

Agenda For The Meeting of Otago Fish & Game Council
On Tuesday 29 September 2026
At Otago Fish and Game Council Office
5 Hazlett Road Mosgiel
Starting 10:00 am

Timetable	Council Meeting
10.00 am	Meeting Begins
10.30 am	Public Excluded Session
11.00 am	Open Meeting Resumes
11.30 am	Public Forum
12.30 pm	Presentation – Vicky May
12:45 pm	Lunch
1.15 pm	Councillor Only Session
1.30 pm	Candidate interview 1
2.45 pm	Afternoon tea break
3.00 pm	Candidate interview 2
4:30 pm	Councillor Deliberations
5.00 pm	Meeting Ends

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1.0 Present and Apologies

2.0 Matters to be raised not on the agenda

3.0 Declarations of Interest

4.0 Confirmation of Previous Minutes

**Minutes for the Meeting of Otago Fish & Game Council
On Tuesday 21 July 2026
At Otago Fish and Game Council Office
5 Hazlett Road Mosgiel**

The meeting began at 12.30pm.

1.0 Present and Apologies

Present: Adrian McIntyre (Chair), Mike Barker, John Cruden, John Highton, Blair Trevathan, Colin Weatherall, Paulette Tamati-Elliffe (Ngāi Tahu).

In attendance: Jamie Ward (Acting Chief Executive), Bruce Quirey (Communications Officer), Neil Harraway (Otago Conservation Board).

Apologies: John Preedy

The Chair welcomed Otago Conservation Board member Neil Harraway to the meeting. Mr Harraway introduced himself to Council and outlined his background in conservation, journalism and wildlife tourism. He noted his involvement with the Wild Dunedin Festival of Nature.

Ngāi Tahu representative Paulette Tamati-Elliffe joined the meeting later.

Moved: Cr Weatherall, Cr Cruden

That apologies be accepted.

Carried

2.0 Matters to be raised not on the agenda

No matters were raised.

3.0 Declarations of Interest

No declarations were made.

4.0 Confirmation of Previous Minutes

Moved: Cr Barker, Cr Highton

That the minutes of the Council meeting held on 19 May 2026 be confirmed as a true and correct record.

Carried

5.0 Matters Arising from the Minutes

Council discussed a few outstanding matters arising from previous meetings.

Cr Highton sought an update on data security within Fish & Game, particularly in relation to the national licensing database. Cr Barker advised that, in his capacity as Otago's representative on the New Zealand Fish & Game Council, he had raised the matter with NZ Council's Chief Operating Officer and had been assured appropriate security arrangements were in place through the external provider managing the licensing system.

The Chair advised that a fraudulent email had recently been circulated using his name and encouraged members to remain alert to email scams.

Cr Weatherall requested an update on arrangements for a follow-up meeting with the directors of the proposed Clutha Pumped Hydro project. The Acting Chief Executive advised that correspondence had been sent on behalf of the Chair seeking a further meeting but no response had yet been received. He undertook to follow up with the project directors.

Council reaffirmed the importance of meeting with the project directors to discuss potential mitigation measures should the proposal proceed.

6.0 Health and Safety Report

The Acting Chief Executive presented the Health and Safety Report for June–July 2026.

Council noted:

- ranger training had been scheduled across two sites;
- vehicle audits were continuing;
- one staff member had completed four-wheel-drive training;
- personal protective equipment had been obtained and distributed in preparation for any response to Highly Pathogenic Avian Influenza (HPAI);
- Fish & Game continued to receive regular operational guidance from the lead government agencies regarding HPAI preparedness.

The Acting Chief Executive outlined current advice relating to HPAI, including procedures for reporting dead birds, requirements for personal protective

equipment when handling potentially infected birds, and the expectation that staff should not handle dead birds unless specifically directed by the lead agencies.

Council discussed:

- the practical implications of HPAI response requirements;
- potential impacts on future game bird hunting should the disease become established in New Zealand;
- public understanding of HPAI and the need for clear communication regarding risks to hunters, hunting dogs and the wider community;
- recent social media discussion regarding avian influenza.

Councillors also discussed alternative personal protective equipment options, including face shields, and the importance of ensuring staff remained appropriately protected while maintaining practical field operations.

Moved: Cr Barker, Cr Trevathan

That the Health and Safety Report for June-July 2026 be received.

Carried

7.0 Items Requiring Decisions

7.1 2026/27 Budget and Operational Work Plan

The Acting Chief Executive presented the draft 2026/27 Budget and Operational Work Plan.

He advised that the budget before Council had been prepared prior to confirmation of the Minister's approval of the licence fee increase. Since the agenda had been circulated, the Minister had approved a \$2 increase to resident licence fees and a \$3 increase to non-resident licence fees.

The Acting Chief Executive explained that the revised budget also incorporated additional external funding received since the original budget was prepared, including funding from the Clutha Mata-Au Sports Fish and Habitat Trust, the Otago Regional Council Eco Fund grant for Bendigo Wildlife Management Reserve and other approved project funding. Revenue from Designated Waters licences would also be retained by the region. Council had agreed to continue contributing \$5000 annually to the Donald Scott Memorial Scholarship Trust for a further three years.

Council discussed:

- the financial implications of the approved licence fee increase;
- anticipated expenditure associated with HPAI preparedness and response. The CE noted that lead agencies had advised that sick and dying birds were to be left where they lay. Clean-up would only be required if they presented a hazard to human health. Council noted that mallard-grey duck hybrids might be more susceptible than mallards;
- proposed expenditure from reserves, including provision for future acoustic monitoring equipment;
- the importance of maintaining adequate reserves should game bird licence revenue decline because of avian influenza.

Council also discussed several aspects for the Operational Work Plan, including:

- monitoring waterfowl habitats and upland game habitats. The CE noted that waterfowl monitoring mostly monitored the birds rather than their habitat;
- maintenance and enhancement of angler and hunter access;
- the need to develop a strategic approach to management of Fish & Game-owned wetland assets.

The Acting Chief Executive recommended that Council develop a broader policy for prioritising investment across its wetland estate, rather than considering individual projects in isolation.

The Chair suggested the Acting Chief Executive come back to the Council with ideas. The Acting Chief Executive said staff could discuss a wetlands management plan at the next staff meeting.

The Chair thanked the Acting Chief Executive for the significant work undertaken in preparing the budget.

Moved: Cr Highton, Cr Barker

That Council adopts the 2026/27 Operational Work Plan and Budget prior to final notification of licence fee changes and grants the Acting Chief Executive authority to update the budget to reflect the Minister-approved licence fee increase.

Carried

7.2 Legislative Compliance 2025/26

The Acting Chief Executive presented the annual Legislative Compliance report.

He advised that the report reviewed Council's compliance with relevant legislative requirements and organisational obligations, including recent changes to employment legislation, Living Wage requirements and KiwiSaver contribution rates.

Council noted that staff had reviewed applicable legislation and that the organisation remained compliant.

Moved: Cr Barker, Cr Highton

That Council notes that Otago Fish & Game Council currently complies with the relevant legislative requirements identified in the report.

Carried

7.3 Second Review of Sports Fish and Game Management Plan

The Acting Chief Executive presented a report seeking Council direction on whether work should recommence on the review of the Otago Sports Fish and Game Management Plan.

Council noted that the review had previously been deferred pending progress of the Government's Resource Management Act reforms. While those reforms remained uncertain, Council's approved extension for completing the review was finite and further delay would compress the remaining timetable.

Councillors discussed:

- uncertainty surrounding the timing and content of legislative reform;
- advice being provided nationally by Fish & Game environmental staff and managers;
- the benefits of progressing technical work while delaying formal consultation where appropriate;
- the likelihood that completed work could still be adapted once the new legislation was finalised.

Council supported recommencing the review while retaining flexibility to amend the document should legislative requirements change.

Councillors also agreed that formal engagement with Aukaha should occur later in the process once greater certainty existed regarding the legislative framework.

Moved: Cr Barker, Cr Highton

That Council:

- 1. direct staff to recommence the review of the Otago Sports Fish and Game Management Plan 2015; and**
- 2. direct staff to review the draft or approved Sports Fish and Game Management Plan (as applicable) for consistency with new legislation when the Bill is introduced to Parliament and again following Royal Assent.**

Carried

7.4 Macraes Hatchery Operations and Fish Transfers

The Acting Chief Executive presented the Macraes Hatchery Operations and Fish Transfers report.

Council noted that essential maintenance work was required before the next spawning season, including resurfacing hatchery tanks and maintenance of the header and effluent ponds. The estimated cost of approximately \$9,000 had not been included in the current budget.

The Acting Chief Executive also briefed Council on the possible future availability of the former Port Chalmers salmon hatchery at Sawyers Bay following advice that the current lessee intended to vacate the site.

Council discussed:

- the immediate maintenance requirements at Macraes Hatchery;
- the age and long-term suitability of the existing hatchery;
- future investment requirements, including potential recirculating aquaculture systems;
- water temperature risks associated with both hatchery sites;
- the need for a temperature warning system at Macraes Hatchery.
- opportunities presented by the Sawyers Bay facility, including the associated fish-farming licence;
- Council requested a paper from staff on the direction of Otago Fish & Game's hatchery operations for the planning meeting.

Members agreed the maintenance work at Macraes was essential regardless of any future strategic decisions.

Moved: Cr Weatherall, Cr Highton

That Council approve expenditure of approximately \$9,000 for essential maintenance works at the Macraes Trout Hatchery.

Carried

Moved: Cr Weatherall, Cr Barker

That staff investigate the future potential of the Sawyers Bay hatchery site, including water quality, water temperatures, infrastructure, licensing arrangements and overall suitability, and report back to Council.

Carried

Moved: Cr Weatherall, Cr Highton

That the Macraes Hatchery Operations and Fish Transfers report be received.

Carried

7.5 Kiwi Park hatchery trout donation

The Acting Chief Executive presented a proposal to continue Otago Fish & Game's partnership with Kiwi Park, Queenstown.

Council noted that Kiwi Park had upgraded its trout display ponds following the loss of fish during an algal bloom the previous year. The park attracted more than 100,000 visitors annually and provided an opportunity to increase public awareness of trout, freshwater angling and the role of Fish & Game.

Members supported continuing the partnership and requested that interpretive signage prominently display Otago Fish & Game branding.

Moved: Cr Barker, Cr Trevathan

That Council:

- **provide Kiwi Park, Queenstown with 20 hatchery-reared two-year-old rainbow trout for stocking in the upper display pond;**
- **where suitable opportunities arise, authorise staff to supply a small number of wild brown trout captured during electric fishing operations in the Queenstown Lakes area; and**
- **assist Kiwi Park to update interpretive signage to reflect contemporary information about trout, freshwater angling, the role of Otago Fish & Game and the Macraes Trout Hatchery.**

Carried

The order of discussion of agenda items was rearranged. Council next discussed the financial report.

9.0 Financial Report

The Acting Chief Executive presented the Financial Report and Licence Report to 30 June 2026.

Council noted:

- the balance sheet remained strong, with Council's equity and reserves in a sound position;
- freshwater licence sales were tracking ahead of budget and ahead of the previous year;
- game bird licence revenue remained below the previous season, reflecting a shift in sales back to Southland region during the 2026 game bird season;
- expenditure was above budget primarily due to costs associated with the office relocation;
- approximately \$2.1 million was held in Council reserves.

The Acting Chief Executive advised that the Finance Report was the first prepared independently by the Administration Officer and acknowledged the work undertaken on reporting of Council's reserve accounts.

Council discussed:

- management of Council reserves and investment strategy;
- interest rates available through financial institutions and investment providers;
- the desirability of obtaining independent investment proposals;
- the need for regular cashflow forecasting to support financial planning;
- employee leave balances and monitoring accumulated annual leave.

Councillors also discussed freshwater licence sales, noting the reduction in family licence sales following changes to the national licensing structure. Council considered whether the changes had reduced participation by women and families and noted that the matter had previously been raised with the Minister, who had indicated he did not support further changes at this stage. The Acting Chief Executive noted an increase in non-resident licence sales reflected increased tourism data.

Council requested that future financial reporting continue to include cashflow information and provide greater detail on reserve allocations.

Moved: Cr Weatherall, Cr Barker

That the Acting Chief Executive seek proposals on investment opportunities for Council reserves and report back to Council.

Carried

Moved: Cr Highton, Cr Trevathan

That the Financial Report and Licence Report to 30 June 2026 be received.

Carried

10.0 Chief Executive Report

The Acting Chief Executive presented his report.

Bullock Creek Restoration

Council discussed recent heavy rainfall in the Wānaka area and public comment about water clarity at Bullock Creek following completion of works commissioned by QLDC to manage stormwater runoff.

The Acting Chief Executive advised that engineering inspections had confirmed the project was functioning as designed and that the recent rainfall event had resulted in widespread sediment movement throughout the catchment. He noted that one minor issue associated with erosion control matting had been promptly rectified by the contractor.

Council discussed community perceptions of the project and acknowledged the importance of ongoing monitoring and communication regarding project outcomes.

Catchment Group Engagement

Council discussed staff involvement with catchment groups across the region.

Councillors supported continued engagement while noting the importance of ensuring staff time remained focused on projects that delivered benefits for fish, game and freshwater habitats.

The Acting Chief Executive advised that staff participation continued to support implementation of Otago catchment action plans and development of partnerships with landowners and community groups.

Future Meetings

Council agreed the next ordinary Council meeting would be held on 22 September 2026 at the Mosgiel office.

Members also discussed holding a future meeting, including the Annual General Meeting, in the new Cromwell field base meeting room.

Moved: Cr Barker, Cr Cruden

That the Chief Executive's Report be received.

Carried

11.0 RMA Planning and Consents Report

The Acting Chief Executive presented the RMA Planning and Consents Report on behalf of the Environmental Officer.

Council discussed the increasing number and complexity of planning matters expected during the coming financial year, including:

- the Bendigo-Ophir Gold Project;
- Clutha Pumped Hydro (Onslow Battery);
- OceanaGold;
- the Manuhirikia Local Bill proposal;
- implementation of the Government's Resource Management reforms.

The Acting Chief Executive advised that while future costs remained uncertain, Council should consider making provision within its operational budget for planning and consent processes rather than relying on ad hoc funding requests.

Council discussed:

- the importance of maintaining strong advocacy on behalf of anglers and game bird hunters;
- the need to prioritise planning involvement where Council could achieve the greatest benefit;
- expenditure controls and Council oversight of significant legal and planning costs.

Members agreed that any expenditure on major planning matters should continue to require Council approval.

Following discussion, Council agreed that a dedicated annual budget allocation would provide greater transparency than establishing a separate reserve.

Moved: Cr Weatherall, Cr Highton

That an annual Operational Work Plan budget allocation of up to \$50,000 be included for planning and consent matters, with expenditure subject to prior Council approval.

Carried

12.0 Committee and Delegate Reports

12.1 New Zealand Council

Cr Barker provided an update from recent New Zealand Fish & Game Council meetings.

Council noted:

- the Minister had approved the licence fee increase but declined to support changes to the family licence;
- recruitment of a permanent Chief Executive for New Zealand Fish & Game was underway;
- working groups had been established to review NZ Council organisational structure;
- recent staff resignations at NZ Council;
- the most recent NZ Council meeting had focused primarily on budget matters;
- the Otago Fish & Game Council Chair had given a presentation to NZ Council;
- the Anglers Notice had been approved, with only minor amendments requiring future review, including wording relating to single hooks and Designated Waters.

Council acknowledged Cr Barker's ongoing contribution as Otago's representative on NZ Council.

12.2 Clutha Mata Au Sports Fish and Habitat Trust

The Acting Chief Executive tabled a report from the Trust.

Council noted that restoration work on the Pomahaka catchment was now progressing following earlier concerns about communication regarding project delivery.

Members discussed opportunities for continued collaboration between the Trust and Otago Fish & Game on fisheries and habitat restoration projects.

12.3 Ngāi Tahu

Paulette Tamati-Elliffe joined the meeting during the afternoon session and apologised for her recent absence due to health matters.

She acknowledged recent correspondence between Otago Fish & Game and Papatipu Rūnaka regarding ongoing engagement and noted the significant workload arising from current legislative and policy reforms.

Council was advised that Ngāi Tahu continued to develop work relating to customary game bird harvest practices. Consultation was ongoing and further information would be provided once that work had progressed.

In relation to HPAI preparedness, Ms Tamati-Elliffe mentioned her involvement with Department of Conservation programmes for whio (blue duck) and takahē, and noted concerns about the Tītī Islands.

She discussed areas of shared interest between Ngāi Tahu and Otago Fish & Game, including:

- the protection and restoration of healthy waterways;
- Tuakitoto, the Clutha/Mata-Au estuary and lagoon systems;
- native fish migration, including lamprey (kanakana); and
- future resource management processes involving Contact Energy.

The Acting Chief Executive advised that lamprey environmental DNA had recently been detected during spawning surveys in the Pomahaka catchment.

Council also discussed the forthcoming review of the Otago Sports Fish and Game Management Plan. It was agreed that, while formal consultation with Aukaha would occur once there was greater certainty around legislative reforms, draft material could be shared at an earlier stage to keep Ngāi Tahu informed and support ongoing dialogue.

12.4 Conservation Board

Mr Neil Harraway provided an update on recent Conservation Board activities.

Council noted:

- submissions made by the Conservation Board on the Bendigo-Ophir Gold Mine fast-track proposal;
- proposed reforms affecting conservation legislation and Conservation Boards;
- the Board's submission on the Conservation Reform Bill;
- concerns regarding proposed centralisation of decision-making;
- support in principle for international visitor access charges where revenue is reinvested into conservation;
- ongoing work relating to concession reform and conservation planning.

Council discussed areas of shared interest between the Conservation Board and Fish & Game, including wetland protection, freshwater management and advocacy.

The Chair thanked Mr Harraway for attending the meeting and providing an update.

12.5 Clutha Fisheries Trust

Cr Barker reported on the recent Clutha Fisheries Trust meeting.

Council noted:

- the Trust was reviewing its long-term investment strategy and future financial sustainability;
- discussion continued regarding the future use of funds originally established for a trout hatchery associated with the Upper Clutha hydro development;
- opportunities to improve angler access through strategic land acquisition were discussed;
- planning continued for a migratory galaxiid workshop later in the year;
- the Donald Scott Memorial Trust would continue to receive annual financial support.

Councillors also discussed proposed subdivision and realignment of an unformed legal road near Park Burn Quarry and the importance of maintaining future public access.

12.6 Tiaki Maniototo

Cr Highton provided an update on behalf of Tiaki Maniototo.

Council noted:

- Tiaki Maniototo was successfully transitioning from Government funding to a community-based nursery model;
- planting, fencing and pest management work continued across the Maniototo;
- a field day was scheduled for August to showcase restoration projects;
- Tiaki Maniototo continued to participate in development of the Taieri Catchment Action Plan.

Council acknowledged the ongoing value of its relationship with Tiaki Maniototo and other catchment groups.

13.0 Correspondence

13.1 New Zealand Council Correspondence

Council noted correspondence received from New Zealand Fish & Game Council.

13.2 Otago Correspondence to New Zealand Council

Council noted correspondence sent to New Zealand Fish & Game Council dated 26 June 2026.

13.3 General Correspondence In

13.4 General Correspondence Out

13.4.1 Takitakitoa Monitoring Report for Otago Regional Council RMA Compliance

Council noted the Takitakitoa Monitoring Report submitted to Otago Regional Council in accordance with resource consent requirements.

Council discussed:

- the ecological condition of Takitakitoa Wetland;

- management of willow and raupō encroachment;
- continued maintenance of hunting opportunities while protecting ecological values;
- opportunities to improve public awareness of the wetland's biodiversity values.

Councillors agreed these matters should form part of Council's broader discussion on future wetland management priorities.

Moved: Cr Barker, Cr Weatherall

That the correspondence be received.

Carried

14.0 Items to be Received or Noted

14.1 Upper Lakes Acoustic Monitoring Report

Otago Fish & Game staff member Jayde Couper joined the meeting to present the Upper Lakes Acoustic Monitoring Report and answer questions.

Council noted that the latest survey indicated no significant decline in fish abundance since previous surveys, although fish distribution and age structure appeared to have changed in some lakes.

Members discussed:

- interpretation of acoustic survey data;
- opportunities to validate acoustic results through complementary monitoring methods;
- potential links between lake temperatures and fish distribution;
- relationships between acoustic surveys, creel surveys and angler observations;
- future opportunities to improve understanding of trout and salmon movements.

Council thanked Mr Couper for his work and acknowledged the value of maintaining long-term monitoring of the Upper Lakes fishery.

Moved: Cr Barker, Cr Cruden

That the Upper Lakes Acoustic Monitoring Report be received.

Carried

14.2 Clutha Lagoon

Cr Highton presented a paper outlining opportunities to progress restoration work at Clutha Lagoon.

Council discussed:

- the history of Fish & Game involvement in the lagoon;
- previous restoration work, including culvert installation;
- declining habitat condition;
- the importance of improving coordination between Otago Fish & Game and the Clutha Mata-Au Sports Fish and Habitat Trust;
- opportunities to develop a staged programme of practical restoration works.
- Cr Highton withdrew a sentence in his tabled paper which had suggested that the Trust declined to provide Contact Energy funds for the lagoon restoration.

The Acting Chief Executive advised that previous planning documents would be reviewed and broken into achievable work programmes for future consideration.

Council agreed that Clutha Lagoon should form part of broader discussions regarding future wetland management priorities.

That the Clutha Lagoon report be received.

15.0 General Business

Council noted the need for the organisation to change from the Dunedin PO Box number to the physical postal address of 5 Hazlett Road, Mosgiel for ANZ bank and merchant statements.

ANZ Bank required mandate signatories to authorise the change of address and the cancellation of the credit cards of the former chief executive Ian Hadland and administration officer Sharon Milne.

Moved: Cr Barker, Cr Highton

That Council remove the former chief executive Ian Hadland and former administration officer Sharon Milne as holders of Otago Fish & Game Council credit cards.

Carried

Moved: Cr Trevathan, Cr Cruden

That the meeting move into Public Excluded session.

Carried

8.0 Public Excluded Items

8.1 Draft Public Excluded Minutes from 19th May 2026

8.2 Draft Minutes of Extraordinary Executive Meeting 18 May 2026

8.3 Draft Public Excluded Minutes 25th June 2026

8.4 Bendigo-Ophir Gold Project Fortnightly Update

8.5 The Hills Golf Course TAKF Pond Opportunity

Moved: Cr Barker, Cr Highton

That the meeting move out of Public Excluded session.

Carried

The meeting closed at 4.30pm.

5.0 Matters Arising from the Minutes

6.0 Health and Safety Report

Events/Work Requiring OHS Planning – Job hazard sheets complete

- Beginners Spin Fishing Classes and fishing event
- Take a kid fishing events
- Planting days
- Spawning surveys
- Fish liberations

Next audit areas:

Completed: Office, workshop, vehicle and chemical

Upcoming; Staff training, boat safety

Incidents/Accidents/Near Misses/New Hazards – discussed, including mitigation, at weekly meetings and recorded on file if needed.

Two snowfall events caused review and alteration of plans for field activities fish transport, shoveler count and postponement of one Beginners Spin Fishing Class. Staff were reminded to check forecasts in advance of field activities and also snow warnings before coming into the office. Need to ensure all vehicles have snow chains and staff are able to fit them appropriately.

Earthquake evacuation during one Wānaka Beginners Spin Fishing Class, reminder to all about evacuation plans and procedures.

Staff mental health was strained associated with team discussions on the management review.

Minor ankle roll in rabbit hole loading a trailer at the Milton Corrections Facility, no medical treatment required and no ongoing problem.

Training Completed

Mask fitting for 2x Mosgiel and 2x Cromwell staff for HPAI and chemical spraying

Drone training in preparation for formal course, BC, JC, MC.

General Discussions, Actions

River crossing training and psychosocial harm were raised as important considerations across the organisation.

National activity

National H&S Rep meeting 24 September

Regional managers are concerned about staff morale.

Recommendation

1. To receive the health and safety audit report and August/September update report

Jamie Ward
Acting CE

7.0 Items Requiring Decisions

7.1 Communications and Engagement Annual Report

Paper Title	Communications and Engagement Annual Report
Purpose	For Information and decision
Executive Summary	Delivery against the 2024–26 Communications Strategy was strong across most channels for the September 2025–August 2026 year: licence holder engagement, media coverage and public events all met or exceeded target, and relationships with mana whenua, landowners and the University of Otago's science community continued to develop, evidenced by 118 tracked direct interactions. Social media follower growth both improved markedly on last year but remained just short of the 25% target. Social media engagement also grew but fell below target. Analysis points to content quality — not posting frequency — as the way to close that gap. Measurement of stakeholder perceptions will be refreshed over the coming year via a deferred Stakeholder Survey and the 2026 Licence Holder Survey, both reporting back to Council in early 2027. The 2024–26 Strategy is due for review, and with prior-year proposed adjustments never formally discussed, this report puts forward a fresh set of recommendations to Council.
Discussion/Analysis	Several of the year's biggest public-profile wins (the wheelchair-accessible maimai, Wild Dunedin, Brighton Gala) relied on staff hours outside the Operational Work Plan. The budget set aside for additional digital support and video production went undeployed — a likely factor in social media engagement remaining below target despite exceeding posting-frequency goals. The Strategy is due for review. R3 (recruit, retain, reactivate) activity is coded inconsistently between the Operational Work Plan and the Strategy Implementation Plan, making it harder to plan and report on coherently. The recommendations respond to both without proposing new hard-to-resource metrics — seeking Council direction on the Strategy review, flagging the R3 coding issue for resolution with the Communications Officer's manager, and clarifying that the Strategy Implementation Plan already sets measurable goals, and the engagement-activities tracker is a supplementary working record rather than a formal KPI.
Links to Previous Papers/Decisions	2024-2025 Communications Strategy Annual Report, September 2025 Public-Excluded Agenda
Attachments (if any)	Nil
Recommendation	The Communications Officer recommends that Council:

	• receive this report, noting staff intention to improve social media engagement and local video content with external support under the current OWP budget; • review the Communications Strategy at the January/February planning meeting on completion of both the 2026 Stakeholders Survey and 2026 Licence Holders Engagement Survey; • note that R3 activity is currently coded inconsistently between the Operational Work Plan ("Participation," "Public Interface") and the Communications Strategy Implementation Plan ("Direct communications," "Engagement activities"), and that the Communications Officer will work with his manager to align terminology and coding, improving the accuracy of future reporting to Council; • note that measurable goals for the Strategy are already clearly defined in the Communications Strategy Implementation Plan, and that the engagement activities tracker is a supplementary working record rather than an additional formal KPI — building consistent, cross-organisational logging against it will take time given competing demands on staff time across the organisation.
Decision Record	Moved by: Seconded by: Carried / Lost:

Communications and Engagement Annual Report

Reporting period: 1 September 2025 – 31 August 2026

Prepared for: Council meeting, September 2026

Prepared by: B. Quirey, Communications Officer

Executive Summary

This report assesses progress against the five strategic priorities set out in the 2024–26 Otago Fish & Game Communications Strategy, for the twelve months from September 2025 to August 2026.

Delivery against the plan has been strong across most channels. Email newsletters to licence holders continued to exceed industry benchmarks (48–57% open rates), face-to-face engagement with licence holder groups exceeded target, and social media posting frequency was 30% above the target of three posts per week. Media coverage remained consistent and positive, including national television coverage of the new wheelchair-accessible maimai and strong regional coverage through the Otago Daily Times

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and rural press. Public event targets were met, including Take A Kid Fishing, Brighton Gala and the Wild Dunedin New Zealand Festival of Nature. Relationships with mana whenua, landowners and the University of Otago's freshwater science community continued to develop, with several new and productive contacts made during the year. Landowner engagement was particularly broad, spanning renewed contact with Federated Farmers at both provincial and district level, sustained involvement with catchment groups across the region — including Tiaki Maniototo, Lowburn and the Upper Lakes Integrated Catchment Group — and consent, access and habitat work with individual landowners and industry (see Section 2.3). Mana whenua engagement was anchored by the whakawatea led by a representative from Ōtākou Rūnaka that blessed the opening of the new Mosgiel headquarters — a positive step for that relationship. The organisation's engagement activities tracker recorded 118 direct interactions with these audiences over the same period — meetings, presentations, enquiries and resolved complaints — providing a fuller, more measurable picture of frontline activity than in previous reports. However, it is important to note that the tracker is not a complete record of every interaction.

Two areas fell short of target, though both improved on last year. Social media follower growth reached 22.1% (from a confirmed base of 4,715 followers at the end of August 2025 to 5,759 at the end of August 2026), up from 9.6% growth the previous year but just short of the 25% target. Engagement grew 6.4% (from 8,283 to 8,810 interactions), reversing last year's 7.1% decline but likewise short of the 25% target. Analysis of post-performance points to a clear opportunity: engagement is driven by content quality and format (human-interest stories, strong photography) rather than posting frequency alone.

Measurement of perceptions will be refreshed over the coming year. The stakeholder survey, last conducted in 2023, was deferred by Council from 2025–26 to 2026–27. We have engaged a consultant on this project. Its outcome will inform progress against the Strategy's stakeholder perception goals across all five priority audiences. Additionally, the annual licence holder engagement survey will next be conducted in November–December 2026 and will inform progress on licence holders' understanding of the organisation and perceptions of value in their licence. A report on both surveys will be presented to Council ahead of the strategic planning meeting early in 2027.

The Communications Strategy and Implementation Plan (2024–26) is due for review. Proposed adjustments to focus and budgeting for digital outreach, mana whenua engagement and media relations were put to Council in the 2025 Annual Communications Report. However, the report was received and noted without discussion, and the proposed adjustments were not given further direction. Given the 12-month time lapse, this report proposes a fresh set of recommendations (see Recommendations, Section 5).

Progress Against the Five Strategic Priorities

The Communications Strategy identifies five shifts as priorities for the 2024–26 period. Progress against each is set out below.

Licence holders — increase licence holder numbers and perceptions of value

- We produce two regional e-zines for licence holders: the Otago Weekly Fishing Report and The Game Call (Otago Regional Hunting Report). The weekly fishing report has completed two and a-half seasons of publication. The hunting report has completed two full seasons. Both e-zines were launched in response to licence holder survey feedback requesting more direct, local email contact.

- **Open rates:** The Game Call averaged 54% and the Weekly Fishing Report 48% open rates, well ahead of the 27% industry benchmark. By contrast, click-through to our regional content provided to NZC's national e-zines Reel Life and Both Barrels was very low (0.72% and 0.86% respectively), confirming the value of an Otago-first approach.
- Two seasonal EDM campaigns (an October long-weekend campaign and a January game bird season countdown) achieved an average 57% open rate.
- **Perceptions of value:** the most recent engagement survey (2025) shows game bird hunters' value-for-money rating climbing from a 2021 low of 4.73 (out of 9) to 5.20 in 2025 — the highest in seven years of surveying. Fishing licence holders have held steady at 5.81–6.14 over the same period. The next licence holder engagement survey will be conducted in November–December 2026 and will measure understanding and perceptions of value for the current reporting period; results will be reported to Council ahead of the strategic planning meeting in late January – early February 2027.
- Face-to-face engagement with licence holder clubs and groups exceeded the target of 10 direct engagements for the year, including club presentations, clay target event support (Wakatipu, Wanaka, West Otago and Dunedin clay shoots), and Central Otago Hunting & Fishing and Outram duck nights, drawing 15–80 attendees per event, April 2026), Women on the Fly NZ/club fly-fishing workshops, soft bait fishing clinics in Titiri and Cromwell run with a fishing tackle industry representative and F&G staff/volunteers (around 150 anglers combined, November 2025), and fishing competition weighmaster/data-collection support at Glenorchy (October 2025), Lake Dunstan (November 2025) and Lake Hawea (February 2026).
- Supported two Otago Anglers Association/Women on the Fly NZ fly-casting workshops during the year (March and August 2026), each drawing 20–25 participants with strong female representation; also presented on aquatic macroinvertebrates and Otago F&G's environmental work at Patagonia's Otago Fly Bar (November 2025).
- Worked through HPAI (avian influenza) scenario planning to prepare for a possible New Zealand incursion (December 2025), and resolved individual access and amenity issues raised directly by licence holders, including signage discussions for Dean's Bank (Albert Town) and the Bendigo boat ramp following freedom-camper congestion.
- Otago content was supplied on deadline for Fish & Game magazine Issue 62 (2026 game bird season) and Issue 63 (2026–27 fishing season), including a feature on drift hunting, and local stories about game harvest data, regulations, new monitoring technology, a first-season hunter's experience, and hunting tips; and stories on boat/lake fishing, Wānaka salmon research, women's fly fishing and Otago fishing clubs — all built around the Strategy's R3 (recruit, retain, reactivate) and key-message themes.
- The quarterly stakeholder newsletter, Watermark, was issued in December 2025, July 2026 and September 2026, however, it missed its April edition due to staffing and leave constraints. This is emailed to more than 200 stakeholders, partners, Councillors and staff.
- A Hunting & Fishing-sponsored Otago photo competition trialled for the past two game bird seasons in conjunction with The Game Call newsletter received low engagement and will not be repeated.

Mana whenua — strengthen the relationship as a step toward partnership

Progress here remains foundational, consistent with the scale of resourcing on both sides, but several concrete steps were taken during the year.

Otago Fish and Game Council Meeting 29th September 2026

- Otago Fish & Game Council's new Mosgiel headquarters opened in December 2025, blessed in a whakawatea led by Komene Cassidy of Ōtākou Rūnaka — a significant, visible step in the mana whenua relationship and a fitting start for the organisation's new premises.
- The Environmental Officer held regular discussions on planning and consenting matters with Aukaha, including about the Inch Clutha wheelchair-accessible maimai project, and to a lesser extent with Te Ao Marama and Te Runanga o Moeraki.
- Mana whenua were invited to provide feedback on the 10-year Sports Fish and Game Management Plan.
- Otago Fish & Game's Ngāi Tahu Council delegate has advised that a paper on cultural harvest is being prepared. The delegate has maintained contact with the Otago Fish & Game CE and occasional attendance at Council meetings as availability has permitted.
- A new relationship was established with Rangatahi Tumeke Charitable Trust (contact: Stephanie Blair, director of programmes and relationships): following an enquiry about regulatory settings, Otago F&G developed a proposal to increase opportunities for Māori youth camps in the Catlins, resulting in a regulation change on the Trust's behalf (August 2026). Planning for a media story about this relationship is underway for publication early in the new fishing season.
- Other incidental interactions with mana whenua related to catchment groups, and fishing and hunting regulations consultation have provided further engagement opportunities.

The Strategy's proposed next step — a joint project or event with mana whenua built around shared values — has not yet been established. Iwi partners have limited capacity and significant demand from other organisations seeking engagement, and this remains a realistic constraint on pace. The engagement activities tracker recorded two formally logged mana whenua interactions this period (the Mosgiel headquarters whakawatea and Rangatahi Tumeke); ongoing contact with Aukaha and Te Ao Marama through the Environmental Officer continues but was not always separately logged.

Landowners — build constructive relationships with progressive landowners

Otago F&G continues to take a proactive approach to landowner relationships, focused on building rapport and common ground with catchment and industry groups that represent the rural sector, while remaining clear about the organisation's statutory advocacy role. Engagement with the Otago Catchment Community and its member catchment groups, Federated Farmers and individual landowners was sustained throughout the year. Increased requirements for catchment action planning groups have provided opportunities for a broad range of meetings with stakeholders and other community representatives, delivering well for the Communications Strategy.

- Council Chair Adrian McIntyre and then-CE Ian Hadland met with Federated Farmers representatives during the year (exact dates not recorded, but within the reporting period): positive general stakeholder-relationship discussions with West Otago representative Luke Kane, a site visit with Mr Kane to assess a proposed farm wetland development, and a conversation with Otago provincial president Anna Gillespie on geese population management.
- Staff supported the Upper Lakes Integrated Catchment Group's formation of a governance group and a wetland action plan starting at Glenorchy (December 2025 and June 2026).

- Attended the Otago Catchment Community Leaders' Forum (May 2026). Otago Catchment Community (OCC) received the quarterly Otago F&G stakeholder newsletter, Watermark. We also submitted two newsletter items from Otago F&G, drawn from relevant media releases and other material, for publication in the OCC newsletter, however, this fell behind the Strategy's target of one submitted item per quarter.
- Initiated discussions with Contact Energy on vegetation (willow) management planning for the Bendigo Wildlife Management Reserve (BWMR) site (December 2025).
- Progressed a landowner-facing habitat improvement project through the Habitat Enhancement Fund (HEF), including a stream assessment for a proposed wetland development with farmers at Woodside (November 2025).
- Delivered new fishing access points on the Catlins River in partnership with Southern Forestry Ltd, supported by a joint media release.
- Facilitated a new gate for angler access to the lower Taieri River, following a direct enquiry from an affected landowner (December 2025).
- Engaged closely with the Tiaki Maniototo catchment group throughout the year, including a site visit to the Takitakitoa wetland restoration project (June 2026) and a roadshow presenting the group's progress to farmers and the wider community (August 2026). Otago F&G staff and Councillor John Highton between them attended 5–6 Technical Advisory Group meetings and a similar number of Governance Group meetings, with their contribution formally recognised by the group.
- Supported the Lowburn Catchment Group with a planting-day demonstration on using an auger, and discussed the group's future planting plans (May 2026).
- The "Trout with PhDs" story — media releases and video interviews with a rural catchment coordinator and an angler — highlighted the value of landowner–angler partnerships and was published in the Otago Daily Times and Farmers Weekly, with positive social media engagement from the rural community.
- Reviewed consent applications with implications for landowners, including a proposed land-based salmon aquaculture operation for Davison Agriculture at Queensbury (October 2025) and early consultation from TPG, acting for Central Otago District Council, on a road-stopping and subdivision proposal with new lake access implications (July 2026); also shared bird moult count data with Queenstown Airport's ecologist for comparative purposes (June 2026).

General public — increase positive awareness

Media

- Coverage remained consistent and positive, with over 30 media stories placed during the year against a target of roughly three pitches a month. Highlights included the opening of the new Mosgiel headquarters (blessed in a whakawatea led by Komene Cassidy of Ōtākou Rūnaka - see Mana whenua, Section 2.2), the wheelchair-accessible maimai (national television coverage previewing the 2026 game bird season), the Catlins River access announcement, the Lake Dunstan creel survey, spring trout liberations and the Wānaka salmon spawning story.
- Best exposure continues to come through Allied Media (Otago Daily Times, Rural Life and community titles) and Farmers Weekly, where releases built around people or research are typically published with minimal editing.

Events

Otago Fish and Game Council Meeting 29th September 2026

- Delivered the target of five public events as follows:
- Delivered adult beginner fishing classes in Dunedin and Central Otago, and Take A Kid Fishing events —four major events in Dunedin, as well as small group sessions in Dunedin and Central Otago. Multiple community group planting events were held at Bendigo Wildlife Management Reserve. These activities serve dual Strategy goals as both public events (social licence and potential recruitment) and licence holder engagements.
- Coordinated Otago F&G's attendance at the Wild Dunedin New Zealand Festival of Nature — a significant team effort during a busy period, including a NatureDome activity stand at Forsyth Barr Stadium (300-400 attendee families); a well-attended Takitakitoa wetland walk and talk (about 30 attendees); and a lecture about environmental legislation at Tuhura-Otago Museum (about 40 attendees). This was the first time Otago F&G had been invited to take part in Wild Dunedin.
- The F&G stand and "Backyard Bass" game at the Brighton Gala Festival was well attended (January 2026). The Taiari Wai River Festival at Patearoa, also planned for January 2026, was cancelled due to bad weather.
- Hosted 50 residents from Brooklands Retirement Village on a hatchery visit (January 2026), and delivered a talk to the Mosgiel Probus Men's Group on Fish & Game's work and the wellbeing and economic benefits of fishing (November 2025).

Social media

- Posting frequency exceeded target: 197 posts between September 2025 and August 2026, averaging 3.9 posts per week (30% above the target of three).
- Follower growth was strong but marginally short of target: 22.1% growth (1,044 net new followers, from a confirmed base of 4,715 at end of August 2025 to 5,759 at end of August 2026), against a 25% target — a marked improvement on last year's 9.6% growth.
- Engagement grew 6.4% (from 8,283 to 8,810 interactions), against a 25% target — reversing last year's 7.1% decline, but still well below target, indicating that increased posting volume alone has not been the main driver of engagement.
- Note on data consistency: this year's reactions and shares figures (9,358 reactions; 335 shares) do not reconcile cleanly against the total interactions figure (8,810), suggesting the underlying Meta export categories changed between years.
- **What works:** analysis of the year's posts shows photo posts substantially outperforming other formats (10,856 average impressions and 69.1 average interactions per post, versus 908 impressions and 8.4 interactions for standard content posts). The strongest individual posts consistently combined people, place, a story and a strong image — for example a rare Clutha salmon catch (79,933 impressions, 783 interactions, 36 shares), the Greenstone/Caples drift-diving story (54,840 impressions, 418 interactions) and the new Catlins River access story (45,488 impressions, 295 interactions). A practical "how to" post (Tasmanian Devil lure advice) generated the highest single-post follower gain (50 net follows).

Academic community — broaden the base of connection with University of Otago academics and the wider science community

Engagement with the University of Otago and the wider freshwater science community continued to broaden over the year, laying groundwork for future research partnerships.

Otago Fish and Game Council Meeting 29th September 2026

- Council confirmed three years of continued funding for the Donald Scott Memorial Trust Scholarship for Research in Freshwater Ecology, following a catch-up with the University's Development Manager.
- Attended the University of Otago Freshwater Forum (October 2025) and the Alpine Lakes Forum "Deep Lakes, Deeper Knowledge" (November 2025), the latter also attended by Councillors John Highton and Mike Barker, alongside staff.
- Held working meetings with University of Otago professors on post-graduate project collaboration, with NIWA and a fisheries engineering contractor on the design and feasibility of fish screens on the Pigburn, with DOC and ORC on native fish species interaction, and with Dr Robin Holmes of Cawthron Institute on monitoring and cumulative-effects modelling.
- Supported practical research by providing field equipment to a University of Otago post-graduate researcher for a South Westland helicopter monitoring trip, and discussed applying Otago-based deep-lakes monitoring methods with independent researcher Roe Stuart.
- Hosted an electric fishing demonstration for the University of Otago freshwater ecology class, including a talk on Fish & Game careers, and staff completed NIWA-led training in fish ageing (otolith) techniques.

Metrics Dashboard

Metric	Target	Result (Sept 2025 – Aug 2026)	Status
EDM open rate	50%	48–57% (Game Call 54%, Weekly Fishing Report 48%, seasonal EDMs 57%)	Achieved
Social media posting frequency	3 posts/week	3.9 posts/week (197 posts)	Achieved (+30%)
Social media follower growth	+25%	+22.1% (4,715 → 5,759 followers); up from +9.6% in 2024–25	Improved, just short
Social media engagement growth	+25%	+6.4% (8,283 → 8,810 interactions); up from –7.1% in 2024–25	Improved, below target
Face-to-face licence holder/club engagements	10 groups	Exceeded 10 direct engagements	Achieved
Public events	5	Achieved – incl. Take A Kid Fishing, World Wetlands Day, Wild Dunedin	Achieved
Media stories pitched/placed	≈3/month	30+ stories year-to-date	Achieved*

Metric	Target	Result (Sept 2025 – Aug 2026)	Status
Otago Catchment Community newsletter items	1/quarter	Delivered for 2 quarters	Below target**
Rural media releases	2/quarter	Delivered each quarter	Achieved
Direct engagement interactions logged (all audiences)	No formal target	118 logged (OU academics/science 14, Landowners 19, Licence holders 21, General public 11, Mana whenua 3, other partner contacts 41, 9 uncategorised)	N/A ***

**Media story count reflects releases and pitches tracked by the Communications Officer; a consistent method for counting placed (published) versus pitched stories is recommended for future reporting.*

*** OCC also receives quarterly Otago F&G stakeholder newsletter (except April 2026).*

**** No formal overall engagement-volume target is set in the Strategy; measurable goals for the Strategy are already clearly defined in the Communications Strategy Implementation Plan, and the engagement activities tracker is a supplementary working record rather than an additional formal KPI. Building consistent, cross-organisational logging against it will take time given competing demands on staff time across the organisation.*

Challenges

- **Stakeholder perceptions survey deferred.** The stakeholder perceptions survey (last conducted in 2023) was deferred by Council from 2025–26 to 2026–27. Until it is completed, there is limited independent visibility on progress against the Strategy's broader stakeholder-perception objectives for mana whenua, landowners, the academic community and the general public, beyond the activity reported here.
- **Strategy review overdue and prior recommendations undecided.** The 2025 Annual Report proposed adjustments to digital outreach investment, mana whenua engagement and media relations, but was tabled as an item to be received and noted rather than one requiring Council feedback, and was not discussed further. The 2024–26 Strategy is due for review.
- **Allocated digital budget not yet deployed.** Budget set aside for additional digital communications support (0.5 FTE, approximately \$50,000) and for video production (approximately \$2,500) was not used during the reporting period. This is a likely contributor to social media engagement growth falling short of target despite posting volume being exceeded. Within the 2026-2027 budget \$45,000 has been committed from the Comms Reserve for the Strategy and Plan implementation, of which \$15,000 is allocated to the Stakeholder Survey.
- **Reliance on staff goodwill for high-value opportunities.** Significant unplanned opportunities such as the wheelchair-accessible maimai project, Wild Dunedin and Brighton Gala delivered strong public profile but required considerable additional staff time, including outside normal working hours, and in excess of the Operational Work Plan. Wild Dunedin substituted World Wetlands Day in the 2025-2026 OWP and is a substantially bigger commitment.

- **Stakeholder newsletter.** Watermark's April edition was missed due to staffing and leave constraints.
- **Scope of R3 activity not formally defined.** Recruitment, retention and reactivation (R3) activity spans several workstreams (events, classes, communications) but does not currently sit within a single, Council-endorsed regional R3 strategy. R3 activity identified under various codes as "Participation" and "Public Interface" in the OWP overlaps with the "Direct communications" and "Engagement activities" in the Strategy. Terminology and coding in the OWP should be revised to reflect the Strategy Implementation Plan or vice versa. A preliminary comparison of proposed targets under the Regional R3 strategy circulated to regional F&G Councils by NZC showed that Otago F&G is meeting – and more often exceeding – those targets under the existing OWP and Comms Strategy.

Recommendations to Council

The Communications Officer recommends that Council:

- receive this report, noting staff intention to improve social media engagement and local video content with external support under the current OWP budget;
- review the Communications Strategy at the January/February planning meeting on completion of both the 2026 Stakeholders Survey and 2026 Licence Holders Engagement Survey;
- note that R3 activity is currently coded inconsistently between the Operational Work Plan ("Participation," "Public Interface") and the Communications Strategy Implementation Plan ("Direct communications," "Engagement activities"), and that the Communications Officer will work with his manager to align terminology and coding, improving the accuracy of future reporting to Council;
- note that measurable goals for the Strategy are already clearly defined in the Communications Strategy Implementation Plan, and that the engagement activities tracker is a supplementary working record rather than an additional formal KPI — building consistent, cross-organisational logging against it will take time given competing demands on staff time across the organisation.

8.0 Public Excluded Items

- 8.1 Draft Public Excluded Minutes from Minutes 21st July 2026, Mosgiel**
- 8.2 Update on the Clutha Pumped Hydro Fast-Track Application:
Engagement proposal and comment preparation**
- 8.3 MAS Insurance Claim**

9.0 Financial Report

Draft Finance and Licence Sales to 31st August 2026

9.1 Finance Reports

The unaudited financial Profit and Loss report and Balance sheet for the period from 1st September 2025 to 31st August 2026 for the 2025/26 financial year are below.

The Council is required to **adopt a draft set of accounts** at this point to satisfy the auditors requirements. Please note that these are only a draft and there may be further adjustments made as final accounts are settled by both the auditor and accountant. The full audit is planned for early November 2026.

Profit and Loss

Income

Licence Income

Fish licence revenue from the profit and loss statement 31st August 2026 totals \$2,336,240 (Fish sales \$2,293,310 + Designated Water licence \$42,930) compared with \$2,159,590 for the same period of the 2024/25 season. Licence revenue is ahead 2024/25 season by \$176,650. The budget for fish licence sales was \$2,099,760 for the full year.

Central South Island Fish and Game and North Canterbury Fish and Game's Councils have a sea run Salmon Endorsement Project. We have sold 316 Sea Run Salmon endorsements with a value of \$1,373.91 (GST excl). These funds have been returned to them.

All designated water funds from other regions sold by Otago region have now been distributed to regions and ours returned.

Game licence revenue from the profit and loss statement 31st August 2026 totals \$361,670 compared with \$414,537 for the same period of the 2025 season. Game licence revenue is behind by \$52,867.

The budget for game licence sales is \$378,655 for the full year.

Game Bird Habitat revenue has been returned to the trust. (\$5 per game licence sold)

Other Income

Total other income to 31st August 2026 is \$165,093.

Areas of interest are:

- Clutha Mata-Au Trust – is reimbursed OF&GC work done on the trust research projects.
- Rent Received is from yard lease in Cromwell.
- Contract work done for H5N1 surveillance testing on mallards
- Tohu Environmental electric fishing processing fee

- Interest Income from Term Deposits.

Donations & Grants not in Budget

- Teviot Angling Club donation of \$500.00
- Donation from Bayfield

Expenses

Expenditure at the 31st August for the 2025/26 financial year is \$2,749,740 against a year-to-date budget of \$2,589,352.

The budget was approved before expenses of Dunedin rental and building costs were planned and this includes the cost of the new build.

The main reasons for any variances against budget are:

- Species Management – Hatchery operations budget was expended but the fish value stocktake had made the cost look lower.
- Habitat Protection –Clutha Mata-Au Trust expenses do not include staff time. These are reimbursed in the income section.
- Participation –Costs slightly lower than budgeted – Good numbers at Take a Kid Fishing events and positive feedback, extra contributions from competition levies.
- Public interface. Liaison, advocacy, weekly fishing newsletters and game bird communications with stakeholders has come out of operating.
- Compliance – No court costs this year. Ranger training has been completed for coming fishing season.
- Licencing – Commission is made up from 5% agent sales commission and bank fees associated with online sales.
- Council expenses – All council meetings have been held. Additional meetings have been held which have included candidate selection for a new Regional Manager. Travel and accommodation cost have increased.
- Planning and Reporting – Accountancy assistance and the audit.
- Overheads/Administration- Staff expenses – recruitment and replacement expenses for administrator and Regional Manager positions have added increased cost, which has been partly offset by unrequired salary on the Regional Manager position.
- Office premises Includes office insurance, cleaning, power, rates and security.
- General Expenses – includes bank charges, increased insurance.
- Approved Reserves Expenses – is not complete at this time and requires further reconciliation. It will include Cromwell meeting room, Bendigo Wildlife Management Reserve, FOBC grant, Designated Waters Monitoring and Bendigo-Ophir Gold Project case. This is expenditure approved by the council for the Bendigo, Non-residents, Otago Property and RMA Reserves.
- Depreciation – Depreciation year to date is \$56,086.
- Levies to NZC – paid monthly as per budget. \$1,139,410 excl GST.

The Draft Net Profit for the 12 months ended 31st August 2026 is \$113,437.

Balance Sheet

Bank Funds Position at 31st August 2026

Bank	Value
ANZ 00 Account	\$67,727.12
ANZ 70 Account	\$200,647.53
ASB Account	\$35.57
Cash On Hand	\$50.00
Total	\$268,460.22

Term Investments as at 31st August 2026

Investment Bank	Amount	Rate	Maturity
ANZ 1006	\$424,600.61	3.45%	21 st September 2026
ANZ 1008	\$518,634.95	3.10%	12 th November 2026
ASB 81	\$221,752.90	3.50%	2 nd November 2026
ASB 82	\$537,803.71	3.45%	10 th September 2026
ASB 84	\$407,072.63	3.45%	22 nd January, 2027
Total	\$2,109,864.80		

Fixed Assets and Capital Expenditure

\$5,404 remained from the previous year. The asset replacement fund is at \$32,957. Land and building transactions are not part of the asset replacement fund.

Liabilities

Total Liabilities at 31st August are \$111,651.

- Other payables include visa card spending, accrued accounting and audit fee expenses and income in advance.

Debtors

No doubtful debts from agents.

No doubtful debts in the general accounts

Balance Sheet

Otago Fish and Game Council
As at 31 August 2026

	31 AUG 2026	31 AUG 2025
Assets		
Current Assets		
Bank	264,051	1,314,597
Receivables		
Accounts Receivable	24,057	27,486
Total Receivables	24,057	27,486
GST	24,818	89,070
Investments	1,584,157	1,443,988
Inventory	47,010	33,565
Accrued Interest	-	18,690
ANZ Term Deposit 1008	518,635	-
Investment - ANZ 1007 10/02/2026 - Building funds + Wanaka	8,848	-
Total Current Assets	2,471,575	2,927,396
Fixed Assets		
Property Plant & Equipment	3,132,005	3,019,921
Total Fixed Assets	3,132,005	3,019,921
Credit Card RE 8509	(4,147)	-
Total Assets	5,599,434	5,947,318
Liabilities		
Current Liabilities		
Accounts Payable	80,145	241,375
Other Payables	74	182,509
Employee Entitlements	48,793	74,687
Suspense	(21,000)	-
Salmon Endorsement	1,374	-
Designated Waters other regions	2,265	-
Total Current Liabilities	111,651	498,572
Total Liabilities	111,651	498,572
Net Assets	5,487,783	5,448,746
Equity		
Accumulated Funds		
Accumulated Funds	4,605,109	3,204,580
Current Year Earnings	113,437	1,400,528
Transfer (To)/From Reserves	(1,471,076)	(1,442,057)
Total Accumulated Funds	3,247,470	3,163,052
Dedicated Reserves		
Non Resident Levy Reserve	342,084	342,084
Habitat Enhancement & Research	26,822	23,522

Balance Sheet

	31 AUG 2026	31 AUG 2025
Priority Plan Changes Reserve	19,080	19,080
Priority Consents Reserve	34,190	34,190
Otago Property Reserve (was Historical Property Reserve)	1,693,456	1,759,690
Communications Strategy Reserve	68,887	68,887
Asset Replacement Funding	32,957	5,404
Total Dedicated Reserves	2,217,474	2,252,855
Restricted Reserves		
Bullock Creek Reserve	(9,974)	26
Bendigo Reserve	32,812	32,812
Total Restricted Reserves	22,839	32,839
Total Equity	5,487,783	5,448,746

Profit and Loss

Otago Fish and Game Council For the year ended 31 August 2026

	JUL 2026	AUG 2026	YTD ACTUAL	YTD BUDGET	VARIANCE	% OF YTD BUDGET	ANNUAL BUDGET	LAST YEAR
Income								
Licence Sales								
Fish Licence Sales	18,748	14,814	2,293,310	2,099,760	193,550	109%	2,099,760	2,114,618
Designated Water Licence Sales	-	-	42,930	-	42,930	-	-	44,972
Game Licence Sales	658	32	361,670	378,655	(16,985)	96%	378,655	414,537
Total Licence Sales	19,406	14,846	2,697,910	2,478,415	219,495	109%	2,478,415	2,574,126
Other Income								
Wages Reimbursement	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	4,691
Clutha Mata-Au Trust	25,833	25,833	77,500	30,000	47,500	258%	30,000	93,296
Interest Income	179	17,837	52,034	25,308	26,726	206%	25,308	67,612
Interest Income Building	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	20,527
Fines - Fishing & Game Offences	-	-	-	500	(500)	-	500	-
Rent Received	500	500	6,000	7,508	(1,508)	80%	7,508	7,311
Fishing Competitions	-	-	1,246	-	1,246	-	-	1,287
Depreciation Recovered on Sale of Fixed Assets	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	22,751
Donations ,bequests and other Fundraising	-	-	2,412	-	2,412	-	-	18,938
Merchandise Sales/Other	-	-	(1,615)	-	(1,615)	-	-	-
RMA Costs Reimbursed	-	-	3,796	-	3,796	-	-	20,537
Sundry Income	-	-	17,670	-	17,670	-	-	1,235
Diversion - Habitat Enhancement and Research Fund	-	-	6,050	-	6,050	-	-	3,830
Total Other Income	26,513	44,171	165,093	63,316	101,777	261%	63,316	262,016
Commission Revenue	-	-	174	-	174	-	-	-

Profit and Loss

	JUL 2026	AUG 2026	YTD ACTUAL	YTD BUDGET	VARIANCE	% OF YTD BUDGET	ANNUAL BUDGET	LAST YEAR
Capital Gains on Sale of Assets	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	1,390,784
Total Income	45,919	59,017	2,863,176	2,541,731	321,445	113%	2,541,731	4,226,927
Gross Profit	45,919	59,017	2,863,176	2,541,731	321,445	113%	2,541,731	4,226,927
Expenses								
Species Management								
Population Monitoring								
Waterfowl Monitoring	-	-	8,168	10,000	(1,832)	82%	10,000	7,719
Spawning Surveys	-	-	-	2,500	(2,500)	-	2,500	-
Fisheries Monitoring	-	-	5,130	6,000	(870)	86%	6,000	4,517
Drift Diving	-	-	3,750	5,500	(1,750)	68%	5,500	-
Total Population Monitoring	-	-	17,049	24,000	(6,951)	71%	24,000	12,236
Monitor key fisheries/Research Liaison	470	-	470	1,000	(530)	47%	1,000	-
Harvest Assessment	-	-	-	1,000	(1,000)	-	1,000	-
Hatchery Operations	-	(47,010)	(7,477)	10,000	(17,477)	-75%	10,000	1,462
Species Interaction	-	5,000	5,000	5,000	-	100%	5,000	-
Releases	-	343	1,146	1,000	146	115%	1,000	870
Game Bird Control compliants	-	-	-	1,000	(1,000)	-	1,000	68
Total Species Management	470	(41,667)	16,186	43,000	(26,814)	38%	43,000	14,636
Habitat Protection & Mngt								
Clutha Mata-Au Trust expenses	358	4,548	25,295	-	25,295	-	-	48,113
Resource Mngt Act	-	-	1,836	1,000	836	184%	1,000	21,718
Works & Management	777	768	5,516	10,000	(4,484)	55%	10,000	7,271
Wetland Training Event	-	-	-	1,000	(1,000)	-	1,000	-
Assisted Habitat	-	-	272	-	272	-	-	170

Profit and Loss

	JUL 2026	AUG 2026	YTD ACTUAL	YTD BUDGET	VARIANCE	% OF YTD BUDGET	ANNUAL BUDGET	LAST YEAR
Habitat Enhancement Research Fund Grants	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	2,870
Total Habitat Protection & Mngt	1,136	5,316	32,920	12,000	20,920	274%	12,000	80,142
Participation								
Access and Signage	-	1,034	4,139	4,000	139	103%	4,000	2,416
Back Country Surveys/Monitoring	-	-	13,848	10,000	3,848	138%	10,000	12,801
Promotion Articles and Advertising	-	-	-	6,000	(6,000)	-	6,000	-
Publications and Web Site	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	120
OF&G Training Events	-	261	4,351	2,000	2,351	218%	2,000	2,796
Club Relations and Grants	57	-	307	1,000	(693)	31%	1,000	1,975
Wetland Reserve Ballots	-	-	121	-	121	-	-	-
Fish and Game Huts	70	-	388	2,000	(1,612)	19%	2,000	-
Total Participation	127	1,294	23,154	25,000	(1,846)	93%	25,000	20,108
PUBLIC INTERFACE								
Liaison								
Liaison DoC Unin Govt CFT IWI	-	-	-	1,000	(1,000)	-	1,000	63
Total Liaison	-	-	-	1,000	(1,000)	-	1,000	63
Communication								
World Wetlands	-	-	1,380	200	1,180	690%	200	164
Total Communication	-	-	1,380	200	1,180	690%	200	164
Media Releases								
Advocacy Statutory	-	-	-	500	(500)	-	500	-
Weekly Fishing Reports/ social media	280	140	5,635	7,000	(1,365)	81%	7,000	5,460
Communications Strategy	98	64	1,135	-	1,135	-	-	2,415
Total Media Releases	378	204	6,770	7,500	(730)	90%	7,500	7,875
Total PUBLIC INTERFACE	378	204	8,150	8,700	(550)	94%	8,700	8,101

Profit and Loss

	JUL 2026	AUG 2026	YTD ACTUAL	YTD BUDGET	VARIANCE	% OF YTD BUDGET	ANNUAL BUDGET	LAST YEAR
COMPLIANCE								
Ranger Training and Expenses	-	336	2,021	5,500	(3,479)	37%	5,500	2,282
Compliance	-	-	-	10,000	(10,000)	-	10,000	-
Total COMPLIANCE	-	336	2,021	15,500	(13,479)	13%	15,500	2,282
LICENCING								
Agent Servicing	-	-	562	500	62	112%	500	137
Commission/Fees	722	578	89,323	99,132	(9,809)	90%	99,132	89,227
Total LICENCING	722	578	89,885	99,632	(9,747)	90%	99,632	89,363
COUNCIL								
Council Meetings and Agendas	1,321	2,759	19,336	17,000	2,336	114%	17,000	18,511
Total COUNCIL	1,321	2,759	19,336	17,000	2,336	114%	17,000	18,511
PLANNING & REPORTING								
Reporting/Audit	-	(19,466)	5,094	19,650	(14,556)	26%	19,650	22,546
National Liason	-	-	-	500	(500)	-	500	286
Total PLANNING & REPORTING	-	(19,466)	5,094	20,150	(15,056)	25%	20,150	22,832
ADMINISTRATION								
Salaries	64,733	115,332	1,041,955	984,469	57,486	106%	984,469	913,870
Staff Expenses								
ACC Levy	2,856	-	2,856	2,500	356	114%	2,500	2,763
Fringe Benefit Tax	-	(3,555)	4,796	8,000	(3,204)	60%	8,000	10,126
Staff Training	-	2,085	8,627	10,000	(1,373)	86%	10,000	8,367
Staff Clothing Branded	-	1,847	2,006	1,000	1,006	201%	1,000	1,581
Staff Personal Expenses	-	(72)	(72)	-	(72)	-	-	-
Staff Expenses	788	262	13,145	9,000	4,145	146%	9,000	7,404
Staff Employment Expenses	5,025	-	20,548	2,000	18,548	1,027%	2,000	7,458
Total Staff Expenses	8,668	566	51,905	32,500	19,405	160%	32,500	37,698

Profit and Loss

	JUL 2026	AUG 2026	YTD ACTUAL	YTD BUDGET	VARIANCE	% OF YTD BUDGET	ANNUAL BUDGET	LAST YEAR
Office Premices	6,740	5,528	74,727	100,791	(26,064)	74%	100,791	187,871
Office Equipmmt	195	45	1,289	3,000	(1,711)	43%	3,000	2,877
Communications	1,558	4,404	25,769	21,300	4,469	121%	21,300	18,007
General Exp (incl Insurance)	116	447	5,207	6,600	(1,393)	79%	6,600	10,547
General Field Equipment	114	-	6,781	5,300	1,481	128%	5,300	2,091
Vehicles	1,561	4,212	54,783	55,000	(217)	100%	55,000	46,588
Total ADMINISTRATION	83,685	130,535	1,262,416	1,208,960	53,456	104%	1,208,960	1,219,549
Approved Reserve Expense	-	-	84,808	-	84,808	-	-	47,113
Depreciation	4,606	4,606	56,086	-	56,086	-	-	55,531
Health & Safety (OSH)	2,038	569	2,642	-	2,642	-	-	-
Loss on Disposal	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	37,342
NZ Fish & Game Levies	94,951	94,951	1,139,410	1,139,410	-	100%	1,139,410	1,205,887
Public Advocacy	-	-	25	-	25	-	-	-
Bullock Creek Expenses	1,100	-	1,158	-	1,158	-	-	-
University of Otago Research Grant	-	-	5,000	-	5,000	-	-	5,000
Mallard Tests MPI	-	-	1,448	-	1,448	-	-	-
Total Expenses	190,535	180,014	2,749,740	2,589,352	160,388	106%	2,589,352	2,826,398
Net Profit	(144,616)	(120,997)	113,437	(47,621)	161,058	-238%	(47,621)	1,400,528

9.2 Licence Sales

Fish Licence Sales 2025/26 Season to 31st August 2026

See table following for fish licence sales numbers and categories for the 2025/26 and 2024/25 season sales to the 31st August of the season.

Designated Waters are \$5 per region for the season for residents and \$40 a day for Non Residents (with a limit of 5 per region)

Note that DWLR and DWLN relate to resident and non resident designated water licences (DWL) sold in Otago, some are for other regions.

In summary, 2025/26 fishing licence sales, in whole season licence equivalents (LEQs), 15,670 LEQs this season compared with 15,551 LEQs to the 31st of August of the previous season - 119 LEQs ahead of last year.

Family fishing licences are back 433, Whole Season Adult Resident licences are ahead 253 and Non resident Adult Day licences are ahead by 656 on the previous season totals.

Game Licence Sales 2025/26 Season to the end of the Season

See table following for complete game season licence sales numbers and categories for the 2025/26 and 2024/25 seasons

Sales began on the 12th March. The gamebird habitat charge has remained the same at \$5 per licence as did the licence pricing being \$116 for an Adult, \$27 for a Junior and \$5 for a Child.

In summary, 2026 game licence sales, in whole season licence equivalents (LEQs), 4,2, LEQs this season compared with 3,940 LEQs of the previous season - 348 LEQs ahead of last year.

Recommendations

- 1. That the Draft set of accounts be approved for Audit**
- 2. That this report be received be received.**

Rachel Easson

Administration Officer

25/09/2026

Otago Region - Complete Season Game Bird Licence Sales

2025/2026							
Sales	GWA	GWJ	GWC	GDA	GDJ	Total	Game LEQ
Public	985	143	64	65	1	1258	1,026
Agency	2690	197	67	23	0	2977	2,734
Total	3675	340	131	88	1	4235	3,760

2024/2025							
Sales	GWA	GWJ	GWC	GDA	GDJ	Total	Game LEQ
Public	1042	166	76	61	2	1347	1,087
Agency	3148	244	94	25	1	3512	3,201
Total	4190	410	170	86	3	4859	4,288

GWA = Gamebird Licence - Whole Season Adult

GWJ = Gamebird Licence - Whole Season Junior

GWC = Gamebird Licence - Whole Season Child

GDA = Gamebird Licence - Day Adult

GDJ = Gamebird Licence - Day Junior

Otago Region Fish Licence Sales to 31st August of the Season

2025/2026

Sales	FWFA	FWA	FWNA	FSLA	FLAA	FWIA	FLBA	FSBA	FDA	FDNA	FWJ	FWNJ	FDJ	FDNJ	FWNC	FDNC	SRSE	DWLR	DWLN	Total	Fish LEQ
Public	1737	2837	697	434	494	208	59	526	3218	3559	872	80	411	235	55	167	0	1516	781	20477	9,100
Agency	1627	2657	222	859	165	100	15	108	420	997	404	31	52	113	9	107	316	1201	242	9697	6,570
Total	3364	5494	919	1293	659	308	74	634	3638	4556	1276	111	463	348	64	274	316	2717	1023	30174	15,670

2024/2025

Sales	FWFA	FWA	FWNA	FSLA	FLAA	FWIA	FLBA	FSBA	FDA	FDNA	FWJ	FWNJ	FDJ	FDNJ	FWNC	FDNC	SRSE	DWLR	DWLN	Total	Fish LEQ
Public	2029	2628	625	364	424	216	45	568	3201	3110	806	71	450	191	32	129	0	1616	655	19644	8,894
Agency	1768	2613	214	816	156	117	24	166	556	790	456	28	63	74	8	52	382	1160	269	9766	6,657
Total	3797	5241	839	1180	580	333	69	734	3757	3900	1262	99	513	265	40	181	382	2776	924	29410	15,551

FWFA = Fishing Licence Whole Season - Family

FWA = Fishing Licence Whole Season - Adult

FWNA = Fishing Licence Whole Season - Non Resident Adult

FSLA = Fishing Licence Whole Season - Loyal Senior

FLAA = Fishing Licence Whole Season - Local Area Adult

FWIA = Fishing Licence - Winter Season Adult (1 Apr to 30 Sept)

FLBA = Fishing Licence - Adult long Break (consecutive 9 day period)

FSBA = Fishing Licence - Adult short Break (consecutive 3 day period)

FDA = Fishing Licence - Resident Day Adult

FDNA = Fishing Licence - Non Resident Day Adult

FWJ = Fishing Licence Whole Season Junior Resident

FWNJ = Fishing Licence Whole Season Junior Non Resident

FDJ = Fishing Licence Day Junior Resident

FDNJ = Fishing Licence Day Junior Non Resident

FWNC = Fishing Licence Whole Season Child Non Resident

FDNC = Fishing Licence Day Child Non Resident

SRSE = Salmon Endorsement

DWLR = Designated Waters Resident

DWLN = Designated Waters Non Resident

Some of the DWLs sold are for other regions, and other regions have some of ours

10.0 Chief Executive's Report

10.1 SPECIES MANAGEMENT

Harvest monitoring

Harvest monitoring has been completed with 1070 phone calls made by staff through the season. The data is reported in 14.4. The season was about average for hunter harvest rate but down on hunter effort. The Lake Dunstan Creel had a total catch rate of 0.25 fish/hour from 101 anglers surveyed. The full report is in 14.3.

Game bird monitoring

Shoveler (including grey teal) and pūkeko counts were conducted in August. Snow conditions limited Mosgiel staff ability to undertake all shoveler counts on the official day. Matt McDougall from Eastern has reported the shoveler data at a National Level. Some equipment for bird monitoring requires replacement.

Bird flu

Steve Dixon is on the National Fish and Game H5N1 group. Steve and Jamie have been working with territorial authorities around bird flu and attended a territorial authority H5N1 workshop last week. This was a very useful workshop as it gave us a better understanding of territorial authorities plans and preparation for bird flu, as well as highlighting to them that Fish and Game exists and we should be notified and engaged at the present time if they find dead waterfowl in unexplained or suspicious circumstances. Otago Fish and Game we personally thanked by the ORC organisers for their proactive engagement with ORC on H5N1.

Spawning surveys

Rainbow trout spawning surveys have begun but have hampered by river conditions from changeable spring precipitation. A small trial comparing on-the-ground redd counts vs drone imagery was undertaken by Otago staff and a couple of other region's experts. Results were mixed, highlighting both staff variability and limitations with drone images.

Regulations

The final Anglers Notice was accepted by the Minister with the Lochy River Designation Water not being passed by NZC for Ministerial review. All other changes were accepted and passed into the Regulations.

Hatchery

Hatchery operations are in full swing. Two-year old rainbow trout are being released for various events and spawning is underway. The waste-outflow tank has been cleaned out. A liberations table is included in this agenda. Some new young wild broodstock were captured from Central Otago to diversity the genetic stock and replace older broods. Investigations

are on-going into Sawyers Bay and the Mata Au Sportfish and Habitat Trust Chair is being kept informed of developments. A table of liberations is included in the agenda 14.5.

10.2 HABITAT PROTECTION AND MANAGEMENT

Habitat enhancement

Rabbit poisoning at Bendigo Wildlife Management Reserve using Pindone has been undertaken throughout the winter and the results look positive. Spring planting community groups has already begun with a full calendar of groups keen to assist. The drone has been used to capture before and progress images for the EcoFund. New signage has been installed at Rocky Point. A student is doing volunteering time releasing plants in Takitakitoa wetland.

New seed has been delivered to the Corrections team, and three loads of plants have been collected to date. A planting day with Fishing Guides in the Fernburn is happening on 24 September.

An invitation for the Game Bird Habitat Trust GBHT has been received requesting Fish and Game Regions to consider potential large scale (e.g. Takitakitoa) enhancement projects to discuss with them. It was noted that Cr Heighton might have been interested in this for Taieri Lake. Discussion with and submission to GBHT can happen any time before March.

Work on Clutha Lagoon has not been progressed far. It was discussed with staff following Council meeting, and I have had discussions with Morgan Trotter as he knows the history and landowner. We will have more discussions soon. I have not fully reviewed Ian Hadlands report from 2025.

RMA update

The intensity of previous months with RMA the Bendigo-Ophir Gold Project Fast Track eased up a little as the applicant put a pause on proceedings until mid-August. We requested to be invited to comment on the Southern Inland Port in Mosgiel, this was accepted and we have had constructive interactions with the applicant to get good concessions on mitigating negative impacts on the Silverstream. Unfortunately, there has been a step change in the Clutha Pumped Hydro project, and the applicant has advised us they want to submit well before the end of the year. This is already having a major short-term impact on staff and Councillor time and resources. Our current student RM intern has completed studies and will commence fulltime employment in November, so we need to consider future RM resourcing. There is more on this project in Public Excluded. All other RMA information is under 11.0.

Clutha Trusts

Staff provided final project reports to the Mata-Au Sportsfish and Habitat Trust in August, ahead of schedule as requested by Contact Energy for their consent reporting requirements. Cr. Preedy is the new Chair of the Mata-Au Sportsfish and Habitat Trust.

10.3 USER PARTICIPATION

Recruitment

Beginners spin fishing classes

A very busy week for staff with 7 beginner spin fishing classes to start our R3 work in September. We had Otago female angler take our Dunedin Women only class which went very well and received good feedback. Other classes also received some very positive feedback. A follow up media story focussing on these woman anglers will be our Season Opening media release. In excess of 70 potential anglers attended across the classes, despite disruption by snow in Mosgiel.

Staff also assisted the Otago Anglers and a Dunedin Intermediate school with female and student fly fishing skills respectively.

Take a kid fishing

We are in the midst of TAKF with the first weekend of the Dunedin Southern Reservoir events last weekend, the second this weekend. It has been well supported by Rangers, staff and formers staff and there was a bumper day of catching on the first Saturday. There have also been two small local group TAKF events at Cromwell so far, with more scheduled.

Access

New Dean's Bank signs have been installed ahead of season opening, with the aim of reducing fly angler angst and increasing spin angler awareness. This has been supported by the Clutha Fisheries Trust with joint branding on the signs.

We have been assisting with a new South Island fishing access map created by a Bannockburn entrepreneur. This app is available for iPhone and on the web, it has 3 tiers of service, our Otago Fish and Game access information has been supplied with the agreement it is accessible on the free tier.

Staff are working with Auckland Waikato staff to upgrade our current GIS information to get it onto the same more modern platform as Auckland Waikato, Southland and Eastern. This is planned to be completed before the start of summer and used as a pitch for our summer licence sales.

Publications

The Weekly fishing report will begin this week for the start of the season, there will be some minor tweaks to this e-newsletter this season to reduce staff workload but maintain quality. Our regional content should have been seen by all now in the Fish & Game fishing magazine. There is a much fuller summary of this and Public Interface in the Communications Annual Report (7.1)

10.4 PUBLIC INTERFACE

Advocacy

Staff have been having good engagement with university staff and students, including being involved in a panel discussion on Monday with University students on the impacts of introduced species. Some staff will attend the Otago University Freshwater forum in Dunedin in October and also the non-migratory galaxiid workshop organised by DOC and supported by Clutha Fishers Trust at Otakou Marae in November.

Central Otago and Southland staff held a Guides workshop in Queenstown in August attracting guides from across Southland and Otago. This was much appreciated by guides, and we will continue this format at least every two years. From this meeting Dean Bell NZPFGA President has written to Otago and Southland Councils requesting assistance with surveying angler to quantify angler perceptions of fishing pressure due to guiding. I believe we may be able to accommodate this request with our annual licence holder survey, so long as there are minimal new questions – for discussion and decision in 13.3.

The stakeholder survey is commencing this week.

Catchment Groups

Staff have been well involved with Catchment Action Plan (CAP) Groups. This generally seems to be going well and getting positive Fish Game messaging to engaged individuals.

10.5 COMPLIANCE

Ranging and Prosecutions

The annual compliance report is included in this agenda (14.1). With the settled weather at the end of winter there was a small spike in localised angling activity and two more offences detected in the past month. Compliance in Otago is still very good at 98%. Targeted ranging will be happening through Opening next week.

Ranger training was completed across Mosgiel and Cromwell office concurrently. Unfortunately, a technical communication glitch prevented both sites being appropriately linked by video for a shared event as planned.

Matthew Veitch our Compliance intern has resigned as he has now completed his studies. He has been a very diligent intern for the past 3 years and contributed very well to compliance and also the likes of game bird harvest surveys. Matthew is assisting with finding a replacement.

10.6 LICENCING

Angling licence sale to 31 August were up 0.8% on 2024/25 and 1.2% on budget. This equates to 15,670 licence equivalents (LEQ) and \$2,125,735 revenue. This is lead by strong non-resident sales, as noted throughout the year.

Game licences were down 12.3% on 2024/25 and 4.2% behind budget. This delivered \$362,910 revenue down \$15,745 on budget from 3,760 LEQ sold. These was no pick-up late in the season. Protest sales returning to Southland and likely the cost of living/fuel in the lead up to opening weekend were the likely prime causes of the loss. Further sales details are in the finance report.

10.7 COUNCIL

Staffing

Rachel Easson our office administrator has moved from a temporary role via an employment agency to full-time Otago Fish and Game staff at the start of September. Congratulations Rachel.

Performance reviews for salaried staff were completed in August and remuneration changes made in time for the new financial year. Some of the team were apprehensive about this process with a different, albeit acting Manager.

Both of our student interns are completing their employment with us. Matthew and Harshi have been excellent interns and have helped in farm more than their core roles. We are current advertising with Matthew's assistance in the Otago University law faculty with the plan to at least replace him and maybe even attach an intern with environmental/resource management credentials that could cover both the compliance and consent/RM intern workload.

Property Update

The Queenstown District Council Stormwater constructed wetland in Bullock Creek Hatchery Springs and the adjoining Alpha series subdivision, has been well tested in recent months. It has received at least two more heavy rain events during recent months. I inspected it during one of these and was pleased to see the flow-path through the constructed wetland and the limited and much cleaner water entering Bullock Creek with minimal noticeable discolouration/sediment.

The construction of the meeting room at Cromwell was completed at the end of August. It came \$3,436 under the estimated cost. The old tables, chairs, screen camera and communications system have been installed and were used first for the Ranger training. The only requirement now is curtains, wall decoration and a wall unit.

The Mosgiel office is now signposted of Dukes Road North.

10.8 PLANNING AND REPORTING

Operational Work Plan 2026/27 and budget

The Operational Workplan (OWP) and budget approved by Council in March, the July was reviewed in August after notification of the Minister's decision to increase the licence fee by \$2.00. This extra revenue and extra commission have been included in the budget. There has been \$50,000 added as Council approved in July for RM work like Fast Track along with an increased rates cost of \$10,000 to \$25,000, as Mosgiel rates costed were based on bare land. The budget now has a surplus of \$94,423, but that could be reviewed relative to how we have treated Designated Waters income while drawing out of the non-resident reserve. This would reduce the surplus to approximately \$50,000. The budgeted gross Fishing licence revenue is now \$2,154,570, Game licence revenue \$421,637, commission \$103,048, and NZC levy \$1,242,736.

This budget with planned spending from reserves was shared with NZC last Friday, but not before their last meeting as I was still awaiting confirmation for NZC that the updated licence revenue, commission and levy amounts they provided were correct.

Option for alternative investments were investigated. We are very limited by the Public Finances Act in where we can invest, which is essentially only in deposits with Government approved banks or in Government Bonds. Consequently, I have not sought alternative investment portfolios.

Next Council Meeting

The next Council meeting is in Cromwell on the 2nd of December. This is the Annual General Meeting.

Recommendation

That this report be received.

The updated budget circulated with this agenda be accepted as final.

Jamie Ward

Acting Chief Executive

24 September 2026

11.0 RMA Planning and Consents Report

Paper Title	Planning and Consenting Report
Author	Nigel Paragreen, Environmental Officer
Purpose	For Information
Executive Summary	During the reporting period, staff have worked on or provided: - The Manuherekia Local Bill - 3x Fast-Track processes - 1 limited notified submission - 4x affected party approvals for resource consents
Discussion/Analysis	Please see below
Links to Previous Papers/Decisions	N/A
Attachments (if any)	N/A
Recommendation	1. That Councillors receive this report

Decision Record	Moved by: Seconded by: Carried / Lost:
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Planning and Consenting Report

8 July – 16 September 2026

Current Legislation, Policy and Planning Processes

<i>Manuherekia Local Bill (the bill)</i>
The Central Otago District Council (CODC) has been investigating the development of a Local Bill to enable the replacement of Falls Dam. It is understood that the Bill will set a minimum flow and enable the flooding of Public Conservation Land, in order to allow the dam to be built. During the reporting period, staff have had contact with the Bill's sponsor who has outlined a desire to include Fish and

Game in consultation, which is to be developed in the future. It's not clear to staff whether this will address the risks encompassed by using this political process.

Fast-Track processes – Bendigo-Ophir Gold Project

Please see the separate fortnightly reports for this case.

Fast-Track processes – Southern Link Inland Port

An inland port is proposed in Mosgiel, bordering Dukes Road, the Silverstream and the train tracks. During the reporting period, staff have completed comments for the application and engaged with the applicant and the Otago Regional Council on issues and consent conditions. Staff identified three main issues with the application:

1. The quality of the discharge must support the sports fish values of the Silverstream.
2. The consent conditions must be adequate to protect against sediment pulses to the Silverstream during construction.
3. Work in the wetted bed must be protective of sports fish spawning, redds and juvenile rearing.

A freshwater hearing was held on the 15th of September. However, after evidence exchange it was clear that Fish and Game's issues had been adequately resolved and staff opted not to attend the hearing. A further workshop with the Panel on consent conditions is set for the 22nd of September. Fish and Game has been invited to attend.

Fast-Track process – Clutha Pumped Hydro

During the reporting period, staff have been in touch with and met with members of the project team for the Clutha Pumped Hydro Fast-Track process. Details on this application will be provided in a separate report.

Sports Fish and Game Management Plan review

Due to fast-track and other commitments, staff have not been able to progress the Sports Fish and Game Management Plan review during the period and will begin as soon as possible.

Current Notification Processes

Applicant	Activity	Outcome
Otago Regional Council notifications		

Real Journeys Ltd.	To disturb the bed of the Shotover River with hand tools, machinery and explosives to move rocks for the purpose of improving the whitewater rafting safety. The application also sought to divert a portion of the river through a historic tunnel.	Staff reviewed the application and provided a submission focusing on the need to address the risk of excavators damaging redds in the wetted bed and ensuring that work, including the use of explosives, was consistent with angling amenity in the catchment. The submission was neutral, recommending pragmatic ways to address these issues.
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Written approval provided during the period

Applicant	Activity	Outcome
Otago Regional Council applications		
Queenstown Hardfill Management Company and Queenstown Gravel Supplies	To extract gravel from the Shotover River near its confluence.	Staff reviewed the application and negotiated consent conditions to manage impacts on angling, natural character and access to the water body. On agreement, affected party approval was provided.
Wheelbarrow Mining Ltd.	Activities related to gold mining on the Fullarton Stream and Filly Burn	The application had previously been provided affected party approval but had been changed since. Staff reviewed the updated application and provided affected party approval.
Rotary Club of Queenstown	To hold a rubber duck race in Horne Creek.	Staff reviewed the application and provided affected party approval.
Queenstown Lakes District Council		
Lakeland Adventures Wanaka Ltd.	To consent two existing moorings in Lake Wanaka	Staff reviewed the application and provided affected party approval.

No written approvals were provided during the period for consents from the following bodies:

- Central Otago District Council
- Dunedin City Council
- Clutha District Council
- Waitaki District Council

Nigel Paragreen

Environmental Officer

16 September 2026

Appendix 1 Response from Otago Regional Council



From the Office of the Chairperson

29 July 2026

Jamie Ward
Acting Chief Executive
Otago Fish & Game Council
5 Hazlett Road
Mosgiel 9024
Email: jward@fishandgame.org.nz

Dear Jamie

Thank you for your letter regarding the proposal to investigate a Local Bill for the Manuherikia minimum flow and associated matters relating to Falls Dam.

We appreciate Otago Fish & Game's long-standing interest in the Manuherikia catchment, and the time and effort it has invested over many years. We also acknowledge the concerns you have raised about the potential use of a Local Bill, community participation, and the need for a durable solution that provides certainty for river users and the wider community.

At this stage, any decision about whether to progress a Local Bill sits with Central Otago District Council. Otago Regional Council is not currently part of that process and has not been involved in shaping the proposal or the matters it seeks to address. We are awaiting the opportunity for more formal discussions with Central Otago District Council so we can better understand the proposal before forming a position.

Otago Regional Council is also considering the new resource management framework and how this may affect our own policy discussions with the Manuherikia community. Until there is greater certainty about the direction of reform, it is difficult to assess how any Local Bill proposal may align with or be affected by the future framework.

Given these factors, Council has not reached any conclusions on the proposal. We recognise the complexity of the issues and the range of interests across the catchment. We remain committed to engaging with relevant parties as discussions progress and more information becomes available.

Thank you again for outlining your views. We value Otago Fish & Game's perspective and will take your comments into account as this work develops. We will respond more fully when we are able to do so.

Regards,

A handwritten signature in black ink, appearing to read "Hilary Calvert".

Hilary Calvert
Chairperson

12.1 New Zealand Council

Otago Delegates report on NZC Meeting 184
(Friday, 28 August 2026)

1 The meeting heard reports from

Steve Haslett – NZ Exec minutes
Euan Williamson Better financial management
Dave Harris Better financial management
Alan Strong Better financial management

2 CEO Report & Risk Register
CEO Recommends

i) That the New Zealand Fish and Game Council proceed with the development of a Resource Reallocation Model for Regional Consultation following its November Council meeting and invite all Regional Fish & Game Councils to develop a Resource Allocation Model for consideration by NZC at its November Council meeting ii) That the top two preferred models are then consulted on with Regional Fish & Game Councils before adoption.

Finally Corina presented a Risk Register report providing an analysis of the organisational and New Zealand Fish & Game Council (NZC) risks associated with achievement of the Councils Strategic Objectives. These risks if not appropriately managed, could impede the achievement of the New Zealand Fish & Game Councils strategic priorities and effective implementation of the Organisational Strategy.

The main areas highlighted as high (2) or very high (1) centre mainly around:

- Organisational fiscal management,
- organisational culture, c
- cohesion, and resilience;
- social licence; recruitment, retention, and reactivation (R3); and environmental management.

The reality for Fish & Game is that licence revenue is unlikely to be materially increased in coming years, stable revenue streams are coupled with increased costs of operation, this means that the organisation needs to face hard decisions around budget allocations across the organisation and associated delivery of core statutory functions.

3. Grey Teal Nelson Marlborough proposal

Nelson Marlborough are proposing moving forward with a strategy to allow for Grey Teal to be hunted by seeking a reclassification to Schedule 3 or Schedule 1 of the Wildlife Act. Minister Meager has asked for further information before considering this further

4. Game Bird Nuisance Policy and SOP adopted but to be sent to Regions again

5. Annual Budget & Meeting Timeline adopted

6. High Pathogenicity Avian Influenza Policy to be sent to regions for consultation

In North America, there have been no recorded impacts on game bird populations, hunting or hunters. No state or federal agencies stopped banding even during the initial outbreak of H5N1 in North America and Canada. It is likely that a heightened level of PPE and personal hygiene will be required, but we anticipate a return to normal operations once the virus has saturated the country and mass mortalities have slowed.

7. Advocacy Fund and Advocacy Update

Staff Recommendations

That the New Zealand Council:

1. 2. Agrees to re-allocate NPS-FM funding (\$10,214 + \$36,287=\$46,501) to new National Direction and Initial National Rules submissions set down to be consulted on in 2026 and 2027. Further funding will be required once we are able to assess this work further for Regional Spatial Strategies and other plans.

Notes that as of 31 June 2026, the RMA fund has committed funds of \$427,657. Available funds are \$145,304 for new cases.

8. Approach, indicative costs and timeline to replace the current ESL licence management system presented by COO

1 - A modern CRM

A modern Customer Relationship Management (CRM) system enables Fish & Game to build better relationships with fishing and hunting participants and key stakeholders (eg retailers). A modern CRM will enable F&G and regional offices to see, immediately, who has licences, what type of licence, what emails and activities are being engaged with, and where opportunities for proactive engagement exist. For example, an email could be sent to let people know when a season was opening; or sent to a subset of people who usually buy a licence but haven't. Or an email could be sent to a targeted group of licence holders, letting them know a retail chain had a deal for licence holders. Or the CRM could let you create a web page that captures details for a particular event, then send an email to people who you think might be interested, and when people sign up for the event, the CRM captures all the information. A good CRM tells you who engaged with emails and events, who has licences,

and where people are located, etc. All of this information is kept in one place, improving future communications, insights and engagement with your audiences.

The market is confident it can replace the current system with a modern CRM and a modern licence purchasing experience. Indicative build costs are around \$250k, with annual subscription costs of around \$150k and vendor support of around \$18k per year.

Delivering the project within the first 12 months would likely cost around \$500k, covering the estimated build, six months of licensing and support, and \$100k for external project, communications and change management support. This excludes transaction costs on licence purchases. The timeline is very tight. To deliver by 1 September 2027, Fish & Game needs to move quickly, commit sufficient resources, and accept significant change to the retailer experience.

9. Privacy Policy

Fish and Game NZ has statutory obligations under the Privacy Act 2020 regarding personal information it collects, stores, uses and discloses. The 14 Privacy Principles, specified in legislation (Part 3, Privacy Act 2020) govern how agencies collect, store, use, and share personal information. These principles ensure that all New Zealanders have privacy rights, including the right of access to their information.

The policy has already gone to the regions for consultation. The privacy policy will now be revised as a NZC policy and brought back to NZC at the November meeting for final adoption. It can then be adopted by each region if they wish.

10 Health and Safety Report

Six regions have advised (from Councils, Managers or directly from staff concerned) about health-related impacts caused by potential change in the organisation. This is resulting in reported low morale but also an understanding that the timing of this is not something that can be influenced.

There is a need for Councils to understand the expected culture and the current “climate” of their region. Some of this can be gauged through use of sick leave, any reporting of overloads of work, incidents of bullying and staff engagement in discussions and meetings.

11. NZC Finance Report (Note dated 30 June 2026)

COO Recommendations

That the New Zealand Fish and Game Council:

- a) Receive the NZC Finance Report for the 10 months ended 30 June 2026 with a deficit of \$721,006 against a budgeted deficit of \$526,024

12.2 Clutha Mata Au Sports Fish and Habitat Trust

No report

12.3 Ngai Tahu

No report

12.4 Conservation Board

No report

12.5 Clutha Fisheries Trust

No report

12.5 Tiaki Maniototo**Tiaki Maniototo Report**

Cr. John Heighton 09 September 2026

The Tiaki Maniototo project is now at an end. Upper Taieri Wai continues. On- the- ground activity is now based on the nursery that is gearing up for Spring planting. Tama Potaka and Miles Anderson were hosted for a visit. My understanding is that strong interest in the work achieved by the TM project was expressed but there was no clear statement on a future official role or funding for catchment groups. The draft Catchment Action Plan for the Taieri was part of the governance agenda. I have skimmed this. The main point I noted is that Fish and Game is not mentioned by name on p 32 in the section on restoration of Tunaheketaka. I think Fish and Game should ensure it is more prominent in this section given interest in the project and Fish and Game Otago's track record in restoring wetlands like Takitakitoa. The future governance of Upper Taieri Wai was briefly discussed. Discussion focussed on recruiting younger members of the Upper Taieri community raising the question of any future role for Fish and Game representation.

13.0 Correspondence

13.1 NZC to Otago

13.2 Otago to NZC

13.3 General Correspondence In

13.3.1 Letter from Dean Bell, President NZ Professional Fishing Guides Association

Received via Otago e-mail 20 August 2026

Dear Council,

On behalf of the NZPFGA I am asking you to consider and approve conducting a survey of NZ Resident Licence holders in Otago with regards to their experiences and opinions on Guided Fishing in Otago and Southland. Given your own surveys of Otago licence holders indicate the highest level of dissatisfaction and rivers they avoid were not in Otago but actually in Southland (The Mataura and Oreti) with Fishing guides ranking very highly towards contributing to that dissatisfaction, it would be worthwhile to get feedback on both the regions they regularly fish.

We have approached the Minister for Hunting and Fishing RE: a Fishing Guides Licence and he is asking for definitive evidence that it is something that is required and is something NZ licence holders want.

The NZPFGA is very cognisant of the social licence extended us by the wider NZ fishing community. With the increase in Guided angling pressure, particularly in Southland, due to the influx of foreign guides post-covid, we feel there is a need to gauge if or how that social licence is being impacted. The Minister will not entertain speculation or individual opinion. We also believe it would be beneficial to Fish and Game to get some definitive data on this topic. Otago already has some feedback on Guided angling via Designated Waters surveys, but the depth of the questioning is shallow to the point it does not fully address the issues the Minister wants clarified.

The NZPFGA does not have the capability to conduct such a survey but Fish and Game do via your data base of licence holders.

Yesterday we had a regional meeting with Southland (Dwight Grieve) and Otago (Jamie Ward and Mason Court) Fish and Game staff, who prompted myself to make this request via the Councils. We will be asking the same of Southland.

At first I am asking for council approval and if afforded, we can then work together on the survey questions.

Thank you for your consideration on this matter.

Best Regards

Dean Bell
President
NZPFGA

13.4 General Correspondence Out

14.0 Items to be Received or Noted

14.1 2026 angling and hunting compliance

Paper Title	2026 angling and hunting compliance
Author	Matthew Veitch & Jamie Ward
Purpose	For Information
Executive Summary	Both angling and hunting compliance have remained high in Otago with 98% compliance during the 2025/2026 seasons. 17 angling offences were detected from 824 licence checks of anglers. Approximately 50 waterways were checked for angling activity this season. 2 hunting offences were detected from 101 licence checks. Hunting checks were carried out over 5 major catchments.
Discussion/Analysis	Unsettled spring weather and angling conditions volunteer likely reduced ranger licence checks. Licence checks by staff rose with two new warranted officers in Cromwell. Licence check targets remain a challenge, especially for game bird hunting as hunters appear to be aggregating on a smaller proportion of ponds during opening weekend.
Links to Previous Papers/Decisions	[
Attachments (if any)	
Recommendation	That this report be received
Decision Record	Moved by: Seconded by: Carried / Lost:

Compliance Summary Report

Purpose

This report provides a summary of compliance activity during the 2025/26 sports fishing and game bird hunting seasons.

It also reports on the achievement of internal regional compliance guidelines of:

- (i) Checking 10% of Fish or Game Adult Full Season Licence holders annually; and
- (ii) Maintaining 95% compliance with laws and regulations.

Licence Diversion Levels

Directions on matters of prosecution, including diversion levels, are guided by the “Offence Guidelines” adopted by the Council. These standard diversion fines, approved in September 2022, align with the levels in the Southland and Central South Island regions. *Note: in July 2024, North Canterbury increased their diversion fines based on the fines imposed by the Christchurch District Court.*

Fishing Season Compliance

Measure	2024/25	2025/26
Total Adult and Family Full Season Licence holders ¹	11,064	11,070
Documented interviews with anglers	870	824
% checked (target >10% Adult Licence holders)	7.86%	7.44%
Number of offenders (excluding failure to produce, “FTP”)	16	17
% compliance (target: 95%)	98%	98%

2024/25 figures are restated from the licensing and ranging effort databases and differ from those reported to Council in September 2025, as the full season ranging data was not all submitted at that time of reporting.

Compliance remained high this season at 98%, materially unchanged from 2024/25 and continuing the trend of strong angler compliance in recent years. Rangers documented 824 angler interviews within the Otago region, representing 7.44% of adult and family full season licence holders, so the 10% checking target was again not met.

¹ Whole Season Family (3364), Whole Season Adult (5494), Whole Season Adult (Non-Resident) (919), & Loyal Senior Adult (1293).

Documented interviews were down 46 on the 870 recorded in 2024/25, a decrease of 5.3%, and remain below both the five-year average of 927 and the ten-year average of 964 (Figure 1). The licence base was effectively unchanged, with adult and family full season holders at 11,070 against 11,064 in 2024/25. The reduction in checks therefore translates directly into a lower proportion of licence holders checked, down from 7.86% to 7.44%. This is the second consecutive season in which the check rate has fallen, from 8.89% in 2023/24.

There were 17 offences under the Conservation Act 1987, excluding one failure to produce, compared with 16 in 2024/25. Fishing without a valid sports fishing licence ("FWL") again accounted for the large majority of offending. Diversion was offered to nine offenders and all nine have now completed. Six offenders received warnings. One matter involving a youth was resolved by no further action after the family purchased a licence. One offender provided false details, could not be identified after extensive enquiries and remains uncontactable.

Overview of Fishing Offences

- 14 Fishing without a licence (FWL)
- 3 Two rods (one as a secondary charge to an FWL)
- 1 False details
- 1 Failure to produce (excluded from the offender count above)

Fishing Prosecution Summary

- 9 Diversions
- 6 Warnings
- 1 No action (youth, family purchased a licence)
- 1 Uncontactable (false details provided)

Game Season Compliance

Measure	2025	2026
Total documented Game Bird Licences	4,878	4,235
Documented interviews with hunters	110	101
% checked (target >10% Adult Licence holders)	2.26%	2.38%
Number of offenders (excluding failure to produce, "FTP")	2	2
% compliance (target: 95%)	98%	98%

Game Compliance Summary

Compliance was high again this season at 98%, with two offences recorded against the Wildlife Act 1953 from 101 documented hunter interviews. This is unchanged from 2025 and continues a trend of high compliance among Otago hunters.

Once again we fell short of the goal to interview 10% of game bird licence holders, with 101 checks representing 2.38% of the 4,235 licences recorded in the region. In absolute terms this is nine fewer hunters than the 110 checked in 2025, but because the licence base contracted the proportion checked was marginally higher than in either of the two previous seasons, at 2.26% in 2025 and 2.40% in 2024.

Total game bird licences fell from 4,878 to 4,235, a decrease of 13.2%. This reverses the 9.6% increase recorded into the 2025 season, which was attributed at the time to a 'protest' migration of licence holders from the Southland region. Adult game bird licences fell by a similar margin, from 4,290 to 3,763. The decline stands in contrast to sports fishing, where total licence sales rose 1.4% over the same period.

All 101 checks were conducted over waterfowl opening weekend on 2 and 3 May 2026. Six ranging teams were deployed across the Manuherekia and Upper Clutha, Wakatipu Basin, Clutha delta and Taieri areas, compared with five teams in 2025 and six in 2024. Twenty Notices of Entry were issued over the weekend, and rangers reported hunters as generally cooperative.

Four of the six teams recorded location level detail, between them visiting 86 ponds and waterbodies. Of these, 23 were occupied by hunters, so 73% of ponds visited were unoccupied. On a like for like basis, comparing only the teams that recorded locations in all three seasons, the proportion of ponds found unoccupied has risen materially, from 61% in both 2024 and 2025 to 73% this season. Occupied ponds held an average of 2.9 hunters, consistent with previous seasons.

Hunter numbers per occupied pond have held steady, but the number of ponds being hunted at all has fallen. At these rates of hunting and pond occupancy, approximately 545 ponds would need to be ranged to encounter 10% of game bird licence holders, compared with approximately 390 in 2025 and 445 in 2024. The 10% target is becoming materially harder to achieve each season.

Hunting Without a Licence and Other Game Outcomes

There were two game bird offences this season. One offender was found hunting without a licence and in possession of lead shot, receiving a warning and completing diversion of \$660. A second offender from outside the region took one pukeko in the closed season and received a warning.

A further two matters were resolved by verbal warning at the time, one for a grey teal taken at Takitakitoa and one for game calling without a licence. Consistent with previous reports, verbal warnings given at the maimai are not counted as offences for the purpose of the compliance figure. Comparable numbers of verbal warnings were given in each of the two previous seasons.

Trends in Ranging Activity

Fishing licence checks decreased by 46 on the 2024/25 season. The composition of ranging effort changed markedly, however, and the headline figure understates the recovery in staff capacity:

- Checks conducted by warranted staff rose from 166 to 319. The two officers warranted for this season following CERT training, as foreshadowed in last year's report, together accounted for 84 checks.
- Checks conducted by honorary rangers fell from 424 to 308.
- Boat based checks fell from 267 to 197. All boat based checks this season were recorded by the Central Otago boat, which remained the single largest contributor of any ranging unit.

- October, historically the peak month, fell from 339 checks to 119. This was partly offset by stronger effort in November, December, March and May. Highly changeable spring weather conditions contributed to the reduction in October ranging effort.

Game bird licence checks were down nine on the 2025 season, from 110 to 101, and remain broadly stable across the last three seasons at 107, 110 and 101. Given the region's high licence holder, owner occupier and waterway numbers, along with safety requirements, the 10% checking target remains extremely difficult to achieve, and the fall in pond occupancy noted above is making it harder still. As noted in previous reports, either the target itself, or the allocation of gamebird compliance activity and tactics, may need to be reviewed.

Recommendations

That Council receives this report.

Matthew Veitch & Jamie Ward

Compliance Officer & Operations Manager

September 2026

14.2 Designated Waters Fishery Survey Results- 2025/26

Paper Title	2025/2026 Designated Waters Fishery Survey Results
Author	Mason Court – Otago Fish & Game Officer
Purpose	For Information
Executive Summary	The 2025/26 Otago Designated Waters survey provides the second year of monitoring of angler use, effort and satisfaction following the introduction of the Designated Waters Licence. An estimated 997 resident anglers fished at least one Designated Water, compared with 1,043 in 2024/25. Resident anglers accounted for approximately 79% of estimated angler effort, with non-residents contributing the remaining 21%. Non-resident participation increased to 559 unique anglers, although most purchased only one or two days of fishing. Angler use varied considerably between rivers, with the Nevis, Hunter and Upper Pomahaka supporting the greatest estimated use, while the Upper Lochy had the lowest. Overall satisfaction remained high, with more than 80% of anglers satisfied on most rivers. However, 32% of resident respondents reported avoiding some rivers due to perceived overcrowding. Lower use across several rivers occurred during a season characterised by unusually wet conditions in Central Otago and increased travel costs, which may have influenced fishing participation. Continued annual survey is recommended to identify longer-term trends.
Discussion/Analysis	N/A
Links to Previous Papers/Decisions	<i>Designated Waters Fishery and Controlled Fishery Report for the 2024/2025 Season – M Court</i>
Attachments (if any)	
Recommendation	That this report be received.
Decision Record	Moved by: Seconded by: Carried / Lost:



Designated Waters Fishery Survey Results- 2025/26

Mason Court -Otago Fish & Game

Executive Summary

The 2025/26 Otago Designated Waters survey provides the second year of monitoring of angler use, effort and satisfaction following the introduction of the Designated Waters Licence. An estimated 997 resident anglers fished at least one Designated Water, compared with 1,043 in 2024/25. Resident anglers accounted for approximately 79% of estimated angler effort, with non-residents contributing the remaining 21%. Non-resident participation increased to 559 unique anglers, although most purchased only one or two days of fishing. Angler use varied considerably between rivers, with the Nevis, Hunter and Upper Pomahaka supporting the greatest estimated use, while the Upper Lochy had the lowest.

Overall satisfaction remained high, with more than 80% of anglers satisfied on most rivers. However, 32% of resident respondents reported avoiding some rivers due to perceived overcrowding. Lower use across several rivers occurred during a season characterised by unusually wet conditions in Central Otago and increased travel costs, which may have influenced fishing participation. Continued annual survey is recommended to identify longer-term trends.

Introduction

The creation of the Designated Waters Licence in the 2023/24 season marked a major shift in fisheries management, replacing the former Backcountry Licence system as a method of managing pressure-sensitive fisheries. The Designated Waters Licence also introduced limits on the total number of angler-days available to non-resident anglers on specified Designated Waters.

Pressure-sensitive fisheries in New Zealand are typically characterised by clear-water rivers, excellent sight-fishing opportunities, large fish, high scenic values and remote or backcountry settings, with many located in the South Island. These fisheries are highly valued by both resident and non-resident anglers for the unique angling experiences they provide. However,

research and monitoring have indicated that increasing use and perceived overcrowding can reduce the quality of the angling experience and result in both resident and non-resident anglers being displaced from these fisheries. Otago has nine Designated Waters fisheries, the most of any region.

The introduction of the Designated Waters Licence followed increasing complaints regarding overcrowding of pressure-sensitive fisheries. These concerns included reduced angling quality, changes in trout behaviour, and perceptions among resident anglers that increasing non-resident use was limiting their access to these fisheries. Historically, some fisheries experienced a relatively even distribution of resident and non-resident anglers; however, by the early 2000s, this balance had shifted towards an approximately 80:20 split in favour of non-resident anglers. The Designated Waters Licence was introduced to help manage these pressures by controlling angler use and distributing effort across sensitive fisheries.

To better understand angler use of Otago's Designated Waters, an email survey was distributed to all anglers who purchased an Otago Designated Waters Licence during the 2025/26 season. The survey repeated the approach used in 2024/25, allowing changes in angler use and satisfaction to be assessed between seasons.

This report presents the findings from the 2025/26 survey and compares results with the previous season where appropriate, including patterns of angler use and satisfaction, and the distribution of resident and non-resident angling effort across Otago's Designated Waters.

Survey Methods

Over the months of June and July 2026, Otago Fish & Game invited all anglers who had purchased an Otago Designated Waters Licence to participate in an online survey. Anglers were sent an initial email invitation, those who had not responded followed by two email reminders, for a maximum of three emails. Both anglers who had fished the Designated Waters and those who had not were requested to participate.

For the 2025/26 season, Otago had 2,227 resident and 559 non-resident Designated Waters licence holders. Of these, 498 residents and 133 non-residents completed the survey, representing response rates of 22% and 24%, respectively.

The survey questionnaire was designed using the online SurveyMonkey platform. While all licence holders were invited to participate, only anglers who reported fishing within the Otago Designated Waters were asked questions regarding satisfaction and the number of days fished on each waterway. The survey repeated the questionnaire used during the previous 2024/25 season, allowing results to be compared between seasons.

Estimated angler days, E_i , were calculated from reported angler days according to the formula:

$$E_i = N \left(\frac{D_i}{n} \right)$$

In which N represents the number of anglers with an Otago Designated Waters licence, D_i represents the number of reported angler days for river i , and n represents the number of anglers surveyed.

Results

Resident Anglers

It was estimated that 997 resident Otago Designated Waters licence holders fished at least one of Otago's Designated Waters during the 2025/26 season. This represents a decrease from the estimated 1,043 anglers who fished Designated Waters during the 2024/25 season (Figure 1). Of the New Zealand resident survey respondents who purchased a Designated Waters licence endorsement, 45% reported fishing at least one Designated Waters River during the 2024/25 season, while 55% did not. The most frequently reported reason for not fishing Designated Waters was time constraints (51%), followed by other reasons (22%), weather (18.6%), and financial constraints (6%). A small proportion of respondents (2%) preferred not to provide a reason. Other reasons included injury, family commitments (e.g., having a new child), and not travelling to Otago during the season.

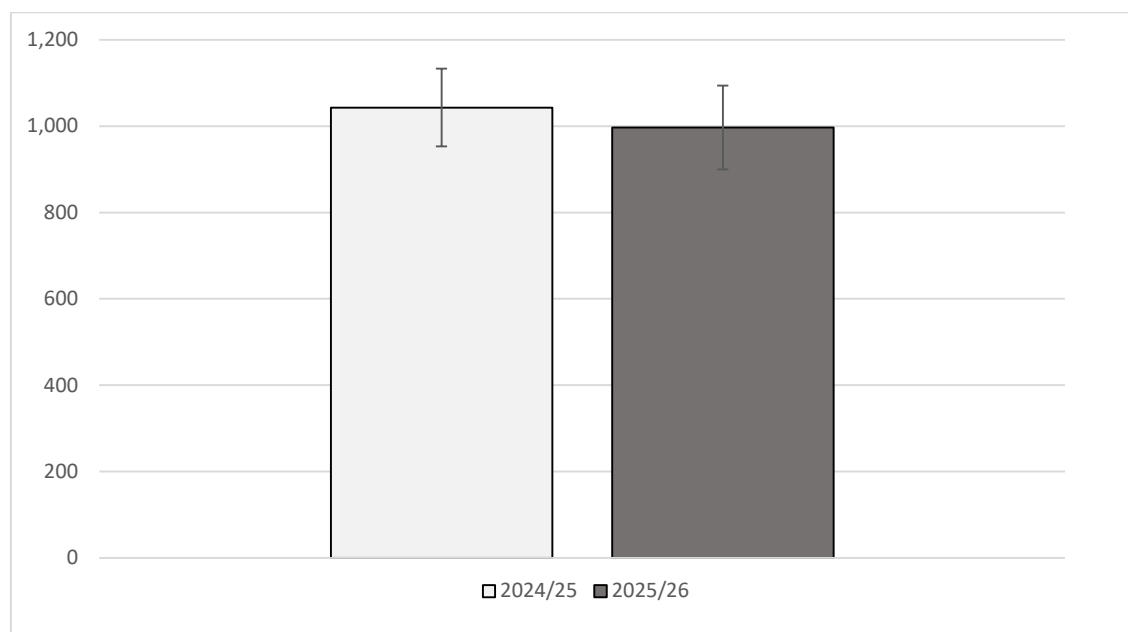


Figure 1: *Estimated number of Resident anglers that fished at least one of Otago's Designated waters for the 2024/25 & 2025/26 seasons*

The Nevis River had the highest proportion of resident anglers that reported fishing each of the Otago Designated Waters among surveyed resident anglers, with 27% of anglers who had fished at least one Designated Waters River reporting that they had fished the Nevis (Figure 2). This was closely followed by the Hunter River (26%) and Upper Pomahaka (23%). The Upper Lochy was fished by the lowest proportion, with only 3% of anglers reporting that they had fished the river.

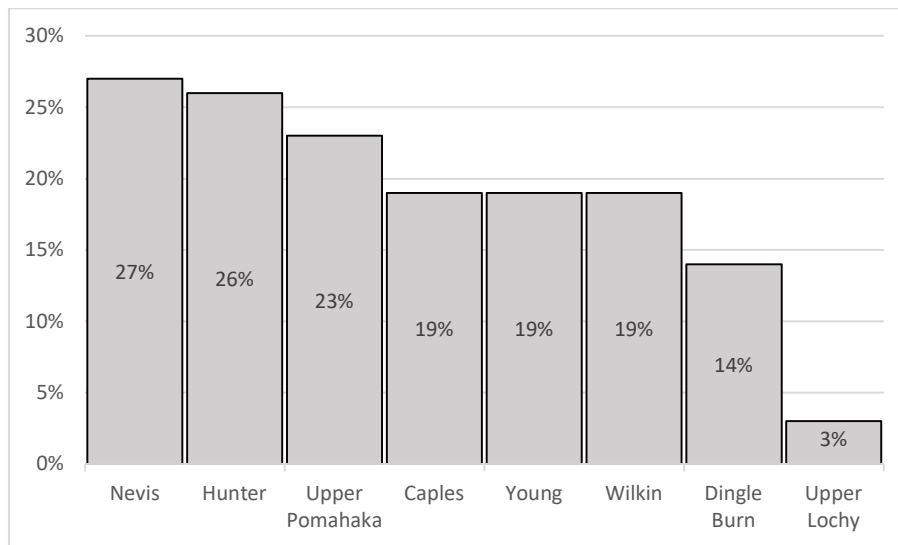


Figure 2. The proportion of resident anglers that reported fishing each of the Otago Designated Waters during the 2025/26 fishing season.

Non-Resident Anglers

During the 2025/26 season, a total of 1,019 Designated Waters Day licences were sold to 559 unique non-resident anglers. On average, each non-resident purchased 1.82 days, with 53% (n = 298) purchasing a single day and 3.8% (n = 21) purchasing the full five-day allowance (Figure 3).

This represents an increase in both the number of licences sold and the number of unique non-resident anglers compared with the 2024/25 season, when 910 Designated Waters Day licences were sold to 465 unique anglers, averaging 1.98 days per angler. Licence sales have also increased since the 2023/24 season, when 782 Designated Waters Day licences were sold to 423 unique anglers, averaging 1.82 days per angler. (Figure 4)

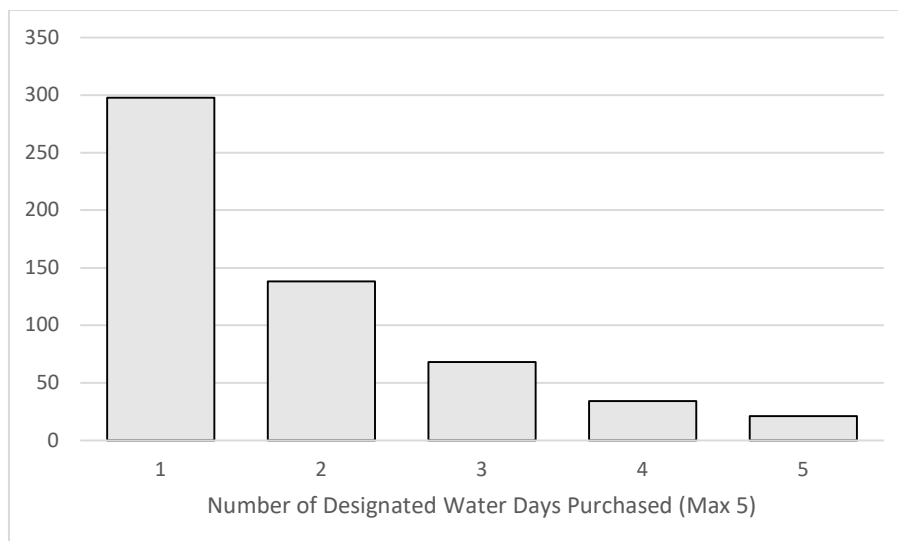


Figure 3. Number of Otago Designated Waters Day licence purchased per non-resident angler to a permitted maximum of 5 days for the 25/26 Fishing Season.

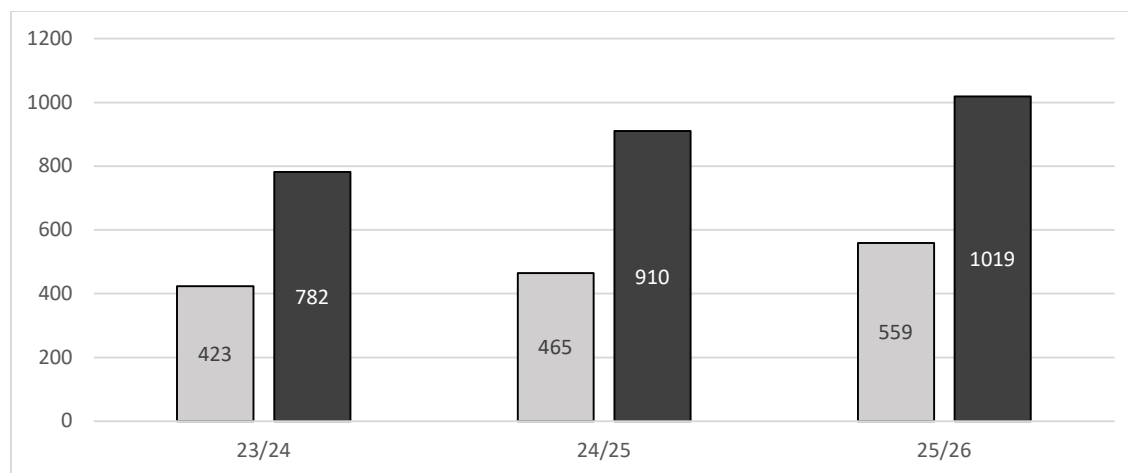


Figure 4. Number of unique non-resident anglers who purchased at least one Otago Designated Water day licence (light grey) and the total number of non-resident Otago Designated Water day licences sold during the 2023/24, 2024/25, and 2025/26 seasons (Dark Grey).

Estimated Anglers

At the river scale, the estimated number of total anglers varied among the Otago Designated Waters. The Nevis River recorded the highest estimated number of anglers ($n \approx 419$), followed by the Upper Pomahaka ($n \approx 362$) and Hunter River ($n \approx 352$) (Figure 5). In contrast, the Upper Lochy recorded the lowest estimated number of anglers with 31.

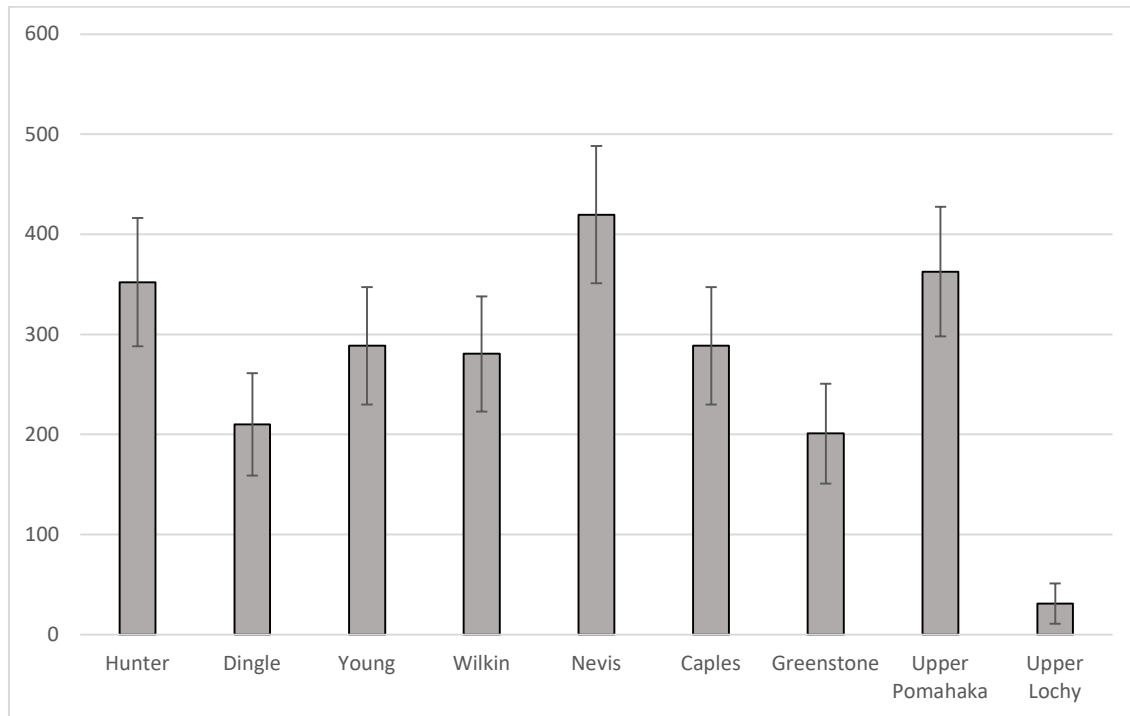


Figure 5: Total estimated anglers for each of Otago's designated waters for the 2025/2026, error bars showing 95% confidence intervals.

The estimated number of anglers differed among Designated Waters and between resident and non-resident anglers (Figure 6). Resident anglers were more numerous than non-resident anglers across all rivers. The highest estimated numbers of resident anglers were recorded for the Nevis (n=268), Hunter(n=263) and Upper Pomahaka(n=232), while the Upper Lochy had the lowest estimated number of resident anglers (n = 27). Among non-resident anglers, the Nevis had the highest estimated number, followed by the Upper Pomahaka, Young and Caples. The Upper Lochy again had the lowest estimated number of non-resident anglers.

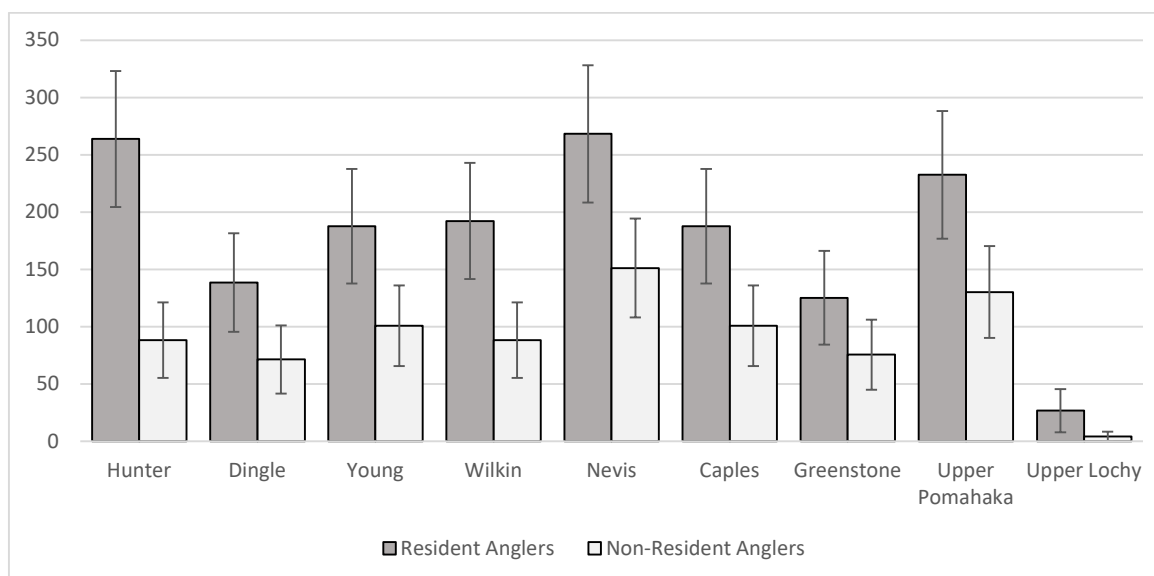


Figure 6: Estimated total number of resident (dark grey) and non-resident (light grey) anglers for each Otago Designated Water during the 2025/26 season, error bars showing 95% confidence intervals.

The estimated number of anglers varied between the 2024/25 and 2025/26 seasons across the Designated Waters (Figure 7). The Hunter, Dingle, Young, Wilkin, Nevis, Caples, Greenstone and Upper Pomahaka all showed lower estimated angler numbers in 2025/26 compared with 2024/25. The Nevis had the highest estimated number of anglers in both seasons, decreasing from estimated 504 anglers in 2024/25 to 419 in 2025/26. The Hunter also showed a notable decrease, from approximately 530 to 352 anglers. The Upper Lochy had the lowest estimated number of anglers in both seasons, decreasing from estimated 60 to 31 anglers.

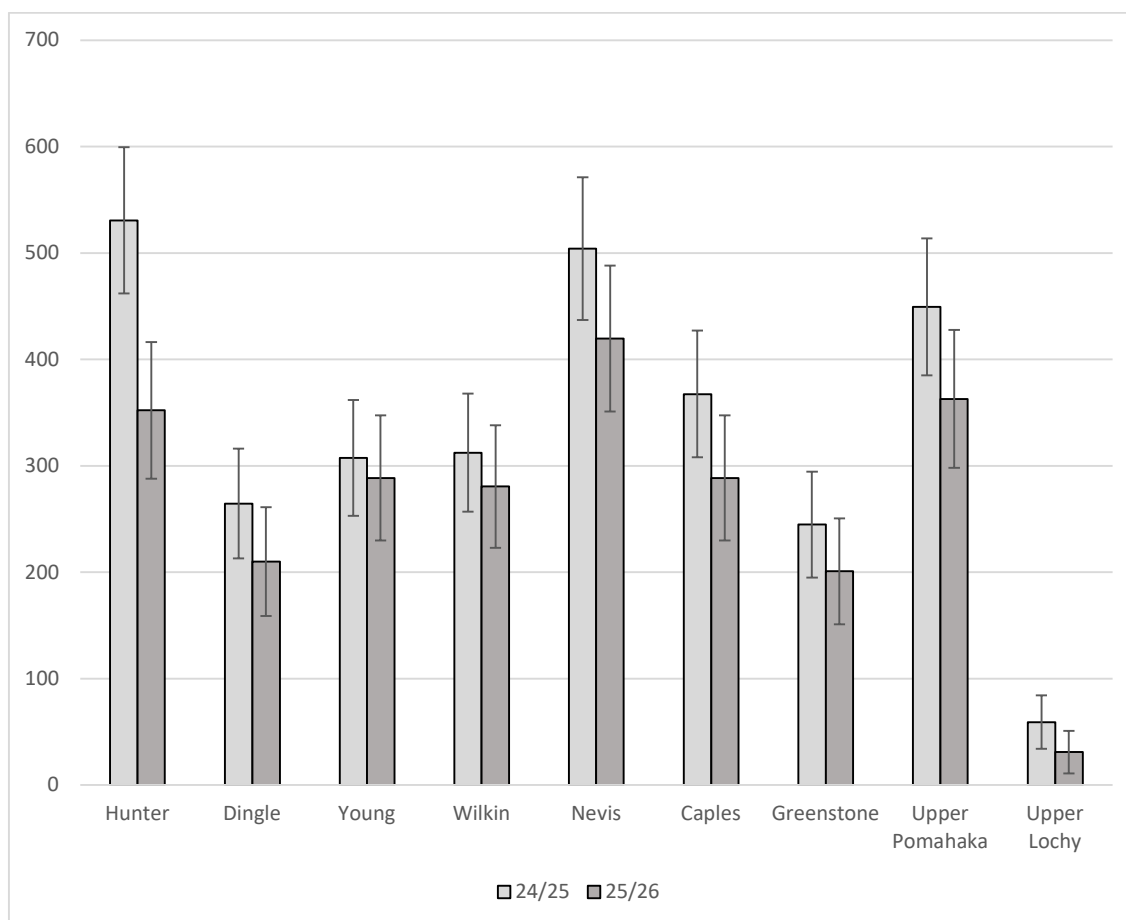


Figure 7: Total estimated anglers for each of Otago's designated waters for both the 2024/2025 Season (Light Grey) and the 2025/2026 (Dark Grey), error bars showing 95% confidence intervals.

Angler Effort

It was estimated that resident anglers accounted for approximately 4,503 angler days (79%) on Otago DW rivers during 2025/26 (Figure 8). Non-resident angler use was estimated at 1214 days (21%); however, noting that this slightly overestimates the actual licence sales (1019 days) but is still within the 95% *confidence intervals*.

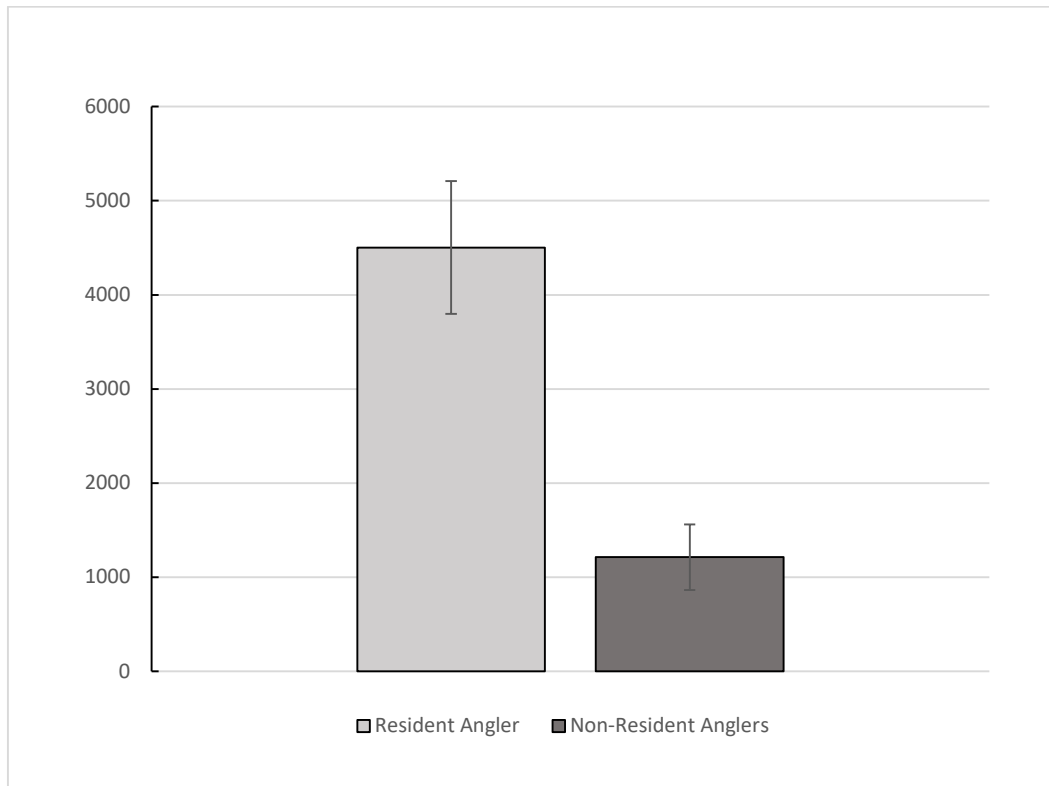


Figure 8: Estimated resident (grey) and non-resident (black) angler days on Otago Designated Waters for the 2025/26 season error bars showing 95% confidence intervals

The Hunter River again recorded the greatest number of estimated angler days totalling 1075 combining resident and non-resident effort (Figure 9). The Upper Pomahaka (975 days) and Nevis (916 days) had the next two most estimated angler days. The Upper Lochy had the lowest total use, with just 31 estimated angler days.

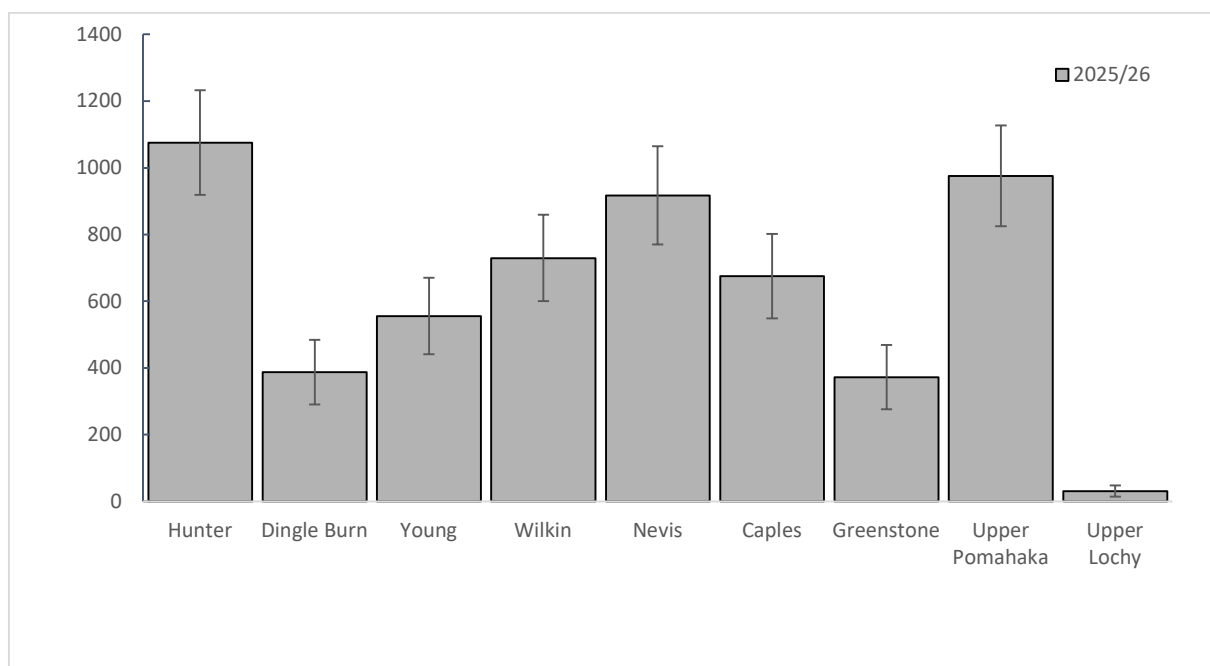


Figure 9: Total estimated angler days for each of Otago's designated waters for the 2025/2026, error bars showing 95% confidence intervals.

Estimated total angler days varied among rivers and declined across most sites between 2024/25 and 2025/26 (Figure 10). Hunter recorded the highest angler effort in both years, decreasing from approximately 1,617 angler days in 2024/25 to 1,075 angler days in 2025/26. Similar declines were observed in Upper Pomahaka (1,170 to 975 angler days), Nevis (1,170 to 917 angler days), and Greenstone (600 to 380 angler days). More moderate decreases occurred in Wilkin, Caples, and Upper Lochy. In contrast, Dingle Burn showed a slight increase in estimated angler days (360 to 387), while Young remained relatively unchanged between years. Despite the overall reduction in effort, the ranking of the most heavily fished rivers was broadly consistent, with Hunter, Upper Pomahaka, and Nevis maintaining the highest estimated angler use.

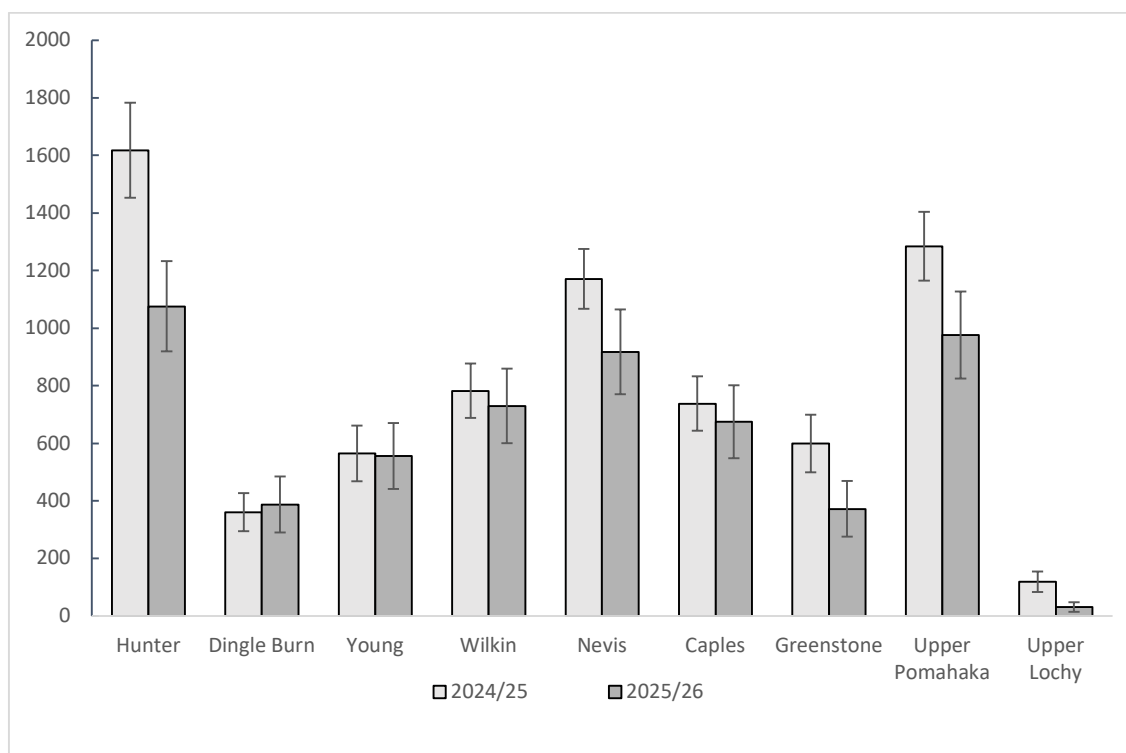


Figure 10. Estimated total angler days for Otago's nine designated waters during the 2024/25 (light grey) and 2025/26 (dark grey) fishing seasons, error bars showing 95% confidence intervals.

Resident anglers accounted for the majority of estimated angler days across all rivers (Figure 11). Hunter supported the highest level of resident angling effort, with estimated 890 angler days, followed by Upper Pomahaka (778 angler days), Nevis (711 angler days), and Wilkin (600 angler days). Lower resident effort was recorded at Dingle (290 angler days), Greenstone (246 angler days), and Upper Lochy (27 angler days).

Non-resident angler effort was considerably lower than resident effort at all sites. Nevis recorded the highest estimated non-resident use (206 angler days), followed by Upper Pomahaka (198 angler days) and Hunter (180 angler days). Intermediate levels of non-resident effort occurred at Caples, Wilkin, and Young, while the lowest values were observed at Dingle and Upper Lochy.

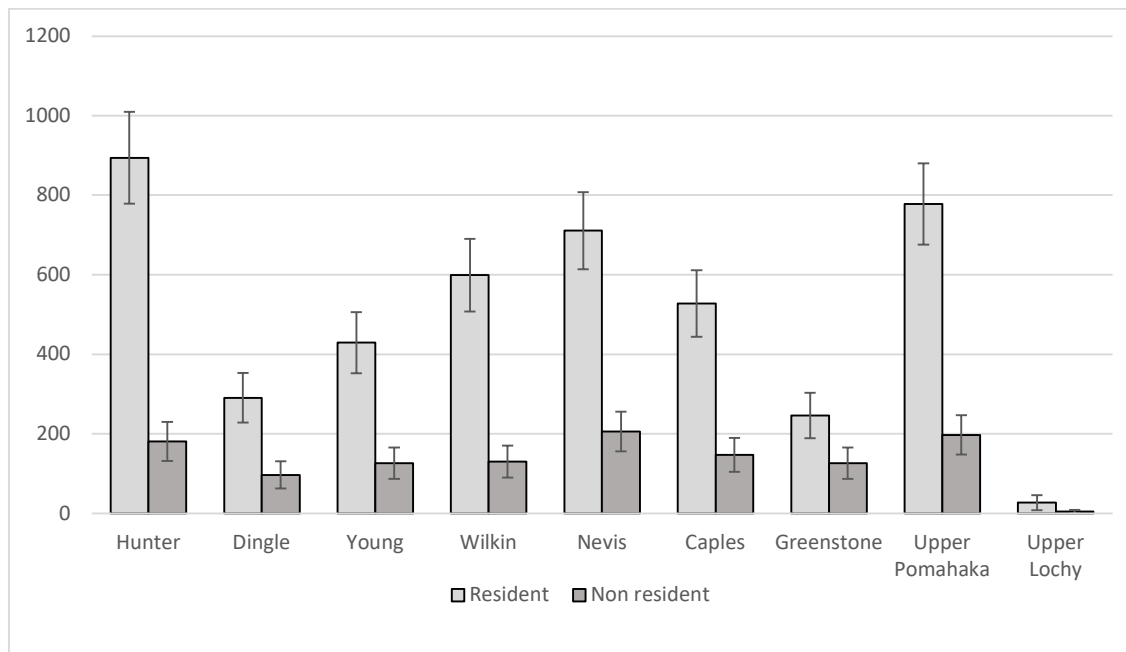


Figure 11: Estimated total number of resident (light grey) and non-resident (dark grey) anglers for each Otago Designated Water during the 2025/26 season, error bars showing 95% confidence intervals.

Resident vs Non-Resident Use

Estimated angler use varied across the nine Otago Designated Waters; however, resident anglers accounted for the majority of estimated use in all waters. On average, 79% of estimated use was attributed to resident anglers and 21% to non-resident anglers. The Greenstone had the highest proportion of estimated non-resident use, at 34% (Figure 12), while the Upper Lochy had the lowest, with only 14% of estimated use attributed to non-resident anglers. The remaining seven Designated Waters had a similar distribution of use, with approximately 80% attributed to resident anglers and 20% to non-resident anglers.

Non-resident angler use increased across most Otago Designated Waters between the 2024/25 and 2025/26 seasons, with the exception of the Caples, where the estimated proportion of non-resident use decreased from 39% to 23% (Figure 13). The largest increase was recorded on the Greenstone, where non-resident use increased from 10% in 2024/25 to 35% in 2025/26. In the remaining Designated Waters, increases ranged from 1% on the Hunter to 11% on the Nevis.

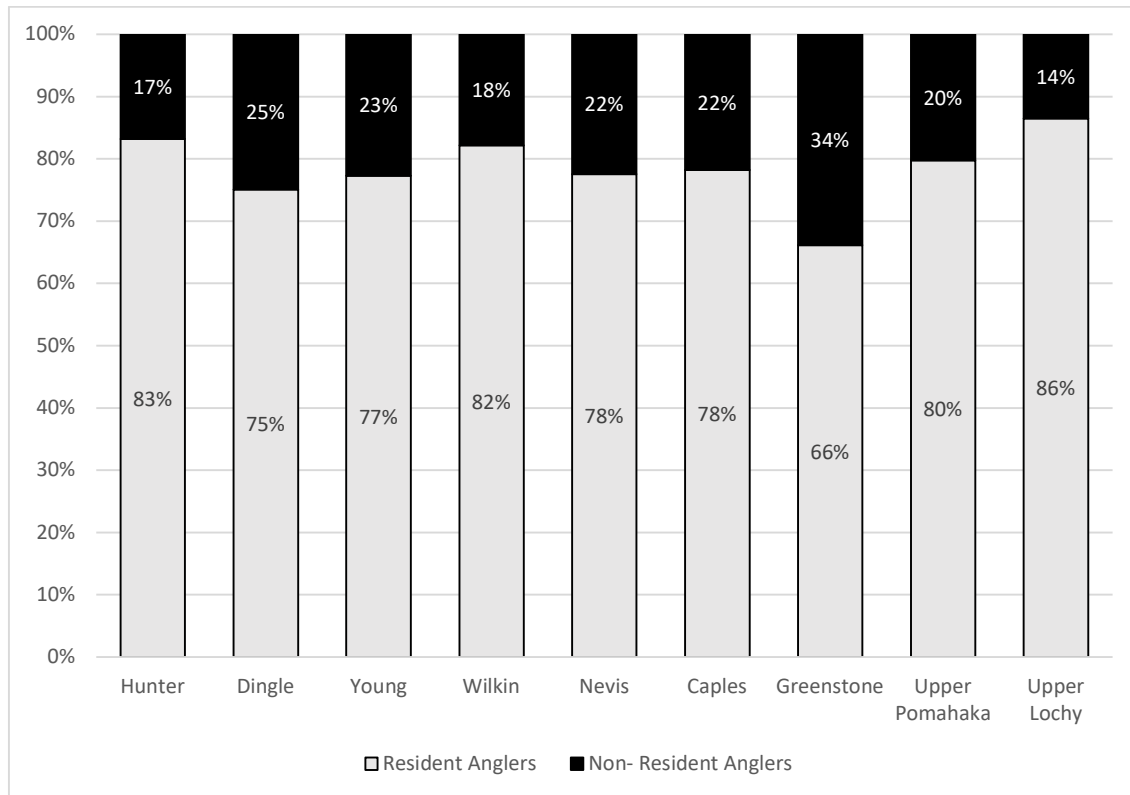


Figure 12: Angler use breakdown (Resident angler in light grey, Non-Resident Anglers in black) for Otago's nine designated waters for the 2025/2026 fishing season.

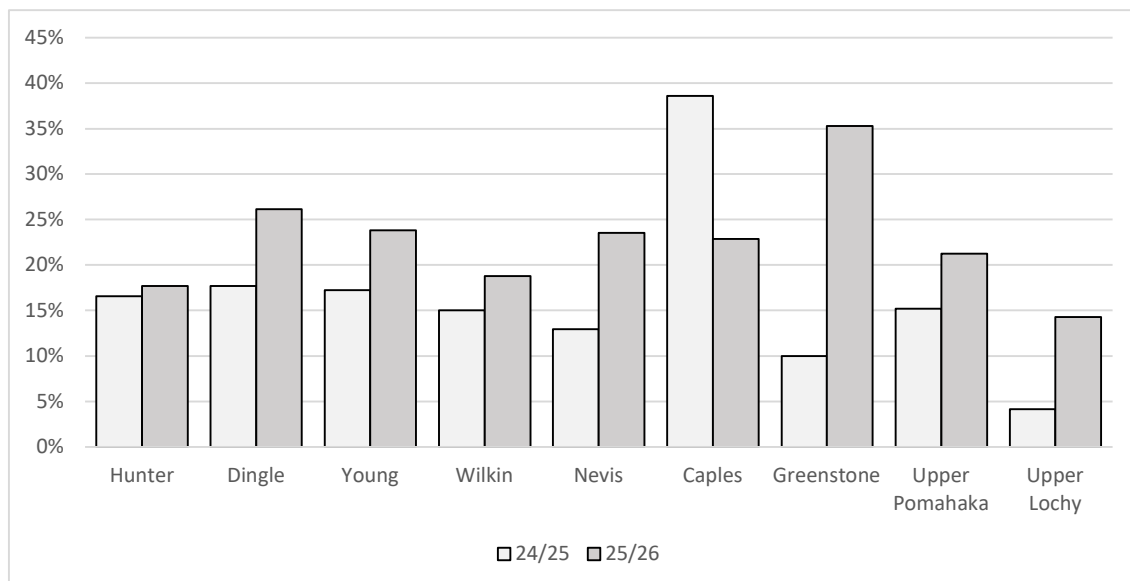


Figure 13: Estimated Non-Resident proportion of total angler effort on Otago's Designated waters for the 2024/25 & 2025/26 seasons.

Angler Satisfaction

To simplify analysis, satisfaction ratings were grouped into “satisfied” (very satisfied + satisfied) and “dissatisfied” (very dissatisfied + dissatisfied), with neutral responses excluded. The Hunter River recorded the highest level of satisfaction, with 92% of anglers reporting that they were satisfied (Figure 14). Other rivers with high satisfaction levels included the Nevis (90%), Young (88%), Wilkin (82%), Upper Pomahaka (80%), and Dingle (80%). The lowest satisfaction was reported for the Greenstone (68%), while satisfaction on the Upper Lochy was 75%.

Angler Satisfaction

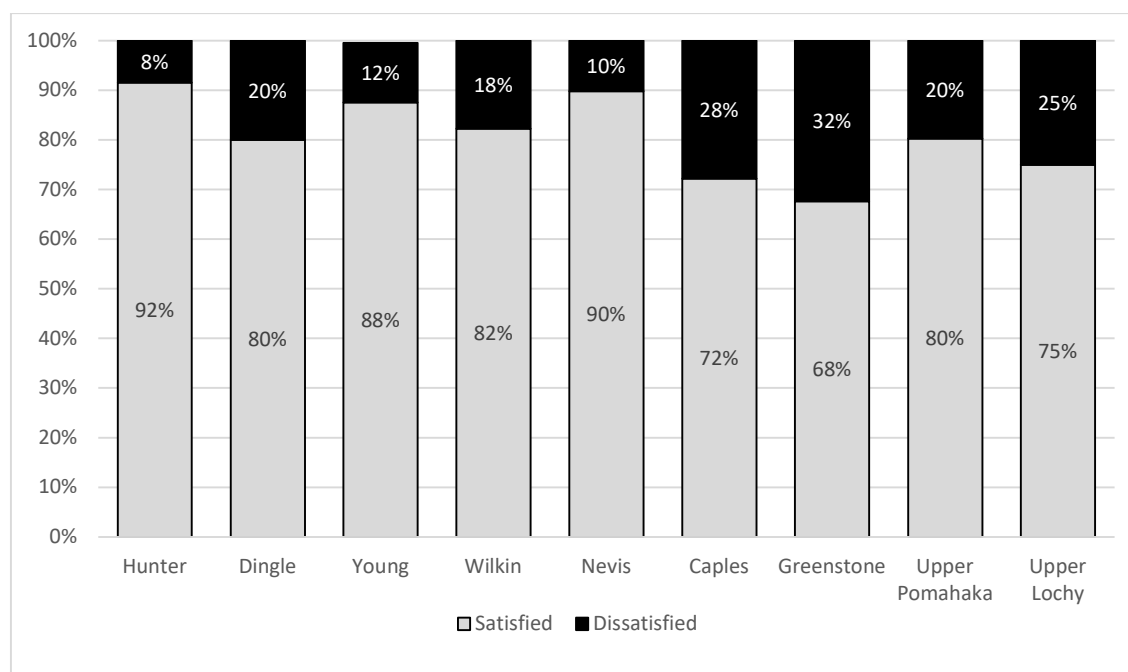


Figure 14. Angler satisfaction, with neutral responses removed for angler for each of Otago’s Designated Waters during the 2025/2026 season.

Satisfaction increased for a number of Otago’s Designated Waters between the 2024/25 and 2025/26 seasons, while others experienced small declines. Satisfaction on the Hunter River increased from 86% to 92%, while the Nevis also increased by six percent, from 84% to 90%. Satisfaction on the Dingle increased by seven percent, from 73% to 80%. (Figure 15). The largest increase was recorded on the Upper Lochy, where satisfaction increased from 50% in 2024/25 to 75% in 2025/26.

In contrast, satisfaction on the Wilkin, Caples, and Greenstone declined slightly, with decreases of approximately two–three percent.

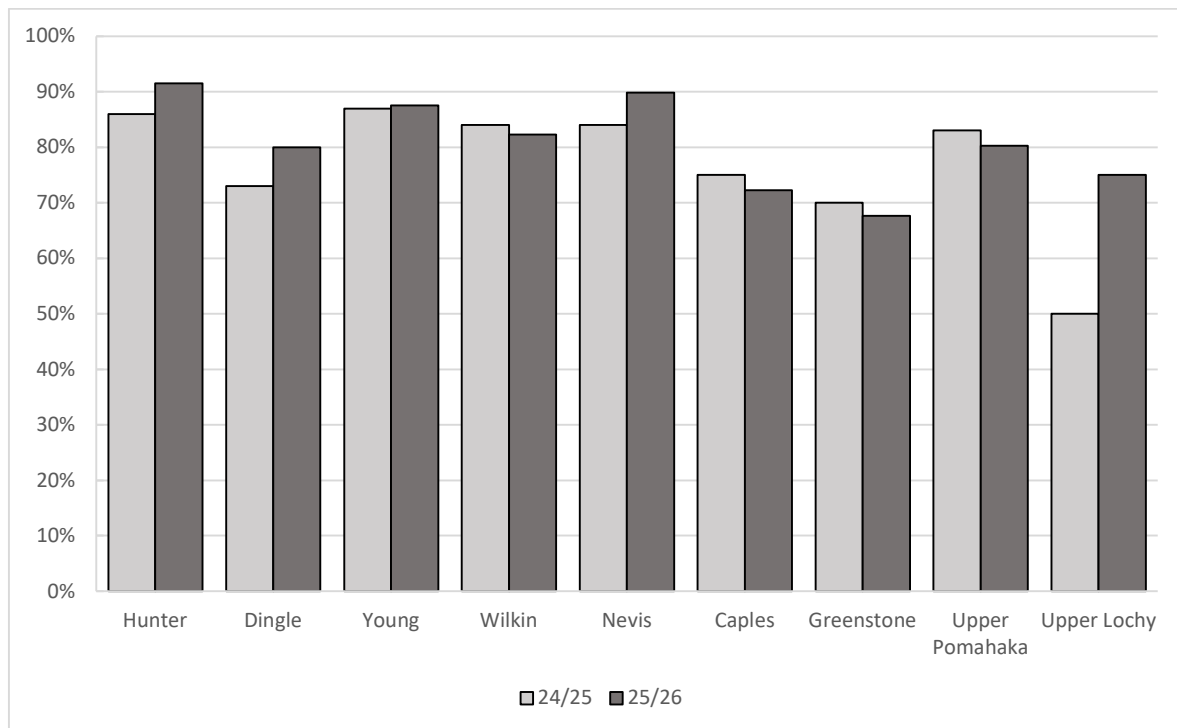


Figure 15. *Percentage of satisfied” (very satisfied + satisfied) with neutral responses excluded who fished Otago’s designated water for the 2024/25 and 2025/26 season.*

Perceptions of the Designated Waters System

When asked whether the Designated Waters Licence made them feel more comfortable to make the journey to fish Otago Designated Waters, 36% of resident anglers responded “yes,” while 64% reported no change.

In response to the implementation of the Designated Waters system most (83% & 71%) anglers both Resident & Non-resident reported that no change to how often they fished the designated rivers (Figure 16). Resident anglers were balanced on whether they fish rivers more, or less, at 10% and 7% respectively, whereas non-residents were more likely to fish them less (24%), not more (7%).

Similarly, 32% of residents indicated they avoided certain rivers due to overcrowding, while the majority (68%) reported that overcrowding did not affect their fishing choices. The rivers most frequently identified as being avoided due to perceived overcrowding were the Upper Mataura (37 mentions), Oreti (25) Ahuriri (19),), Caples (19), and Greenstone (17) (Table 1).

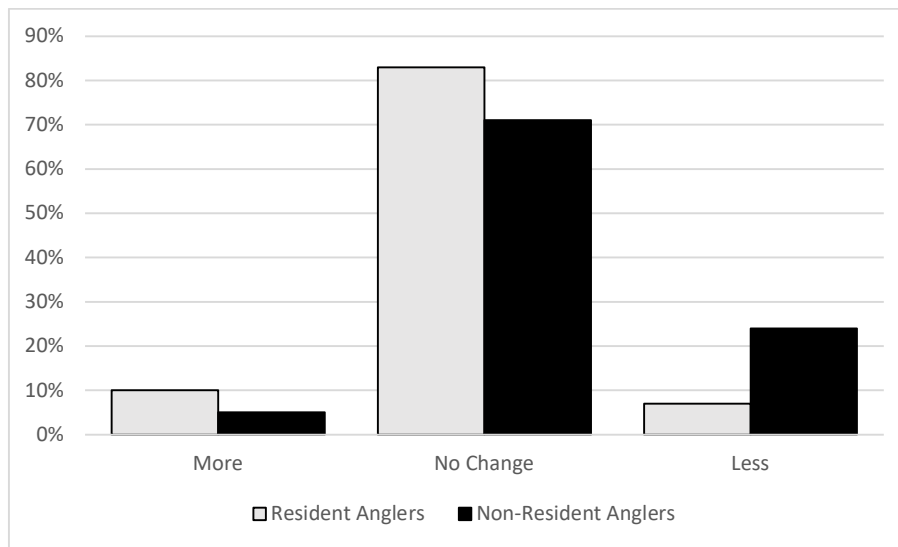


Figure 16. Percentages of resident (grey) and non-resident (black) anglers that fished Otago Designated Waters use more or less since the implementation of the Designated Waters system.

Table 1. Top 10 mentioned rivers and the region (bracketed) that survey respondents said they avoid due to overcrowding.

Rank	River	Number of mentions
1	Mataura (Southland)	31
2	Oreti (Southland)	25
3	Ahuriri (Central South Island)	19
4	Caples (Otago)	19
5	Greenstone (Otago)	17
6	Hunter (Otago)	15
7	Nevis (Otago)	11
8	Wilkin (Otago)	10
9	Dingle Burn (Otago)	9
10	Young (Otago)	7

Discussion

The 2025/26 survey provides a second year of information on angler use of Otago's Designated Waters and allows patterns of participation, effort, and satisfaction to be compared with the previous season. Overall, resident anglers continued to account for the majority of use, while non-resident participation remained relatively limited. Angler use was also unevenly distributed, with the Nevis, Hunter, and Upper Pomahaka supporting greater use than the Upper Lochy.

Resident participation remained relatively stable between seasons, with an estimated 997 resident licence holders fishing at least one Designated Water in 2025/26 compared with 1,043 in 2024/25. Resident anglers accounted for approximately 79% of total estimated angler-days, down from 82% the previous season (Court 2025). While use declined on several rivers, particularly the Hunter and Nevis, these changes should not be attributed to any single factor.

Weather conditions are likely to have provided important context during the 2025/26 season. The fishing season followed an unusually wet spring, with rainfall across much of interior Otago above normal. Periods of high rainfall can affect road and track access, as well as river conditions, potentially resulting in trips being postponed, cancelled, or shortened, particularly on waterways that require more effort to access, such as the Hunter, Dingle Burn, and Upper Lochy. This may have contributed to lower levels of use on some rivers, although the survey cannot determine the extent to which weather directly influenced individual fishing decisions. Anglers who fished at least one Designated Water were not asked about weather, and only 18% of resident anglers who held a Designated Waters Licence but did not fish any Designated Waters reported weather as the main reason.

The cost of travelling to remote fisheries may also have influenced participation. Fuel prices have remained elevated following international oil-market disruption associated with ongoing wars. For anglers travelling several hours to access remote Designated Waters, these additional costs may have reduced their willingness to undertake frequent or longer trips. As with weather, this should be considered a possible contributing factor rather than a demonstrated cause of the changes observed (Hayes & Lovelock 2019).

Non-resident participation increased from 465 unique licence holders in 2024/25 to 559 in 2025/26. This aligns with an increase of non-resident adult season licence sales in Otago of 9% ($n = 80$). However, most non-resident anglers continued to purchase only a small number of fishing days, with more than half purchasing a single day and only a small proportion using the full five-day allowance. Non-residents accounted for approximately 21% of total estimated angler-days, although their contribution varied between rivers. The Greenstone had the highest proportion of non-resident effort, at approximately 35%, while the Upper Lochy had the lowest, at approximately 14%.

Most anglers reported no change in their fishing frequency following the introduction of the Designated Waters Licence. This suggests that the licence system has not resulted in a major change in fishing behaviour for most respondents, although non-residents were more likely than residents to report fishing less often. This aligns with one of the main aims of the Designated Waters Licence: to reduce non-resident pressure on these fisheries. However, because limited data are available from seasons before the licence was introduced, comparisons over a longer period remain difficult.

Perceived crowding remains an important consideration despite generally high satisfaction. Almost one-third of resident respondents reported avoiding particular rivers because they considered them too crowded. This indicates that crowding is not experienced uniformly across the rivers and that some anglers may respond by changing where they fish rather than

stopping fishing altogether. Continued monitoring of both angler numbers and the distribution of effort is therefore important, particularly on rivers with comparatively high use, such as the Nevis, Hunter, and Upper Pomahaka.

Overall, satisfaction remained high across most Designated Waters, with more than 80% of respondents satisfied on six of the nine rivers where satisfaction was reported. Lower satisfaction on the Greenstone and Caples Rivers may have been influenced by lower fish numbers, with the 2025 drift dive recording fewer fish than historically reported (Court 2026)..The results indicate that Otago's Designated Waters continue to provide a generally positive angling experience, while also highlighting differences in use and perceived crowding between individual rivers. Continuing the survey for another season will support annual monitoring, help identify longer-term trends, and provide a stronger basis for assessing changes in resident and non-resident participation, angling effort, and satisfaction.

Recommendation

That this report be received

Mason Court

Fish & Game Officer

September 2026

References

Court, M. J. 2025. *Designated Waters Fishery and Controlled Fishery Report for the 2024/2025 Season September 2025*. Otago Fish and Game Council, Dunedin.

Court, M. (2026, May). *Drift dive report – 2025/26*. Otago Fish & Game Council. Otago Fish and Game Council, Dunedin.

Hayes, S., & Lovelock, B.A. (2019). Angler displacement on and from pressure-sensitive rivers in Otago and Southland. Dunedin, New Zealand. Centre for Recreation Research, Department of Tourism, University of Otago.

14.3 2025/26 Lake Dunstan Creel Survey Report

Paper Title	2025/26 Lake Dunstan Creel Survey Report]
Author	Cole Briggs
Purpose	For Information
Executive Summary	Conducted between September 2025 and May 2026, this survey provides the first creel survey assessment of the Lake Dunstan fishery since the Clutha Fisheries Trust surveys undertaken between 1992 and 2001. A total of 101 anglers were surveyed across 36 survey days, representing 115 hours of fishing effort for 29 fish caught. Information on angler use, fishing methods, catch composition, and factors influencing participation is reported. Angling activity was concentrated in the Clutha Arm and was predominantly undertaken by local boat-based anglers, with weather conditions having a significant influence on participation. The findings provide a baseline for future monitoring and management of the Lake Dunstan fishery.
Discussion/Analysis	• Effort: A total of 101 anglers were surveyed across 36 survey days, representing 115 hours of fishing effort. • Zones: Angling was concentrated in the Clutha Arm, with surveyed anglers recording 96 hours of fishing effort and 20 fish caught, compared with 19 hours of effort and 9 fish caught in the Dunstan Arm. • Boat versus land: Angler numbers were relatively evenly distributed between boat and land-based anglers. However, boat-based anglers accounted for the majority of effort and catch, fishing 68 hours and catching 20 fish, compared with 47 hours fished and 9 fish caught by land-based anglers. • Demographics: 91 of 101 surveyed licence holders resided within Otago. Participation was dominated by Full Season and Family Season licence holders. Limiting factors: Weather conditions influenced angler participation throughout the survey period, contributing to the relatively small dataset collected.
Links to Previous Papers/Decisions	250702 Lake Hāwea Creel Survey 2022-2025 FINAL.docx 2019-20 wanaka Creel survey results CH 2020.docx NZ_LHInsights.pdf NIWA Client report D Scott Thirty Three Years of Creel surveys Oct 2007.pdf D Scott 2002 Lake Dunstan Creel Survey - Comparison of annual change for the nine year period of the survey.pdf

Attachments (if any)	NIL
Recommendation	That future Lake Dunstan creel surveys be planned and implemented in accordance with the recommendations outlined in the discussion of this report, including peak-use creel surveys and targeted fisheries assessments. That the report be received by Council.
Decision Record	Moved by: Seconded by: Carried / Lost:

Lake Dunstan Creel Survey 2025/26

C Briggs

September 18th 2026

Strategic Priority: *Conduct angler surveys on lakes*

Project 1122: Lake Dunstan Creel Survey 2025/26 Season

1. Executive Summary

Angling on Lake Dunstan (Te Waiwere), Central Otago, was assessed using a randomised roving creel survey conducted between September 2025 and May 2026. This survey was a continuation of fisheries monitoring in the Upper Otago Lakes conducted by Otago Fish and Game Council. This was the first creel survey for undertaken on Lake Dunstan since Clutha Fisheries Trust surveys between 1992 and 2001.

During the 2025/26 season, 36 surveys with 101 angler interviews were completed. Weather conditions influenced angler participation, with 16 surveys recording no anglers, primarily during periods of moderate- to strong-winds or heavy rainfall. Surveyed anglers contributed 115 hours of fishing effort and caught 29 fish, resulting in an overall total catch rate (TCR) of 0.25 fish per hour, equivalent to approximately one fish every four hours of angling. One or more fish per day were caught by 20% of anglers, while 80% recorded no catch. Of the fish caught, 62% were released and 38% were retained.

Rainbow trout were the dominant species captured, accounting for 17 fish, followed by brown trout (8), salmon (2), and perch (2). Deep trolling was the most common fishing method and accounted for the greatest proportion of angling effort and catch. Boat-based anglers contributed 59% of total

Otago Fish and Game Council Meeting 29th September 2026

fishing effort and 69% of the total catch, producing a higher catch rate than land-based anglers (0.29 compared with 0.19 fish per hour).

Angling activity was concentrated in the Clutha Arm, where 79 anglers contributed 96 hours of effort and caught 20 fish. The Dunstan Arm had less angling activity, with 22 anglers totalling 19 hours of effort and catching nine fish.

The Lake Dunstan fishery was primarily supported by local and regional anglers, with 90% of surveyed licence holders residing within Otago. Participation was dominated by Full Season (46%) and Family Season (43%) licence holders, indicating a strong base of full season licence holders. Female anglers comprised 11% of surveyed anglers, comparable with the 2024/25 national proportion of female licence holders (13.8%). (Fish & Game New Zealand, 2025)

The 2025/26 creel survey provided a useful baseline for future monitoring of the Lake Dunstan fishery. Incorporating recommendations from the Lake Hāwea three-year creel survey (Sowry & Ward, 2025), including collection of weather conditions, boat versus shore-based fishing, and angler gender, has strengthened the survey design and will support more robust assessments of future fishery trends.

2. Introduction

Lake Dunstan (Te Waiwere) was formed following the development of the Clyde Dam on the Clutha River (Mata-Au). Covering approximately 26km², the lake extends through the Cromwell Gorge (Dunstan Arm), across the Lowburn flats (Clutha Arm), and into the Kawarau Gorge (Kawarau Arm). Initial lake filling commenced in April 1992, with the reservoir reaching its operating range of 193.5–194.5 m above sea level after approximately 18 months. The lake has a shoreline length of 97 km and a mean depth of 14.7 m.

The lake is surrounded by steep mountain ranges, including the Pisa, Dunstan, Carrick, and Cairnmuir Ranges. The Cromwell Gorge is characterised by steep rocky margins, while broader alluvial flats occur around Lowburn and Cromwell.

Lake Dunstan is the fourth most popular angling waterbody in Otago; however, the National Anglers Survey (Stoffels & Unwin, 2023) indicates a fluctuating and more recently declining trend in angler-days recorded on the lake (**Figure 1**). Brown and rainbow trout are common throughout the lake and form the basis of the fishery. Perch are also present, while Chinook salmon occur seasonally due to the downstream migration of smolt from landlocked populations in Lakes Wānaka, Wakatipu, and Hāwea. Anglers fish from both the shore and boats using all legal methods with a daily bag limit of two trout and four salmon. The bag limit for Chinook salmon will change to one for the 2026/27 season.

Lake Dunstan contains diverse habitat, ranging from shallow weed beds dominated by lagarosiphon to deeper open-water areas and steep drop-offs through the Cromwell Gorge. Water clarity is generally good in the Clutha Arm, but the Dunstan arm is influenced by Kawarau River flows, with high rainfall events increasing sediment and debris.

Angler (creel) surveys provide valuable information on fishing effort, catch rates, harvest, and fishery use. This report presents the findings from the first season of monitoring in recent times. Previous creel surveys were undertaken by the Clutha Fisheries Trust between 1992 and 2001.

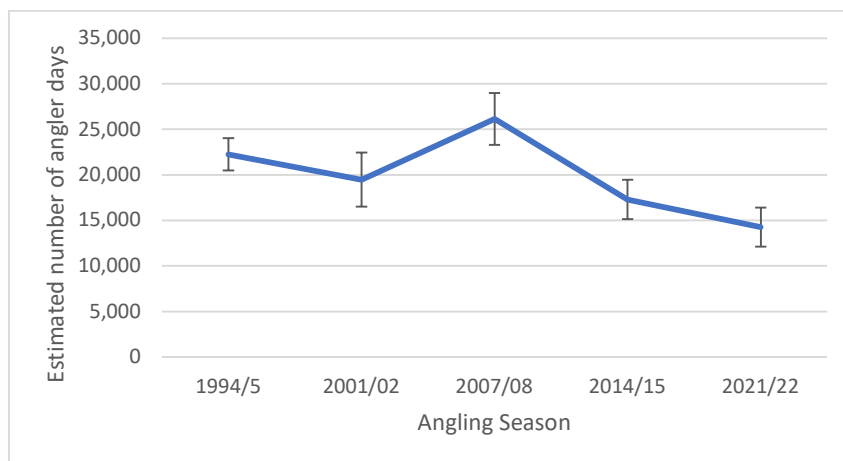


Figure 1. Estimated Annual Angler Effort (days) from National Angler Surveys for Lake Dunstan

3. Methodology

Creel Survey

The creel survey employed a randomised design, with surveys conducted four-times monthly, with two week, and two weekend days per month. Days and survey time-of-day (i.e. morning or afternoon) were randomly selected. This approach aligns with the methodology of a randomised stratified roving creel survey, as described by Pollock et al. (1994). The surveys were conducted between September and May, inclusive, to align with historic creel methodology and angler activity.

The survey start times were either morning at 08.30am, or afternoon at 12.30pm. A detailed schedule was created to outline the survey days and start times, and each survey was conducted within a three- to five-hour window, depending on the day. When the skipper considered lake conditions were inappropriate due to wave action, wind or forecast wind (i.e. gusting >15kt) surveys were shore-based in a motor vehicle.

Two people undertook the boat-based surveys, and one the shore-based surveys. The boat-based surveys were using the Otago Fish & Game boat (OFG7), a 5.5-meter Kiwi Kraft equipped with a 115hp four-stroke Suzuki engine. The boat would circumnavigate the lake, departing from either of the three main boat ramps (McNulty, Lowburn or Dairy Creek), and the direction of the trip was randomly chosen.

Shore-based surveys visited 15 key accessible fishing areas, 11 in the Clutha Arm and 4 in the Dunstan Arm, which offered a view of most accessible fishing on the lake. If boats were observed and appeared to be fishing, during shore-based surveys this was noted to indicate missed activity.

All anglers on the lake were approached for interviews. To minimize disruption to shore anglers the boat was beached at a distance from their fishing position, and they were approached on foot. For boat anglers, interviews were conducted while the Fish & Game boat remained alongside which meant they could either remain moving or not, depending on the fishing circumstances and wishes of the angling skipper. Fenders were deployed to protect both vessels, and boats were approached from the starboard side to avoid any damage.

Prior to commencing any surveys the date, start time, weather conditions and direction of survey were recorded along with the names of those conducting the survey. Angler surveys involved a series of questions about their fishing activity for the day, including a standard set of creel questions (Appendix 1 and 2). All available harvested fish were weighed and measured; condition factor (CF) was calculated as $\text{weight(g)}/\text{length}^3 \text{ (cm)} \times 3612.8$ (Appendix 3). The lake was divided into two zones and recorded next to each surveyed angler: Clutha Arm (above State Highway 8B bridge to the Bendigo boat ramp) and Dunstan Arm (below State Highway 8B bridge to the Clyde Dam) (Appendix 4). For the purposes of this creel survey, the Clutha Arm was surveyed as far upstream as the Bendigo boat ramp. The delta at the head of Lake Dunstan and the Kawarau Arm were excluded from the survey as the risk of grounding in shallow water made them unsafe to survey. Lowburn inlet was also excluded from the creel survey, based on previous survey methodology. Time spent angling was estimated by the angler to the nearest half hour with zero hours allocated to anglers who had not started angling.

4. Results

A total of 101 angler interviews were conducted across 36 sampling days. 16 survey days produced no angler interviews, ten of which recorded moderate to heavy winds and an additional two had heavy rainfall. Although there were some notable days where sunny and calm weather conditions also aligned with no fishing activity. Only two anglers were recorded in heavy rain and three anglers in strong winds.

Forty-one anglers were surveyed on weekdays and 60 on weekends. Six weekend and ten weekday surveys had no anglers recorded.

A total of 29 fish were caught during the survey, 20 were recorded across separate angler interviews, representing 19 individual anglers. One angler was interviewed on two separate occasions and accounted for eight fish (28% of the total catch), catching three fish during one occasion and five during the other. Consequently, over a quarter of the recorded catch was distributed among two successful angling events by one individual angler. The remaining 81 anglers had not caught a fish at the time of survey. Fifteen anglers at the time of interview caught one fish, three anglers caught two fish, one angler caught three fish, and one angler caught five fish. A total of 11 fish (38%) were retained and 18 fish (62%) were returned.

Of the 101 anglers surveyed, 79 anglers (78%) fished the Clutha Arm and 22 (22%) fished the Dunstan Arm. Anglers had spent an average of 1.1 hours (approximately 1 hour 8 minutes) fishing before being interviewed. The mean angler estimated seasons of fishing was 7.3, the median 4 with a range of 1-35 seasons. Anglers surveyed self-reported to fish the lake for an average of 17.5 days per season with a range of 1 to 200 days per season.

4.1 Catch Rate

The Total Catch Rate (TCR) was calculated from the total number of fish caught over the total length of angling time.

Table 1. Numbers of fish caught by species, released and kept with total catch rates (TCR), return rates (RR) and harvest rates (HR) from Lake Dunstan Creel 2025-26 seasons.

Species	Fish caught (TCR)	Fish released (RR) and % returned	Fish Kept (HR)
Rainbow trout	17 (0.14)	11 (0.09) 64%	6 (0.05)
Brown trout	8 (0.06)	3 (0.02) 38%	5 (0.04)
Salmon	2 (0.01)	2 (0.01) 100%	0 (0)
Perch	2 (0.01)	2 (0.01) 100%	0 (0)

A total of 29 fish were caught by 19 anglers spanning 20 interviews over 37.5 hours of fishing effort. This resulted in a catch rate of 0.77 fish per hour for successful anglers (approximately one fish every 1.3 hours of angling). Of the 29 fish caught 8 were brown trout, 17 were rainbow trout, 2 were salmon and 2 were perch.

Table 2. Number of Fish Caught and Catch Rate (CR) by angling method as fish per hour.

Angling Method	Sum of Hours fished	Sum of Total fish caught	Catch rate
Bait	12.5	2	0.16
Deep trolling	47.5	10	0.21
Fly	11.5	3	0.26
Spinning	33	8	0.24
Surface trolling	10.5	6*	0.57

*Five fish caught by same angler

Deep trolling accounted for the greatest proportion of fishing effort (47.5 hours; 41% of total effort) and produced the highest number of fish (10). Surface trolling attracted less time (10.5 hours) but achieved the highest catch rate (0.57 fish/h). However, this result was heavily influenced by a single angler who caught five fish in just 1.5 hours. Spinning (0.24 fish/h), fly fishing (0.26 fish/h), and deep trolling (0.21 fish/h) all produced comparable catch rates, while bait fishing was the least successful method (0.16 fish/h).

Boat-based angling accounted for the majority of fishing effort, with 68 hours fished (59% of total effort) compared with 47 hours (41%) from land-based anglers. Boat anglers also caught the majority of fish, landing 20 fish (69% of the total catch), while land-based anglers caught 9 fish (31%). The estimated catch rate was 0.29 fish per hour for boat anglers, compared with 0.19 fish per hour for land-based anglers, indicating that boat fishing was generally more productive during the survey period.

Table 3. Angler effort and catch by survey zone during the 2025/26 Lake Dunstan creel survey

Zone	Count of Anglers	Sum of Hours fished	Sum of Total fish caught
Clutha Arm	79	96	20
Dunstan Arm	22	19	9
Grand Total	101	115	29

Fishing effort was concentrated in the Clutha Arm, where boat anglers fished 58 hours and land-based anglers fished 38 hours, compared with 10 and 9 hours, respectively, in the Dunstan Arm. Despite the lower effort in the Dunstan Arm, catch rates were generally higher, particularly for land-based anglers. However, these results should be interpreted with caution due to the small sample size.

4.2 Catch Details

Table 4. Mean length, weight and condition factor of each sports fish species recorded during 2025-2026 Lake Dunstan creel surveys.

Season	Species	Mean Length (mm)	Mean Weight (g)	Mean Condition Factor
September 2025 – May 2026	Rainbow trout	451	1,068	39.25
September 2025 – May 2026	Brown trout	483	1,380	44.40

Gutted fish and incomplete measurements were excluded from calculations of length, mean weight, and condition factor. No salmon or perch were retained by anglers. Given the very small sample size (n = 6), these results should be interpreted with extreme caution as they may not be representative of the wider Lake Dunstan fishery.

4.3 Angler demographics 2025/2026

Table 5. Licence type and licence holder age-class numbers and percentages (bracketed) for anglers encountered during Lake Dunstan Creel Surveys 2025/26 season.

Licence type	Number of licenced anglers (% of licenced anglers)			
	Adult	Junior	Child	Total
Family Season	32 (32%)	8 (8%)	3 (3%)	43 (43%)
Full Season	34 (34%)	4 (4%)	4 (4%)	42 (42%)
Day	2 (2%)			2 (2%)
Local area	1 (1%)			1 (1%)
Loyal Senior	8 (8%)			8 (8%)
Non-Resident	5 (5%)			5 (5%)
Total	82 (81%)	12 (12%)	7 (7%)	

Of the 101 licence holders surveyed on Lake Dunstan, 91 anglers (90%) were from within Otago, showing that participation is mostly regional. The largest group came from Cromwell (47 anglers, 47%), followed by Dunedin (15 anglers, 15%), Alexandra (12 anglers, 12%), and Mosgiel (5 anglers, 5%)

Season-long licences accounted for most participation. Full Season licences were the largest category (n=46), including Local Area (n=1) Loyal Senior (n=8) and Full Season Non- Resident (n=3). Family Season licence (n=43) was also a large portion of participation.

Adults (n=82) made up the majority of anglers, with juniors (n=12) and children (n=7) forming a smaller but important component, largely within the family licence group.

Females comprised 11% (11 of 101) of anglers surveyed on Lake Dunstan, compared with 13.8% of fishing licence holders nationally reported by New Zealand Fish & Game. (Fish & Game New Zealand, 2025)

4.4 Historical, neighbouring and competition comparisons:

The overall catch rate decreased from 0.31 fish per hour during the historical creel surveys (Scott 2002) to 0.25 fish per hour during the 2025/26 survey. Historical creel surveys also recorded trolling as the dominant fishing method. The total catch rate for anglers trolling during the historical Lake Dunstan creel surveys was 0.30 fish per hour (Scott 2002), which was similar to the total catch rate for trolling recorded during the 2025/26 season (0.29 fish per hour). Historical surveys documented a sharp decline in Chinook salmon after lake fill, (Scott & Wright, 2007) with the species remaining scarce in the current survey. Methodological differences between the current and historical creel surveys limit the extent to which results can be directly compared but add a useful background to understand how the Lake Dunstan fishery has been utilised in the past. Licence categories have also adapted with time making comparisons difficult.

More recent creel surveys on Lakes Hāwea (2022 – 2025) and Wānaka (2019/20) show Lake Dunstan recording similar angler success. Days anglers were encountered were higher on Lake Dunstan than on Lake Hāwea, with 16 survey days recording no anglers compared with 22 on Lake Hāwea. Both surveys recorded 115 hours of fishing effort, although Lake Dunstan interviewed more anglers (101 vs. 86) and recorded a slightly higher catch rate (0.25 vs. 0.23 fish/hour) (Sowry & Ward 2024). Lake Wānaka recorded a higher catch rate of 0.32 fish per hour during the 2019/20 season (Halford 2020). Angling success was similar between Hāwea and Dunstan, with around 80% of anglers recording no catch prior to interview. Trolling accounted for most fishing effort on lakes Wānaka, Hāwea and Dunstan.

Table 6. Lake Dunstan Fishing Competitions species breakdown 2025/26 Season

Species	Number	Percentage
Rainbow trout	64	34%
Brown trout	84	44%
Chinook salmon	4	2%
Perch	39	20%

Two major fishing competitions were held on Lake Dunstan during the 2025/26 season, attracting a combined 278 entrants. A total of 191 fish were weighed across both events equating to 0.69 fish per angler entered. All four major sport fish species were represented in the catches (Table 6), with length, weight, and species data recorded from weighed fish. Competition data have been excluded from the analyses presented in this report but provide a valuable supplementary source of information on the fishery, while representing only a point-in-time snapshot of species caught.

Discussion

Key findings indicate that Lake Dunstan continues to support a diverse recreational fishery, with good opportunity and success for both shore and boat-based anglers. This reflects the range of angling opportunities available across the lake, supported by extensive shoreline access and established boat access points. All legal fishing methods recorded during the survey were successful, demonstrating that the lake provides opportunities for a range of angling methods. Catch rates were comparable with historical surveys, trolling and leadlining remained important fishing methods, and Chinook salmon continue to represent only a minor component of the fishery.

Shore-based anglers accounted for 41% of total fishing effort, highlighting the value of accessible shoreline of Lake Dunstan in supporting angler participation by providing opportunities for a wider range of anglers, and angling types. The strong representation of local and regional anglers, with 90% residing within Otago, indicates that Lake Dunstan is primarily a community-based fishery. Of the 101 anglers interviewed, 97 held Full Season licences in some form, indicating that Lake Dunstan is predominantly used by anglers with an established commitment to recreational fishing rather than casual or occasional users. Continued quality access for both shore- and boat-based anglers will be important for supporting recreational angling use.

The low number of fish captured during the survey (29 fish) limits the strength of the meaningful characterisation of the Lake Dunstan fishery. But given that catch rates and usages align with similar lakes and historic creel surveys it is likely a fair representation. The biological dataset was limited, with only six fish having complete length, weight and condition factor data. The high release rate reduced opportunities to collect biological measurements, while gutted fish could not provide reliable whole-body weight or condition factor measurements, further limiting the usable biological dataset.

A full Lake Dunstan creel survey has not been implemented for the 2026/27 season. Peak-use creel surveys during December, January and February are planned to maintain fisheries information, along with compliance. Focusing effort during peak holiday periods and appropriate boating weather should maximise encounters with anglers while requiring substantially less time than a full-season survey. This would provide continued information on angler demographics, fishing methods, catch rates and harvest between full creel survey programmes.

If obtaining biological data on the Lake Dunstan fish population is a priority, targeted fisheries assessments during periods of lower angler activity may be used to complement peak-use creel surveys. This could include brown and rainbow trout spawning surveys in Lake Dunstan tributaries to improve understanding of spawning timing, distribution and recruitment, and gill netting to assess species composition, size structure and condition. Targeted Chinook salmon monitoring, during peak migrations was also identified as a future possibility by the Clutha Fisheries Trust (Scott 2002).

Overall, the 2025/26 creel survey establishes an important point-in-time assessment of the Lake Dunstan fishery. Continued monitoring through consistent methodologies, combined with targeted surveys during peak angling periods and understanding key spawning migrations, will improve

understanding of angler participation, fish population dynamics and the long-term performance of this important Central Otago sport fishery.

5. Recommendations

That future Lake Dunstan creel surveys be planned and implemented in accordance with the recommendations outlined in the discussion of this report, including peak-use creel surveys and targeted fisheries assessments.

That the report be received by Council.

6. Acknowledgments

I would like to thank Jamie Ward and Mason Court for their ongoing support, Ian Hadland for his assistance during the holiday period, and honorary ranger Mike Rowland.

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8. Appendixes

Appendix 1. Lake Dunstan Creel Survey Data Recording Form.

Water : Lake Dunstan Date: Start time: Rangers:

Survey type: Boat or land-based Launch ramp: Travel direction: Clockwise Anticlockwise

Weather: Cloud cover est. %: Wind: Nil Light Moderate Strong Precipitation: Nil Light Moderate Heavy

Angler Data									Sports Fish Data								Experience	
Zone	Group #	Licence Number	Licence Category	Gender	Hometown	Hours Fished	Fishing Method	Boat or land	FISH KEPT				FISH RETURNED				Number Seasons	Days / season
									B	RB	S	P	B	RB	S	P		

AS: Adult Season AD: Adult Day FA: Family Adult FJ: Family Junior FC: Family child JS: Junior season CF: Child Free LA: Local Area LS: Loyal Senior SB: Short Break LB: Long break NR: Non-Resident
 BT: Bait DR: Downrigger FL: Fly HR: Harling JG: Jigging LL: Lead line PV: Paravane SP: Spinning TL: Top line NF: Not fishing Zone: CA:Clutha Arm (above bridge) DA: Dunstan Arm (below bridge)

Appendix 2. Lake Dunstan Creel Survey Questionnaire

Lake Dunstan Survey - Angler Questionnaire

1. How many hours have you fished today?
2. What fishing method are you using?
3. Have you caught any fish today?
4. How many seasons have you fished Lake Dunstan?
5. How many days per season do you fish this lake?

14.4 Whole Season Game Bird Harvest and Activity - 2026

Paper Title	Whole Season Game Bird Harvest and Activity - 2026
Author	Jayde Couper – Otago Fish & Game Officer
Purpose	For Information
Executive Summary	Results from the 2026 Otago Game Bird Harvest Survey indicate a low to average season for hunter participation, returning to lower levels following a small peak in 2025. Opening Weekend effort dropped to approximately 29,000 hours, though it continued to draw the majority of total seasonal effort (62.8%), reinforcing an established trend toward Opening focussed activity. Total regional game bird harvest reached approximately 60,000 birds, supported by steady late-season effort across the broader region. Overall, while initial participation was low, the season delivered solid returns for regional hunters, anchored by a greylard harvest rate of 0.97 birds per hour. This rate sits above both the 10-year and long-term historical averages, maintaining a clear recovery from 2024's low of 0.77.
Discussion/Analysis	N/A
Links to Previous Papers/Decisions	
Attachments (if any)	
Recommendation	That this report be received.
Decision Record	Moved by: Seconded by: Carried / Lost:

*Whole Season Game Bird Harvest and Activity
September 2026
Jayde Couper – Otago Fish & Game Officer*



Andre Reihana, Redginald Reihana, Duane Pinny, Jeremy Comer and Daniel Comer had a great day hunting a nice wetland near Balclutha.

Introduction

To track game bird species across New Zealand, the game bird harvest survey measures total harvest, hunter effort, and average seasonal bag size. Each Fish & Game region conducts this survey for hunters who bought licences within their region. Running continuously since 1993, it provides a vital long-term dataset on the country's game bird hunting trends.

Definitions for this report:

- **"Greyland"** covers mallard ducks, grey ducks, and mallard-grey hybrids.
- **"Waterfowl"** encompasses greylards, paradise shelduck, black swan, shoveler duck, and pukeko.
- **"Upland Game"** refers to pheasant, Californian quail, and chukar.

Methods

To collect Otago regional data, surveyors contacted 189 randomly selected adult and junior licence holders after Opening Weekend, followed by fortnightly surveys of 100-130 hunters through late July. A final survey in early September was run to capture the extended August season for upland game, paradise shelduck, and black swan.

Exclusions: Estimates do not cover the summer paradise shelduck season, nor do they include harvest by child licence holders, day licence holders, or unlicensed hunters (such as property owners hunting under the landholder exemption).

Harvest calculations incorporate three primary variables:

1. Birds per hour (harvest rate)
2. Hours hunted (hunter effort)
3. Total licence sales

Statistical testing has been incorporated where suitable. Graphs express 95% confidence intervals via error bars to show the probable parameter range, and p-values quantify confidence in observed trends ($p < 0.05$ used as a standard for statistical significance).

Note on Omitted Years: Both 1998 and 2018 are excluded from key charts and statistics. The 2018 dataset suffered from a record duplication error, whereas 1998 contains only Opening Weekend records, leaving the full-season dataset incomplete.

Results

Licence Sales

One major factor affecting total hunting effort and harvest is the regional number of licence holders (Figure 1). Sales of adult and junior whole-season licences in Otago have shown a strong, statistically significant upward trend since 1993 ($p < 0.001$). However, this growth has flattened over the past ten years ($p = 0.50$). Following a record high in 2025 (4,608 sales), licence sales decreased to 4,020 in 2026, dropping slightly below the 10-year average.

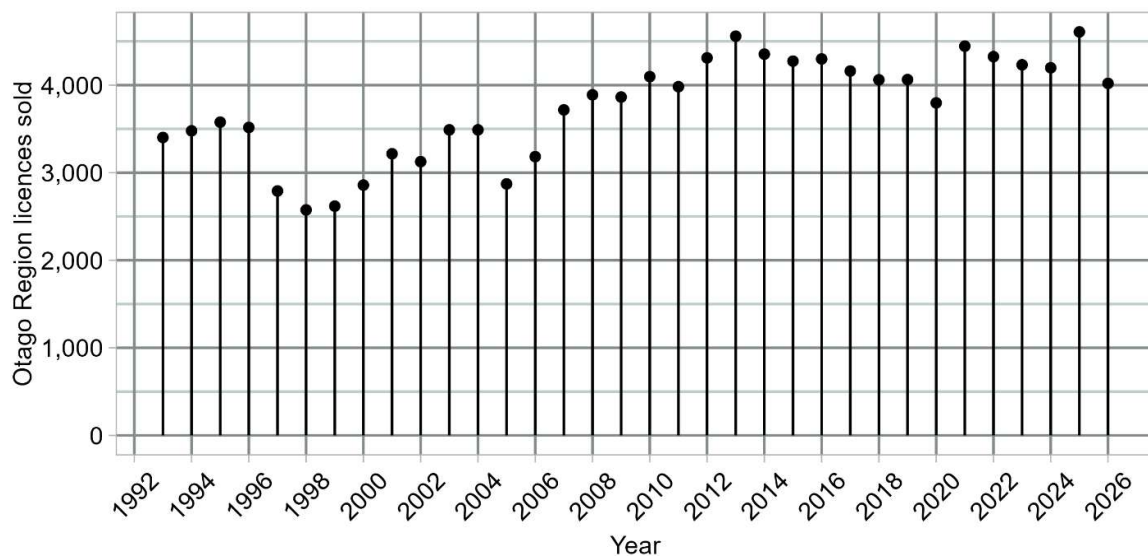


Figure 1: Sales of adult and junior whole-season game bird licences in Otago, 1993–2026.

Hunter Effort

Total hours spent hunting waterfowl in the Otago Region have fluctuated in recent years without showing a statistically significant trend over the last decade ($p = 0.141$) (Figure 2). In

2026, estimated whole-season waterfowl hunting effort dropped to approximately 46,200 hours, down from roughly 55,200 hours in 2025 and 48,900 hours in 2024. The 2026 total remains well below the long-term historical average of over 60,000 hours.

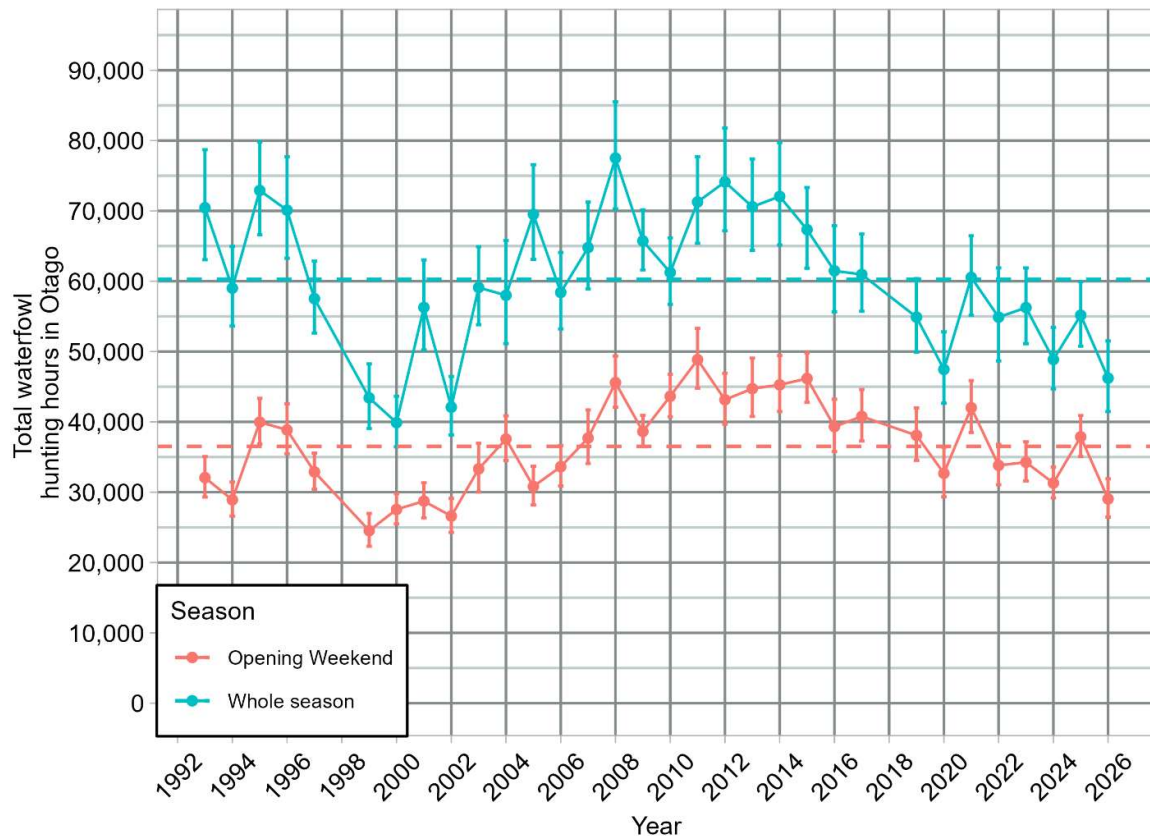


Figure 2: Total waterfowl hunting hours in Otago for Opening Weekend and the whole season, 1993–2026. Dashed lines indicate long-term averages.

Across the full long-term dataset (1993–2026), there has been no statistically significant change in whole-season ($p = 0.342$) or Opening Weekend ($p = 0.128$) waterfowling hours. Similarly, ten-year trends show no statistically significant decline for whole-season ($p = 0.141$) or Opening Weekend ($p = 0.079$) effort.

The proportion of total hunting effort concentrated on Opening Weekend has shown a statistically significant upward trend since the survey began ($p < 0.001$) (Figure 3), pointing to a clear long-term shift in hunter behaviour toward front-loading their season. In 2026, 62.8% of all waterfowling effort took place over Opening Weekend, a slight reduction from 68.6% in 2025 and roughly 8.4 percentage points below the historical peak of 71.2% set in 2010. Despite year-to-year fluctuations, Opening Weekend now consistently accounts for the majority of seasonal hunting effort.

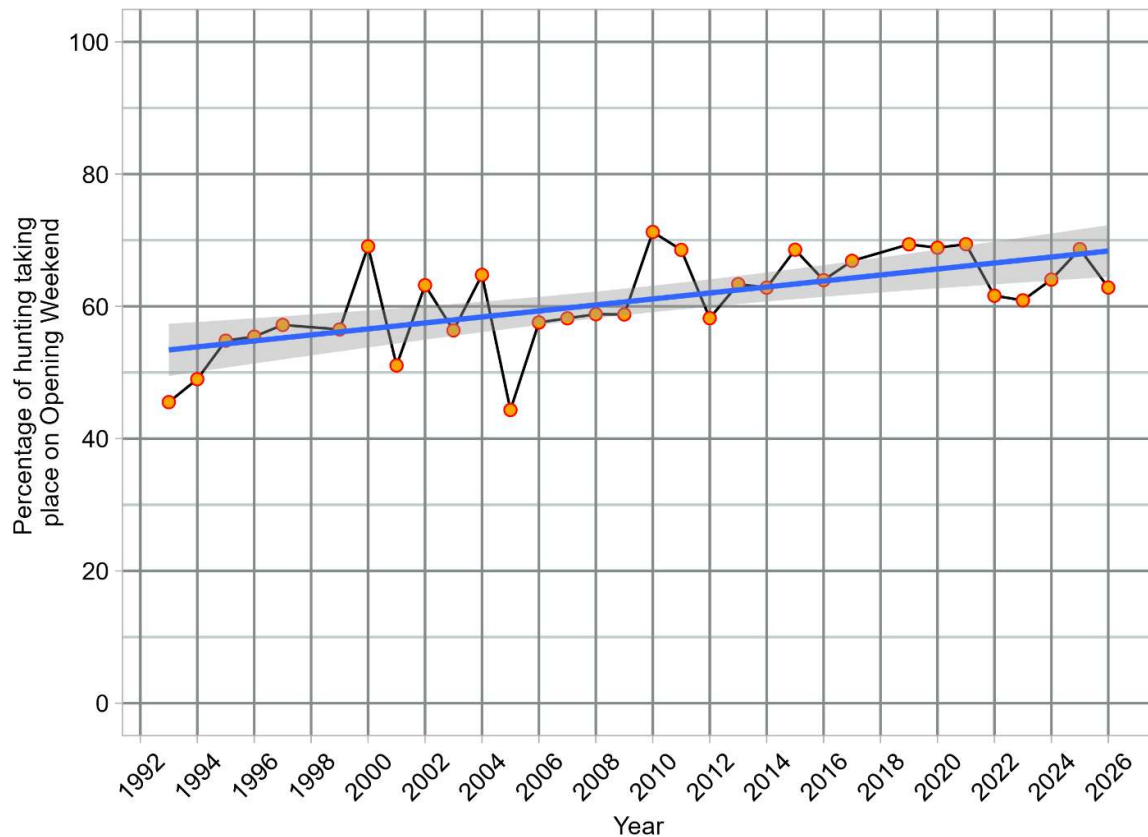


Figure 3: Percentage of total waterfowl hunting hours spent on Opening Weekend in Otago, 1993–2026. The blue line represents the long-term linear trend, with the 95% confidence interval shaded in grey.

Total Harvest

An estimated 60,000 game birds were harvested this season in the Otago Region (Figure 4), representing a decline from last year's total of 73,000. Greylards remained the primary harvest species, comprising over three quarters of the total season bag, with paradise shelduck making up an additional 23%. Harvest of other waterfowl species remained low, with black swan (0.67%) and shoveler (0.38%) combined accounting for just over 1% of the total harvest. Quail were the only upland species detected, with an estimated 380 harvested (0.63%). Due to likely low harvest levels, the survey did not detect any pheasant or chukar taken this season.

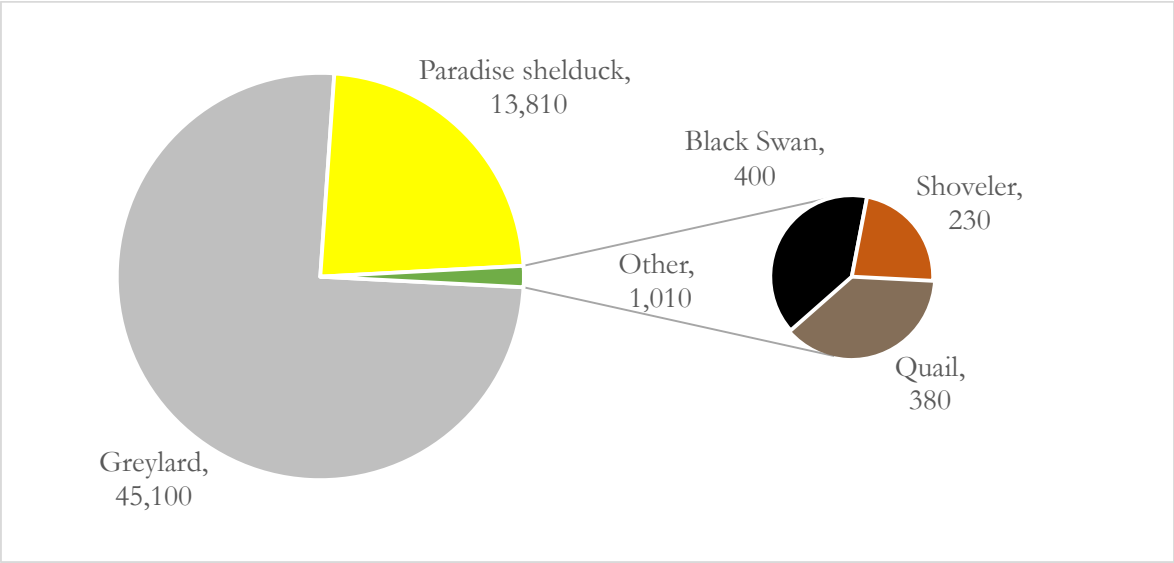


Figure 4: Total waterfowl harvest by species in the Otago Region for the 2026 season.

Paradise Shelduck

An estimated 13,810 paradise shelduck were harvested in the Otago Region this hunting season, aligning closely with the long-term average of approximately 13,320 birds and down by nearly 3,900 from 2025 (Figure 5). Since 1993, paradise shelduck harvest in Otago have demonstrated a statistically significant long-term upward trend ($p = 0.004$).

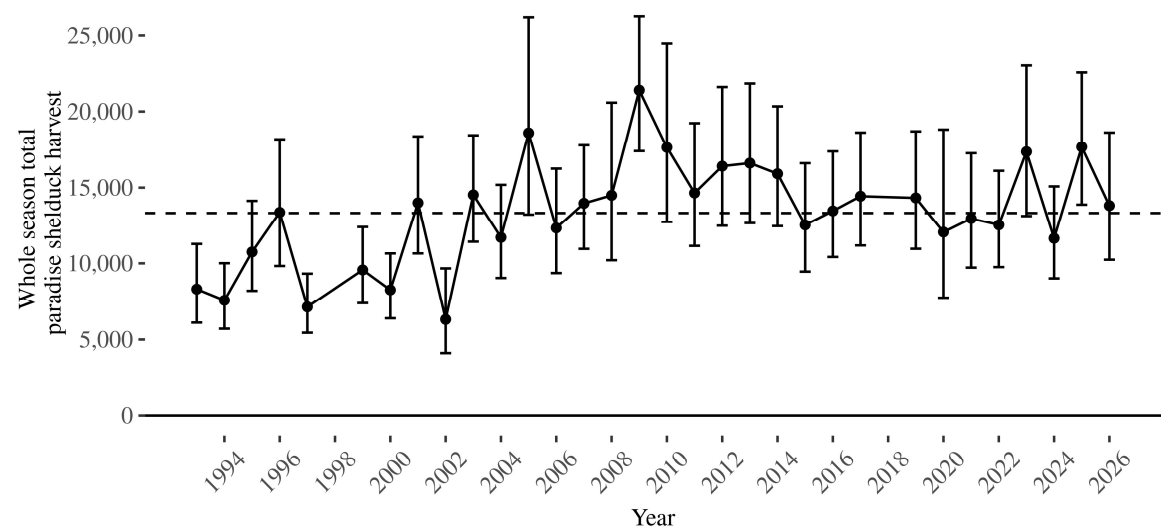


Figure 5: Total paradise shelduck harvest in Otago, 1993–2026. Error bars represent 95% confidence intervals, and the dotted line indicates the long-term average.

Greylands

Figure 6 shows total greyland harvest in Otago since 1993. While annual harvest fluctuates considerably, the long-term downward trend remains statistically insignificant ($p = 0.216$). In 2026, the whole-season greyland harvest was estimated at 45,050 birds, a decrease of nearly 9,700 from the 2025 total of 54,720, though still above the 2024 low of 37,690. This year's harvest sits approximately 11,700 birds below the long-term average of 56,760 and roughly 4,900 below the recent 10-year average.

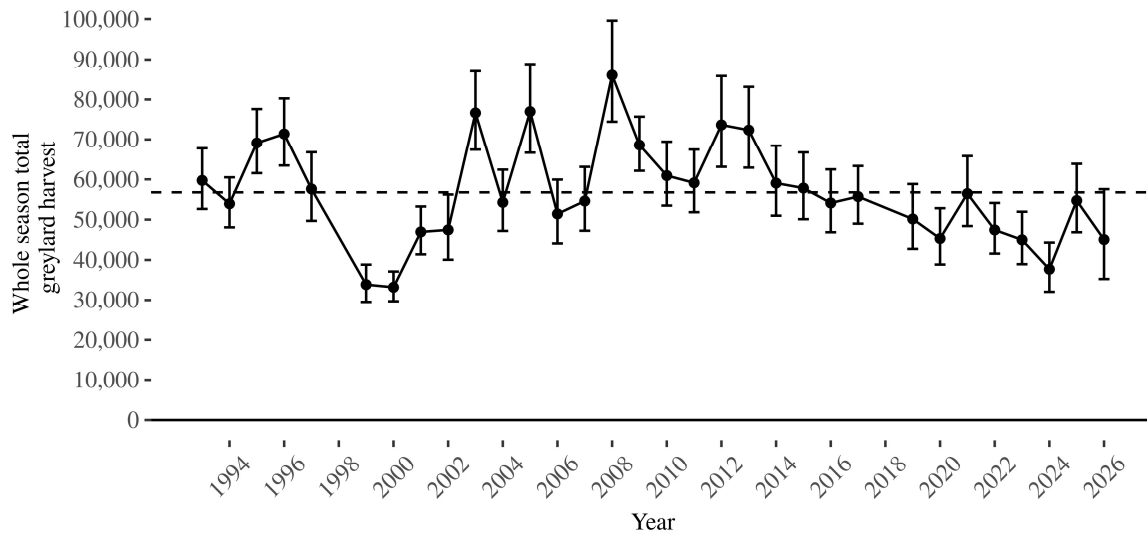


Figure 6: Total greyland harvest in Otago, 1993–2026. Error bars show 95% confidence intervals and the dotted line indicates the long-term average.

The average rate at which hunters in Otago harvest greylands (birds per hour) serves as a key indicator of hunter success and satisfaction. Ten-year linear regression shows no statistically significant trend in harvest rates ($p = 0.719$). This season, the greyland harvest rate was 0.97 birds per hour (Figure 7), remaining above both the long-term average (0.94) and the 10-year mean (0.90). While slightly lower than 2025's rate of 0.99, it represents a strong continuation of the rebound from the 2024 low of 0.77 birds per hour.

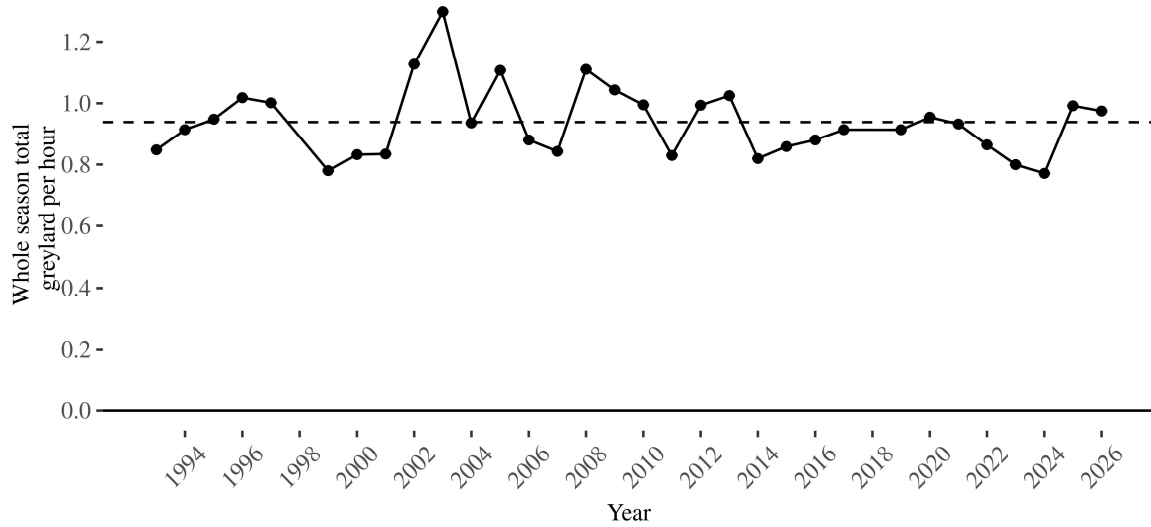


Figure 7: Average greylard harvest rate (birds per hour), 1993–2026. The dotted line indicates the long-term average.

Recommendation

That the report be received.

Jayde Couper
Fish & Game Officer
September 2026

14.5 Macraes Flat Trout Hatchery Liberation Plan 2026/27

Paper Title	Macraes Flat Trout Hatchery Liberation Plan 2026/27
Purpose	For Information
Executive Summary	Attached is a list of waterways where rainbow trout from the Macraes Trout Hatchery will be liberated for the 26/27 Season. Liberations for Lake Dispute are unconfirmed due to uncertainty around access through private property. If we can get guaranteed access, we will have to review stocking. The liberation at Kiwi Park was unsuccessful, the fish were liberated into a newly renovated pond and overnight all liberated fish plus one resident died. Kiwi Park and Fish and Game staff were gutted by this event, Samples have been sent for laboratory analysis. Cause of death has yet to be determined, it may be pond toxicity due to recent dig out or an oxygenation system problem.
Discussion/Analysis	
Links to Previous Papers/Decisions	None
Attachments (if any)	Kiwi Birdlife Park incident
Recommendation	To be received.
Decision Record	Moved by: Seconded by: Carried / Lost:

Macraes Flat Trout Hatchery Liberation Plan 2026/27

Trout liberations from the Macraes Hatchery will start in September with the 2yr old fish heading to the Southern Reservoir & Molyneux Pond for the annual Take a Kid Fishing Events & the Adult Beginner Fishing Classes. The yearling fish liberations will start at the beginning of October and should be completed by the end of October early November depending on weather conditions.

Release date	Water	Number	Age	Weight Range
26/08/2026	Molyneux Pond (BSF, TAKF)	75	2yrs	800g - 1.2kg
2/09/2016	Southern Reservoir (BSF)	110	2yrs	800g - 1kg
	Southern Reservoir (TAKF)	300	2yrs	800g - 1.2kg
	Southern Reservoir (TAKF)	200	2yrs	800g - 1.2kg
	Remarkables Orchard pond (TAKF)	50	2yrs	1.5kg
	Earnscleugh Pond (Alex TAKF)	75	2yrs	800g -1.3kg
26/08/2026	Kiwi Park Queenstown	20	2yrs	800g - 1kg
	Coalpit Dam	300	1yrs	60 - 80g
	McAtamneys Head pond	200	1yrs	60 - 80g
	Hamiltons Dam	200	1yrs	60 - 80g
	Tomahawk Lagoon	25	2yrs	1kg +
	Sullivans Dam	25	2yrs	1kg +
	Rutherfords Dam	300	1yrs	60 - 80g
	Pinders Pond	300	1yrs	60 - 80g
	Lower Manorburn Dam	300	1yrs	60 - 80g
	Nenthorn Pond	300	1yrs	60 - 80g
	Mathias dam	300	1yrs	60 - 80g
	Blakelys Dam	300	1yrs	60 - 80g
	Butchers Dam	300	1yrs	60 - 80g
	Conroys Dam	50	1yrs	60 - 80g
	Lake Johnson	200	1yrs	60 - 80g
	Moke Lake	300	1yrs	80g
	Lake Dispute	Unconfirmed	-	-

**Recruitment events: BSF – Beginners spin fishing classes, TAKF – Take a kid fishing*

Table showing liberations for the 26/27 season

15.0 General Business