

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 21 March 2021

1. Councillor Juby updated the meeting on his concerns over the lack of Fish & Game input into the decision by DOC to renew guiding concessions for another 20 years. Councillor Juby recognised that this was a much greater issue for South Island councils, and thus he was pleased to report that the manager of Nelson/Marlborough Fish & Game was actively working on a submission with assistance from Mischa Davis.
2. A letter was tabled from Ray Grubb, Chair NZF&G Council and Andrew Hoggard, National President Federated Farmers, about building a positive Fish & Game/Federated Farmers working relationship. Councillor Smith reported that he had noticed that local farmers were more likely to give access and were not as negative about Fish & Game.
3. Ms Robertson provided an update on the application for consents to carry out maintenance work on Council's wetlands. She had met with WRC staff to discuss the application and it was envisaged that the application would be lodged soon.
4. Councillor Juby updated Councillors on Mr Dyer's successful advocacy regarding the delays by police in reissuing firearms licence. Their issue had been taken up by the NZ Fish & Game Council who were now strongly advocating at a national level.
5. Mr Wilson introduced the draft 2021/22 Operational Workplan emphasizing that there was still considerable uncertainty as to funding due to the various internal and external reviews.
6. Councillors discussed the necessity of increasing the licence fees to maintain an adequate funding base. Councillors agreed to recommend to the NZF&G Council that the game licence be increased by \$2, the fish licence by \$3, and the non-resident licence by \$25.
7. Councillors agreed to recommend to the NZF&G Council that the 5% cutback on regional budgets be reinstated. Mr Wilson advised that the 5% reduction in budgeted expenditure had been achieved by deferring expenditure on wetland maintenance.
8. Councillors agreed that a contestable funding application for \$20,000 be submitted to the NZF&G Council for the costs involved in the RMA application for maintenance work on Council's wetlands.
9. Councillor Kerr spoke on the appalling state of Lake Waikare, which was perhaps in even worse condition than in past years. He considered that a causal factor was the ongoing discharge of treated effluent into the lake from the Te Kauwhata wastewater treatment plant and the lack of water being flushed through the lake. Councillor Cocks considered that restoration of the lake would require the lake levels to be raised back to near historic levels. Mr Wilson advised that staff had spent considerable effort on Lake Waikare in recent years, including successfully in getting the special status of Lake Waikare recognised in the proposed Healthy Rivers Plan and contributing to the catchment management plan.

Matters arising from the Chief Executive's Report

- **Banding:** It was a tough year, bird numbers were lower than normal at most sites and we had to work much harder for the birds we did catch.
- **Trend counts:** Mr Dyer completed the trend flight of black swan and Canada geese on the Western Harbours and Waikato lakes, January 12, 2021.
 - Black swans: Total of 25 sites: 4,702 total swans counted in 2021 compared with 4,977 in 2020.
 - Canada geese: Total of 25 sites: 12,166 total geese counted in 2021, up from 8,528 in 2020.
 - Paradise shelduck: Total of 25 sites: 8,245 paradise shelduck in 2021 compares with 7,979 in 2020.
- **Botulism Outbreaks:** We continue to assist and maintain a watch on botulism outbreaks on Paeroa, Waihi, Huntly, Ngaruawhaia, Ngatea, and Te Aroha WWTPs. We have also had multiple reports of some dead birds on the upper Piako River in the vicinity of the Flax Block but as of, yet most outbreaks appear to be small and relatively well contained. We should be through the highest risk period now, although outbreaks have occurred as late as the end of March in previous years. We attribute the lower than average spread and mortality associated with outbreaks this year to a mix of good fortune and better management by some agencies and companies.
- **National Environmental Standards for Freshwater Regulations:** Ms Davis prepared a submission on behalf of Fish and Game Council seeking amendment to the new National Environmental Standards for Freshwater regulations. This comes after concerns were raised that the new regulations 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 wetland restoration works. The submission seeks amendment to the NES-FW regulations to provide for those activities in wetlands. The submission has since been sent to the Minister for the Environment seeking to adopt the amendments put forward in the submission.
- **Puke Coal:** The hearing regarding the Puke Coal Ltd consent application was held on 2 March. We submitted a statement at the hearing setting out our reasons for opposing the application.
- **Open Country Dairy:** Open Country Dairy Ltd continues to work on revising their consent application and has sought more time from the Environment Court to refine details and consult with all parties.
- **Healthy Rivers Plan Change 1:** Ms Robertson met with Waikato Regional Council to discuss reasons behind Fish and Game's appeal on the proposed Healthy Rivers Plan change.
- **Whangamarino Weir Memorandum:** A further responses has been prepared and sent to the Waikato Regional Council proposing a way forward for the Whangamarino Weir consent review. In particular, it was proposed to undertake technical work that:
 - provides a better understand the wider dynamics of the existing hydrological environment including the operation of the Whangamarino Weir and the LWFCs; and
 - identifies any physical changes to the nature of the Whangamarino Weir that are considered to be desirable to reduce the extent of any adverse hydrological effects associated with its existence and/or operation while still achieving the ecological benefits of the weir.