available decisions could not be finalised on such issues as the appointment of a new CE and the elections.
6. The letter from Rainsford Grubb, NZC chair, on retention of the legal provisions for game bird guide's licencing was tabled. Councillors agreed that they supported the removal of these provisions.
7. Mr Wilson advised that the draft sports fish and game bird management plan had been sent to iwi groups, territorial authorities, and DOC for comments/submissions. The submission date was the end of April. The option to comment on the plan will also be advertised as a public notice in the NZ Herald and the Waikato Times.
8. Councillor Juby reported that the NZ Council had decided that all commercial preserves would be phased out by 2025 but they were still waiting for signoff by the Minister.

Matters arising from the Chief Executive's Report

- **Mallard Banding:** It's been a tough start at many of our banding sites, numbers are generally down on previous years and we have had to work hard sometimes doing multiple trapping events to get what we need. We have banded about 1850 birds with Te Awamutu and Wellsford to go, so despite the extra effort we will need extremely good catches to achieve 3000 which is our annual target. At Parakai there were 430 new birds and 27 recaptures there this year. At the Aka Aka site, 213 new ducks were banded this year, a big improvement on last year and vindication of the relocation to a slightly different, more secluded pond site.
- **Mangatawhiri and Mangatangi Reservoirs:** Adam Daniel and Clair Robertson completed fish surveys in both reservoirs, and confirmed the presence of self-sustaining rainbow trout populations with young of the year fish found in the upper Mangatawhiri River and Rata Creek.
- **Shelduck trend counts:** The King Country trend count revealed 8,075 paradise shelduck this year, thus passing the pre-set threshold for having a special season.
- **Botulism Outbreaks:** We are currently dealing with outbreaks on Paeroa, Waihi, Huntly, Ngatea, and Te Aroha WWTPs. Council responses have been mixed. Hauraki District Council have employed a contractor to conduct dispersals and carcass recovery with direct report to both us and the Council. This has worked very well, and we are encouraging other councils to adopt similar policies.
- **National Environmental Standards for Freshwater Regulations:** Mischa Davis has prepared a draft submission which will be made on behalf of Fish and Game seeking amendment to the National Environmental Standards for Freshwater regulations (NES-FW). This comes after concerns being raised that NES-FW will have a considerable detrimental impact on Fish and Game licence holders and on Council's own operations regarding the maintenance and construction of maimai and other activities in wetlands, including wetland restoration works. The submission seeks amendment to the NES-FW regulations to provide for those activities in wetlands.
- **Open Country Dairy:** We have just received a revised application for their disposal of treated effluent. In general, it is a substantive improvement moving back to the current dual land and river discharge regime. There are still some issues that remain to be resolved but we are hopeful that this can be done without requiring an Environment Court hearing.
- **Thames WWTP:** We have finally signed off on this consent with the 11th and final iteration of consent conditions. We managed to get N and P limits reduced substantively from those originally proposed but believe this could have gone further based on recent plant performance. The botulism management plan condition requires our feedback into consideration, and we have worked with TCDC to draft up a plan which should now be being implemented. Once again, we were the only submitter for this large single point source discharge into the Firth.
- **Hauraki Drought Response:** After last year's disaster on the Plains with widespread fish and bird deaths, DOC, Councils, Iwi and F&G got together to develop an action plan to deal with a similar event should it recur. Up until the end of October we were on track for another extreme drought but some much needed summer rain has helped mitigate the risk in some areas. Agencies have ramped up their surveillance and at present bird mortalities appear to be limited.
- **Consents for Council's wetlands:** Clare Robertson has visited most of our wetlands to obtain an appreciation of what is required for the consent application to carry out maintenance work. Adam has been advised by regional council staff on their expectations for surveying the wetland's fish population.