

AUCKLAND/WAIKATO FISH & GAME NEWSBRIEF

If you require further elaboration or clarification of items contained herein, or any other matters relating to F&G business, please don't hesitate to contact your local councillor or the office.

Matters arising from the Council Meeting of 17 October 2020

1. The Chairman, Grant Annan, welcomed our new RMA Officer, Clare Robertson, to her first Council Meeting.
2. It was agreed that Council write to the Chairman of the NZ Fish & Game Council expressing concern over the lack of consultation on their decision that the non-resident levy be treated as licence income for the budgeting process and that all non-resident reserves become general reserves.
3. Mr Wilson provided an update on the Cambridge WWTP consent application noting that an MOU had been signed with the Waipa District Council. Mr Klee informed councillors that the MOU committed the District Council to spend \$800,000 on environmental mitigation over the next six years.
4. Concern was expressed by Councillors over the decision by the NZ Fish & Game 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. 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 agreed that the Chairman of the NZ Council be informed of the concerns of Council over the decision to allow commercial preserves to continue, and the lack of consultation over this decision.
5. 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 agreed that the Chairman of the NZ Council be informed of Council's disappointment at the discontinuation of the mallard research levy and the lack of consultation with regions over this decision.
6. Council's current policies were reaffirmed. A new policy was approved that in negotiating mitigation agreements staff advocate for at least 50% of funds to be spent on environmental initiatives anywhere within the Auckland/Waikato region.
7. Mr Dyer's report on the Aka Aka Wetland was discussed. It was agreed that Mr Dyer contacts pondholders in the Aka Aka wetland and establish an association of pondholders to manage the Aka Aka wetland.
8. 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.

Matters Arising from the Chief Executive's Report

- 1. Arapuni Trout Release:** Trout yearlings were released in lakes Karapiro, Ototoa, Whatihua, Parkinson and Arapuni. Two thousand fish were tagged to evaluate the effectiveness of the sterile fish release in Lake Arapuni. One thousand non-sterilized and a one thousand sterile fish were tagged for the first of a three-year evaluation that will compare the two groups.
- 2. Game Harvest Survey:** The harvest survey data has been finalised for 2020. The average hours hunting waterfowl was the highest recorded since 2011, with a corresponding increase in harvest. This is likely due to a combination of the increase in season length and better conditions for hunting towards the end of the season with an increase in water levels which led to an improved success (high number of ducks per hour). There appears to be a tight coupling between number of hours hunting and number of ducks shot, but less so for paradise shelduck harvest which has shown a general increase. Mean pheasant harvest is continuing to maintain a steady rate despite an overall reduction in effort over time indicating either an increase in hunter proficiency or a greater availability of birds for hunters to harvest. In summary, while the lower duck harvest may in part be explained by more restrictive hunting regulations over the past decade and is showing some signs of increasing in the short term, the number of ducks available for hunters should continue to be a key focus for council.
- 3. Waikato District Plan:** We submitted three pieces of evidence for the hearing on the new Waikato District Plan – from David Klee specifically about earthworks in wetlands, from Ben Wilson about the importance of building maimai as a permitted activity, and earthworks in wetlands identified as Significant Natural Areas, and from Mischa Davis who addressed all the matters generally from a planning and legal perspective. The staff report recommended to support our request to exempt maimai from the setback rule that requires landowners to obtain a resource consent for building within 32 meters of a lake or wetland or 28 meters of the Waikato or Waipa river. Another success was having wetland enhancement/restoration earthworks in the rural zone made a permitted activity – provided those works meet the criteria of a “conservation activity”.
- 4. Healthy Rivers PC1:** 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.
- 5. Cambridge WWTP:** Late last year we filed a submission opposing the Waipa 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. David Klee and Adam Daniel attended expert conferencing to try and reach agreement with the applicants and WRC scientist on water quality matters. Subsequently, David has worked with the applicant and their consultants to develop an agreed set of conditions and an MOU that will ensure that reductions in contaminant loading will be achieved over appropriate timeframes.
- 6. Wetland development:** David Klee conducted 5 site visits with landowners wanting advice on wetland restoration and how to reduce their environmental impacts. He is assisting in the development of plans and funding applications. We are also assisting a landowner to construct 2 wetlands and received \$6000 in funding from the Game Bird Habitat Trust to conduct the earthworks.
- 7. Fishing Guide:** Adam Daniel and Roslyn Simmonds have just completed an Auckland/Waikato Fishing Travel Guide with 19 places to travel and fish within the region. The goal of the project is to increase domestic fishing tourism. The map of the sites corresponds to a brief description complete with other activities that are available that previous surveys have found to be important to our anglers.