



Manifesto 2023

Fish & Game

Fish & Game New Zealand manages, maintains and enhances sports fish and game birds and their freshwater habitats in the best long-term interests of present and future generations of anglers and hunters, nature-lovers, conservationists and mana whenua.

Fish & Game is funded solely through the sale of licences to fish and hunt.



Our vision is a New Zealand where freshwater habitats and species flourish, where hunting and fishing traditions thrive and all Kiwis enjoy access to sustainable wild fish and game resources

At Fish & Game, we know that what's good for anglers and hunters is good for all New Zealanders – clean and healthy waterways and thriving wetlands, sustainable sources of kai, and access to the great outdoors all contribute to our wellbeing.

We are New Zealand's primary freshwater guardian – we have an outstanding record of achievements in protecting and enhancing the environment, in particular:

- Creating, restoring and protecting wetlands
- Securing Water Conservation Orders which recognise and protect the outstanding values of our lakes and rivers
- Pushing for regional and national policy plans which protect the environment including setting robust bottom lines for healthy waters

- Working on the ground to restore habitats by revegetating wetlands and river sides
- Being an insights-driven organisation researching species, their habitat and people's values
- We not only focus on valued introduced species but also help protect indigenous non-game species.



Corina Jordan
CEO Fish & Game New Zealand



Earlier this year, Fish & Game staff equipped with snorkelling gear drifted and glided down hundreds of kilometres of rivers across the country, recording the health of these rivers, including water quality, the health of both the trout fishery and native fish, and of insect life, which is key to all species.

The divers monitor over **100 different rivers** throughout the country.



We actively monitor species, including through drift diving and electric fishing, and the state of their habitats (freshwater health, physical form and function).

We work to protect and enhance hundreds of kilometres of waterways and wetlands that are home to both native and valued introduced species, maintaining habitats and funding restoration projects.

Nationally and regionally, we push and support central and local government to manage the environment in a way that provides for healthy

habitats and species and enables the recreational use that Kiwis value.

We speak directly for around 300,000 people and in any one year 150,000 anglers and hunters who hold licences from Fish & Game.

Our advocacy also reflects the experiences and values of the 16%¹ of New Zealanders who go fishing and 7% who hunt.

We value our relationship with government and policy-makers – a strong and enduring partnership is vital if we are to safeguard our freshwater habitats and species for future generations.

What we are seeking from Government:

<p>1</p> <p>Support to keep doing our work, by maintaining our mandate when reforming conservation laws. We're ready to take on more, with support and funding.</p>	<p>2</p> <p>Strong and effective measures put in place to protect our rivers and lakes from pollution, water over-allocation and further degradation.</p>	<p>3</p> <p>Strong protection for wetlands – maintaining and enhancing existing wetlands and backing landowners to create new wetlands for the benefit of all New Zealanders.</p>	<p>4</p> <p>Work with communities, sectors, and iwi to collaboratively develop solutions for the benefit of our communities and treasured freshwater.</p>	<p>5</p> <p>Enable New Zealanders to continue to get out in nature, enjoy our hunting and fishing heritage, and identity, and improve well-being. We do this by ensuring access to our natural environment, and sports fish and game, alongside indigenous species in our ecosystems.</p>
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We want to work with elected representatives and officials to ensure policies and regulations respect the value New Zealanders place on enjoying the great outdoors.

This manifesto provides simple solutions to help meet this important goal and ensure a strong and healthy environment for all New Zealanders.

¹ Primary Purpose research for Fish & Game April 2023

The seven key challenges, and how we address them:



1 Conservation Act and Wildlife Act reform

The issue

Current legislative reform proposals put hunting and fishing at risk by putting a sharp focus on the absolute protection of indigenous biodiversity and failing to recognise valued introduced species, the impacts of climate change, and the role of people and communities as central to conservation efforts.

We agree with the concept of better protection for rare, threatened, and endangered species but believe this can be done while recognising valued introduced species as well, which also require healthy habitats.

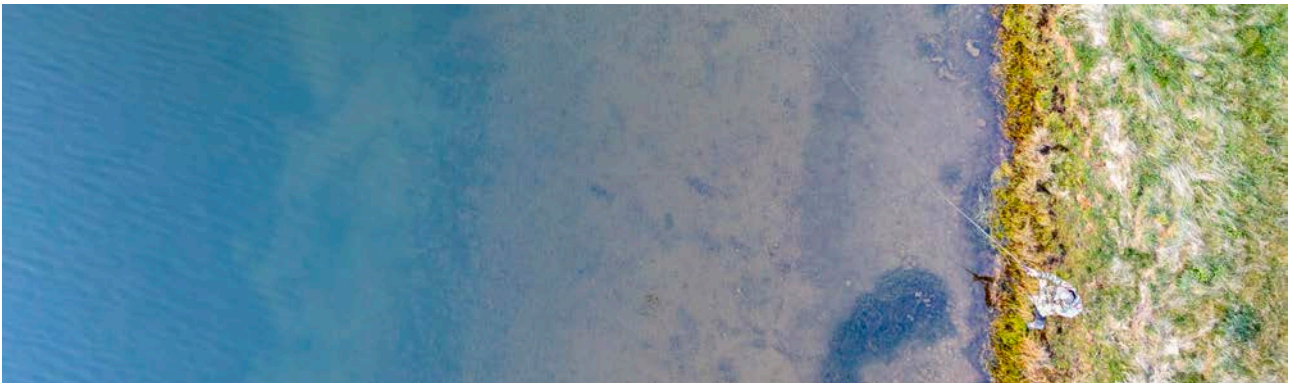
Our solutions

- Maintain Fish & Game's statutory mandate to manage sports fish and game. Given our excellent track record, responsibilities for monitoring indigenous fish species could also be added to our mandate, subject to funding being provided.
- Recognise the value of sports fish and game in our traditions and ecosystems alongside indigenous species. We note that there is increasing priority placed on indigenous species. We urge you to also recognise sports fish and game as a valued resource and continue to include them both in the Wildlife Act and the Conservation Act.

- Ensure mana whenua rights and obligations are recognised and te Tiriti o Waitangi obligations are appropriately recognised in legislative frameworks.
- Incorporate customary harvest/mahinga kai into wildlife management legislation. Currently there is no national programme or consistent approach to managing or regulating customary harvest. Fish & Game is willing to work in partnership with mana whenua on this issue.
- Continue to prohibit the sale of game and hunting rights. The principle is that this resource is publicly owned, not commercially owned and therefore accessible to all New Zealanders.

Approximately **\$22 million** has been invested so far in restoring wetlands, mainly on private rural land, in partnership between hunters and landowners.





2 Freshwater

The issue

Almost half of the country's lakes are in poor health, vast lengths of our rivers are adversely impacted by nitrogen and phosphorous inputs, with almost a fifth severely degraded by nutrient pollution. Overallocation of water in rivers is causing the ecology in the rivers to decline. New Zealand only has around 10 percent of its original wetland habitat remaining. It's important to ensure that strong and effective measures are in place to protect our rivers, lakes and wetlands from pollution, water take overallocation, drainage, and damage to their form and function.

Our solutions

Ensure the intent of the freshwater reforms, including the NPS-FM 2020, are delivered. Regional plan changes to improve water quality under the NPS-FM 2020 are due to be notified by December 2024. It is vital that these are effective in reducing pollution and result in wholesale improvements in waterways. To support this, we want to see Government:

- Ensure regional councils stop the overallocation of water
- Ensure regional councils cease permitting intensification of land use in the many at-risk catchments
- Amend legislation to enable the Ministry for the Environment (MfE) to review regional plan changes for compliance with the NPS-FM 2020 (and amendments). This is more effective than having public interest groups lodge appeals

- Empower MfE to ensure consents are granted in accordance with regional plan changes. This role should not continue to fall to public interest groups who aren't funded to do this work
- Ensure regional policy, plans, and resource consents recognise and protect the maintenance and enhancement of sports fish and game birds and their habitats. We are willing to work with regional councils and Māori on a collaborative approach to identify where sports fish protections may negatively impact the habitat of indigenous freshwater fish and discuss how these situations can be improved
- Amend the National Environmental Standards for Freshwater (NES-F) to ensure no more loss of wetlands, or deterioration of lakes and rivers and provide permitted activities for wetland maintenance, restoration and creation
- Ensure that resource management reforms continue protections for trout and salmon habitats, by focusing on water quality and quantity issues, habitat enhancement and restoration.

Fish & Game has been responsible for **securing 12** of the 15 **WCOs** (Water Conservation Orders) currently in place for 13 rivers and two lakes across the country.





3 Firearm safety

The issue

Our enforcement team of over 200 warranted officers is one of New Zealand's prime enforcers of hunting and fishing regulations under the Conservation and Wildlife Acts. We encourage hunters to comply with all laws around firearms and their use, but those laws must be practical, fair, and reasonable, represent public good, and work for hunters and shooters.

Our solutions

- Ensure that law reform does not impact on our ability to carry out our enforcement work. Our warranted officers must continue to be able to enter private property. We must be able to continue our work prosecuting offenders in relation to breaches of the Conservation and Wildlife Acts as that relates to sports fish and game birds.
- Minimise any increase in firearm licence fees. New Zealand Police are reviewing the fees. We have advocated for minimal increases with the aim of maximising compliance.

4 Access

The issue

Legal access to New Zealand's rivers, lakes, coastline, and their margins is valued by anglers and game bird hunters. The ability to gain access to these areas and know where they are is a fundamental component of fishing, hunting and mahinga kai. However, the access to public recreational resources that we have enjoyed in the past is being eroded through changed land use and changing land ownership.

Our solutions

Amend the National Environmental Standards for Freshwater (NES-F) so that items that provide for public access on publicly owned or managed wetlands (such as mai mai, signs, boardwalks) are permitted activities. Recognise and maintain Fish & Game's mandate to take a lead in processes that result in legal and physical access to fishing and hunting areas, including:

- advocating for public access
- participating in statutory processes related to public access through esplanade reserves, esplanade strips, and access strips, te Tiriti o Waitangi settlement processes, High Country land tenure review processes and land sales to overseas buyers.
- providing access through our owned or managed properties
- negotiating access agreements with private landowners
- providing information on access arrangements and physical works such as tracks and signage.



5 Stewardship land review

The issue

‘Stewardship’ is a conservation category which provides protection based on the natural and historic values of the land. Stewardship land is managed by the Department of Conservation, which is undertaking the review. We support this review as much of the stewardship land is not appropriately classified and is therefore insufficiently protected.

Our solution

- Ensure the review results in more appropriate, more stringent land classifications as appropriate.
- Avoid any loss of public access when land is disposed of, through the creation of public access reserves, easements or corridors as required. Disposal can only be considered when stewardship land has no, or very low, conservation values present (as set out in the Conservation General Policy). This policy should be retained.
- Consult Fish & Game on disposal applications. A large proportion of the game bird species populations managed by Fish & Game are on public conservation land and Fish & Game also manage the impact that these species have on other land owners.

6 Climate change

The issue

Climate change is resulting in more weather variability. More rainfall will result in flood events, and at other times drought and heat waves will cause lower water levels in wetlands, lakes and rivers. This will have flow-on effects for the habitat of fish and game species as well as indigenous species. Reduced flows or water levels can cause increases in water temperature which can be detrimental to sports fish reproduction.

Our solution

- Ensure that New Zealand quickly and significantly reduces emissions in ways that do not come at the expense or to the detriment of the natural environment.



7 Renewable energy impact on waterways and wetlands

The issue

Renewable generation projects to dam rivers can have negative impacts on precious wetlands and waterways.



More than **10,000 international anglers** took to the water in pursuit of New Zealand's renowned wild trout during the recent fishing season.

Our solution

- Ensure that renewable energy generation and electricity transmission is constructed and managed to deliver a “win-win” for both a low emissions economy and the natural environment. This includes requiring constraints mapping to identify landscape and ecological areas to avoid when looking at project feasibility for wind and solar. Fish & Game is ideally suited to assist with identifying fishing and game bird hunting values.
- Ensure any amendment to the National Policy Statement for Renewable Electricity Generation will not have negative ecological consequences, such as poorly-located solar and wind developments, or hydro developments having detrimental impacts on fish passage which is critical to fish lifecycle.

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