

WELLINGTON FISH & GAME COUNCIL

MINUTES OF MEETING OF THE WELLINGTON FISH & GAME COUNCIL, HELD ON
TUESDAY 12 FEBRUARY 2019 AT 3.05PM AT COACHMAN HOTEL, 140 FITZHERBERT
AVE, PALMERSTON NORTH

1. **Present:**

Chairman Strato Cotsilinis, Councillors Colin Shore, Andy Tannock, Paul Shortis, Andrew McGregor, Chris O'Meara, Don Scott, John Hancock, Malcolm Francis,

2. **In Attendance:**

Staff: Phil Teal (Manager), Dr Matt Kavermann
Licenceholders: Roger Smaile, Paul Browne, David West

3. **Apologies:**

Councillors Richard McIntyre, Aaron Passey, Jim Cook.

Licenceholders Andrew Morris, Simon Muckley, Marc Flaws

Staff: Peter Wilson, Dr Adam Canning, Hamish Carnachan, Reg Cull

It was then moved that:

the apologies be accepted.

Malcolm Francis/Chris O'Meara

Carried

4. **Conflicts of Interest**

A list was available for viewing of the existing declarations of Conflicts of Interest. Mr Teal distributed additional forms for declaration to provide an opportunity for all Councillors to update the register for the new governance term.

No specific conflicts of interest were declared for items noted for the current meeting.

5. **Minutes of Previous Meeting of 4 December 2018**

After a brief discussion it was moved that:

the Minutes of the Meeting of Wellington Fish & Game Council of 4 December 2018 be approved as a true and correct record of the proceedings of that meeting.

Don Scott/Chris O'Meara

Carried

6. **Matters Arising from Previous Meeting 9 October 2018**

Concern was expressed regarding the \$200,000 deficit in the NZ Fish & Game Council and national budgets. Chairman Cotsilinis noted that the NZ F&GC Chief Executive Martin Taylor had discussed the issue with him, including the NZC CE's concern about the amount of resources used in Resource Management litigation. Councillor Shortis noted that the NZ Council cash reserves were being drawn down and that the additional accounting scrutiny was providing a better indication of financial position and reflection of true costs.

Dr Kavermann noted that in another item to be considered in maimai allocation requests would be a consistent pattern in game bird licence purchase.

7. **NZ Council Business**

Councillor Shortis provided an overview of the planned governors meeting on Friday 15 February 2019 and the NZ Council meeting on Saturday 16 February 2019. Chairman Cotsilinis noted that the NZ F&GC CE had indicated that significant changes were necessary for the sustainability of the organisation. It was noted in discussion that if any significant changes or decisions are made these needed to be communicated wider and be more inclusive, rather than appearing as a directive from centralised decision-making.

Chairman Cotsilinis noted that there were three regional Fish and Game Council audits being undertaken concurrently with North Canterbury region being completed and publicly distributed, Central South Island region having a final draft, as yet, not released, and Hawke's Bay region audit still continuing.

Chairman Cotsilinis noted that the NZFGC CE had discussed Wellington Fish & Game Council's letter regarding the budgeting process undertaken last year, and it was noted that there could potentially be a review of the budgeting system to address those anomalies.

8. **Public Participation**

Licence holder Roger Smaile noted his concerns regarding the continued media dialogue with Fish & Game and industry advocates, He specifically referred to a recent opinion piece in Farming News (by MP Hamish Walker) that noted comments from NZ F&GC CE indicating that Fish & Game didn't

have a mandate for all pollution – particularly in urban setting close to the sea.

Mr Smaile noted that the importance of farming contribution to the NZ economy. He further noted that he considered increased anti-Fish & Game sentiment in the Rangitikei catchment even though most of them are not intensive dairy farming operations. He considered that the messaging from NZ F&GC was being interpreted as being against the wider farming community and industries, and that this degrading relationship needed to be addressed.

Chairman Cotsilinis noted that the intensification of land use (particularly dairying) in many South Island catchments had caused issues of degradation to water quality of the fishing resource. Councillor Scott noted that recent media coverage had highlighted the 'green image' of New Zealand for tourism interests was being affected, and didn't consider that Fish & Game was targeting the farming industry per se. Mr Smaile considered that farmers were being targeted as a 'major polluter', and Fish & Game needed to maintain a good relationship with the rural community to access the resource.

Councillor Shortis indicated that the issue of maintaining better relationships with the farming community would be discussed at the next NZ Council meeting. It was noted that there could be a more subtle and nuanced communication strategy beyond single communication tactics. Discussion ensued on whether there was assistance that central Government could provide to help farmers accelerate enhancement beyond current capabilities. With intensified farming, in most situations riparian planting on its own is not enough to mitigate nutrient leaching so other sustainable farming practices must be implemented over time. It was acknowledged that this is a collective responsibility of all interested stakeholders, and we need to work with the agricultural industry for improving waterways beyond the 'blame game' used in media communications (including industry communications citing urban issues).

Chairman Cotsilinis noted that the NZ F&GC CE had consistently advocated that water pollution needs to be controlled. It was further noted that there were some examples of farmers being acknowledged for their proactive sustainable farming actions (eg. Establishing Balance Farm Environmental Awards and regional Fish & Game acknowledging good farming practices with awards). It was further noted that lumping together of all dairy farming operations whether larger scale industrial farms or smaller traditional family farming operations was creating a disconnect. Mr Smaile considered that in

comparison to many overseas countries that NZ was still relatively 'clean and green'.

Councillor Scott noted that central Government could provide more grants for legal assistance and determinations, and then provide leadership and direction on how rules (if any) and implemented consistently.

Councillor Tannock noted that some of the new councillors to Wellington Fish & Game Council stood for election to reflect their desire to bridge the gap between an increasing anti-Fish & Game sentiment in the rural community. He considered that a NZ F&GC needs to undertake a more strategic public relations messaging that promotes the positive activities undertaken by Fish & Game in that context. He considered that there would be effective results emanating from farmer peer pressure for good farmers to bring poor farming practices into line. He further noted there needed to be a positive direction for change established and supported by wider community, and therefore supported the environmental awards concept. While he acknowledged the risks existed of denial of access to the resource, he would prefer that Fish & Game be seen in a positive light making a contribution to the rural community. He considered that the actions taken by Fish & Game have been responsible to date, there was also a greater community movement for improving water management occurring – to the extent that Fish & Game did not need to always be the public media front for change.

Councillor Francis agreed that it was preferable to focus on good farming behaviour and sustainable practices rather than taking a negative slant, especially given that public awareness of the water management issues has been achieved and is acknowledged as a key issue for New Zealanders.

Mr West agreed with the comments regarding the management of wastewater treatment plants and stormwater into the Manawatu river catchment. Mr Teal noted that Wellington Fish & Game Council had spent considerable resources advocating for improved treatment and appropriate disposal options. Mr West also commented on the potential risk of farmers closing off access to the public – including hunters and anglers if the urban/rural disconnect worsens.

Mr Smaile considered that Fish & Game and Fonterra should work together on projects so that Fish & Game are not seen as overbearing. Mr Smaile noted his concern about anti-Fish & Game comments in the rural community that were looking at reducing the perceived value of trout as an introduced species in a catchment.

Councillor O'Meara considered that change should occur through Regional Councils providing clear direction, and that he hadn't noted the risk of anti-Fish & Game sentiment manifesting in the Wairarapa farms he interacts with.

Councillor Tannock requested that staff investigate what environmental award schemes Fish & Game could either establish or contribute towards to recognize good sustainable farming practices.

Mr West provided comment on the current Game Preserve situation, where he considered Fish & Game should be allowing this type of hunting right. He supported the approach advocated by Wellington Fish & Game Council for NZ Council to look at what legal avenues are available to allow continuance of pheasant preserves. He postulated that there had been an effort to stifle pheasant preserves and hoped that a solution could be found internally to allow them to continue.

Chairman Cotsilinis confirmed that the legal opinion sought by NZ Council on another matter provided clear guidance that their legal tenure was in question. He considered NZ Council had little option but to act on that advice.

Mr West considered the efforts by NZ Council to consult with game preserves to coerce them into signing legal documents was clumsy and didn't reflect an attempt to resolve the issue.

Chairman Cotsilinis noted that there had been contrary legal opinions in the early 2000s including Wellington Fish & Game Council that questioned their legality to charge for activities associated with hunting, but NZ Council at the time considered their operations legal if they operated under ethical guidelines. He confirmed that there had not been any momentum to change the status of game preserves in recent years, but had been brought to light following the recent legal opinion on hunting captive reared mallards on these types of properties. He noted that in the interim the game preserves would be listed under Game Gazette as currently occurs (if they confirm no charge for hunting) or continuance Schedule 3 of Wildlife Act (Minister's declaration) for three years while issues were resolved either way.

Councillor Shortis confirmed that there was no evidence that NZ Council were doing anything other than seeking a solution, including looking at changes to the Wildlife Act provisions.

Councillor Tannock considered that he had a strong preference for any issues to be resolved internally and between the stakeholders to avoid spending resources in legal disputes.

9. **Health & Safety Update**

Mr Teal provided an overview of the Health & Safety reporting.

It was then moved that

The Health & Safety Report for December and January be received

Malcolm Francis/Chris O'Meara

Carried

10. **Draft Game Regulations 2019**

Dr Kavermann provided an overview of the staff discussion document with proposed bag limits. Discussion also confirmed the conclusions from the telephone conference held with Councillors on 1 February 2019. After brief discussion it was moved that

The draft game conditions recommended at the 4 December 2018 meeting and those relating to paradise shelduck and black swan recommended at the telephone conference on 1 February 2019 be confirmed as the recommendations to the Minister of Conservation for approval in the Game Notice 2019

Andy Tannock/Don Scott

Carried

11. **Strategy Planning Discussions**

Mr Teal provided an overview of the Strategic Discussion Summary that had previously been undertaken in April 2016 and subsequently updated each year to refocus the work programme. Mr Teal noted that additional items that are likely to become active in the next financial year. Discussion ensued on each of the functional areas and it was agreed that two new issues were emerging as requiring priority from Council:

- Urban / Rural disconnect and improving engagement
- Pressure Sensitive Fisheries/Kiwi Angling opportunities.

Councillor Francis noted for the latter issue that guiding of backcountry rivers is an important issue and we need to ensure that NZ anglers are not affected by locking off river access. Dr Kavermann also noted that he and Mr Carnachan attended a staff seminar on the issue – with international anglers putting pressure on Southland and Otago trout fisheries and their management and seeking some way to protect NZ angler opportunities.

12. **Pheasant Preserve Practices**

Mr Teal provided an overview of the consultation document prepared by NZ F&G Council (dated Nov 2018) regarding what various arrangements exist for upland game preserves.

Discussion ensued on the questions used for consultation purposes:

Question 1: Does your Council support the operation of upland game properties with special conditions for the principle purpose of providing a guaranteed hunting opportunity for a fee?

It was agreed YES. This was consistent Wellington Council's current position.

Question 2: Is there support for non-commercial (i.e. where hunting is not being provided for a fee) upland game properties operated by families, private syndicates or friends to provide an immediate and guaranteed hunting opportunity?

It was agreed YES. This was consistent Wellington Council's current position. It was further noted that these should only be allowed to operate as long as approved and follow national policy (currently only national guidelines) for operational animal welfare and ethical hunting practices.

Question 3: If F&G allows pheasant/quail/partridge hunting on upland game properties with special conditions for a fee, should it also allow hunting of mallards or other gamebirds on that property for a fee?

It was agreed NO (Councillor Scott recorded Yes). This was consistent Wellington Council's current position. It was considered that wild birds would be targeted.

Question 4: If F&G allows pheasant/quail/partridge hunting on upland game properties with special conditions without a fee, should it also allow hunting of mallards or other gamebirds on that property without a fee?

It was clarified Question 4 could also potentially be phrased to supports or not allows. Discussion ensued on whether there was a problem with allowing hunting of mallards if they had been captive reared if no fee was involved.

It was agreed YES. This was slightly different to Wellington Council's current position in that to be consistent with national guidelines with upland game properties with special conditions - waterfowl hunting should not occur on the same day as an organised upland game hunt.

It was agreed that a potential question for the email survey conducted towards the end of the year that a question be included to ask hunters about the relevancy and raising of mallard for hunting for no fee.

Question 5: Would you support legislation being changed to allow the sale of hunting rights on upland game properties with special conditions but maintain the prohibition on the sale of hunting rights in all other hunting situations?

It was agreed YES. This was consistent Wellington Council's current position.

This would be conveyed to NZ Council as part of the consultation process.

13. Proposed Hunting Code of Conduct

Council considered the memo *Code of Practice for Game Bird Hunting* (undated) by Robert Sowman (Policy and Planning Manager, NZF&GC) which sought feedback on a draft revision of the hunting code of conduct.

After discussion it was moved that

Wellington Council concurs with the intent of the text used for the draft Code of Practice for Game Bird Hunting

Malcolm Francis/Don Scott

Carried

14. R3 Programme and Marketing Update

Mr Teal provided an overview of the interim report prepared by Steve Doughty outlining:

- Reel Life and Both Barrels Audit – indicating a poor readership of all content, review and revise urgently;
- Access Information: lack of timely access information is a major barrier to participation;
- R3 Activity Mapping Tool for Wellington Region

Councillor Francis noted that additional projects such as "Casting for Recovery" for cancer recover was an activity getting good publicity and support for involvement. He also noted that *Australia FlyLife* had included articles about trout fishing being a good process for helping greater overall wellness. Councillor Scott concurred noting that access for elderly anglers who found with access difficult would benefit from these sorts of programmes. Any further discussion on detail would be deferred until next meeting when Mr Doughty would make a further summary presentation.

After discussion it was moved that

The R3 Programme and Marketing Update be received

Chris O'Meara/Colin Shore

Carried

15. Freshwater Indigenous Fish Bill

Mr Teal provided an overview of the submission made to the Select Committee and that Committee had heard only submissions from organisations prior to the end of 2018. The continuance of the hearings through to June was to enable other consultations to take place and to hear the many individual submissions. There appeared to be some surprise from some members of the Select Committee on the depth and breadth of feeling on the issue, which was originally proposed and considered as an 'operational issue'.

It was moved to

Receive the report on the Freshwater Indigenous Fish Bill submission

Chris O'Meara/Don Scott

Carried

16. Policy Review – Maimai Allocation at Lake Wairarapa

Mr Teal provided an overview of the issues regarding requests to formally change maimai tenure via succession at Lake Wairarapa sites. Dr Kavermann provided an overview of the key questions considered and the key principles used in deliberations to ensure the process was transparent.

Nine applications were made to transfer maimai tenure of which seven met criteria and were dealt with by staff.

Two applications fell outside the narrow criteria defined and were presented to Council:

It was agreed that transferring maimais within a narrow group of hunters in these cases was acceptable and confirmed:

Stand 90	Ben Allen – primary standholder
Stand 92	Doug Aplin – primary standholder
Stand 84	Keith Sexton – primary standholder
Stand 86	Scott Abery – primary standholder
Stand 87	John Burr ridge – primary standholder

17. Draft Sports Fish & Game Bird Management Plan

Mr Teal provided an overview of the progress of the development of the draft Sports Fish & Game Bird Management Plan with a number of corrections that needed to be made. Discussion ensued on specific corrections:

§2.2.6 Bulk of sales need updating

§ 3.1.2 Wellington Conservation Board – it was noted that governors should look at turning up to their meetings as governors if available.

Councillor Hancock noted that this would also assist in Fish & Game’s views being fairly reflected rather than relying on perceptions. Councillor Shortis noted that the Conservation Board should also be aware of small projects that are likely to be ineffective but still a draw on resources (e.g. predator trapping around sites in Lake Wairarapa). Councillor Hancock also recalled the recent past where the Department had an increased tourism focus and access to the resource policy directives. It was agreed that governors should attend if possible and a prepared issue be defined each time to provide a focus for discussions.

§2.2.4 items b and d were identical

§2.2.6 (d) and (e) should be reflected as “in accordance with compliance policy”

§2.2.7 Structure of Council – confirmed that Mr Teal has the role of Chief Executive

§4.5 relating to the extremes in the Hutt River – remove October reference as other major floods can be ecologically catastrophic.

§4.10.1 Predators, biosecurity threat, and (e) hydro developer/irrigation development, Wainuiomata River duck hunting, Ruamahanga River – rainbow in both sections.

These amendments would be made where appropriate and a further draft presented to Council in June.

18. Western River Resource Consent Applications

Mr Teal gave a brief overview of the formal pre-hearing meeting with Greater Wellington Regional Council for Waikanae River section noting that they had included a Natural Character Index (NCI)/Habitat Quality Index (HQI) which is significant in measuring potential changes in habitat due to works undertaken. Kapiti Fly Fishing Club who also submitted also attended.

Also attended a specific meeting on gravel extraction proposed for the Waikanae River – GWRC are seeking to remove 35,000m³ gravel predominantly below the Expressway bridge. GWRC are adamant that gravel extraction is essential but have not provided formal written justification for this yet. They are to provide options on where gravel extraction is proposed and also how they will deal with implementation of NCI/HQI measurements.

After brief discussion it was moved that

The reports for GWRC Western River global consents be received.

Malcolm Francis/Andy Tannock

Carried

19. **One Plan Implementation Update**

Mr Teal gave a brief overview of interactions between Horizons and MfE, and the Minister for the Environment.

It was then moved

To receive the report on the One Plan Implementation Project

Andy Tannock/Andrew McGregor

Carried

20. **Wairarapa Water Irrigation Project Update**

Mr Teal and Councillor Shortis gave a brief overview of the current state of the project by GWRC, District Councils and their interaction with a private company funded by water users (irrigation interests). There had not been much public comment or activity other than District Councils seeking to secure reliable water supplies. There does not appear to be clear support from the Minister of Regional Development for additional funding.

Discussion confirmed that it was uncertain how many would take up the option of water supply at the price suggested two years ago.

Wellington Fish & Game are not anti- dam but want a credible EIA undertaken. It was requested to seek how they are progressing on those given that they part commissioned a review paper by John Hayes (Cawthron Institute) et al. on flow requirements for trout.

It was agreed to

Receive the report on the Wairarapa Water Irrigation Project

Chris O'Meara/John Hancock

Carried

21. **Lake Wairarapa Update**

Mr Teal provided a brief overview of issues: the Treaty Settlement involving Kahungunu has stalled due to two sub-iwi groups disputing the mandated negotiators. It is expected that a legal ruling will determine this matter by early 2019.

Preparation by the regional council and DoC for the formation of a proposed Statutory Reserve Board has continued.

Mr Teal provided a brief overview of how the permit had been exercised to remove sports fish for sampling on several waterbodies in the Wellington region.

Dr Kavermann provided a brief overview of the Ramsar designation process which was being considered by the Department of Conservation and soon by the Minister of Conservation.

It was moved that

The report on issues at Lake Wairarapa be received

Chris O'Meara/Malcolm Francis

Carried

22. Research Update

Mallard Project: a contract for following up work associated with the PhD project to further develop work on brood habitat selection and use had been confirmed – anticipated final report by end of 2018.

eDNA project: there have been some additional samples sought from around the country to determine variability within species when detecting presence of adult trout or spawning trout. Additional work has also been undertaken on collection method to increase the sample volume.

Native Fish – Trout Interactions: work has been progressing to find sites that don't have trout (as a control) to be able to compare interactions effects.

It was moved that

The report on research project progress be received

Colin Shore/Andrew McGregor

Carried

23. Junior/ Novice Participation

Hokowhitu Lagoon Fish Out Weekend – Manawatu

Councillor Scott lead a brief discussion on a principal sponsor had withdrawn its support at the last minute, and the Manawatu FW Anglers Club had requested reconsideration. The main costs were to pay for the fish and left an outstanding amount for a shooting gallery and miscellaneous costs which left unanticipated deficit. Chairman Cotsilinis confirmed reports had noted it was a very successful day and thanked Dr Kavermann and the Manawatu Freshwater Anglers Clubs for their outstanding efforts.

Councillor Francis noted that the Otaki Fish Out day and acknowledged the work of Dr Kavermann and the two fishing clubs involved, as well as outstanding support from Graham Winterburn (GWRC) and Winstones staff. There may have some unanticipated cost overruns noted which might have to drawn from dedicated reserves.

It was moved that

The report on Junior Angler Programme initiatives be received

Malcolm Francis/Don Scott

Carried

24. **Access Issues**

Mr Teal briefly outlined issues at:

- **Otaki River Mouth** – An opportunity to allow representations of those opposed to hunting at the Friends of the Otaki River but failed to turn up. Councillor Francis noted that there were more users access the site and it would continue to be an issue. It is the consequence of opening up the area for more people to use.
- **Ohau River Access** – Councillor Francis noted a continuing access issue on the lower Ohau River with access across private property being difficult or denied.
- **Pukepuke Lagoon** – iwi groups who have settlements at the site are currently considering how hunting fits into their mahinga kai principles. Status quo at present.
- **Forest Blocks** – possible requirements for public liability insurance in future – change in landowner noted
- **Walking Access Commission Review** – an opportunity to make a positive submission on the review of the Commission which has a statutory review clause after ten years to assess its relevance.

It was moved that

The report on access issues be received

Paul Shortis/Malcolm Francis

Carried

25. **Management Report 1 December 2018 to 31 January 2019**

Mr Teal provided a brief overview of key project work streams undertaken by staff.

Mr Teal noted there had not been any further progress on a NZ wide public liability insurance as there was not universal support at the Managers Meeting to support progressing this. Councillor Hancock noted the potential liabilities for private landowners if issues arose from normal farming practices and recreational activities are being undertaken.

Mr Teal also updated Council on the Waikanae River recharge project which was now operational and baseline monitoring had been completed.

It was then moved that

The Management Report for the period 1 December 2018 – 31 January 2019 be received.

Colin Shore/Chris O'Meara

Carried

26. Fish & Game Licence Sales

Mr Teal referred to the summary in the project report documents noting that licence sales for fish were slightly down on previous year's sales, but was most likely dependent on weather conditions.

It was moved that

The report on Fish Licence Sales to 28 January 2019 be received

Malcolm Francis/Paul Shortis

Carried

27. Expenditure and Financial Report

Chairman Cotsilinis provided an overview of the key financial reporting.

Differences were explained between the Asset Replacement Funding and depreciation expense – with the former being a budgetary item and the latter being a financial accounting treatment.

After brief discussion it was moved

That the Expenditure Report to 31 December 2018 and Financial Transactions for November and December be received

Don Scott/Paul Shortis

Carried

28. Correspondence

Correspondence and media items were briefly discussed.

It was agreed that all councillors would be included on the Fish & Game media distribution list (daily provision on key word search).

29. Contribution Recognition

Mr Paul Browne was recognised for his diligent and outstanding effort in maintaining the building at Kilmore Lodge. This had provided great support to staff, and has provided an outstanding asset for game bird hunters to use.

Mr Browne was presented with a medal by Chairman Cotsilinis – acclamation.

Mr Browne responded by acknowledging the award and also recognised others that helped him over recent years.

30. General Business

Councillor Shortis offered to attend club meetings around the region to provide a clear view from the NZ Fish & Game Council perspective.

There being no further business the meeting was concluded at 6.38pm.

Next Meeting to be held: Upper Hutt Cosmopolitan Club , 11 Logan Street,
Upper Hutt on 26 March 2019 at 3.00pm.

Chairman



Date

26. 3. 2019

