

**CONFIRMED MINUTES OF THE 206th MEETING OF THE EASTERN FISH AND
GAME COUNCIL, HELD AT THE ROTORUA OFFICES OF FISH & GAME NEW
ZEALAND ON THURSDAY 1 FEBRUARY 2024 AT 11.00 AM**

Present

Crs. Ngahi Bidois, Debbie Oakley, Alan Simmonds, Scott Nicol, Mike Jarvie, Mark Sceats, and Murray Ferris.

In attendance

Arash Alacinia, Kate Thompson, Matt McDougall, Eben Herbert, Matt Osborne, Anthony van Dorp (Eastern Fish & Game); and Barry Roderick.

1.0 WELCOME AND KARAKIA

1.1 Cr Ngahi Bidois opened the meeting at 11.12 am with a karakia and welcomed all present.

2.0 APOLOGIES

2.1 Apologies were received from Crs. Lindsay Lyons, Jay Tapsell, and Kevin Counts; Ken Raureti (Te Arawa Lakes Trust); Sara Carley (Bay of Plenty Conservation Board).

2.2 *Agreed (Ngahi Bidois/Mark Sceats) that the apologies for the 206th meeting of the Eastern Region Fish and Game Council be sustained. [24/02/2.2]*

3.0 MINUTES OF THE PREVIOUS MEETING (7 DECEMBER 2023)

3.1 *Agreed (Ngahi Bidois/Murray Ferris) that the minutes of the meeting held on 7 December 2023 be confirmed as a true and correct record. [24/02/3.1]*

3.2 IDENTIFICATION OF RESOLUTIONS FOR INCLUSION IN COUNCIL POLICY

No items were identified for inclusion in Council policy from the minutes of the meeting held 7 December 2023.

3.3 MATTERS ARISING

Cr Alan Simmonds queried the impact on licence sales from the temporary closure of Lake Okataina due to the Golden clam. Cr Ngahi Bidois asked for this to be discussed when the licence sales report is being discussed.

4.0 NOTIFICATION OF ITEMS FOR GENERAL BUSINESS

Mark Sceats – Identify existing policies and review process.

5.0 CONFLICT OF INTEREST REGISTER

5.1 Councillors were asked to inform the chair of any conflicts of interest. No conflicts of interest were recorded.

6.0 HEALTH & SAFETY

6.1 Health and Safety Report – Arash Alacinia informed Council that a review of Health and Safety policies is occurring at a national level. Arash was pleased to report no incidents for the reported period but commented on a more recent event (near miss) involving the mower being utilised too close to the stream. This was being reviewed and would be included in the next report. Cr Ngahi Bidois was pleased with the health & safety results to date and acknowledged that the health and safety of our staff and organisation is a high priority for the Council.

6.2 *Council received the Health and Safety report.*

7.0 ANGLERS NOTICE REVIEW

7.1 Council discussed the issue raised regarding the perceived high catch rate using the method of “Czech Nymphing”. Cr Alan Simmonds believed that this method was very successful at catching high numbers of juvenile trout and was concerned it could wipe out a juvenile population. Matt Osborne was asked for his opinion, he advised that as with jigging it is a difficult method to define. Matt questioned whether it is creating an issue as his view was that we are wanting anglers to catch fish, and we are wanting to increase participation. Council also questioned whether regulations could be changed pertaining to equipment used or limits set around how many fish could be caught and released per day, however adoption of these rules would be difficult to enforce. Matt Osborne had not witnessed any impacts of Czech nymphing on the fisheries and commented that many of our fisheries were underutilised.

7.2 *Agreed (Mike Jarvie/Mark Sceats) that Council agrees with the consultation process and time frame for considering changes to the 2024-2025 Anglers Notice. [24/02/7.2]*

7.3 *Agreed (Mike Jarvie/Mark Sceats) that Council was in favour of progressing the item on “Czech Nymphing” to the next stage of consultation for feedback and did not identify any other issues for further discussion. [24/02/7.3]*

7.4 *Council adjourned for lunch at 11.43am, reconvened at 12.15pm.*

8.0 WAIKAREMOANA SPORTS FISH HABITAT ENHANCEMENT FUND

8.1 Arash Alaeinia provided an overview of the proposed application to the Waikaremoana Sports Fish Habitat Enhancement Fund for the purchase of an electric fishing machine (EFM) to assist with river fisheries investigations within the Wairoa catchment and more widely in due course.

8.2 Matt Osborne advised that recent focus had been on “lakes” research, and we are now looking to move back to river investigations particularly following cyclone Gabrielle. The EFM will allow analysis of the smaller streams and rivers and the data collected will feed into Niwa’s freshwater database. Matt commented on the benefit of owning a machine versus hiring the equipment and timing it when conditions were right to undertake the work.

8.3 While Council supported the purchase of the EFM, discussion occurred around whether external funding should be sought for this type of purchase in future. Crs. Debbie Oakley and Alan Simmonds felt that this was good use of the Waikaremoana fund. Kate Thompson suggested that charitable funding for this type of equipment may be difficult to obtain as the project being funded usually needed to benefit the whole community rather than a specific group eg anglers.

8.4 *Agreed (Scott Nicol/Mike Jarvie) that Council approves the application to the Waikaremoana Sports Fish Habitat Enhancement Fund for additional funding in this financial year, 2023-24, of up to \$25,000 for the purpose of procuring an Electric Fishing Machine. [23/12/8.4]*

9.0 GOALS AND PRIORITIES FOR THE 2024-2025 OPERATIONAL WORK PLAN

9.1 Arash Alaeinia informed Council of the process undertaken each year to review Council’s current priorities and advised that this was the opportunity for Council to provide input into the goals and priorities planned for the 2024-25 operational year.

9.2 Council discussion covered the following:

- Opportunities - remove reference to Waikato River as an example for underutilised fisheries considering Golden clam issues.
- Assisted habitat on non-public land – include Hort NZ for development of working relationship.

- Statutory Liaison – amendment required “Provide support to NZ Fish & Game representative at Taupo Fisheries Advisory meetings”.
 - Use and hireage of facilities and risks associated with this such as disease and health & safety.
 - Considerable staff time dealing with Access particularly recent concerns about Golden clam.
 - Prioritisation of activities with the limited resources available.
- 9.3 With no changes to Council’s primary priorities declared Arash Alaeinia advised that today’s discussions will be taken into consideration for the next draft of the 2024-25 Operational Work Plan which will be reviewed at the next meeting.
- 10.0 DRAFT PREVENTION OF BULLYING AND HARASSMENT POLICY**
- 10.1 Arash Alaeinia provided background to the Draft Prevention of Bullying and Harassment Policy which in short defines the behaviours we do not support and processes to deal with these.
- 10.2 Council did not have any feedback on this policy noting that the issues with Bullying and Harassment is also covered in employment law.
- 11.0 DRAFT DRUG AND ALCOHOL POLICY**
- 11.1 Council discussion focussed primarily on staff needing management approval to consume alcohol after hours when working away from home.
- 11.2 Cr Debbie Oakley felt that the policy’s primary should focus on alcohol and use of vehicles and suggested that it incorporates a requirement that staff remain within legal driving limits.
- 11.3 Eben Herbert understood this was also covered in employment law but how the draft policy is written meant that because staff are salaried, when working away from home, they are unable to consume alcohol after hours unless they had express permission from their manager. Eben questioned when staff are not driving should they be required to be under the legal driving limit?
- 11.4 Cr Mark Sceats described the alcohol driving limits and agreed this is certainly a work issue if you exceed them, but if you are not breaking the law then there is no real issue.
- 11.5 Council supported Cr Scott Nicol’s suggestion to amend policy under section 4 “Drugs and Alcohol in the Workplace” to remove the first sentence of second paragraph relating to approval to consume alcohol.
- 11.6 Suggestion was also made to remove the wording of “and accommodation” in the first paragraph under section 4 and to add “paid” in between “performs” and “work” on the first line in the first paragraph. This would eliminate the contention of defining the place of accommodation as a work environment.
- 12.0 DRAFT GOVERNANCE CODE OF CONDUCT POLICY**
- 12.1 Council had reviewed the Draft Governance Code of Conduct Policy and had no further comments. Cr Ngahi Bidois suggested Council could feedback to Arash Alaeinia directly if they had any feedback on this policy.
- 13.0 OPERATIONAL REPORTS**
- Finance Report***
- 13.1 Cr Ngahi Bidois called for questions on the finance report. There were no questions, Council proceeded with confirming the recommendations.
- 13.2 Agreed (Ngahi Bidois/Debbie Oakley) that Council receives the Finance Report. [24/02/13.2]***
- 13.3 Agreed (Mike Jarvie/Murray Ferris) that Council approves payments for November and December 2023 totalling \$360,598.70. [24/02/13.3]***

Management Report

- 13.4 Cr Ngahi Bidois thanked the team for the well-constructed and informative reports. Arash Alaeinia highlighted that we will be adding more photos and information about what we do. Arash thanked his team for their efforts over the holiday period acknowledging the work that goes into summer surveys, game bird monitoring, and compliance at this very busy time of year.

Licence Sales Report

- 13.5 Arash Alaeinia provided an update to the licence sales report noting another improvement in sales since the last report but also highlighting that sales are still down on a poor season last year which is concerning. He advised that an email is scheduled to be sent in the next couple of days to lapsed participants promoting the excellent fishing opportunities to be had in the Region with fishing at stream mouths and lakes returning great results. Arash had also gained permission to send the communication to Auckland/Waikato and Hawke's Bay regions lapsed participants which he hoped would benefit all three regions. Arash added that non-residents had not yet returned to pre- covid levels and there appeared to be an increase in short term licences over family and season categories.
- 13.6 Kate Thompson commented on the graphs in the report which showed good sales over the summer period following the slow opening. She wondered if some participants had delayed purchasing their season licence due to the Golden clam and access issues that had occurred on opening of the season and possibly they had chosen short term this year. Her feeling was that these small improvements will continue over the next month assuming the weather stays as stable as it has been.
- 13.7 Discussion also occurred around the return of non-residents and sales results nationally.

14.0 LIAISON OFFICERS REPORTS

14.1 *Report from New Zealand Council*

Cr Debbie Oakley report covered:

- Two working groups still in discussion – Future Structure and Finance Working Groups.
- CEO and Chair have met with Minister of Hunting & Fishing Hon. Todd McLay.
- NZC advertise for Governance position.

Discussion occurred about the Ministerial review and outcomes achieved without legislative changes. CEO and NZ Chair have communicated with Minister about appetite for legislative change.

- 14.2 Matt McDougall informed Council of talk of the Department of Conservation shutting down Game Bird Hunting if avian influenza arrives in New Zealand. He advised that Fish & Game needed to have established well thought out plans in place if this were to happen otherwise, we risk DoC taking over the process. Matt provided some background to what was occurring overseas and possibilities of it coming to NZ.

15.0 GENERAL BUSINESS

- 15.1 Arash Alaeinia provided Council with an update on current access arrangements for Lake Okataina which are in place until the end of February. He has reached out to various parties for discussion on short/long term arrangements. Arash advised that the eDNA result on all the lakes tested were negative and MPI and TALT will test again in March.
- 15.2 Cr Mark Sceats requested his item regarding Council Policy review be considered at a later meeting.

16.0 MEETING CLOSED

16.1 Cr Ngahi Bidois closed the meeting with a karakia at 1.35pm.



Ngahi Bidois
Chairman

SUMMARY OF RESOLUTIONS

2.0 APOLOGIES

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