

**CONFIRMED MINUTES OF THE 177th MEETING OF THE EASTERN FISH AND
GAME COUNCIL, HELD AT THE ROTORUA OFFICES OF FISH & GAME NEW
ZEALAND ON THURSDAY 15th AUGUST 2019 AT 12.00PM**

Present

Crs Murray Ferris, Barry Roderick, Lindsay Lyons, Geoff Thomas, David Woolner, Ngahi Bidois, Adam Rayner, and Alan Baird.

IN ATTENDANCE

Andy Garrick, Kate Thompson, Matt McDougall, Anthony van Dorp, Lynne Sands, Mark Sherburn, John Meikle, Eben Herbert, Matt Osborne, John Meikle, Carmel Veitch, and Lloyd Gledhill (Eastern Fish & Game); Martin Taylor (New Zealand Fish & Game); Mark Venman (Department of Conservation), Shane Grayling (Bay of Plenty Regional Council); Don Atkinson and John Gifford (Lakes Water Quality Society).

1.0 WELCOME AND KARAKIA

1.1 Cr Murray Ferris (Chairman) opened the meeting at 12.05pm, and welcomed all present introducing Martin Taylor, Shane Grayling, Mark Venman, Don Atkinson, and John Gifford. Cr Ngahi Bidois opened with a karakia.

2.0 APOLOGIES

2.1 Apologies were received from Crs Laurance Tamati and Ken Coombes; Helen Neale and Dave Conley (Department of Conservation); and Ken Raureti (Bay of Plenty Conservation Board).

2.2 *Agreed (Alan Baird/David Woolner) that the apologies for the 177th meeting of the Eastern Region Fish and Game Council be sustained. [19/08/2.2]*

3.0 TRIBUTE TO RAY BUSHELL

3.1 Cr Murray Ferris asked that Council stand for a moments silence in memory of Ray Bushell, past Councillor and long-standing supporter, who had recently passed away.

3.2 Cr Barry Roderick spoke a few words on behalf of Ray providing some history to his contribution to Fish & Game and conservation.

4.0 MINUTES OF THE PREVIOUS MEETING (13 JUNE 2019)

4.1 *Agreed (Ngahi Bidois/Alan Baird) that the minutes of the meeting held on 13 June 2019 be confirmed as a true and correct record subject to a correction to spelling of Alan Baird's name under Item 6, General Business. [19/08/4.1]*

5.0 IDENTIFICATION OF RESOLUTIONS FOR INCLUSION IN COUNCIL POLICY

5.1 No items were identified for inclusion in Council policy.

6.0 MATTERS ARISING

6.1 There were no matters arising from the minutes of the meeting held on 13 June 2019.

7.0 NOTIFICATION OF ITEMS FOR GENERAL BUSINESS

- Cr Lindsay Lyons – R3
- Andy Garrick – Indigenous Freshwater Fish Amendment Bill

8.0 CONFLICT OF INTEREST REGISTER

8.1 No conflicts of interest were identified.

9.0 2019 – 2020 OPERATIONAL WORK PLAN

9.1 Andy Garrick informed Council that the final draft of the OWP had been circulated to clubs and other interested organisations and no feedback had been received. With no changes to consider he advised that it was appropriate for Council to formally approve the final draft if it was agreeable to doing so.

9.2 *Agreed (Barry Roderick/Lindsay Lyons) that Council approves the Operational Work Plan and Budget for the 2019-2020 year. [19/08/9.2]*

9.3 *Agreed (Barry Roderick/Lindsay Lyons) that Council delegates authority to the Manager to approve expenditure during the year as set out in the Council approved Operational Work Plan and Budget. [19/08/9.3]*

10.0 CATFISH INCURSIONS AND ISSUES ARISING

10.1 Andy Garrick introduced speakers Shane Grayling (Bay of Plenty Regional Council), Mark Venman (Department of Conservation), and Don Atkinson and John Gifford (Lakes Water Quality Society) who would be presenting to Council today.

10.2 Shane Grayling (Bay of Plenty Regional Council) presented via Powerpoint and provided a brief overview of Regional Council's Biosecurity team and their role in managing pests under the Regional Pest Management Plan (RPMP). The new RPMP was currently being developed having been through the public consultation stage and with a workshop scheduled for late September 2019 the plan was likely to be endorsed early in 2020. Shane briefly covered some of the proposed "strengthened rules" relating to boat trailers and potential offences for leaving boat trailers in the water and the transportation of ballast water between water bodies by the likes of wakeboard boats. Shane also advised of the Regional Council's plan to include perch and tench in the RPMP as they were considered to have the potential to impact native fish populations and recreational fisheries. Perch and tench were not well established in the region and the recent discovery of perch in Papamoa appeared to have been a one-off incident. The Regional Council was planning to make a case for amending the Freshwater Fisheries Regulations 1983 and declassifying these species from the sports fish schedule within its area of responsibility.

10.3 Shane advised that the first catfish incursion was discovered in Lake Rotoiti in 2016 by the Regional Council's weed harvester, and in late 2018 were found in Lake Rotorua. By early 2018 the population in Lake Rotoiti had increased dramatically where some 35,000 were caught. The catfish incursion was Regional Council's largest biosecurity project within the Bay of Plenty with \$300,000 being spent annually following the \$450,000 spent last year in attempts to contain and prevent the spread to other lakes. Discussion points included:

- risk to other lakes;
- projects currently underway including working with other groups;
- investment in science and innovation for alternative methods of control;
- eradication not feasible with budgets allocated over the next 10 years;
- Waikato Regional Council's involvement with the Lake Taupo incursion;
- effect on koura populations.

10.4 Don Atkinson and John Gifford addressed Council on behalf of the Lakes Water Quality Society (LWQS). Their concern is about the huge risk that catfish (and other aquatic pests) could be spread into lakes not currently affected. They felt that aside

from the Regional Pest Management Plan there was nothing specific requiring individuals to be involved and do their bit to reduce the risks of pests being introduced or transferred into lakes in which they're not currently present. Providing an example of a programme specific to Lake Tahoe in the United States, the LWQS is advocating for setting up a certification system here to engage boat users and remind them to check their boat before they launch. This might be by way of a cell phone app and instant fines for those who did not comply with the certification process. They advised that the upcoming workshop and LWQS Symposium scheduled for November would provide the opportunity to consider the concept in greater detail.

10.5 Don Atkinson left the meeting at 1.15pm.

10.6 Mark Venman (Department of Conservation) presented via Powerpoint some historic research into the catfish incursion in Lake Taupo where they were first identified in 1985. A previous study had indicated that catfish preferred shallow, weedy, and rocky areas, but in 1997/98 summer they appeared to have vacated the traditional shallow habitat and were seen schooling midwater above the sandy bottom. Initial concerns were that catfish preyed on juvenile trout when they shared the same habitat, but analysis of the diet of catfish found that those found in shallow areas fed mainly on plant material, snails, and insects while bullies appeared to be the main diet of those found in deeper water. A study which monitored catfish movement using transmitters concluded that the catfish in Lake Taupo were primarily found between the surface and a depth of 17 metres. They were most active during hours of dim light, and were less active during winter when they moved into deeper water. A substantial seasonal migration in spring was identified which was possibly related to spawning, and fyke netting during this time of year might be an effective means of controlling catfish as it selected for larger individuals. The results of ongoing monitoring show no obvious signs of the population in Lake Taupo increasing in size.

10.7 Shane Grayling and John Gifford left the meeting at 1.45pm.

11.0 PRESENTATION BY CARMEL VEITCH "REGIONAL & NATIONAL FINANCE PROCESSES"

11.1 Due to time constraints it was agreed that this item be deferred until the next meeting.

12.0 DISCUSSION WITH MARTIN TAYLOR, CHIEF EXECUTIVE NZ COUNCIL

12.1 Martin Taylor, Chief Executive for the New Zealand Fish and Game Council presented to Council on the challenges and risks facing Fish & Game as he saw them. These included:

- licence sales – declining participation, aging participants, licence fee has exceeded CPI over the last twenty years, maximum licence price threshold has effectively been reached;
- political – Indigenous Freshwater Fish Amendment Bill, NZ Biosecurity Strategy, firearms reforms;
- internal – quality of governance, appropriateness of structure and shortcomings in electoral system;
- climate – effects of climatic warming on lakes and rivers and the species Fish & Game manages.

12.2 Matters raised and discussed by Councillors and staff included:

- current maximum licence fee that a participant is willing to pay now or next year will change within a relatively short period of time because society is conditioned to costs of everything increasing over time;
- value of what Fish & Game delivers to the licence holder for their licence fee needs to be conveyed more effectively;
- comparison of New Zealand's licence fees to other countries;
- increasing participation rather than licence fees;
- revenue could be significantly increased if greater effort put into compliance work in some regions and Fish & Game has a statutory obligation to do this;
- Government budget of \$229m for cleaner waterways tagged for rural sector and could Fish & Game be applying for some of this?
- impacts of population growth, urban expansion, and urbanisation on habitats and resources, social licence and participation are also risks to the organisation;
- access to the resource and individual success tends to be of greater importance to licence holders than the licence fee itself;
- difficulty in making universal changes across a geographically disparate organisation structured as it is, what are Martin's aspirations in terms of the changes he considers necessary? Martin noted it was the role of governors to determine what change was required and for regional councils to direct managers to get in behind the changes they deem to be required;
- the success of an organisation is dependent on more than simply how it is structured – it's dependent on its policies and processes and how all of its different parts interact with each other, and thirdly and critically, it is dependent on the knowledge, skills, experience, motivation and commitment of its staff which increasingly appears to be overlooked or dismissed as being unimportant more recently;
- the strength of the organisation is in its staff in addition to its governors, and staff are the interface between Council and licence holders;
- generic issues identified in recent audits of three regions do not imply that the organisation is broken or in need of major restructuring;
- Fish & Game's portrayal of itself as an environmental champion/extremist and the negative effect of this on its social licence to operate within certain sectors of the community is disturbing;
- public statements made on behalf of the organisation and lack of consultation with staff with significant experience prior to such communications;
- potential role Fish & Game's wetlands could play as carbon sinks;

12.3 *Agreed (Adam Rayner/Alan Baird) that the meeting time be extended for one half hour to close at 3.30pm. [19/08/12.3]*

12.4 Further matters discussed:

- we don't have a good relationship with farmers, when is this going to change? Martin advised the messaging going out would not change until legislation changes and new rules are in place requiring regional authorities to enforce new standards around water quality;
- concern was expressed that it will take a great amount of effort and a lot of time before some members of the farming community regain confidence in, and support for Fish & Game, if they ever do;

- Council make up needs to be more representative, e.g. need more women governors;
- future of upland game property operations was queried, and Martin advised the organisation representing the interests of operators appeared to be very busy behind the scenes and it would be a question of waiting to see what they came up with over the next 2-3 years;
- the Chairman requested that greater dialogue was required between national and regional staff, and staff needed to be consulted and involved more in what Fish & Game puts out nationally.

13.0 DATES FOR SETTING LICENCE FEES IN 2020

13.1 Andy Garrick noted that since this agenda item had been prepared, the NZ Council had approved a 2019/20 Budget and Meeting Schedule for consultation with regions that overlooked and was inconsistent with the letter received by the Chair of the Eastern Region Council dated 12 June 2019. Martin Taylor advised that he was unaware of that letter, but regional Fish & Game Councils would be invited to comment in due course on the more recently drafted schedule.

13.2 *Agreed (Barry Roderick/David Woolner) that Council agrees to the proposed schedule for setting licence fees in 2020 as set out in the Chairman of the NZ Council's letter to the Chair of the Eastern Fish and Game Council dated 12 June 2019. [19/08/13.2]*

14.0 SPECIES MONITORING REPORT

14.1 Council received the Summary for the 2019 Paradise Shelduck and Black Swan Trend Counts Report.

15.0 LIAISON OFFICERS REPORTS

15.1 *Tongariro-Taupo Conservation Board*

No report.

15.2 *Bay of Plenty Conservation Board*

Ken Raureti had emailed his report to Andy who highlighted key items;

- The Bay of Plenty Conservation Management Strategy had been populated with key stakeholders, Fish & Game included, and full consultation was planned for late October/November.
- DOC is working on a NZ Biosecurity Strategy to *Protect & Restore* nature from the Mountain Tops to the depths of the Oceans
- Conservation week 14th – 22nd September marking the 50th anniversary of Conservation Week. Event will be hosted at Wairaka, Te Manuka Tutahi Whakatane.
- Management of Treaty Settlements, Partnerships and relationships is significant in this rohe with several overlapping Waka, multiple iwi, and numerous Hapu. The legislative requirements to resource Treaty Settlement obligations was resource demanding.

15.3 *Department of Conservation*

Mark Venman spoke briefly on behalf of the Department of Conservation fishery team. He said the fish traps were currently in full swing and that fish trapped were on average 2.5cm longer and 300 grams heavier than last year. Recent drift dives had identified fish in the deeper pools which generally indicated that they were not really spawning yet. Compliance work was currently at a very high level for all of DOC.

15.4 *New Zealand Fish and Game Council*

Cr Lindsay Lyons thanked Martin for the presentation and following discussion, adding that it was great to see the New Zealand Council CEO at regional meetings. As the Chairman of the New Zealand Council he advised that there was no intent to restructure the organisation rather it was about a re-set. He said that there was a need to look at where Fish & Game is heading and what it wants and needs to do to look after the resource, and get behind the R3 programme to maintain and increase participation. Lindsay advised that the recent audit of Hawke's Bay, which came about as the other two audits did from concerns relating to governance and conflicts of interest, was nearing completion, and in due course the Minister of Conservation would address this with Fish & Game. He highlighted the need for confidentiality in relation to legally embargoed and politically sensitive information, and commented on the positive relationship Fish & Game has with both the Department of Conservation and the Minister of Conservation.

16.0 OPERATIONAL REPORTS

16.1 Due to time constraints there was no discussion of the Operational Reports.

16.2 ***Agreed (Ngahi Bidois/Alan Baird) that Council receives the Management and Health and Safety reports. [19/08/16.2]***

16.3 ***Agreed (Ngahi Bidois/Alan Baird) that Council receives the Finance Report and approves payments for May and June 2019 totalling \$328,334.80. [19/08/16.3]***

16.4 Council also received the Licence Sales report.

17.0 GENERAL BUSINESS

17.1 Martin Taylor noted that the issues raised by Eastern Region staff in relation to recently inserted provisions in the Conservation (Indigenous Freshwater Fish) Amendment Bill which appear to be of concern to this region, have been circulated to other regions for their views. He noted there is still time to deal with these, and Andy Garrick appealed for New Zealand Council staff to take the matters raised seriously, as the implications for both this region and the Taupo fishery are considerable.

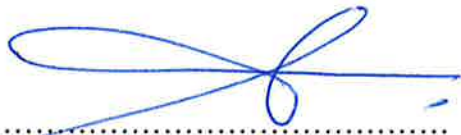
17.2 Cr Lindsay Lyons spoke of the tagged trout event which has been hosted by the Eastern Region each opening for the past four years, and noted its alignment with the R3 strategy. Lindsay queried the possibility of the New Zealand Council underwriting the major prize of \$10,000. Martin Taylor responded that he thought this was a great idea. Andy Garrick noted that the New Zealand Council had previously rejected this proposition, and queried whether Martin considered the Council would be comfortable being accountable to licence holders in the event the major prize was won. He asked Martin whether he had considered the cost benefits of the event as it is currently operated. Martin Taylor stated that it was about more than just licence sales, and said this would be a matter for the Council to consider.

17.3 Cr Adam Raynor advised a duck calling competition would be held at the Sika Show in late September and advised that he would have a stand available for Fish & Game if the region wished to be involved.

18.0 MEETING CLOSED

18.1 Cr Ngahi Bidois closed the meeting with a karakia.

18.2 The meeting closed at 3.46pm.



Murray Ferris
Chairman

SUMMARY OF RESOLUTIONS

2.0 APOLOGIES

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