

Minutes of the Fish & Game NZ, Southland Region Council meeting held at the Council Office, 17 Eye Street, Invercargill on Thursday 13th October 2016.

Present	Graeme Watson (Chair)	Chris Owen
	Dave Harris	Chris Frisby
	Fred Inder	Russel Graham
	Michael Hartstonge	Paul Stenning
	Ray Waghorn	Corey Carston

Staff in attendance:

Z Moss, C Stewart, Jacob Smyth (7.00pm)
C Mason (Minutes).

Members of the Public: 1 x member of the public attended.

Welcome:

The Chairman opened the meeting at 6.30pm and welcomed those present to the new premises. He then gave a health & safety brief covering emergency exits etc.

Apologies:

Resolved Watson/Inder that apologies be received and sustained from Cyril Gilroy, Ken Cochrane, Kevin Fiveash & Jacob Smyth for lateness (7.00pm). Carried.

Conflicts of Interest with items on the agenda:

There were no conflicts of interest advised.

If any conflicts should arise during the meeting Councillors were to let the Chairman know before discussions began.

Health & Safety:

The health & safety report for the period 1st August to 30th September 2016 was attached to the agenda for consideration.

All known hazards were listed in the Southland Health & Safety Plan.

Resolved Owen/Hartstonge that the Health & Safety report to 30th September 2016 be received and accepted. Carried.

Cr Harris asked to view a tailgate form. This would be included in the next agenda for Councillors information.

Minutes of the meeting held 11th August 2016.

Resolved Stenning/Harris that the minutes of the meeting held 11th August 2016 were taken as read and were confirmed as a true and correct record. Carried.

Matters arising from the Minutes:

Wildlife Park:

Zane reported that he and the Chairman had met with Alan Munn, DoC Invercargill, in respect to the Wildlife Park to confirm that Fish & Game wanted to be involved in discussions about any development of the Park, because of our mandate to promote our resources. Zane had also spoken to the Southland District Council Mayor, Gary Tong, noting that if any parties involved in development of the Park found Fish & Game's involvement an insurmountable problem, Zane had suggested an alternative option, being a special relocation site to be used for F&G purposes. Zane explained where that site could be. The Mayor thought it was an excellent suggestion which he undertook to raise with his Chief Executive. However nothing further had been heard to date on the Wildlife Park.

Angler Ethics:

In reply to Cr Waghorn's query on angler ethics, Zane replied that he had responded to the NZ Council memo with the Council's decision after the last meeting, being that the Council recognised the need to ensure anglers behaved ethically in their treatment of sports fish and encouraged and supported the development of a catch and release policy, which should take the form of a voluntary code of conduct.

Cr Waghorn reported that during his fish opening day ranging at Waituna he had asked anglers what their comments were on catch and release. Some were for catch and release and some were against. Many wanted to carry on fishing and release once the limits were reached. Zane reminded the meeting that the current regulations under Schedule 1, were that once the bag limit was reached anglers were required to stop fishing. Otago was the only region that had an exemption to that through the Second Schedule.

Cr Waghorn noted he had seen, during ranging, some unethical treatment of fish that were caught and released. He gave an example of that.

Administration Reports:

The accounts paid, direct credit/debit list & automatic payments, annual profit and loss report subject to audit, & correspondence reports were attached to the agenda for Council's consideration.

Cr Graham queried if there were any more charges to come for the Environment Court hearing for the cycleway. Zane replied it was possible that more charges could come in for sundry work, particularly once the decision was known.

Staff Reports:

The staff report was attached to the agenda.

Mallard predator study:

Erin Garrick's predator study was ongoing with the assistance of Cohen Stewart. While the trapping of feral cats in particular was not as productive as we had anticipated, we were still obtaining some valuable information from the study. Hedgehogs were the most numerous species caught to date, with stoat numbers significant as well.

Erin was developing a relationship with DoC and Landcare Research who were undertaking a lot of work on stoat lure & behaviour. We were currently trialling two different baits courtesy of them and we were keen to see if our trapping rates increased from that study.

Isotope analysis of recently trapped animals would be undertaken to determine if ducks were part of their diet. This analysis would be led by Cohen.

Upper Waiau – rainbow trout spawning:

With the heavy rainfall in the last few days storage in Lake Te Anau was rising. This was good news for the flow of the Upper Waiau which Meridian should be able to keep at a level that won't dewater the trout redds. It was crucial for rainbow trout spawning in the Upper Waiau that the redds were not dewatered. The advocacy with Meridian by Fish & Game to keep the flows right for the redds had contributed to the increased productivity of the fishery over the last decade.

Cr Frisby asked if Meridian were concerned about the low pack snow in the area in regards to lake storage levels later during spring and summer. Zane replied that the headwaters had a large dump of snow last night, but they may not have the pack snow required to sustain flows during the summer. Cr Harris noted that he understood that the Manapouri & Te Anau lakes were more reliant on rainfall as lake storage intake rather than snowfall.

MPI Funding next summer 2016/2017.

Zane reported he had attended a meeting today in Te Anau with MPI who had confirmed funding for this summer for Hamish Angus doing biosecurity public relations work and assistance with ES, DoC and F&G work. This work would be broadened slightly this year to include more DoC and ES work.

“Lake Snow” – (Cyclotella bodanica)

Zane reported that very little was actually known about “lake snow” the name for a diatom algae found in some lakes. So far it had only been confirmed in Lakes Collieridge, Wanaka and Wakatipu and seemed to have been prevalent for some time in those lakes. It was unknown if it was a native species or not and DNA work was being done to try to determine that. It was of nuisance value to anglers using the lakes because it was a sticky mucus compound that caught on lines, ruining fishing gear and rendering those parts of the lakes unfishable. However some scientists were suggesting it could be of good nutrient value to the lakes. The snow effect was a build-up of microscopic bacteria, algae and mucus that all clumped together. Some scientists have suggested this could be a good food source for zooplankton, which were a good food source for planktonic bullies etc. so it may be good from a lake productivity perspective.

F&G have offered assistance to ES with some field work in Southland on lake snow and Bill Jarvie would accompany them next week. He would be working with ES on an appropriate methodology for the study. They would be looking to see if the algae was present in our lakes and would start with Lake Te Anau and the Mavora Lakes.

Pond creation:

This work was ongoing and some significant ponds were being surveyed.

DoC - Battle for our Birds 1080

Zane referred to a recent media release where Fish & Game was critical of DoC's efforts to reduce 1080 risk to anglers. On the eve of the opening of fishing season DoC issued a warning to trout anglers not to eat trout from 1080 drop areas for a week after a poisoning operation. Research looking at the rates of breakdown of 1080 in trout flesh by Cawthron in 2014 was not able to model the half-life. F&G had called for more research into the potential issue of anglers eating trout that may have ingested 1080.

Fish and Game believed the withholding period should be longer and asked for drop exclusions near waterways, which had occurred locally. However, MPI suggested a 7 day withholding period was sufficient.

Some media had turned the request of F&G asking for a longer withholding period to a F&G against DoC & 1080 issue, which was not the case, but it had caused a lot of friction with the Department. Zane had corresponded with various DoC staff explaining Southland's perspective on the issue. Zane would also talk to the Conservation Board next week about the matter.

Fish in Schools program:

This program was highly valued by most of the schools involved. All the Schools, except one, had successfully reared their salmon. Lochiel School had released theirs in the Oreti just prior to the school holidays and James Hargest would be releasing theirs in early December. Te Anau School would release theirs into McGregor's Pond before the end of term.

Media:

Erin had completed a brief segment on Angler Access for a new TV series called "Pure Fly NZ", which would be aired towards the end of the series. Each episode would have a brief segment on Fish & Game.

Joint Compliance with DoC:

Cohen and Erin had joined a DoC staff member recently for a day of joint compliance on the lower reaches of the Oreti, Aparima and Waimatuku rivers. One angler was found fishing without a licence on the Aparima.

New Building:

Southland Fish & Game Council moved to its new premises at 17 Eye Street, Invercargill on the 24th August 2016.

Cr Harris was thanked for his assistance with electrical work that was required. Minor renovations had occurred. The Board room was still to be stopped and painted and curtains erected. The fire department had inspected the building and we would be submitting a fire escape plan for their sign off, although it was not necessary for the size of our operation, but considered to be good practice.

The previous owner had completed the new roof and cladding as per the sale & purchase agreement. During that process a lot of the framing underneath the iron was replaced as it had been leaking and had rotted.

Zane had explored further with Simon Tonkin, Building Regulations Manager with the ICC our position regarding building change of use. Mr Tonkin had concurred that 17 Eye Street was not undergoing a change in use. He noted that we were not going to use the building for large public meetings and our AGM's were held elsewhere.

The old building at North Road had been sold and negotiations by the Manager with the new owner had resulted in the rental we pay being shortened by 4 months – finishing on the 31st December 2016 instead of 30th April 2017.

Wildlife Park maintenance:

Transit NZ had agreed to a 50:50 cost share for the felling and removal of the gum trees at the entrance and car park of the Te Anau Wildlife Park. The trees were identified as being dangerous and would be felled late October. DoC was not prepared to contribute to the felling.

Water & Land 2020 & Beyond Plan:

Jacob Smyth explained to the meeting that the ES current operative Water Plan governed the activities that Fish & Game were involved in e.g. discharges to surface water and groundwater takes etc. The Water Plan was a ten year document that became operative in 2010. However ES staff were very aware where matters were going, particularly in terms of surface and groundwater quality, which was either not improving or deteriorating. The result of that was ES has notified a Water & Land 2020 & Beyond Plan which would govern land use activities that impacted on groundwater quality as well as activities that were governed by the existing Water Plan. Jacob had made a lengthy submission on the 2020 Plan for Southland Fish & Game. ES were currently going through the submissions and would probably start convening hearings in the middle of next year onwards. Fish & Game would be involved in a significant manner and would need various experts at different times giving evidence on our behalf supporting our submission.

Jacob noted that the rules that related to water quality in the proposed plan were being treated as operative now, which was an improvement on the status quo.

A strength in the proposed plan was the introduction of physiographic zones, where they looked at the vulnerability of various areas in terms of climate, topography, soil type, geology and the influences they had on the ground & surface water quality. This allowed better understanding of why we had variations in water quality in different areas. Rather than treating Southland as one land mass they were differentiating areas and these were being used to develop a risk management framework. Eg some areas had key issues like nitrogen losses, while other areas had other issues etc. This framework would govern rules around intensification of land use, wintering and stock exclusion from waterways in those specific areas.

Cr Hartstonge referred to the storm water treatment in the Plan and the impact it could have on Invercargill. If the storm water had to be treated like the sewage did before it entered the ocean then the cost of that could increase significantly the rates for homeowners in Invercargill.

Jacob commented that the WAL20/20 & Beyond Plan was being driven by Central Government's National Policy Statement for Freshwater Management and all regional councils in NZ were responsible for managing freshwater resources, so it was not just ES doing this by choice, they were required to do it. This Plan would implement a time staged programme to set objectives and limits for all freshwater resources in Southland.

Jacob further explained that part of the Plan was looking at intensive land use activities, e.g fodder cropping and cultivation. These would be permitted activities subject to certain criteria around risk factors such as slope and buffers from waterways. This was a key support area for Fish & Game to submit on strongly to improve overland flow and the net result of sedimentation entering the waterways.

Zane agreed that this was a key issue for F&G. With the amount of rain we had in July this year it was a disaster in terms of the amount of sediment that washed off paddocks. Farmers were often in a position they couldn't do anything about it, as they were wintering stock on fodder crops.

New rules meant that even in flat areas they were not allowed to cultivate within 3 metres of the bed of a watercourse and as the slope grew so did the setback buffer amount for cultivation grow.

This was operative now and some aspects were a significant improvement over the previous rules.

NZ Council Issues:

Cr Stenning said unfortunately he did not attend the last one day NZ Council meeting held in Wellington but briefly went over the discussions other NZ Councillors had told him of from the meeting. He said the meeting would be able to get a full report when the NZC minutes came out.

Eyede Licence Agreement – two year extension.

The current agreement for licence administration services with Eyede Solutions ends on 2nd December 2016. If the extra 2 years extension was agreed and applied the agreement would run until 2nd December 2018.

Service had continued by the provider to a high and acceptable standard and the provider wished the agreement to be extended for an extra two years and would not seek any fee changes for that period.

Annual external audits of the provider had not identified any issues that required remedial action.

Because the licence agreement was with 13 Fish & Game Councils it was appropriate that all Councils were asked to support the extension term of two years and if supported would be endorsed by NZC at their November meeting.

Zane said that we were in a position that would be hard to break away from, Eyede were doing a good job and it was just a question of whether they were charging appropriately. Previously when it was tendered out Eyede were very competitively priced and are already set up and running well. The licence working party were reluctant to change now as any transfer to another provider would require establishing a new platform and new reporting capabilities, which could be a very costly exercise. Even though the data belonged to Fish & Game the software to run the licensing system was the intellectual property of Eyede.

Zane commented that now there were no books issued and we now had a streamlined online system with very few problems it would be nice to see costs coming down.

Resolved Stenning/ Inder that Council agreed to a two year extension of the Licence Agreement with Eyede. Carried.

Functions for Standard Operating Procedures (SOP's):

At its 20th May 2016 meeting the NZC considered outcomes of the Governors Forum in March 2015 to determine what needed to be actioned. It was agreed that regions should be asked for their top 5 priorities of Fish & Game functions that would lend themselves to initial SOP treatment.

These would be submitted to NZC for its consideration at their Nov 16 meeting.

Southland staff had suggested a list of obvious areas that Council could consider when deliberating over their top 5. These were attached to the agenda.

Zane reported that it could be frustrating at budget meetings when there was no way to interrogate a level of rigour applied to expenditure in some areas and it would be good to have SOP's in place where expenditure was for standard procedures throughout the country, particularly when there were applications for the contestable fund. Managers used to look at regions OWP's in specific projects but for some reason don't do that now. He would like to see each Manager have the responsibility of a specific project area to see what the external costs were and what they were achieving.

Jacob added that SOP's were a good thing but equally if you have SOP's it was imperative that at some stage there had to be an audit of compliance with those SOP's.

Discussions followed with the Southland Council listing their top 5 priority functions for SOP treatment as follows:

- 1) Financial Management. (Reporting, use of accountants, FBT, full disclosures of assets & their values, etc).
- 2) Staff training.
- 3) Legal Fund application approvals - NZC struggle with this one as what is important for one region, may seem unimportant to another region. It is difficult to get impartial judgement on applications and huge money can be involved, with more applications coming as regional councils develop water and land plans, intensification of land use etc. We can't keep fighting the battles endlessly as we will run out of money. We need an independent mechanism for assessment & approval of applications.
- 4) Use of the Media. – can have huge ramifications, need to use it to our best advantage. How do decisions impact on the organisation, still need regional input as well.
- 5) Compliance operations, including prosecutions and reparations,- needs standardising in respect to compliance effort, better recognition to value of compliance - can lead to better licence sales.

It was agreed that the rest of the list in the agenda be sent as well in no particular order. This would be a starting point for the NZC to consider.

General Business:

Executive Committee:

Tabled at the meeting was a submission from Cr Cochrane who had an apology for the meeting. Cr Cochrane while happy with the purpose of an Executive Committee was not comfortable with the process of selection for it.

The Chairman said that when we were advised to have an Executive Committee he had been guided by Robert Sowman on it. Mr Sowman's comments were attached to the agenda.

To the question of the Chairman's participation, the Standing Orders, Clause 1.44, adopted by Council in June 2016, stated that "*the Chairperson is a member of every committee of the Council*". Therefore the Chairman and two others would comprise the Executive Committee.

The Chairman emphasised that the executive committee was a committee of the Council and should keep the Council fully informed and not act as a default Council. Any recommendations made should be ratified by the whole Council at a following meeting. There were no powers over and above the existing full Council.

Another recommendation by Mr Sowman was to have Councillors on the committee who had reasonable experience as a Fish & Game Councillor. With that the Chairman had suggested two names for the committee. That suggestion was only for further discussion and was not an appointment. If anyone else had suggestions then that could be discussed as well. Southland Council had not had an executive committee for many years.

Cr Stenning reported that since an executive committee was selected for the NZ Council it had worked very well. It gave the Chairman help and support with his work.

As most NZ Councillors had long experience the committee was selected for practical reasons i.e. people who were nearest to Wellington and could give the Chairman support by spreading the load. There was no political selections only practical ones.

The Chairman reiterated what the Executive Committee would be set up for.

Cr Owen said the outcomes & reasons of the committee were very clear and fine, but the process of selection was not really fair. Surely any selection should come from the full Council so everybody had an equal opportunity to put their names forward. Cr Owen said he was a bit put out by the process so far. It seemed that Councillors were being asked to rubber stamp the names put forward. There were other experiences and expertise that Councillors had that may be very beneficial to an executive committee, not just experience as a Fish & Game Councillor.

The Chairman conceded that the process he had undertaken may be seen to be biased but it was not meant to be that way. He was only trying to follow the advice given to him. However if there were concerns with the process he was more than willing to leave it until the next meeting to give more time for other people to put their names forward.

Cr Frisby suggested an email be sent around asking for those that were interested to put their names forward. The meeting agreed with that as it gave everyone an equal opportunity for selection.

(The Chairman advised after the meeting that advice he received had suggested an email situation was not the best way to form a committee and so the matter would be put back on the agenda at the December meeting for further discussion by the Council).

Angler Notice Review 2017/2018:

Changes to the angler notice were considered every three years. The process was explained. At the August meeting council & staff outline suggested changes they thought appropriate. At the October meeting these are confirmed and public submissions called for. Public submissions are received by the December meeting for consideration and submitters could talk to Council re their submissions at the February meeting. The Council would then confirm any changes at the April meeting and advise NZ Council for the gazette changes.

For this three year review Cr Cochrane had put forward a submission for a regulation change on the Aparima for Council to consider. He would like to see a reduction in the bag limit of the Aparima River from the Hamilton Burn confluence to Wreys Bush, from 4 fish to 2 fish per day, reflecting an apparent reduction in the abundance of trout through this reach over the last few years drift dive counts.

Staff had not recommended any changes for the Angler Notice, in addition to Cr Cochrane's.

Feedback received from a retailer was a desire to consider opening day to be the first Saturday in October rather than the 1st October. They believed it would create more anticipation for opening day. Council could consider that if they wished.

A brief discussion occurred on the Aparima bag reduction proposal. Points made were that a few years ago we wanted consistency in our regulations, were we going away from that now. If the numbers were declining shouldn't we manage the decline?

It was decided that this should be advertised calling for public submissions on the proposal. A background for the suggested change would be put on the web site and the proposal advertised calling for submissions and referring to our web site for more information. Before the final decision was made in April a further drift dive would have been completed as well.

Cr Inder wanted to advertise a regulation that there be no fishing from boats unmoored or unanchored on the Upper Waiau, as it used to be many years ago. Boats fishing at Queens Reach alone on opening day numbered at least 30 boats fishing on the move upstream, covering the river from one side to the other. Some were fishing directly over the redds. With the huge increase in boat numbers the pressure on the river was huge in his opinion. Also with the cycleway now there was more access for shore anglers and that was being ruined by moving boats fishing on the river. The disturbance to shore anglers was also an increasing problem. He would also like to see a fish pass at the TLC as he believed that it had an impact on low fish numbers in the lake.

Zane said yes there was more boat fishing on the river now and more people were enjoying that resource, which meant more licences sold. It was a river that was difficult to fish without the use of a boat, despite having some banks in parts of the river to fish from shore. We had good data on fish abundance through there and it does have the highest trout density in Southland. Why is trolling in the river an issue when they can troll on the lake. If it was purely a disturbance issue for shore anglers we could make a separation regulation for that, like Otago does.

Cr Harris noted the commercial businesses using the river which needed to be considered, e.g. fishing from drift boats. Cr Carston suggested exclusion zones for boats from shore anglers. Cr Stenning noted that we were here to promote all opportunities for angling and this river gave a unique opportunity for both shore and boat fishing. The Chairman said that there were also scenic tours going on the river by jet boats.

Jacob gave a word of warning and reminded the meeting that Fish & Game had provided approval for a number of commercial operators to utilise either drift boats or jet boats for angling on the Upper Waiau. If the Council then tried to restrict that use that they had previously given written approval for the reasons for doing that had to be very good.

Jacob also referred to the Sports Fish Management Plan due for renewal next year and noted that Council could be thinking about what their vision was for the management of these individual fisheries like the Upper Waiau. There was competition now with commercial aspirations, increasing recreational fishing and different methodology. The objectives and policies for management of specific fisheries and their inherent values that we wanted to retain or preserve for future generations were very important issues for Council to consider in the Plan.

After discussions the consensus was that Bill Jarvie should design and implement a survey of the Upper Waiau River users to gain more information on the issues of the river before any proposal for changes was considered.

Council would still like to have a combined meeting with Otago. However, their CE is currently away, and prior to departing on leave, suggested they were reluctant to have it this year and suggested next year some time. Zane will continue to liaise with Otago to try and find a mutually acceptable date this year.

There were no specific items mentioned for the next Council agenda.

There was no further business and the meeting was closed at 9.11pm.

Chairman _____ Date _____