

**CONFIRMED MINUTES OF THE 183rd MEETING OF THE EASTERN FISH AND
GAME COUNCIL, HELD AT THE ROTORUA OFFICES OF FISH & GAME NEW
ZEALAND ON THURSDAY 18th JUNE 2020 AT 12.00PM**

Present

Crs David Woolner, Ngahi Bidois, Lindsay Lyons, Murray Ferris, Barry Roderick, Laurance Tamati, Geoff Thomas, Ken Coombes, Adam Rayner and Debbie Oakley.

IN ATTENDANCE

Andy Garrick, Kate Thompson, Lynne Sands, Eben Herbert, Matt McDougall, John Meikle, Matt Osborne, Lloyd Gledhill, Mark Sherburn, and Anthony van Dorp (Eastern Fish & Game).

1.0 WELCOME AND KARAKIA

1.1 Cr David Woolner (Chairman) opened the meeting at 12.00pm, welcomed all present, and thanked everybody for their flexibility and patience throughout the Covid 19 disruptions. David also thanked the staff on behalf of the Council for their work during these difficult times and invited Cr Ngahi Bidois to perform an opening Karakia.

2.0 APOLOGIES

2.1 Apologies were received from Cr Alan Baird.

2.2 *Agreed (Murray Ferris/Debbie Oakley) that the apologies for the 183rd meeting of the Eastern Region Fish and Game Council be sustained. [20/06/2.2]*

3.0 MINUTES OF THE PREVIOUS MEETING (28 APRIL 2020)

3.1 *Agreed (Murray Ferris/Debbie Oakley) that the minutes of the meeting held on 28 April 2020 be confirmed as a true and correct record. [20/06/3.1]*

4.0 IDENTIFICATION OF RESOLUTIONS FOR INCLUSION IN COUNCIL POLICY

4.1 No items were identified for inclusion in Council policy.

5.0 MATTERS ARISING

5.1 In response to Cr Barry Roderick's query about potential savings that could be made if the number of fish raised by the hatchery was reduced, Andy Garrick advised that while some costs could be saved in areas such as fish food and the internal costs associated with fin clipping, costs for running the hatchery would be unlikely to alter significantly. Staff had however contemplated reducing the numbers of fish raised for liberation as one year olds next year due to a number of factors including reduced harvest pressure, the possibility that we were releasing more than was required to maintain the fishery in some lakes, and the perception that numbers released were having an impact on the size and condition of fish. Andy provided a summary of the lakes that potentially warrant reductions to liberations one of these being Lake Rotorua which received 1,000 datawatch tagged fish each year, very few of which were caught and reported. The other lakes were Tarawera, Rerewhaakitu, and Okataina. Barry advised that when he raised the item at the prior meeting things were looking a bit grim but felt that the outlook was much more positive now. Matt McDougall expressed concern over reducing the Lake Tarawera liberations as he felt catch rates were low and we should be looking to improve angler success. Andy Garrick accepted Matt's comment and advised that these were scenarios being contemplated and were yet to be finalised. In response to Cr Murray Ferris' question regarding the possibility of further tagged

liberations to Waikaremoana, Andy advised that again tag returns in the past had been too low to warrant further releases of tagged trout. He advised that the creel surveys being undertaken at Lake Waikaremoana currently were providing some good insight into the state of the fisheries there.

6.0 NOTIFICATION OF ITEMS FOR GENERAL BUSINESS

- Andy Garrick - Reserves Policy
- Cr Ngahi Bidois - Te Arawa Fisheries Bylaws
- Cr Barry Roderick - National Policy Statement on Freshwater Management

7.0 CONFLICT OF INTEREST REGISTER

7.1 Councillors were asked to inform the chair of any conflicts of interest. No conflicts of interest were recorded.

8.0 ANGLERS NOTICE REVIEW

8.1 Cr David Woolner suggested that Council consider each proposed amendment to the Anglers Notice with Matt Osborne providing an overview of the proposal and answering questions as they arose.

8.2 With regard to the proposal to remove all 'Fly Fishing Only' methods from shoreline areas on Lakes Rotoiti and Tarawera, Cr Murray Ferris asked whether there had been any adverse reactions to areas that had already been opened up to fly/spin methods? Eben Herbert commented that while its likely some issues may arise from time to time there is no evidence to suggest an increase in conflict, noting that conflict occurs occasionally anyway regardless of methods used. Cr Ngahi Bidois had observed angler behaviour at the Awahou Stream mouth since the change was implemented there and was pleased to report he had not witnessed any issues and that it was great to see the young spin anglers there having a go.

8.3 *Agreed (Ngahi Bidois/Lyndsay Lyons) to remove fly fishing only designation from all lake shoreline areas on lakes Rotoiti and Tarawera. [20/06/8.3]*

8.4 Council supported the removal of the winter angling restriction on the Otara River downstream of the Otara East bridge. Cr Barry Roderick asked why the area was not open to bait fishing in line with the policy for some other coastal waters in the region which were open to bait fishing below State Highway 2 bridges? Mark Sherburn responded advising that the bridge was in fact a long way up the river which was why the same policy did not apply to the Otara River.

8.5 *Agreed (Ken Coombes/ Murray Ferris) to remove the winter angling restriction on the Otara River downstream of the Otara East Bridge. [20/06/8.5]*

8.6 Council supported the introduction of 'fly/spin' methods to Lake Whakamarino which would provide increased opportunity for children in the small community of Tuai. Cr Murray Ferris requested that Lake Whakamarino's description include 'Tuai' as this is what the lake had been known as locally.

8.7 *Agreed (Murray Ferris/Geoff Thomas) to amend Lake Whakamarino/Tuai's permitted fishing methods from 'fly fishing only' to fly and spin. [20/06/8.7]*

8.8 Council supported the proposal to open lakes Kaitawa and Whakamarino to angling all year round to provide alternative angling opportunities when the main lake (Waikaremoana) is too rough to allow angling.

8.9 *Agreed (Ken Coombes/ Murray Ferris) to alter the Open Season for lakes Kaitawa and Whakamarino (Tuai) to "1 October – 30 September". [20/06/8.9]*

- 8.10 To improve clarity and align regulations relating to the Hopuruahine and Mokau stream mouths with others in the guide, Council supported the staff recommendation of removing the regulation that relates to these streams from where it appears in the guide under 'Lake Waikaremoana', and instead, and more appropriately, incorporate it under the regulations applying to the streams. The new regulation would enable 'fly and spin' methods from the specified landmark poles downstream to the lake removing the ambiguity which results when lake levels vary.
- 8.11 ***Agreed (Ngahi Bidois/ Ken Coombes) to amend wording under Mokau Stream, Hopuruahine Stream and tributaries, and Waikaremoana Lake to reflect the areas downstream of landmark poles on Mokau and Hopuruahine streams are open year round to fly, spin (FS) and upstream of the Mokau and Hopuruahine landmarks are open 1 Dec to 30 Jun, fly fishing only (F). [20/06/8.11]***
- 8.12 Council discussed at some length the proposal to change the opening of lakes Rotoiti, Tarawera and Okataina to the first Saturday in October each year. Those in support of the change felt that there was a need to raise the profile of the opening of the lakes, to create a carnival atmosphere to promote trout fishing, increase participation and interest in the sport, and bring it into line with the opening of the game season. Arguments against the proposal which were raised by some Councillors and staff included issues around congested boat ramps and parking facilities, many anglers already being happy to take 1 October off work whatever day of the week it was, some not liking the crowded conditions a Saturday opening might generate, and by pushing opening out to the first weekend may exclude some families as this would quite likely be the last weekend of the school holidays. Looking at it from a compliance perspective, some staff felt 'Saturday-ising' would add unnecessary complexity to the regulations and it might take several years before people became acquainted with the new rules. It was suggested that the proposal be put to the New Zealand Council for a national change to the rules rather than applying it just to these three lakes. Council agreed that an approach should be made to the New Zealand Council for consideration of a national change to the opening of the season with the majority supporting a change for the three lakes regardless of that outcome.
- 8.13 ***Agreed (Ngahi Bidois/ Lawrence Tamati) to change the season opening dates for lakes Tarawera, Rotoiti and Okataina from 1 October to the first Saturday in October. Carried 6/3. [20/06/8.13] Cr David Woolner abstained, Crs Murray Ferris, Debbie Oakley, and Ken Coombes did not support the motion. [20/06/8.13]***
- 8.14 Cr Debbie Oakley pointed out that the change should not occur for the upcoming season as many people had already booked their accommodation for opening on 1 October. In the interest of common sense, Council agreed to recommend the proposed change being deferred until the 2021-22 Season.
- 8.15 ***Agreed (Ngahi Bidois/ Lyndsay Lyons) that the recommendation [20/06/8.13] to change the season opening dates for lakes Tarawera, Rotoiti and Okataina from 1 October to the first Saturday in October comes into effect for the 2021-22 Sports Fishing Season. Carried 7/2. [20/06/8.15]***
- 8.16 Council discussed a late submitter's request to allow only single barbless hooks on spinning lures, and based on previous Council discussions and research that had not demonstrated increased mortality arising from through the use of treble hooks, did not support the proposal. Staff agreed, informing Council that many anglers choose to remove the extra hooks regardless of what was permitted.
- 8.17 ***Agreed (Ken Coombes/Murray Ferris) that Council does not support the request to use only single barbless hooks on spinning lures. [20/06/8.17]***

- 8.18 Another request Council discussed was the introduction of a “maximum size limit” in streams and lakes. Council did not support the request as this type of rule would be very difficult to enforce.
- 8.19 *Agreed (Geoff Thomas/Lindsay Lyons) that Council does not support the introduction of “maximum size limits” in streams and lakes. [20/06/8.19]*
- 8.20 Council discussed a further submission to make “catch and release” mandatory in “back country” fisheries and again did not support the request agreeing that it would again be difficult to enforce.
- 8.21 *Agreed (Ken Coombes/Lindsay Lyons) that Council does not support mandatory “catch and release” in “back country” fisheries. [20/06/8.21]*
- 8.22 Council agreed with an anomaly identified by staff in the current regulations regarding winter shoreline areas, and supported the proposed change of wording.
- 8.23 *Agreed (Geoff Thomas/Lindsay Lyons) that the name “winter shoreline areas” on lakes Tarawera, Rotoiti and Okataina be reworded to “winter shoreline fishing areas”, and the winter shoreline areas on Lake Rotoma be renamed “winter shoreline spawning areas”. [20/06/8.23]*

9.0 NZC CHAIR PAUL SHORTIS VIA ZOOM

- 9.1 Paul Shortis, New Zealand Council Chairman, addressed the Council via Zoom, introducing himself, and thanking Council for the opportunity to speak. Paul provided a brief overview of what had been occurring nationally with the NZ Council standing finance committee and the proposed financial modelling which was being undertaken for the 2020-21 financial year. He touched on reductions to budgets requested of regions, the use of reserves, and the need to maintain the capability and capacity of the organisation. In response to a question from Cr Lindsay Lyons as to whether consideration had been given to a possible recurrence of COVID 19, Paul advised that there was a need to retain flexibility and the ability to adapt quickly should this occur, and added that he considered the organisation had the reserves to cope with this should it occur.
- 9.2 Cr David Woolner asked if Paul was able to provide Council with information about the proposed review of Fish & Game. Paul advised that the first meeting with the review panel was to occur next week and that he was confident that the panel would do a good job on behalf of Fish & Game. He said that they were keen to engage with as many governors and managers across the country as possible, and a programme was being put together to meet with each Council.
- 9.3 Cr David Woolner asked Paul whether he had any thoughts on the Reserves Policy paper that had been put out for consultation? Paul advised that he no predetermined thoughts in relation to this and would wait for regional feedback.
- 9.4 Cr Lindsay Lyons queried why this work was proceeding before the review panel had undertaken its investigation. Paul commented that it was appropriate to get some work underway such as reserves policy and allocation of resources across the country before the next budget round. He advised that the review panel had no problem with this being undertaken as it was not geared or contracted to undertake detailed analysis of this nature.
- 9.5 Andy Garrick asked how the NZC intended approaching the issue of regional resource allocation. Paul advised they were currently developing terms of reference. There was a need to engage at least one external person to assist with this as it was critical to involve an expert in this area. The goal was to rebalance resources over an extended perhaps five year period of time, to look at what we have, what is needed, and how to

go about it. He noted it was a large amount of work do it, and the regional imbalance had progressively become greater and greater. Andy commented that it was reassuring that the exercise was likely to involve both a bottom up and top down approach. Paul advised that it was important to understand capacity and capability and what we actually need as a whole organisation to address this topic.

9.6 Cr David Woolner thanked Paul for dialling in to talk with Council and Paul advised that his communication channels are open anytime.

10.0 2020-21 OPERATIONAL WORK PLAN

10.1 Andy spoke briefly to Council about changes made to the Operational Work Plan to accommodate the need to reduce our base funding level by 5%, and in particular, changes to staff roles which would see a net reduction in the region's staff complement next year from approximately 11.5 FTEs to 10.5 FTEs. Cr Lindsay Lyons noted Council's own budget had been reduced by \$3k, and this was followed up with an acknowledgment of the considerable contribution that some Councillors made to the organisation in the form of absorbing their travel costs or assisting in other ways such as helping out with ranging, banding, and providing staff accommodation when required. Cr Barry Roderick queried how nimble the region was likely to be should things get worse? Andy noted that the region's reserves were robust and acknowledged Cr Debbie Oakley's comment that we would need to come back to the table if the economy was to take another hit. Andy also advised that the final task to be completed was to assign staff hours to the Operational Work Plan.

10.2 *Agreed (Barry Roderick/Geoff Thomas) that Council approves the revised and latest draft of the 2020-21 Operational Work Plan for submission to the New Zealand Council and circulation to other parties for comment. [20/06/10.2]*

11.0 WAIKAREMOANA SPORTS FISH HABITAT ENHANCEMENT FUND

11.1 Council reviewed and supported the application to the Waikaremoana Sports Fish Habitat Enhancement Fund for \$8,000 to offset staff time and expenses associated with monitoring, access, and buoy related work for the 2020-21 OWP.

11.2 In response to Cr Debbie Oakley's request for more information about the Waikaremoana Fund and its purpose, Andy Garrick confirmed that he would arrange this.

11.3 *Agreed (Murray Ferris/Ken Coombes) that Council approves staff's application to the Waikaremoana Sports Fish Habitat Enhancement Fund to draw down \$8,000 to for incorporation into the 2020-21 Operational Work Plan for the purpose of monitoring, access, and buoy related work as described. [20/06/11.3]*

12.0 EYEDE LICENCING ADMINISTRATION AGREEMENT

12.1 Council discussed the Eyede Licencing Administration Agreement and thanked Kate Thompson for her work in reviewing the detail. Questions were raised as to whether the items raised should have been dealt with prior to the draft agreement being submitted to Council for signing. Andy Garrick provided an overview of the process, and its shortcomings, that had been followed to that point in time, and noted that a comprehensive review had since been undertaken by Kate and the three regional managers who were members of the Licencing Sub-committee, and that consensus had been reached amongst them on issues remaining to be addressed.

12.2 Matt McDougall raised concerns over access to the database, which seemed to be somewhat restricted, as many staff had different requirements of the data. Kate

Thompson confirmed that this was one of the issues identified which needed to be clarified.

- 12.3 Council was comfortable that there were no fundamental flaws or major issues needing to be addressed in relation to the contract, but acknowledged the need for internal Fish & Game policy to be developed outside of the contract to provide clarification in relation to national and regional staff's roles and responsibilities, and ownership of and access to data, in addition to other functional matters.

12.4 *Agreed (Murray Ferris/Ken Coombes) that Council undertakes to sign the proposed contract with Eyede subject to the matters raised by Eastern and other regional Fish & Game staff being reviewed and resolved to the satisfaction of the full Licencing Subcommittee. [20/06/12.4]*

13.0 KAITUNA WMR HUNTING STAND NO. 5

- 13.1 Council considered the proposal to rename Hunting Stand No. 5 in the Kaituna WMR in recognition of the contribution the late Ray Bushell had made to the wetland. Matt McDougall suggested that any change would need to retain "No. 5" in the ballot management system as it was numerically based, but saw no problem with allocating an alternative name to the stand for more general use.

13.2 *Agreed (Adam Rayner/Laurance Tamati) that Hunting Stand No. 5 in the Kaituna WMR will publicly, and more generally in future, be known as the "Ray Bushell Memorial Stand". [20/06/13.2]*

14.0 LAKE TARAWERA LANDING 30 SEPTEMBER 2020

- 14.1 Council considered Cr Lindsay Lyons' proposal to promote Fish & Game at the Lake Tarawera Landing on 30 September 2020. Lindsay commented on the diminishing numbers of attendees at the event and felt there was a need for Fish & Game to be more involved with it and attract greater participation and interest in opening day more generally. He advised that Steve Doughty was looking to highlight the Rotorua Lakes in this year's magazine and felt that it would be useful for Fish & Game to have a greater presence there. Andy Garrick noted that he and generally at least one other staff member have attended the event for many years to meet and interact with participants, but saw little to be gained from Fish & Game doing more to promote it in its current form as experience had shown people were attracted to it largely for its party atmosphere and social interaction, and had little interest in talks or presentations from Fish & Game. Staff at the landing on opening day were disappointed at the broken bottles left in the car parks and the drunken behaviour exhibited by some groups overnighing in their boats.

Andy appreciated the offer made by the NZC CE to provide staff and contracted support to lift Fish & Game's profile around opening of the season, and noted that the concept of an event to attract new licence holders definitely had merit. However, he felt that a more productive way of doing this would be by providing some other incentive or event to recruit or reactivate lapsed and/or non-licence holders rather than lifting the focus on the Tarawera Landing. Andy saw merit in a collaborative event with other agencies which we could leverage off, and had initiated discussions along these lines with Rotorua Lakes Council event organisers some time ago. In February this year he and Steve Doughty had met with the Chief Executive of Destination Rotorua and were putting together follow up meetings in July to explore ways we could work together to get trout fishing back on the radar and a reason in itself for visiting Rotorua. While

Steve was here Andy would endeavour to convene a meeting with Crs Ngahi Bidois, Lindsay Lyons and Geoff Thomas to brainstorm ideas for increasing revenue as discussed in Council's February 2020 meeting.

15.0 LIAISON OFFICERS REPORTS

15.1 *Te Arawa Lakes Trust*

Cr Laurance Tamati spoke on behalf of the Te Arawa Lakes Trust about the Te Arawa Lakes Bylaws which have recently come into effect after nine years of work. He said that the Trust worked with the Ministry for Primary Industries, Department of Conservation, Fish & Game, and undertook extensive public consultation during the development of the bylaws, and that more detail could be found on the Te Arawa Lakes Trust website. Laurence provided Council a brief overview of the rules and vulnerability of some of the taonga species. He advised that no permits had been issued to date, and that permits were available to all. Compliance will be undertaken by MAF officers and people without permits could be prosecuted. Cr Ken Coombes asked whether those granted with permits were required to submit catch data? Laurance advised that research is ongoing so yes catch information was required to be reported. In response to Eben Herbert's question on whether the issues Fish & Game had raised on the draft document had been addressed, Laurance advised the final document had met the legal test.

15.2 *The New Zealand Fish and Game Council*

Cr Lindsay Lyons spoke briefly about the proposed review of Fish & Game noting that it was uncommon for an organisation like Fish & Game not to have had a review in 30 years. Lindsay advised that he had spoken with the reviewers and had been asked to assist with the review. He felt confident that it will work out well for the organisation and wanted to ensure that Council was aware that he wanted the very best for Fish & Game and its staff.

16.0 OPERATIONAL REPORTS

16.1 Andy Garrick drew Council's attention to the positive response that had been generated from the recent release of approximately 130 3-4 kg and up to 5kg rainbow trout into Lake McLaren. He noted that of 35 anglers whose licences had been checked at the lake on Sunday 7 June, nine had purchased licences specifically as a result of the publicity around the release. Six were day licenses, two were winter licences, and one was a family licence. Publicising it on Facebook had resulted to date in more than 8,100 likes, comments or shares. Cr Lindsay Lyons asked whether we could keep these types of releases going? Andy advised we had set aside fish to grow on for this purpose (50 over next year) and our intent was to produce more as time went on. In response to another query from Lindsay's as to whether donated gear was still being utilised for novice hunters, John Meikle advised yes it was.

16.2 *Agreed (Murray Ferris/Barry Roderick) that Council receives the Health and Safety Report, Management Report, and Licence Sales Report. [20/06/16.2]*

16.3 *Agreed (Murray Ferris/Ken Coombes) that Council receives the Finance Report and approves payments for March and April 2020 totalling \$250,987.80. [20/06/16.3]*

16.4 Kate Thompson provided a brief overview of licence sales which had improved slightly since the licence sales report had been written.

17.0 GENERAL BUSINESS

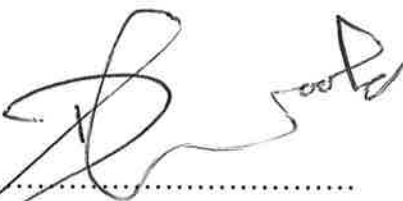
- 17.1 Andy Garrick advised that he would liaise with Carmel Veitch and Kate Thompson about the Standing Finance Committee's reserves policy and prepare a paper for Council to consider via email or Zoom meeting. Cr David Woolner asked that feedback on that should be sent directly to Andy.
- 17.2 Cr Ngahi Bidois' item of general business on the Te Arawa Fisheries Bylaws had already been covered by Cr Laurance Tamati in his Te Arawa Lakes Trust liaison role, and Ngahi had nothing further to add.
- 17.3 Cr Barry Roderick asked if staff had a view on the review of the National Policy Statement on Freshwater Management and how it relates to Fish & Game as an organisation. Eben Herbert advised that he had not had much input in the recent past as this was being dealt with at a National level.

18.0 ACKNOWLEDGEMENTS

- 18.1 Andy Garrick informed Council of Lynne Sands' decision to retire on 3 July after 13 years with Eastern Fish & Game. He acknowledged Lynne's contribution to the team, her diligence, and the behind the scenes support she has provided to four Eastern Fish and Game Councils over the years. On behalf of the Council Cr David Woolner expressed thanks to Lynne and wished her all the best in her retirement.
- 18.2 Cr David Woolner also wished to acknowledge Cr Murray Ferris for his wise, diligent, and skilled service as Chairman of the Council. Cr Barry Roderick also said a few words on behalf of Council acknowledging Murray's contribution in this role. Matt McDougall expressed thanks from the staff adding that Murray approached the job with passion, fairness, and consideration. In response Murray said that he enjoyed being involved with Fish & Game and had no intention of clearing off any time soon.

19.0 MEETING CLOSED

- 19.1 The meeting closed at 3.06pm with a closing karakia from Cr Ngahi Bidois.



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David Woolner
Chairman

SUMMARY OF RESOLUTIONS

2.0 APOLOGIES

- 2.2 *Agreed (Murray Ferris/Debbie Oakley) that the apologies for the 183rd meeting of the Eastern Region Fish and Game Council be sustained. [20/06/2.2]*

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