

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 27th April 2024

1. **Staff update:** The CE expressed excitement at having some new skilled enthusiastic staff starting shortly. He explained that the two candidates appeared to complement each other's skill sets well.
2. **Letter to the Minister:** All F&G regions received a letter from Todd McLay minister of hunting and fishing seeking a comprehensive breakdown of F&Gs activities over the past 7 years. The draft response was tabled. Council suggested that issues of 4.10, Whakapapa access and the state of the lower waikato lakes and wetlands were to be included in the response.
3. **Letter to NZ Council regarding Levy payment:** Councillors expressed disappointment at the fact NZ Council was unwilling to engage in arbitration and reach a mutually acceptable position. Council maintains that the budgeting process did not adequately account for Covid restrictions in our region and which led to licence sales targets being set artificially high for our region.
4. **Budget reduction:** The Chair indicated that we were the only region that made the 3% saving and did not put in a contestable funding bid but that we were only able to do this because of staff changes.
5. **Whakapapa Access:** Dr Daniel gave a brief history of the access issues and future prognosis for getting it re-established. It appears that all avenues to find an acceptable outcome with the new landowners has been exhausted and the matter has been elevated to the minister of hunting and fishing.
6. **New Policies:** The following draft policies produced by the NZ Council were tabled for review:
 - National Health and Safety Policy
 - Protected disclosure policy
 - National Health and Safety Policy For Rangers.
7. **National Health and Safety Policy For Rangers:** Concerns were raised around the requirements to implement some of the policies for honorary rangers. At face value there are some significant costs and reporting requirements. to the National office. It would be helpful if NZ council produced a template which allowed for regional variation. This would give everyone some clarity around expectations moving forward.
8. **Research Fund:** Concerns were raised regarding previous use of research funds for national projects that did not appear to meet research criteria. It was also noted that further consideration should be given to acquiring external funding and prioritising research that was not solely reliant on licence holder income.
9. **.410 shotguns:** The staff report on 4.10 shotguns was discussed. Discussion around how the regulation came into effect, CE raised concerns about availability of non-toxic and lack of communications being put out to our hunters through our communications team. The CE confirmed that he will be purchasing some non-toxic .410 bismuth if it can be sourced to take ranging on opening weekend. Any children found with lead shot will be given some nontoxic alternatives to use to ensure they can remain compliant.

Matters Arising from the Chief Executive's Report

Mangatutu earthworks: Concern was expressed regarding earthworks conducted next to the stream with no response from WRC to date.

Banding data Councillor Barker asked about banding information and noted a recent report from Australia with helpful information for regulations. The CE gave a verbal update and indicated that new staff member Beau Jarvis-Child will be assigned to work with Matt McDougall from the Eastern region and prepare a report for council. It is hoped that all North Island regions will adopt a cohesive banding programme with Northland potentially coming on board in 2025.

Arapuni trout competition: Councillor Annan gave an update of the competition. Some excellent fish landed; most large fish got caught near the top under the dam. Around 50% of the fish were wild. Adam will be preparing a report for the next council meeting.

Whangamarino Weir: The latest information from WRC is that they agree it can be non-notified providing provision to raise the weir to 3.14 RL removed from the consent. The weir has never been put at that height (current design level is 2.95 RL) and it was only a provision in the consent which required a further assessment regardless. The CE suggested that it was in no one's best interest to try and litigate this now, given the weir comes up for re consenting in just a few years.

Banding After last years wash out, we were pleased with the overall catch of ducks during our annual banding programme. The Hauraki Plains site was a disappointment given the number of ducks at the site that wouldn't come into the cages. We are looking to modify the site for next summer to move the cages closer to the water's edge to see if this improves catch rates.

Botulism We had sporadic outbreaks across several wetland environments this summer, but overall mortalities were lower than average. The worst hit area appeared to be a ponds around Te Aroha including the Howarth Memorial Wetland. Staff in concert with the Te Aroha club did several days in row boats recovering sick and dead birds.

Parkinsons Lake: We have requested that WRC staff produce a lake management plan for Parkinson Lake due to repeated fish kills and declining water quality. There has been no response from WRC on the Parkinson Lake management plan.

Weir Project. This was a DOC funded project which we conducted on their behalf. Fish and Game contractors installed large spall rock on both upstream banks to mitigate erosion and prevent the parish polder stop bank being compromised or risk the water bypassing the weir through Nth Shepherd block and potentially causing it to blow out. Contractors also built up the access track to a uniform height where it had slumped. Some of the reno mattress was refixed where it had come away although the main repairs on where someone has cut squares out of it could not be completed due to water levels.

Wetland Projects: 2 large scale wetland restoration projects were implemented on private land this summer. In total close to 40Ha have been restored and these areas should provide significant breeding habitat for waterfowl and upland game.