

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 19th March 2022

1. The Chairman expressed his concerns over the Regional Structural Review and recommended that Council commissions an independent review. It was agreed that Council allocated \$15,000 for an external consultant to peer review the report on the Regional Structural Review.
2. The access issue was discussed with Councillors emphasising that improving access for waterways was a priority. It was agreed that in proposed district plan proceedings, and where possible elsewhere, Council advocates for the right of landowners to receive an additional title for placing covenants across private land to allow public access to rivers, lakes and wetlands.
3. A letter from John Sumich, Habitat Te Henga Project co-ordinator, was tabled. He was requesting whether Council could assist with the project by funding predator traps. It was agreed that Council provide funding to the Habitat Te Henga project for two AT220 traps.
4. Correspondence was tabled from Troy Downs, Piggott Wetland President, and Grant Mackey, President Franklin Acclimatisation Society regarding tenure of ponds 1 and 5 in the Piggott Wetland. Councillors agreed to support Mr Mackey's recommendations that a bond is placed on the tenure of these ponds. Councillors agreed that the Chairman of each wetland association be asked whether they had issues/problems arising from tenure and pondholders not maintaining and/or marking up ponds.
5. Councillor Ralph advised that there would be a huge increase in maize costs later in the year, but he was likely to have a surplus and could provide maize for the banding programme. The Chairman expressed his appreciation to Councillor Ralph for this offer.
6. Mr Wilson updated Councillors on the Waikato District Plan, advising that Council had joined the following appeals to the Environment Court.
 - **Ward Demolition:** Oppose. The applicant is seeking to reverse the WDC decision to disallow the rezoning of 2 sites at Meremere, comprising approximately 56 hectares, from Rural Zone to Heavy Industrial Zone.
 - **Middlemiss Farms:** Support. The applicant is seeking to reverse the WDC decision to remove conservation lot provisions for the protection, maintenance and enhancement of Significant Natural Areas, especially wetlands.
 - **Department of Conservation:** Support. The applicant is seeking to reverse WDC decisions on conservation lots, biodiversity offsetting, and Significant Natural Areas.
 - **Federated Farmers:** Support. The applicant is seeking to reverse the WDC decision to remove conservation lot provisions.
 - **Federated Farmers:** Oppose: The applicant is seeking to remove all provisions for Significant Natural Areas except when verified by experts from field visits.
7. The draft Operational Work Plan for 2022/23 was discussed. It was agreed that the Plan should include an objective that we secure one new permanent access point per year.
8. The Chairman recommended that the OWP includes more emphasis on increasing duck numbers. Mr Wilson cautioned that such an objective alone could have unforeseen consequences, but that it was already a broad theme throughout the plan. It was agreed that the Plan would include a provision encouraging the rearing and release of captive reared mallards.

Matters Arising from the Chief Executive's Report

- **Banding:** The number of ducks banded was pleasing this year, exceeding the 3000 bird target. Aka Aka and the Helensville sites in particular produced above average results. The cyclone that hit during the Te Awamutu banding weekend coupled with the botulism outbreak on the adjacent lake Ngaroto is likely to have had an influence on catch rates there.

Banding Location	2014	2015	2016	2017	2018	2019	2020	2021	2022
Hauraki Plains	1153	1171	1422	1818	1449	1224	881	1068	947
Te Awamutu	502	417	557	786	806	478	646	280	487
Opuatia	284	355	322	399	517	148	247	104	164
AkaAka	181	274	264	507	399	0	48	212	914
Helensville	254	526	570	708	487	472	519	430	858
Wellsford	179	224	97	165	35	50	151	125	104
TOTAL	2553	2967	3232	4383	3693	2372	2492	2219	3474

- **Botulism Outbreaks:** Botulism outbreaks are starting to abate, although Lake Ngaroto has just had another low DO event leading to a fish kill which could exacerbate the issue there. Contractors are still working at the lake removing carcasses. The system David Klee has implemented over the past 10 years with botulism management plans becoming standard conditions on Waste Water Treatment Plant consents and having specialised contractors to solely manage avifauna on these facilities is paying dividends with mortality rates reduced by an order of magnitude in most cases. Botulism has also been an issue in the north of our region this year, beginning mid-December at Mangere Watercare where a Bird Care Aotearoa worker, contracted to Watercare, has been collecting birds every few days and transferring live ones to Green Bay.
- **Healthy Rivers (Plan Change 1):** Waikato Regional Council has confirmed that it intends to complete the appeals process and make Plan Change 1 (PC1) operative as soon as possible. The starting point for resolving the points of appeal for PC1 requires identification of the relevant national regulations and whether there is sufficient justification within the bounds of PC1 to adopt a more stringent standard or whether the PC1 rule should be removed to allow the national regulation to prevail.
- **Stone Jug Road:** Fencing has been completed and Adam has reinstated the stock water. A local farmer has been asked to graze the property to keep the grass and weeds in check.
- **Wetland Consent Application:** David Klee and Britta Deichmann have completed the first round of ground truthing and aerial surveys to inform the habitat assessment work being carried out for our comprehensive consent application. David has also been assisting other regions with wetland consenting issues given that he is one of the first to have acquired a consent after the new NES provisions came into effect.
- **WCEET funded wetland projects (Project Manager: David Klee):** Contractors have completed another project on private land which will create 9ha of wetland and riparian nesting habitat. A dual water controls structure has been put in place that allows both manipulation of levels and complete dewatering if required. We are also working with Hall Engineering and WRC fisheries biologists to trial a removable koi cage that will allow us to catch pest fish and remove them from the system when the water is let go. If this is successful, we plan to implement more of these and retrofit some existing wetlands.
- **Angler access:** Adam Daniel met with two landowners below Toa Bridge and has secured a tentative access deal including signage on the downstream end to the two properties. Adam also met with a trustee of the Whangapeki Trust (upper Whanganui River) to discuss the potential of assisting the trust in any fencing or riparian projects they may wish to undertake.
- **Licence details:** A request form has been created by Roslyn Simmonds on the F&G website so that anyone with a licence can ask for their contact information to be updated on the Eyede database.