

## WELLINGTON FISH & GAME COUNCIL

MINUTES OF MEETING OF THE WELLINGTON FISH & GAME COUNCIL, HELD ON TUESDAY 10 DECEMBER 2024 AT 3.05PM AT CLUB WAIRARAPA, 20 ESSEX STREET, MASTERTON.

1. **Present:**

Chairman Paul Dewar, Councillors Jim Cook, Damon Taylor, Steve Brown, Terry Inglis, Andrew McGregor, Kieran Bell, Aaron Passey, Jennifer Yanko, Andrew McGregor, Ben Hancock, Don Scott, ,

**Via Video Link:** Prof. Stephen Haslett.

**In Attendance:**

Fish and Game Staff: Phil Teal, Dr Matt Kavermann, Hamish Carnachan

Licence Holders: Paul Browne, Roger Smaile, Mark Royds, Philip Pearpoint (from 4:45pm), Peter Pearce (from 4:30pm), Don Scott (from 5.00pm), Daniel Merritt (from 5.25pm)

**Welcome and Confirmation of Agenda**

Chairman Dewar opened the meeting and welcomed Councillors (including Councillor Haslett via video link), staff, and public.

2. **Apologies:**

It was noted that apologies were received from:

Councillor Richard McIntyre

Councillors Jennifer Yanko (3:10pm) and Aaron Passey (3:20pm) for lateness

Staff: Ami Coughlan

It was then moved that

***the apologies received be accepted***

**Jim Cook/Ben Hancock**

Carried

3. **Conflict of Interest**

The Conflicts of Interest Register was discussed with no additional items identified and therefore no amendments were required to the register and no specific items that needed to be identified for the current agenda.

Mr Teal confirmed that the current Conflict-of-Interest register, and the Conflict-of-Interest Management Plan would remain unaltered.

**4. Minutes of Previous Meetings**

**Minutes of Previous Meeting of 15 October 2024:**

Following consideration of the draft Minutes of the meeting of the Wellington Fish and Game Council of 15 October 2024 it was moved that  
***the Minutes of the meeting of the Wellington Fish & Game Council of 15 October 2024 be approved as a true and correct record of the proceedings of that meeting.***

**Steve Brown/Jim Cook**

Carried

**Minutes of Previous Meeting of 5 November 2024:**

Following consideration of the draft Minutes of the meeting of the Wellington Fish and Game Council of 5 November 2024 it was moved that  
***the Minutes of the meeting of the Wellington Fish & Game Council of 5 November 2024 be approved as a true and correct record of the proceedings of that meeting.***

**Steve Brown/Jim Cook**

Carried

**5. Matters Arising:**

Councillor Brown outlined the consultation that he and staff have undertaken on simplifying and rationalising angling regulations with four Angling Clubs to date. He commended Dr Kavermann for the professional and informative way he led discussion of the issues at those meetings. Chairman Dewar thanked Councillors who had been involved in the consultation process to date.

Mr Teal referred to the Action List resulting from the 15 October 2024 meeting, noting progressing actions relating to informing NZ Council of the following items:

- Support of NZ Council to use the Zero-Based Budget approach as long as it was applied across all regions.
- Supports the NZ Council's guidelines for the development of a new template for the next generation of Sports Fish and Game Bird Management Plans – noting that there was scope for collaboration amongst several regions.
- That there were no material issues with the Meeting Schedule proposed by NZ Council.

**6. New Zealand Fish and Game Council Business**

**A. Update from NZ Fish and Game Council Appointee**

Councillor Haslett confirmed that there had not been a meeting of NZ Council since October 2024.

He provided a brief overview of the upcoming NZ Council Meeting on 14 December 2024 including:

- Confirming discussion on implementation for a Zero-Based Budget (ZBB) approach for determining funding allocation. He noted that the move to a Zero-Based Budget approach was passed unanimously by NZ Councillors – but reservations were expressed by larger regions: Auckland/Waikato, Otago, and Southland regions. Discussion ensued that confirmed the budgets were originally set based on historical configurations and that a review in approach and quantum of bulk funding was appropriate. The purpose of ZBB was to provide NZ Council with greater transparency of budgets, ability to identify operational efficiencies, and a potential recalibration of bulk-funding quantum.
- Considering the response by individual NZ Council appointees to the letter from the Minister for Hunting and Fishing regarding organisational efficiencies and recommended changes in approach to organisational governance. There would be an opportunity at the NZ Council meeting to develop a workshop response.
- That there will be changes to the composition to NZ Council given some members were not re-standing for appointment for their region to NZ Council – and that this may impact on the election of the Chair.

Councillor Haslett provided an update on RM Regional Legal Fund – noting that it was hard to budget for expenditure within a Financial Year. There would be a detailed update of the legal case to define responsibilities for implementing the Water Conservation Order for the Rakaia River.

Councillor Haslett confirmed that NZ Council would be updated research projects including the NZIER economic assessment on the value of sports fisheries to the economy.

The Staff Development Fund and the guidelines for the development of Sports Fish and Game Bird Management Plan would be confirmed. He further noted a discussion item to update NZ Council on the future of the licence management system.

Councillor Haslett confirmed that the Minister for Hunting and Fishing would attend that the 14 December 2024 meeting in person.

Council would confirm the KPIs for Chief Executive Performance for the NZ Council Chief Executive.

Councillor Haslett noted that he would be attending the meeting via video-conferencing link as he would be overseas, but that he was granted voting rights in attendance.

After further brief discussion it was moved that

***The report from Wellington Council's appointee Councillor Haslett on NZ Fish and Game Council business and preview of the upcoming meeting agenda be received***

Jim Cook/Jennifer Yanko

Carried

## **7. Public Forum**

An opportunity was afforded to members of the public to discuss specific issues with Council.

Mark Royds had provided a short email expressing concern regarding the recent change to fishing regulations in relation to methods allowed on the Mangatoro, Kopuaranga and Mangatarere Waters. He considered that allowing all fishing methods could increase the mortality rate of fish, and that because the named rivers have not recently been surveyed for base stock levels there would be no way of determining causal changes to population levels from these changes in regulations. He postulated that irreparable damage could be done to the fishery if these regulations are not reversed. He suggested an SOP regarding regulation changes and their implementation.

Mr Royds provided further in-person commentary making the following points:

- Management approaches to perceived fragile or sensitive fisheries.
- get a better understanding of why regulations have been changed or are being considered for change – including information fish numbers and harvest pressure from angler activity.
- Concern that decisions are being made without adequate analysis of data of the fisheries – and whether the changes could be detrimental beyond a threshold of natural robustness and resilience.
- Would like to see more data and research of rivers where and when regulations are changed. Anecdotally he had seen fish numbers dropping in some of the rivers named (at the same time as increased nutrients in the water) but if it is not robustly monitored then how are any regulation changes assessed for their effectiveness in outcome.

Dr Kavermann provided an overview of the consultation process being undertaken with clubs regarding potential to simplify the regulations and make them easier to understand for all anglers – to address concerns of

barriers to participation in having complicated regulations, and to be consistent with the directives of the Minister for Hunting and Fishing to make access to sports fishing simpler for participants.

Discussion continued that historically several fisheries were deemed fly fishing waters only with a justification that they were highly sensitive fisheries and this approach was the best option to limit harvest impact – compared with other liberal regulation approaches on more stable fisheries. It was noted that climate modelling suggested that climatic conditions would be more affected by storm events which may affect habitat values (in addition to effects of impacts of land use changes). The management approach to regulation setting needs to consider outcomes sought and whether it is best to manage harvest through methods or limits. It was considered that the extent of environmental extreme events such as those caused by Cyclone Gabrielle are likely to have a more material effect on population change rather than fishing methods.

Mr Royds acknowledged how some decisions were based but did not understand why the changes were required. Dr Kavermann acknowledged that while changing regulations can impact on a fishery it was unlikely to cause a collapse in these examples. It was acknowledged that other regions were already proactively considering similar approaches to simplification of regulations and Wellington region would have to consider if there were specific unique situations that would require specific effective regulations.

Roger Smaile acknowledged the work of the past recent Council and amongst several items indicated an active interest on how the new Council would follow through on changes to Fish and Game governance.

Paul Browne requested that Council consider a Loyal Senior Licence for gamebird hunters – akin to the Senior Loyal Fishing Licence discount. He postulated that an appropriate discount of 15% to the \$113 Whole Season Adult licence – which would make the pursuit more attractive for senior (65 yr+) and appear fairer to that cohort.

## **8. Regional Governance – Chairman’s Report**

Chairman Dewar provided a brief overview on regional governance matters.

Considerable discussion focused on the letter from the Minister for Hunting and Fishing seeking preferences for options for increasing efficiencies and improved governance.

It was agreed that the following points would form the basis of a response to the Minister:

**Issue 1: Opportunities to make efficiencies, reduce duplication and ensure economies of scale across Fish and Game (e.g. shared services) to improve value for money for licence holders?**

1. **Administration**: Bi-monthly Financial Reporting, Annual Financial Reporting, Annual Performance Reporting, common Payroll system, common IT technology and software
2. **Species Management**: Monitoring, Research
3. **Resource Advocacy**: Case Management at Environment Court Level (or higher)
4. **Communications and R31/Marketing**: Base Level of Communications and Marketing Actions Common to All Regions
5. **Licensing Management System and Revenue Distribution**: Collection and Re-Allocation of Revenue from Provider, Maintaining a Fair Resource Allocation to All Regions
6. **Policy Development**: Common Core Policy Development
7. **Strategic Planning**: Implementation of Strategic Planning

Concepts Discussed:

- Consider centralisation of some common functions
- National suite of policies and procedures that all regional councils to consider (rather than dictate) and adopt – national templates
- NZ Council role is to provide service as operations
- ability to amalgamate Fish and Game regions if there is deemed to be a compelling argument to increase efficiency, effectiveness, and/or resilience.
- Representation of licence holders is still viewed as a paramount consideration to ensure they are still connected to the organisation.
- How stop silo mentality – will need changes with Minister support
- Hunt report on regional structure review (2022) supported rather than Ministerial Review report that was arbitrary and did not consider Fish and Game values
- Reduced numbers of governors – not paid
- Backlash from licence holders if councillors paid
- What circumstances could be appropriate to make honorariums e.g. a deficient Council or co-opted members appointees, NZ Council

contributors (materially extra work) – but generally agreed all or nothing – so no payment of governors.

- Governance training after election supported.
- NZ Councillor appointee be for whole term of an election cycle - unless extraordinary circumstances
- possible situation appointee votes against regional silo view but must look at organisational view
- Fit and proper person – look at other options used for other organisations to ensure consistent and modern. Only one ‘rogue’ councillor can have limited effect but need to consider options to remove if bringing organisation into disrepute. Council requests Minister for removal rather than Minister initiated.
- Minister needs to consider when a Council is ineffective and needs to step in and appoint commissioner – e.g. operating without a General Manager, population monitoring not meeting legislative requirements – criteria would need to be clear and very high bar for action
- All auto enrolment vote – opt out option

After brief further discussion it was moved

***that the Chairman’s verbal report on regional governance issues be received.***

**Jim Cook/Aaron Passey**

Carried

## **9. Inter-regional Business - Governance**

### **A. Regional Chairs’ Forum Update**

Chairman Dewar provided confirmation that there had been no Chair’s Forum since the previous meeting.

### **B. Shared Resources Update**

Mr Teal updated on the progress of shared resources between Wellington and Taranaki Fish and Game Councils.

### **C. Progressing Formal Arrangement - Taranaki – Wellington Amalgamation**

Discussion ensued focusing on the process for change and amalgamation rather than solely progressing a formal amalgamation between the two Councils with the Minister. It was acknowledged that it was anticipated that Council would get to see any proposed legislative changes in draft form.

Brief discussion ensued on potential topics for discussion and format for January 2025 workshop.

It was then moved that

***Council receive the update report presented the Chairman on Inter-regional Business – Governance for the previous period since the last meeting of Council.***

**Aaron Passey/Steve Haslett**

Carried

Don Scott arrived at the meeting at 5:00pm

## **10. Strategic Matters**

### **A. Risk Management Review**

Mr Teal provided an update on risk management issues associated with:

- Avian influenza H5N1 Strain (HPAI – High Pathogenic Avian Influenza) – no change is risk level
- Golden Clam – Horizons Regional Council response is an extension of the Check Clean Dry messaging.

A summary 15 minutes video was played for Council that gave an overview of the risks and background to H5N1 provided by Professor Jemma Geoghegan (Otago University) that had been presented to Fish and Game staff.

### **B. Iwi Engagement**

Mr Teal noted that he is actively developing a strategic approach to engaging with Mana Whenua and how to incorporate a co-operative process in decision-making. He outlined the development of a detailed register of interest in Mana Whenua groupings and contacts – and rohe (areas of interest).

## **11. Policy and Legislation Considerations**

Key legislation relating to Fish and Game activities were briefly discussed:

### **A. Wildlife Act Review**

Mr Teal noted that the formal review of the Wildlife Act was still under activity consideration but there had been no update as to the priority or timetable made public.

### **B. Resource Management Act Review**

Mr Teal confirmed that new RM Amendment Act was now in force from 25 October 2024:

The Resource Management (Freshwater and Other Matters) Amendment Act 2024 came into force on 25 October 2024. The Act amends the Resource Management Act 1991 (RMA) and several national direction instrument, including:



- Exclude the hierarchy of obligations in the National Policy Statement for Freshwater Management (NPS-FM) from resource consenting while a review and replacement of the NPS-FM is undertaken.
- Repeal the permitted and restricted discretionary activity regulations and associated conditions for intensive winter grazing from the National Environmental Standards for Freshwater (NES-F) and replaces these with new regulations for setbacks from waterways and critical source areas.
- Suspend for three years requirements under the NPS-IB for councils to identify new Significant Natural Areas (SNAs) and include them in district plans. The Bill also extends some SNA implementation timeframes.
- Pause the rollout of freshwater farm plans until work to improve the system is finalised.
- Restrict notification of freshwater planning instruments (regional policy statements and plans that give effect to the NPS-FM 2020) until a new NPS-FM takes effect or 31 December 2025. This applies from 22 October 2024.

Mr Teal also noted the intention of Government to introduce a second RMA amendment bill will be introduced to Parliament in December and is due to become law in mid-2025.

### **C. Fast Track Approvals Bill**

Fast Track Approvals Bill – introduced into Parliament in early March 2024. Submissions heard at Select Committee proceedings and the Environment Committee released its report on the Fast-track Approvals Bill to the House of Representatives on 18 October 2024.

### **D. Arms Act Review**

The Government announced in February 2024 that firearms legislation will be reviewed. This includes rewriting the Arms Act 1983, transferring responsibility for that act to the Ministry of Justice, and transferring the Firearms Safety Authority to another department such as the Department of Internal Affairs. Associate Justice Minister Nicole McKee said the Arms Act had been in place for over 40 years, and would be rewritten by 2026. It was anticipated that consultation would begin in early 2025.

### **E. Organisational Policies**

Mr Teal indicated that he was continuing to liaise with NZ Council and regions regarding defining best practice policy for operational and governance applications.

Council considered the Draft HR Policy – Managing Fatigue in the Work Place - which outlines causes and risks of fatigue, and responsibilities to implement suitable control measures to reduce the risks of fatigue. This was a policy required by the Marine Safety Authority for operations of boats for Fish and Game.

It was acknowledged that there was additional policy required on managing long-term fatigue or burnout – which had the potential to be a greater health and safety risk.

It was then moved

***That Wellington Council support the draft HR Policy – Managing Fatigue in the Work Place***

**Aaron Passey/Jim Cook**

Carried

**12. Health and Safety Report September 2024 and October 2024.**

After discussion it was moved that

***Council to receive staff report on Health and Safety for September 2024 and October 2024***

**Steve Brown/ Aaron Passey**

Carried

**13. Species Management**

**A. Research Update**

Mr Teal provided a brief overview of the research undertaken and the progress on publishing papers in scientific journals:

- **Trout – Native Fish interactions** – a paper had been submitted for peer review in a scientific publication and currently responding to referees' comments and has been re-submitting for final version.
- **Potential effects of Climate Change on Trout Distribution and other Native Fish Distribution** – initial feedback was received by the scientific publication peer reviewers and additional modeling has been completed in response – and was re-submitted and accepted for publication.

**B. Game Notice Considerations**

**Mallard:** Staff presented the data and analysis of the mallard transect counts which indicated a trend downwards – but noted that it still falls between a 'normal' season range. It was confirmed that the base level consideration at the December 2024 Council Meeting would be given to recommending reducing the limit to ten birds per hunter per day.

**Black Swan:**

Staff provided an overview of the numbers of black swan on adjacent farmland adjacent to Lake Wairarapa that were causing some concerns for landowners. Subject to trend counts – consideration would be given to changes in opening weekend limits and possible summer seasons. It was confirmed that the option for issuing special permits remained regardless of what option was pursued.

It was then moved that

***The draft recommendations to the Minister of Hunting and Fishing for Game Season 2025 be confirmed as the basis for season regulations – subject to trend counts for paradise shelduck and black swan in January 2025.***

**Jim Cook/Jennifer Yanko**

Carried

**C. Request for permission to remove perch from Arawhata Wetland, Levin**  
Horizons Regional Council application to remove perch as part of a wider wetland enhancement project was considered.

It was then moved that

***Horizons Regional Council be granted a permit to perch from Arawhata Lagoon with a specific time period constraint – specifically for Arawhata Lagoon only***

**Jim Cook/Terry Inglis**

Carried

#### **14. Habitat Advocacy and Management**

Mr Teal provided a brief summary of activity in September and October 2024 related to resource management advocacy:

##### **A. Regional Planning advocacy**

- Horizons Regional Council are continuing with the Oranga Wai consultation – the next generation of Regional Plan changes to reflect NPS FM 2020 – focusing on water quantity and water quality parameters. The timetable to complete the Plan Change public notification has been revised to September 2027.
- Horizons Regional Council are continuing with their Plan Change 2 of the Regional Plan (One Plan) to introduce an additional tool – Nitrogen Loss Risk Scorecard - to deal with nitrogen leaching from intensive farm use. Awaiting decision from Environment Court.

##### **B. Resource Consent advocacy**

- Mr Teal noted the range of activity undertaken by staff in the months of September and October 2024.

#### **15. Participation**

Mr Teal provided an overview of activities undertaken by staff in September and October 2024 including:

##### **A. Access Management**

- Updating access sign inventory.

- An overview was provided of the Access Charter launched by Minister of Hunting and Fishing

**B. Information to Clients**

- 2024/2025 Fish Season Magazine articles had been prepared and magazine distributed in August.
- Newsletter – Early Summer produced and distributed.

**16. Public Awareness/Communications**

Mr Teal provided a brief overview of activities that had involved staff regarding public awareness and communication in September and October 2024:

**A. Iwi Engagement**

- Attended Otaki and Waikanae River overview.
- Sought clarification from Kahungunu ki Wairarapa on visions and management of Wairarapa Moana

**B. Public Awareness**

- Club sponsored fishing days supported.

**C. Communication**

- Press Releases on Children’s Fishing Opportunities at Otaki Lake.

**17. Licence Sales and Licence Management System**

Mr Teal provided a brief summary of licence sales up until 31 October 2024:

**A. Licence Sales Report for 2024/2025 Fishing Season YTD– until 31 October 2024** –Confirmation of licence sales indicating YTD – comparison with previous year.

- LEQ sales similar to previous year (1473.9 c.f. 1438.8)
- Total Number of Sales of licences similar to previous year (2199 c.f. 1974)
- Nationally licence sales value LEQ is down 3.1% (33,113 c.f. 34,166).

It was moved that

***Council receive Licence Sales Report for 2024/2025 Fishing Season YTD (up to 31 October 2024)***

**Terry Inglis/Ben Hancock**

Carried

Mr Teal provided a brief overview of the Licencing Management System Monthly Performance Reports for September 2024 and October 2024 noting that the provider was performing well with no issues of continuity of service.

It was then moved

***Council receive the update report for September and October 2024 for performance of provider of services to manage the licencing platform and database management.***

**Aaron Passey/Jennifer Yanko**

Carried

**18. Operational Summary 1 July 2024 to 31 August 2024**

After discussion and clarification it was moved

***Council to receive the staff report on Operational Summary for September and October 2024***

**Jim Cook/Jennifer Yanko**

Carried

Councillor Haslett left the meeting at 6:00pm.

**19. Financial Statements to 31 October 2024 and Financial Transactions for September and October 2024**

After discussion it was moved that

***Council receive Financial Statements for Year-to-Date for the 2024/2025 Financial Year –Income Statement up to end October 2024 and Financial Transactions for September and October 2024.***

**Aaron Passey/Ben Hancock**

Carried

Council authorised Mr Teal to look at feasibility of options for leasing office premises including a different location.

**20. Correspondence and Media**

There were no additional specific items of correspondence that had not already been addressed in the meeting.

**21. Recognition Awards**

Chairman Dewar presented a recognition award to Philip Pearpoint (Turners Sports – Feilding) as a long-time licence agent for Fish and Game and that he had provided a valuable interface between licence holders and Fish and Game for many years. Council considered that his contribution to the hunting and angling community should be recognised accordingly.

Chairman Dewar presented a recognition award to Peter Pearce who had provided a valuable contribution to the drift dive programme with staff over the last 20 years. It was recognised that this consistency in skilled personnel had been key in achieving an outcome of such high-quality data over a long-term period.

**22. Conservation Board Liaison**

Discussion ensued on the potential discussion points that could be a focus for attendance at the next Conservation Board meeting scheduled.

**23. General Business**

Councillor Brown sought interest in having a Councillor-only workshop that focused on governance.

There were no further specific items of general business, the meeting closed at 6.15pm.

***Next General Meeting to be held: Tuesday, 11 February 2025 at Hotel Coachman, 140 Fitzherbert Avenue, Palmerston North at 3.00pm.***

Chairman \_\_\_\_\_ Date \_\_\_\_\_