

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 councillor or the office.

Matters arising from the Council Meeting of 16 October 2021

1. Councillor Cocks asked for an update on Lake Waikare. Mr Wilson replied that under the new legislation (National Policy Statement for Freshwater) the Waikato Regional Council must include Lake Waikare in a FMU (Freshwater Management Unit) that will identify environmental outcomes/targets to be achieved. Fish and Game will have ample opportunities to take part in this process.
2. Councillor Cocks expressed his concern that the Minister of Conservation's action in placing pheasants and partridge on Schedule 3 of the Wildlife Act for commercial pheasant preserves was illegal. Councillors agreed that Ms Davis is asked for her legal opinion on the legality of placing pheasant and partridges on Schedule 3.
3. The results of the National Shoveler study were discussed with Mr Klee agreeing that the long-term trend indicated that the population was stable.
4. Mr Barker enquired as to whether the results of the banding programme could be produced earlier in the year. Mr Klee explained that the report from the banding programme was based on both the annual harvest survey and band returns, and thus could not be produced any earlier.
5. Mr Wilson introduced his financial report observing that the surplus for the previous financial year was some \$200k greater than budgeted; however, fish licence sales for the new financial year had been slow due to the lockdowns in Auckland and Hamilton with revenue down 30%.
6. Mr Klee updated the meeting on the ongoing Section 128 review of the consents held by DOC and Fish & Game for the Whangamarino weir. Mr Klee stated that they were waiting for data from ICM on the impact of other structures, especially the Whangamarino flood gates on water levels in the wetland. Mr Klee observed that Fish & Game had a good understanding of the water levels that would enhance waterfowl productivity in the wetland. He emphasised that it made good sense to operate all structures in a coherent manner to optimise habitat values rather than solely concerning on flood relief.
7. Mr Wilson reported that he had not yet heard back from the Waikato Regional Council as to whether they were going to proceed with the current Environment Court proceedings for Healthy Rivers.
8. Councillor Cocks expressed his concern that there had been no consultation with licence holders regarding the review of Fish and Game, and that the whole process was being rushed. Other Councillors agreed and expressed concerns as to how the committee had been formed. It was agreed that the New Zealand Fish & Game Council and other Fish & Game regions be informed of Council's concerns that:
 - the process was being unduly rushed.
 - with the way that committee had been setup and the composition of the committee.
 - the need to consult with licence holders and adjacent regions.

Matters Arising from the Chief Executive's Report

National Shoveler Survey Results: The day of the survey coincided with a cold southerly storm across the country causing difficult counting conditions for surveyors. A total of 10,342 shoveler duck were counted at 244 Shoveler counted included 2,340 in one large flock on Lake Waikare.

Lake Arapuni sterile trout programme: Tags are still trickling in from Lake Arapuni from the tagged release last October of 1,000 sterile yearlings and 1,000 non-sterile. In the lower reaches of the lake (Arapuni Bridge) about 50% of the tagged trout caught are sterile fish. However, 100% of the tag returns from trout caught beneath the Waipapa dam were from non-sterile trout; presumably maturing fish that were running upstream searching for spawning water. It's still too early to be definite, but the occasional sterile trout has been much larger than expected.

Supplementary Question in the gamebird harvest survey: Game bird hunters were asked the question in this year's GBHS. "*Should the game bird hunting season be shifted to start on the first weekend in June*". Out of 137 responses 43% were in favour, 45% against and 12% were unsure.

Paeroa Wastewater Treatment Plant (WWTP) Submissions: We made a submission on the Paeroa WWTP application for 5-year temporary consent. Our main concern is the high nutrient load limits applied for, and we believe that significant reductions are necessary.

Fresh Water Farm Plan Stock Exclusion and Submission Fish and Game prepared feedback on the discussion document, which will form part of a joint submission with Forest and Bird and the Environment Defence Society.

Natural and Built Environment Bill exposure draft – submission Fish and Game made a submission on the exposure draft. In our submission we noted our concern that the protection of trout and salmon habitat under the RMA has not been carried through in the NBA.

Managing our wetland's discussion document: We're making an extensive submission of the Ministry for the Environment's discussion on proposed changes to the National Environmental Standards for Freshwater in regard to the management of wetlands.

Fonterra Hautapu discharge consent: We have been in negotiation with Fonterra regarding their applications with the Waikato Regional Council for discharges to the Waikato River associated with a new wastewater management strategy for its dairy factory at Hautapu.

Comprehensive consent for wetland maintenance: The processing of the comprehensive consent proposal for maintenance of our wetlands has been slightly delayed with the WRC officer dealing with the consent away on ACC recovery.

Murray Young Wetland: A sign has been put up at the wetland and two kauri trees planted on either side. These were Murray's favourite trees.

Game Bird Habitat Trust Projects: David is assisting 5 landowners with projects but due to Covid delays we are yet to receive word from the GBHT if the applications we are involved with have been successful.

Opuatia Wetland Report: David has reviewed and given feedback on the assessment of future management options for the wetland.

Regional Pest Management Plan: We attended the hearing and presented our submission on the proposed Regional Pest Management Plan for the Waikato Region (RPMP). Our main concern was that the RPMP did not provide a list of pest plant species, and thus we now required consents to clear or spray any pest plants in a wetland under the Waikato Regional Plan's discretionary activity rule 4.3.9.3. (which states that you can clear pest plants without consent but only if they're listed in the regional pest management plan.)

Sportsfish and Game Management Plan: We've received feedback from the national office of DoC who have suggested some relatively minor amendments, so these will be considered and then the plan resubmitted.