

AUCKLAND/WAIKATO FISH & GAME

A Meeting of Council will be held at the NZ Deerstalkers Hall, Wairere Drive, Hamilton on Saturday 12 December 2020 commencing at 11.30 a.m.

AGENDA

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G. Annan
Chairman

25/11/20

AUCKLAND/WAIKATO FISH & GAME

Minutes of a Meeting of Council
held at the NZ Deerstalkers Hall, Wairere Dr, Hamilton
on Saturday 17 October 2020 commencing at 11am.

PRESENT:

Chairman: G. Annan
Councillors: E. Williamson, C. Sherrard, S. Smith, W. Howard, D. Cocks, A. Kerr
Staff: B. Wilson, C. Robertson, D. Klee
Visitors: P. Hardy (DOC), F. Bartholomew (Waikato Conservation Board)

1. APOLOGIES

P. Shaw, N. Juby, A. Daniel, J. Dyer, D. Klee (lateness)

It was moved;
that the apologies be accepted.

Sherrard/Smith - CARRIED

2. POSSIBLE CONFLICTS OF INTEREST ARISING FROM MEETING AGENDA:

None declared.

3. MINUTES OF PREVIOUS MEETING OF 15th August 2020:

It was moved;
that the minutes of the previous meeting of 15th August 2020 be accepted as a true
and correct record.

Howard/Sherrard - CARRIED

4. MATTERS ARISING FROM PREVIOUS MINUTES:

The chairman thanked Councillors for their attendance at the meeting with the Ministerial Review Committee.

5. COUNCIL CORRESPONDENCE:

A letter was tabled from the Chief Executive of the NZ Fish & Game Council, Martin Taylor, informing that the NZF&GC had rescinded the previous motions on non-resident

fish levies and agreed that the levy be treated as licence income for the budgeting process and that all non-resident reserves become general reserves.

A letter was also tabled on this issue from the Chief Executive of the Otago Council, Ian Hadland, to the NZF&GC. The Otago Council had expressed concerns at the lack of consultation on the decision by the NZF&GC. The Otago Council had agreed to retain the non-resident reserve and declined to amalgamate these funds with general reserves.

Councillors expressed concern at the lack of consultation by the NZ Council and supported the views expressed in the Otago letter.

It was moved;

that the Chairman of the NZ Council is informed that Council will be retaining the non-resident reserve, and that Council is concerned over the lack of consultation by the NZ Council regarding their decision to treat the non-resident levy as licence income.

Williamson/Cocks - CARRIED

6. CHIEF EXECUTIVE'S BI-MONTHLY REPORT AND FINANCIAL STATEMENTS:

Mr Wilson provided an update on the Cambridge WWTP consent application noting that an MOU had been signed with the Waipa District Council. He agreed to forward the MOU to Councillors.

Mr Klee joined the meeting at 11:40am.

Mr Klee informed the meeting that the MOU committed the District Council to spend \$800,000 on environmental mitigation over the next six years.

Mr Wilson noted that an email newsletter had been sent to both former and current fish licence holders. He agreed to send a summary report to Councillors on the success of this newsletter campaign in terms of fish licences sold to lapsed participants.

Mr Wilson provided a brief summary of his financial report.

It was moved;

that the Chief Executive's bi-monthly report be accepted.

Smith/Kerr - CARRIED

7. NZ COUNCIL MEETINGS OF 21st & 22nd AUGUST 2020:

The minutes of the NZ Council meeting of 21st and 23rd August 2020 were tabled.

Concern was expressed by Councillors over the decision by the NZF&GC to amend the

Wildlife Order 2019 to remove its expiry date thereby allowing pheasants and red-legged partridge to remain on Schedule 3 of the Wildlife Act for commercial game preserves.

Councillors noted that this was not one of the options that regions had been consulted on and that they had been under the impression that commercial preserves would have to cease operations after three years.

It was moved;

that the Chairman of the NZ Council is informed of the concerns of Council over the NZ Council's decision to allow commercial preserves to continue and the lack of consultation over this decision.

Williamson/Cocks – CARRIED

It was agreed that a copy of this letter be sent to the Minister (DOC) and all Fish & Game regions.

Councillors discussed the NZ Council decision to rescind their previous motion on the mallard research levy and to discontinue the separate mallard research fund. Councillors expressed surprise of the lack of consultation with regions on this decision and the impact on current and planned research projects.

It was moved;

that the Chairman of the NZ Council is informed of Council's disappointment at the discontinuation of the mallard research levy and the lack of consultation with regions over this decision.

Williamson/Cocks – CARRIED

Councillors discussed the decision by the NZ Council to fund independent research on the risk profile of different types of trout farming. Councillor Cocks considered that Fish & Game should not be funding this research. He remained strongly opposed to commercial trout farming.

8. DRAFT MEETING SCHEDULE:

It was noted that the proposed meeting schedule did not consider the impact of the 2021 Fish and Game elections and especially the requirement to have a meeting of the new council no later than three weeks after the appointment of new councillors. It was agreed to delay deciding on the 2021 agenda until the next council meeting.

9. DRAFT NATIONAL POLICY ON RESERVES:

The paper prepared by Ray Grubb, Chair standing Finance Committee, was tabled. Councillors agreed that at this stage they would not provide feedback on this discussion paper.

10. DRAFT NATIONAL POLICY ON SALMON RELEASES:

It was agreed that it was inappropriate for Council to comment due to the absence of salmon fisheries in the North Island.

11. GOVERNANCE REPORT:

It was agreed that the Governance Report did not highlight or find any areas of particular concern.

12. POLICY REVIEW:

Councillor Cocks informed the meeting that a policy decision should be included on mitigation funding, as had been discussed at previous meetings.

It was moved;

that where possible when negotiating mitigation agreements staff advocate for at least 50% of funds to be spent on environmental initiatives anywhere within the Auckland/Waikato region.

Cocks/Smith – CARRIED

It was moved;

that current policies are reaffirmed.

Smith/Williamson – CARRIED

The meeting rose for lunch at 1:00pm and resumed at 1:40pm.
David Klee left the meeting.

13. NATIONAL ENVIRONMENTAL STANDARDS:

The letter from the chair of the NZF&GC, Paul Shortis, was discussed.

Mr Wilson summarised the impact of the new National Environmental Standards noting that the NZ Council had agreed that changes need to be advocated for especially in regard to maimai.

14. AKA AKA WETLAND AUDIT:

The report by John Dyer was tabled.

It was moved;

that Mr Dyer contacts pondholders in the Aka Aka wetland and establish an association of pondholders to manage the Aka Aka wetland.

Cocks/Howard – CARRIED

15. HEALTHY RIVERS UPDATE

Mr Wilson updated Councillors on Healthy Rivers, which was now at the Environment Court. He expected court-assisted discussions to start soon between the various parties to determine where there was consensus and to define the disagreements.

16. WARD RANCH UPDATE

Mr Wilson provided an update on this ongoing High Court case.

17. OSH UPDATE:

Mr Wilson introduced his OSH report.

It was moved;

that the October 2020 OSH report be approved.

Smith/Kerr – CARRIED

18. GENERAL BUSINESS:

The proposed landfill at the Gleeson Cox quarry near Huntly was discussed with it noted that considerable publicity had been given by local media on the possible impacts on Lake Puketirini. Mr Wilson emphasised that Lake Puketirini had minimal values for game bird hunting or freshwater fishing and therefore they had not been involved in consultation regarding this consent. However, he understood that the application had not yet been publicly notified and he had not seen any environmental impact assessments for this proposal. But they would certainly be reviewing this documentation when publicly available.

There being no further business the meeting concluded at 2:45pm.



22 October 2020

Mr P. Shortis
Chairman
NZ Fish & Game Council
PO BOX 25 055
WELLINGTON 6140

Dear Paul

Commercial Pheasant Preserves

At our October 2020 meeting the Auckland/Waikato Council considered the recent decision made by the NZ Council to amend the Wildlife Order 2019 to remove its expiry date thereby allowing pheasants and red-legged partridge to remain on Schedule 3 of the Wildlife Act for commercial game preserves.

As you will be aware, there was consultation with the regions over the future of commercial pheasant preserves in February 2019. One of the options was to move pheasants and red-legged partridge to Schedule 3 of the Wildlife Act for three years. However, this was clearly envisaged to be a temporary arrangement for a fixed period. There was no suggestion that this would be a permanent legislative change, and indeed we understood that this arrangement was to allow commercial preserves adequate time to cease operations in an orderly manner.

Nevertheless, the Auckland/Waikato Council did not support this initiative because we considered that a phase out period was unwarranted because commercial preserves have never been legal under the Wildlife Act.

Therefore, we strongly oppose the recent decision by the NZ Council not to consult with the regions before deciding to remove the expiry date from the Wildlife Order 2019. We believe that allowing for commercial pheasant preserves to continue under Schedule 3 is setting a dreadful precedence by allowing the management and control of gamebirds to be taken away from regional Fish & Game councils and given to commercial operators.

The Auckland/Waikato Council requests that the NZ Council rescinds this decision and then fully consults with the regions on the future of the commercial pheasant preserves.

Yours sincerely

Grant Annan
Chairman



22 October 2020

Mr P. Shortis
Chairman
NZ Fish & Game Council
PO BOX 25 055
WELLINGTON 6140

Dear Paul

Mallard Research Levy

At our October 2020 meeting the Auckland/Waikato Council considered recent decisions made by the NZ Council on the mallard research levy. Council was disappointed with the decision to eliminate the mallard research fund and that this decision occurred without any consultation with regions. Nor was there any consultation with key regional staff who have been implementing research projects reliant on this fund since its inception.

The fund was implemented, as it was acknowledged at the time, because game bird research had historically received little support from the general research fund despite mallard populations being under significant stress in many North Island regions. Research supported by the fund has shown that in many years the North Island mallard population cannot sustain itself. Critical population bottlenecks, particular duckling survival and has led to management decisions in those areas. Information is also critical to set sustainable harvest regulations.

Most North Island regions have been forced to set more restrictive harvest regulations in recent years due to declines in mallard populations and this has undoubtedly had an impact on hunter satisfaction and licence sales. Reducing the opportunity for gaining better understanding of these issues seems illogical.

It is unclear what will happen to the extra \$1 that was specially tagged to go towards mallard research. At the time of its approval by the Minister it was under the specific requirement that it was to be spent on this issue alone. Will it now be used to augment the research fund or get swallowed up by other projects? If it is the later, Auckland/Waikato Council is of the opinion that our hunters can rightly feel aggrieved and that extra \$1 should be removed from the licence as it no longer being used for its intended purpose.

Yours sincerely

A handwritten signature in black ink, appearing to read 'Grant Annan'.

Grant Annan
Chairman

Statutory managers of freshwater sports fish, game birds and their habitats

Auckland/Waikato Region

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22 October 2020

Mr P. Shortis
Chairman
NZ Fish & Game Council
PO BOX 25 055
WELLINGTON 6140

Dear Paul

Non Resident Levy

At our October 2020 meeting the Auckland/Waikato Council considered the letter from Martin Taylor regarding the decision of the NZ Council to treat the Non Resident Levy as licence income for the budgeting process and that all Non Resident Reserves become general reserves in which they are currently held.

Council also considered the position of the Otago Council on this issue as stated in an email received from Ian Hadland on 29th September 2020.

We strongly support the concerns of the Otago Council regarding the lack of consultation on this decision by the NZ Council. We also support their concern that the funds were gathered in good faith from overseas anglers, many of whom know that the premium they pay is directed back into waters of interest to them.

Therefore, we request that the NZ Council rescinds this decision and then consults with the regions on the future of the Non Resident Reserves.

The Auckland/Waikato Council agreed to retain the Non Resident Reserve and declined to amalgamate these funds with general reserves.

Yours sincerely

A handwritten signature in black ink, appearing to read 'Grant Annan'.

Grant Annan
Chairman

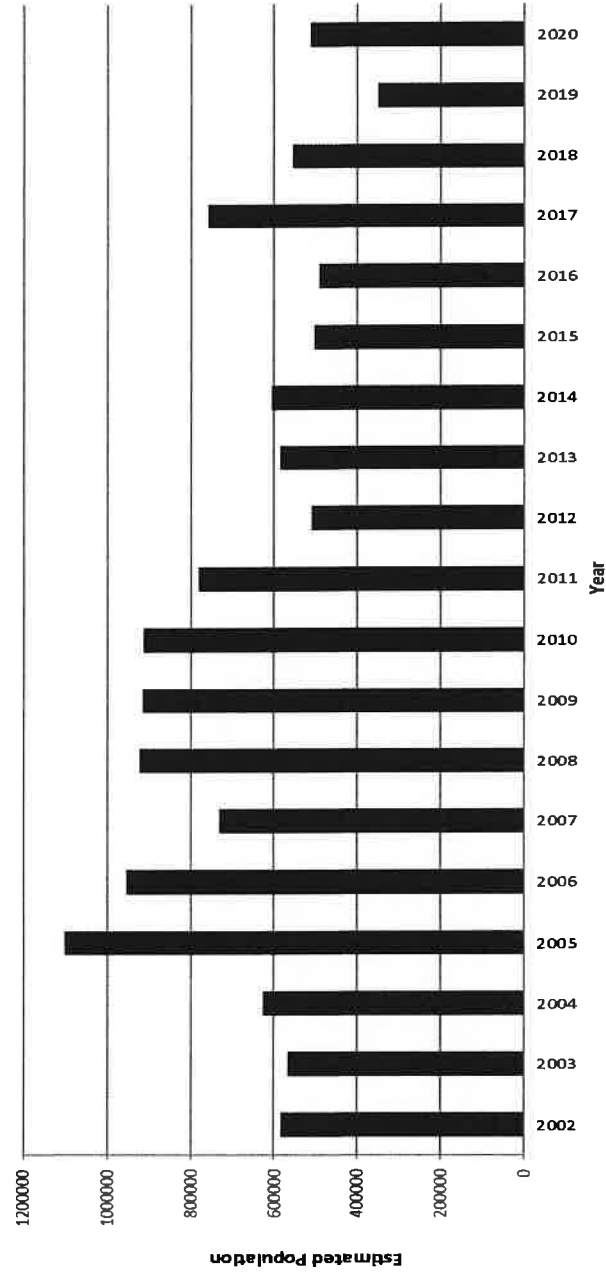
Bi-Monthly Chief Executive’s Report
Auckland/Waikato Fish & Game Meeting December 2020

OUTPUT 1: SPECIES MANAGEMENT

Project 5122: Game Harvest Survey

Population Estimates (Dabbling duck):

Population estimates from banding have been finalised for 2020. We surveyed more hunters for band returns this year to strengthen the statistical accuracy of our reporting rate estimates. In total 52% of hunters who shot a banded bird said they reported it. This is similar to recent years and close to the overall 18-year average of 60%.



Project 5161 Trout Releases

1000 sterile rainbow trout were tagged and released into Lake Arapuni with 1000 normal hatchery reared rainbow trout of similar size. It will take at least a year to receive enough return data to determine if the program is beneficial in terms of increasing fish weight.

Project 5181: Control.

John Dyer attended several stakeholder meetings at the Auckland Airport to discuss control options around the significant increases in Canada goose numbers in the local and wider area.

Project 5311 Access negotiation

Whakapapa intake road: Adam Daniel has contacted the Tuwharetoa Maori Trust Board to discuss riparian planting on the Whanganui River and open the conversation for access.

Kinleith Forests: Anthony van Dorp (Eastern F&G) has been negotiating access to the Kinleith Forest for upland game hunters. Hunters must apply for a permit through the Kinleith Forest Recreation Club which will accept game bird hunters applications for membership, and they will arrange the relevant access permits. Access is only available to hunter access during weekends, and during the game bird season.

OUTPUT 2: HABITAT PROTECTION/MANAGEMENT

Project 5211: RMA

Waikato District Plan

We presented at the hearing on the Proposed Waikato District Plan for the Rural Chapter which took place via zoom on the 29th September. We submitted three pieces of evidence for the hearing which included David Klee on earthworks in wetlands, Ben Wilson on the importance of building maimai as a permitted activity, and earthworks in wetlands identified as Significant Natural Areas, and Mischa Davis who addressed all the matters generally from a planning and legal perspective.

We had a successful outcome in the council's s42A Report which meant we only had two outstanding concerns to put to the Commissioners at the hearing.

With regards to maimai the s42A Report recommended to support our request to exempt maimai from the rule that requires landowners to obtain a resource consent for building close to waterbodies, which was a great outcome. However the s42A Report did not support our request to exempt maimai from the rule that requires a resource consent for building in an Outstanding Natural Feature area, which many of our lakes and wetlands have been identified as including the Whangamarino.

With regards to earthworks in wetlands, another success for us was having wetland enhancement/restoration earthworks in the rural zone made a permitted activity without any restrictions placed on them provided those works meet the definition of a "conservation activity". As for earthworks within areas identified as Significant Natural Areas (SNA), which most of our wetlands are, our request for a new rule to make restoration work permitted (not requiring a resource consent) was only partly accepted. As drafted earthworks within an SNA are only permitted if they are for the maintenance of fences, tracks, and drains and further meet specific volume, height, and location restrictions, otherwise a resource consent is required. The council's s42 report instead recommended to remove the further restrictions on those activities. Therefore, a resource consent will still be required if the earthworks are for anything other than the maintenance of fences, tracks and drains.

Other successes from the s42A Report included having both hunting and signs erected by Fish and Game, made a permitted activity.

Overall, we were pleased with the outcomes from the s42A Report. The hearing also went well with minimal questions from the Commissioners, so it is looking likely the outcomes

from the s42A Report will not be overturned and we will not need to appeal to the Environment Court. The successful outcome has set a good example for ourselves to follow for other plan changes in the future.

Healthy Rivers PC1

On the 8th of July we filed our appeal against the decision of the Waikato Regional Council on Proposed Plan Change 1 to the Waikato Regional Plan. Our appeal was prepared by our legal counsel Sarah Ongley with input from our staff and external expert planner Helen Marr.

We submitted a Legal Pool Fund application to the National Council and have had \$110,000 approved which will cover the financial year 2020/21 for the engagement of legal and technical expertise to complete the Environment Court process. We will not be able to afford to continue with the appeal without this funding. The appeal process will be lengthy and include many days of attending mediation.

On the 29th of October we filed our s274 of the Resource Management Act 1991 notices to join 13 other parties appeals that address matters we are concerned about but did not appeal specifically on ourselves. Correspondingly we have had all 24 appellants' join our own appeal. This sounds like a lot but is not uncommon for this type of plan change appeal, especially when we are in the minority in terms of what we are seeking/appealing in the council's decision.

We have so far presented a strong scientific, legal, and planning case, which has had partial success in the hearing processes. We believe that strategic alignment with DOC and other parties with similar concerns, where possible, through the mediation process will result in a robust case with moderate to high chances of success.

Cambridge WWTP

Late last year we filed a submission opposing the Waipā District Council's short-term consent application to renew the Cambridge Wastewater Treatment Plant (WWTP) consents, based primarily on the adverse effects associated with the discharge of treated wastewater on the Waikato River and a lack of certainty of outcomes for the long-term solution.

The previous consent for the WWTP expired in 2016 (since operating under s124 RMA), the current application sought a term of 6 years, which would effectively allow them to continue operating, after being issued an abatement notice for significant non-compliance since 2018, until they undertake an upgrade of the site in order to meet compliance again. Ultimately the Council is seeking the short-term consent to buy themselves time for the long-term development of a south Waikato "sub-regional" wastewater treatment solution.

In our submission we raised concerns with the delay, consent conditions and poor performance of the plant. Since then we have had several meetings with them including a site visit to the WWTP.

After a lot of negotiation prior to the hearing commencing we decided to agree to the granting of the short-term consent providing several conditions were included as part of the consent application and that a Memorandum of Understanding was drawn up and agreed to between us and the council. It was essential for us to see a guarantee in writing that a long-term option will be developed and implemented during the short-term consent which will lead to agreed improvements in discharge quality when compared to existing (pre-2020) levels.

The council held the hearing for the consent application on 19 October. David Klee, Adam Daniel, and Clare Robertson all attended on behalf of Fish and Game. David Klee chose not to present evidence and instead submitted a statement which highlighted our outstanding concerns/disagreements with the application - but overall, our agreement to the conditions and the MOU. It was important to us that the commissioners were made aware of these issues despite whether they approved it or not.

As mentioned at the last meeting, David Clare and Adam attended the hearing and gave a statement relating to the agreed set of conditions and MOU that we signed with Waipa DC. We are satisfied with the outcome, but also made it clear that we are relying on the Council to honour its commitments to stakeholders. We were thanked for our pragmatic approach.

Open Country Dairy

The court assisted mediation has been postponed while we await further changes to the application. Initially OCD explored an offsetting approach that would retire and convert farmland into treatment wetlands, however the size and scale required was deemed to be too expensive and difficult to implement. Instead OCD are now revising their application to continue with a summer discharge to land plus the treatment upgrade. Clare and David had a meeting with OCD representatives and consultants. It was indicated that the new application would reduce the total load of N and P entering the River and Firth of Thames by around 50% compared to existing loads. We await the application for further details.

Thames WWTP

Further consultation meetings have been had to discuss statistical advice that was conducted to set appropriate discharge limits for the consent. The proposed consent limits have been reduced substantially on the basis of this information which vindicated our position that the proposed limits were overinflated and allowed for substantial increases in contaminant loading despite the application stating that there would be no increases.

Oji Fibre (Kinleith) consents

Clair and Adam have sought further information on mitigation from the applicant for the remaining effects. The application includes significant reductions (50%) in most contaminants.

Puriri River and Apakura Stream Water Takes

The streams were visited by Adam and electrofished but no trout found. Adam encountered an angler that had been fishing the river for 40 years and he indicated there were less and less fish each year and he has not caught a fish in over 5 years.

Project 5221: Fish & Game land.

Piggott Wetland:

Landcare Research last year released beetles in this wetland that eat Wandering Willy. Follow-up checks suggest these did not take and another release is planned. However, a different species of beetle they released 10km away has ironically turned up instead. There is also a rust-fungus that controls this weed that was established back then too and this does seem to be doing well. More has since been added. The beetles like warmer-drier weather and the rust-fungus prefers colder-wetter conditions. So they should compliment each other for year-round control. Wandering Willy not only smothers many low-growing plants, but also covers up fallen seeds that might otherwise feed pheasants and other bird species. The same plant also causes a nasty rash on many gun-dogs, and we shan't miss it a bit.

Dean Wetland:

Mexican water lily is a persistent weed that has established in the Dean Wetland in Pond 13 and which have since spread into Pond 14. These have been repeatedly sprayed and a large infestation removed, but rootstocks seem to pop up regularly. It appears this year that Canada geese have been pulling out the stems also. This is not a plant that we want to allow to become established further inside the dense willow wetland adjoining ponds where it could multiply and spread largely unseen.

A large and relatively wide moat of around 700m long surrounds an area in the Dean Wetland known as Wattle Island. This moat was formed in a funded project by Neil Rankin and his digger more than 20 years ago. The spoil dug up from it has since become covered in a dense forest of pampas grass. Access to spray it is only really practical from a boat and in October John Dyer used a chainsaw and loppers to cut back many fallen willows and similar obstructions on the 160m long borrow-pit canal next to the walkway into Pond 15. This canal then leads onto the Wattle Island waterway. Most of the spray containers needed to be temporarily removed to pull the new F&G boat across the flooded walkway at Pond 15, which was the last obstruction across his path, but then 100-litres of Glyphosate/Metsulfuron was able to be sprayed onto the pampas adjoining the moat. This is to re-establish open areas where ducks and swan can get out of the water and onto dry land to preen, rest, etc. Up to 30% of a duck's daily time budget is spent in these activities so ensuring they have somewhere to do so is vital to keeping them in the area or attracting more of them.

Canadas, mallards, teal and shoveler were all put up on the day. Also noted were several planted clumps of the buttress-rotted swamp cypress trees growing directly out of the water there, which had been planted by Field Officer Frank Thompson perhaps 30-years ago. These otherwise hidden-away gems are now looking truly splendid.

The Wattle Island area was subject to a recent application for funding that was not successful, however, some of the objects of that funding can be attained by rolling up our sleeves and doing the work manually. For instance, the now much overgrown old borrow-pit canal connecting Pond 15 to Pond 13 was noted during this spraying trip and a GPS waypoint made. In future, spraying should help re-establish this as open water again to

facilitate not only the free movement of broods but also help with the exchange of freshwater between individual ponds.



Photo 1: Swamp cypress, Dean Wetland.

Waikato Delta Islands:

Several large baches in the Waikato Delta area have been abandoned and have since started to collapse, due in part to the undermining action of river currents. Two of these are either within or right on the boundary of our island titles. Efforts will be made to establish the original owners and reacquaint them with their responsibilities, but also to check to ensure there are no more like these on our land.

Aka Aka Wetland:

John Dyer identified an issue here with the subsidence of the berm to our entry track as it borders the boundary canal. This is complicated by it being on an unformed legal road, (i.e. an extension of Bregman Rd). Waikato District Council permission to plant the track edge in Matsudana willows was delayed while they worked out if it falls under their parks or roading portfolios, and so whose departmental permission was required. Eventually we got the green light, provided we absorbed the costs, but by then the source of poles and possum guards in Waikato Regional Council had run out and the cost of these blown out besides. Since then, various options have been discussed with the pondholders in this area to see if there is perhaps a better way of fixing this issue and it might be something a new pondholder user group should consider. If it is to be Matsudana willow poles, that authority to plant them is now confirmed.

Williamson Wetland.

4 days was spent by John spraying mostly pampas, but also gorse, tobacco weed and blackberry, in this wetland from Pond 3 to Pond 20, (but not 1&2 nor 13 to 15 which could not be accessed by truck). A working bee was then called and probably around 36

pondholders turned out, most on the day, but some on the day before or the weeks afterwards. Aerial maps were sent to them indicating where staff had sprayed and what still needed to be done. Also, a spray-marker was used by John, who also sprayed pampas plumes above and grass around plants, to further reduce the risk of double-ups. The feedback was that volunteers could see where F&G had been.

Concern was expressed by some that they may be spraying native toetoe accidentally, instead of pampas. John addressed the meeting beforehand showing examples of toetoe he'd collected at Te Kauwhata and explaining its differences to pampas. Also, that he had not seen any toetoe within this wetland, so the risk of an accidental spraying would surely be small. Many pondholders had sprayed their pampas previously, but only from one side. This plant is a colony and so the plants shielded by the ones sprayed survive and multiply. The cure is to spray and wet the whole plant.

Quite a few pondholders had their own quads, arriving on the back of trailers with ramps. A number of these were fitted with spray units. These quads could reach a number of out of the way areas and tractor-mowing beforehand also helped with access. Graeme Garchow's firm Drains.Co provided a digger on the day which was able to clear pampas around one particularly congested pond, Pond 10. This then allowed a quad mounted sprayer to get into this area and nuke the pampas there. Quads can also more easily reach the many "habitat fingers", these being up to 50m long, which run off ponds 10-20.

Also, on the day new traps were commissioned as part of our consent requirements. Some of the older traps had been stolen, some damaged by the tractor mower and some removed. Tall plastic conduit now identifies traps in the long grass to the tractor driver. DoC have offered to send in a "trap-master" advisor once the new traps are commissioned, to make sure we are getting best use of them.

The tractor shed there had been broken into shortly before the working bee, but having had this happen before, the pondholders now remove the steering wheel and other components between visits and the would-be thief this time went home empty handed.

A new committee was also set up for this wetland at the working bee. This should assist with future direction, coordination, fundraising and so on. Using mark-up tags John tracked down several pondholders who were previously unknown to the committee there. Also, he loaded the Williamson Wetland Facebook page with photos of the working bee to encourage those that could not make it in future. This is probably the second-largest working bee turnout at this wetland since the Feb 1, 2015 ballot.

Project 5231: Other land.

In recent times there have been some divergences of opinion regarding plan rules and how they are being implemented when it comes to wetland restoration projects. For example, the classification of ephemeral and perennial watercourses and how WRC identify these.

Many of the projects we do are in concert with WRC catchment management officers who often augment funding streams in order to conduct mutually beneficial projects. Despite

this, in the past if we wanted members of the compliance team to conduct sites visits to ensure that all projects complied with relevant plan provisions we would be charged for their time and disbursements.

David got agreement from WRC compliance managers to free up some resourcing in order to take staff out to sites and ensure all agencies agree regarding the rules governing wetland restoration activities. At this stage, it has been agreed that 3 projects will be assessed on a trial basis to determine how well the process works and site visits were recently conducted. In our opinion it is always more beneficial to see the projects firsthand, meet landowners and get a complete understanding of project activities and where they will occur.

Project 5235: Trees.

Covid-19 and travel restrictions have meant that certain trees distributed some time back were not planted in a timely way. Staff moved these bags in the block concerned to water to ensure the bare-rooted trees remained in the best possible condition for the eventual plant-out that followed when restrictions were lifted.

Project 5241 Assessment and monitoring

Whanganui intake: Genesis Energy will be conducting monitoring this summer and we have agreed to survey stranding of fish if the western diversion shuts down in April.

Project 5311 Access

Several access issues have been resolved including new gates on the Kaniwhaniwha and Mangaohae. The Mangaohae gate was removed as it was not legal and the Kaniwhaniwha will stay in place with the agreement that anglers can use the paper road near the lime works to access the river.

Adam investigated the idea of using ground screws to install fishing platforms at Lakes Parkinson and Whatihua.

OUTPUT 3: PARTICIPATION

Project 5311: Access negotiation

Lake Okowhau

The easement that was required under Solid Energy consent for Lake Okowhau is not on any of the planning maps. John was told that the easement did not actually exist but this was later found to be incorrect. WAMS have been forwarded all of the relevant legal documentation and the easement has been included on their mapping system.

Public access report

Mischa prepared a report, requested by councillor Nigel Juby looking at the mechanisms available to try and increase public access to waterbodies for gamebird hunters and anglers. For example, the subdivision process can provide an opportunity to increase public access through the creation of esplanade reserves and strips. Conservation covenants can also be created by willing landowners to provide for public access and recreational opportunities.

The report found that because of the conflict of private property rights the best mechanism to create enduring public access is to incentivise it via the creation of conservation/open space covenants that contain conditions to provide for public access, in exchange for development rights in the form of subdivision of new smaller lots either in-situ or transferable to a more appropriate area in the relevant district. This is something Fish and Game can look at advocating for in future plan changes.

Project 5331: F&G Newspapers

The 2020 season supplement was sent out by email instead of standard mail with very little reaction from anglers. This was substantial cost savings and provided the opportunity for readers to follow links in the newsletter to buy a licence or to view the new camping and accommodation guide.

Recent phone surveys of our hunters have revealed that pheasant hunting is only pursued hard by comparatively few of them. As this seems like a wasted opportunity, staff asked some of our very best pheasant hunters what advice they would give a newbie in an article. The hope being that improved success will encourage more people to take advantage of the opportunities out there as upland bird numbers seem to be well-up following several dry years. This article has since been tweaked for the national F&G magazine to all licence-buyers, after our National Office publicity staff expressed interest in it.

Project 5341: Other publications

An article by John Dyer on game camera use around ponds, for instance, to monitor traps and feeders at all hours, to better inform management decisions, was recently published in the Ducks Unlimited magazine Flight. A second article on the history of waterfowl banding in NZ is in prep.

OUTPUT 5: LAW ENFORCEMENT

Project 5541: Ranging training

A review of this region's Closed Game Areas revealed the poor state of the Waikato Delta southern sign which has several times been shot, (are hunters sometimes their own worst enemy?). A recommended Pukekohe-based sign company has been approached for a quote to replace it and Franklin Acclimatisation Sub-Society Inc., invited to help with its' installation. Another Closed Game Area, this time in Whitianga area, has been part-subdivided and the annual game notice will need amending with the new title description.

Project 5841: National liaison.

Adam took part in the Freshwater Biosecurity Partnership meeting with MPI in Wellington to set the national freshwater program this team is currently revamping the Check Clean Dry message and broadening the scope of freshwater biosecurity.

B. Wilson,
Chief Executive