Confirmed Minutes - NORTHLAND FISH & GAME COUNCIL

Location: Northland Fish & Game Office

Date and Time: Thursday 06 August 2026, 7.00pm

PRESENT

Acting Chairperson: Darryl Reardon

Councillors: Phil Durham, Sean Brickland, Barrie Barnes, John McEntee, Mark Bell, Lloyd Altham

Staff: Craig Deal (Manager), Rachael Quin (Administrator)

In the absence of the Acting Chairman Shanks, Cr Reardon was nominated to be Acting Chairman.

It was moved: ***That Cr Reardon be Acting Chairman in the absence of Cr Shanks.***

Barrie Barnes / Lloyd Altham ***CARRIED***

The Acting Chairman welcomed the councillors. The Conflict-of-Interest register was circulated around the table for all councillors to sign and declare any conflicts.

APOLOGIES Cameron Shanks, Russell Daniels

It was moved ***That the apologies be accepted.***

Mark Bell / John McEntee ***CARRIED***

Previous Minutes

It was resolved ***That the minutes of the previous meeting held on the 21st May 2026 are confirmed as true and correct.***

John McEntee / Barrie Barnes ***CARRIED***

Matters Arising

There were no matters arising.

Previous Public Excluded Minutes

It was resolved: ***That the minutes of the unconfirmed public excluded previous meetings held on the 21 May and 08 June 2026 are confirmed as true and correct.***

Barrie Barnes / Lloyd Altham ***CARRIED***

Matters Arising

There were no matters arising from the public excluded meeting minutes.

It was moved: ***That Chairman Durham returns from a Leave of Absence without opposition.***

Mark Bell / Barrie Barnes ***CARRIED***

The Chairman thanked Cr Reardon and particularly Cr Shanks for stepping up in his absence and dealing with the vitriol and personal attacks from a disgruntled licence holder which were uncalled for and demonstrated an ignorance of the decision-making process and people involved.

Managers' Report

The Manager further reported;

- HPAI – two incidents in New Zealand currently with no mass outbreaks yet. There is uncertainty as to the potential risk to human health and the exact effect on game birds, seasons and hunting. The Chairman asked if appropriate signage was planned for closing of wetlands. These would be laminated as needed and permit holders emailed for notification.
- Jack Bisset Wetland – the Manager is organising quotes for bund wall repair. The Chairman proposed the option to do nothing or investigate grants particularly the Game Bird Habitat Trust.
- Three prosecutions from opening weekend offences are in progress.

Action: The Manager will talk to Rob Sowman (GBHT) about the prospect of applying for a grant for the bund wall repair. He will copy in NZ Council, then follow up if no action.

It was moved: ***That the Manager's Report be received.***

Barrie Barnes / Mark Bell ***CARRIED***

Field Officers Reports

The bittern telemetry report from DOC Kauri Coast shows interesting patterns of bittern movement.

The Chairman asked about the chainsaw and digger work commissioned by DOC in the Fish & Game reserve at Underwood Wetland. The Manager stated that DOC was apologetic and ceased the work. The Chairman was frustrated at the double standards from DOC considering that DOC had threatened to report NFGC to the regional and district councils for a similar issue two years prior. The Chair suggested the Manager ask to see the consent from DOC for unconsented earth works and vegetation clearance.

Discussions around spawning areas in Northland streams, particularly Waipapa and Kaihu rivers.

It was moved: ***That the Field Officer's Reports be received.***

Darryl Reardon / Mark Bell ***CARRIED***

NZFGC Update

Cr Barnes reported his communication sent out on 3 July covering the following;

- Budget proposal is being worked though.
- CEO recruitment is underway with Corina due to finish in September. Barrie praised Corinas efforts.
- Anglers notice has been approved by the Minister.
- Next NZFGC meeting will involve a request from two regions to include grey teal on the Game Schedule.

Budget 2026-2027

The Manager tabled a memorandum that stated the situation with the 2026-27 budget and the reduced bulk fund confirmed by NZFGC. The memorandum posed several options for how Council could proceed in 2026-27 FY and discussed the merits and risks of the options.

Council discussed the situation and the options presented. Cr Barnes stated that for Fish and Game to continue requesting licence fee increases would continue to reinforce the inability of the organisation to operate within its means. Declining licence sales will continue the pressure on finances. NZFGC is entering a period of change to manage its financial pressure and regions are expected to follow suit.

The Manager advised that piecemeal cuts to projects would not make the savings required in 2026-27 and into the future, a significant change would be required. There was a discussion on the future funding of the Northland Fish and Game Council operation and expenditure and

the ongoing financial viability of the organisation. The Council understands that it cannot continue to draw down on reserves to fund the Operational Work Plan. Therefore, it will conduct a review of its affairs, including but not limited to, staffing levels and job descriptions, asset ownership including wetlands and plant, statutory obligations, council meeting costs and any other costs associated with running the region. The review will be transparent and open and done with due regard to all relevant regulations.

The shortfall for the 2026/27 year will come from reserves. The Bisset bund repair would only be done if external funding could be secured. Funding would not be available from reserves. Action: The Manager to investigate where savings could be made in the outputs of rent, wetland maintenance and staffing. A strategy session will be run at a council meeting to deduce the essential outputs for the region and determine how they will be resourced in 2027-28 FY.

It was moved: ***That the shortfall of $48,006 in the 2026/2027 Budget is to come from reserves and no money will come from reserves for the Jack Bisset Wetland bund wall repair.***

John McEntee / Sean Brickland ***CARRIED***

The draft budget for 2026/2027 was given final approval.

It was moved: ***That the 2026/2027 Budget, subject to the shortfall taken out of reserves, be adopted.***

John McEntee / Lloyd Altham ***CARRIED***

It was moved: ***That the 2026/2027 Operational Work Plan, subject to the shortfall taken out of reserves, be adopted.***

Darryl Reardon / Sean Brickland ***CARRIED***

Action: The Manager to inform NZFGC that NFGC will be using $48,006 from reserves to cover the shortfall in the 2026-27 budget.

Health and Safety Report

Northland Fish & Game is required to give a Health & Safety report at each council meeting detailing:

- The implementation and adherence to Health & Safety policy/manual
- Any new issues or hazards that have arisen and how these have been addressed
- Progress with any ongoing issues
- Outcomes of audits and reviews required in the Health & Safety manual
- Any near misses or injuries

It was moved: ***That the Health and Safety Report be received.***

Lloyd Altham / John McEntee ***CARRIED***

Executive Limitations Report

It was moved: ***That the Executive Limitations Report be received.***

Mark Bell / Darryl Reardon ***CARRIED***

Financial Report

It was resolved: *That the Financial Report to 30th June 2026 be accepted.*

John McEntee / Barrie Barnes ***CARRIED***

General Business

The Manager reminded the Council of his performance review coming up due and suggested a working group. The Chairman said he was expecting advice from Adrienne Murray at NZFGC and he would check communications from Adrienne.

The Chairman visited the pheasant preserve at Titoki and found it to be impressive and a good operation, noting that the owner was appreciative of Northland Fish & Game support.

There being no further business the Chairman declared the meeting closed at 9.38pm.

Phil Durham
Chairman