

**CONFIRMED MINUTES OF THE 199th MEETING OF THE EASTERN FISH AND
GAME COUNCIL, HELD AT THE ROTORUA OFFICES OF FISH & GAME NEW
ZEALAND ON THURSDAY 8th DECEMBER 2022 AT 11.30AM**

Present

Crs Ngahi Bidois, Murray Ferris, Kevin Coutts, Debbie Oakley, Lindsay Lyons, Mike Jarvie, Mark Sceats, Alan Simmonds, Jay Tapsell, and Ken Combes.

IN ATTENDANCE

Arash Alaeinia, Kate Thompson, Anthony Van Dorp, Matt McDougall, Eben Herbert, Mark Sherburn (Eastern Fish & Game); Corina Jordan, Carmel Veitch (New Zealand Fish and Game Council); Pat Swift, Julian Hughes, and Barry Roderick.

1.0 WELCOME AND KARAKIA

- 1.1 Cr Ngahi Bidois (Chairman) opened the meeting at 11.35am and welcomed Corina Jordan (New Zealand Fish & Game CE), Barry Roderick, Councillors, and staff and invited Cr Jay Tapsell open with a karakia.
- 1.2 Arash Alaeinia acknowledged the Councillors service and contribution to Eastern Fish & Game over the past year and presented each with a small gift from the staff team.

APOLOGIES

- 2.1 Apologies were received from Crs. Geoff Thomas and Scott Nicol.
- 2.2 *Agreed (Murray Ferris/Ken Coombes) that the apologies for the 199th meeting of the Eastern Region Fish and Game Council be sustained. [22/12/2.2]*

3.0 MINUTES OF THE PREVIOUS MEETING (6 OCTOBER 2022)

- 3.1 *Agreed (Mike Jarvie/Debbie Oakley) that the minutes of the meeting held on 6 October 2022 be confirmed as a true and correct subject to the following amendment.*
 - 18.1 *Regional Amalgamation*
Remove date "19th of October 2022". [22/12/3.1]

4.0 IDENTIFICATION OF RESOLUTIONS FOR INCLUSION IN COUNCIL POLICY

- 4.1 No items were identified for inclusion in Council policy.

5.0 MATTERS ARISING

- 5.1 *18.3 Staff agreed to prepare a discussion paper on 'Reserves Access'.*

Cr Debbie Oakley queried today's agenda item which had been noted as 'for information only', yet a discussion paper was to be prepared? Cr Ngahi Bidois agreed that today's agenda item on 'Reserves Access' would be for information and discussion.
- 5.2 *10.9 Arash to provide details gleaned from previous licence holder surveys.*

Cr Lindsay Lyons queried the outcome of Arash's investigations. Arash responded advising that there had been very few surveys completed recently and the New Zealand Council were also interested in looking into the shifts in participation in more depth. He said that the information we have currently is that supplied by the licence working group.
- 5.3 *10.9 Why people had stopped buying a licence.*

Matt McDougall informed Council that a report had been completed a few years ago which had concluded across the board that competing hobbies and activities had impacted fishing and hunting participation. Arash had recently spoken with other local

business owners who also acknowledged the competition for time and money for other activities, and he expected that this would certainly be having an impact on fishing also.

6.0 NOTIFICATION OF ITEMS FOR GENERAL BUSINESS

6.1 Jay Tapsell – Little Waihi Estuary

7.0 CONFLICT OF INTEREST REGISTER

7.1 Cr Ngahi Bidois reminded Council of the need to disclose conflicts or potential conflicts of interest and advised that during discussions he as chair reserved the right to ask if a Councillor might be conflicted on a particular matter. Cr Lindsay Lyons said that the Auditor General’s office had produced an excellent document which outlined exactly what a conflict of interest is, how to manage conflicts of interest, and the varying degrees of conflict. Carmel Veitch advised that the document Lindsay refers to forms the basis of our own “Conflict of Interest Policy”.

7.2 No conflicts of interest were recorded.

8.0 UPDATE BY CORINA JORDAN (CEO OF NZFG)

8.1 Corina Jordan provided an update from her position as CEO of New Zealand Fish and Game which included the following:

- Introduction, including her career background, and passion for Fish & Game
- The future of Fish & Game and the challenges ahead of us as an organisation
- Preparation of a draft operational strategy and three-year plan
- Update on the review - no legislative changes would occur during this term of Government but many parts of the ISG report could be progressed

8.5 Cr Mark Sceats asked what was happening regarding the amalgamations and expressed concern over the lack of communications about this from the NZ Council? Corina Jordan responded advising that this Region’s future is in its own hands, regions will not be forced to amalgamate, there is no legislative changes coming through in this term of government. Corina provided an overview of the process to date which concluded with the Implementation Steering Group Report which is now with DOC. She confirmed that the Minister of Conservation had advised that they will not be progressing anything through legislative change and encourages the organisation to move on with implementing what it can do without legislative changes.

8.6 Cr Kevin Coutts also was concerned over lack of robust discussion about the proposed amalgamation options and Cr Murray Ferris advised that this Council was awaiting some further information from NZ Council on the amalgamation outcomes.

8.7 Arash Alaeinia agreed that there had been little information returned to regions to date but it was now clear that the work undertaken over the past 18-24 months has provided us with recommendations of which half involve legislative changes that will not occur during this term of government. There are however points raised through the review and various reports that are valid and we do need to consider these. From the 36 recommendations half of them do not require any change to legislation to implement, and of those, half are needed at a national level which all regions will feed into national policy and the remainder are purely for each region. He said his kaupapa will be to put all of this into a format to share with our Council with some more feedback from his own team with regards to what the future Eastern Fish & Game will look like. He will then invite Council responses and feedback. He said this is an exciting time, we are now

in charge of being able to shape the Eastern Fish & Game we want for future generations. Discussion on regional amalgamation is up to us to have those discussions if that is what we want. He acknowledged that this Council did not have as robust consultation periods as it could have had but it was consulted, it did receive the reports and it did make resolutions over preferred options.

8.8 To close the discussion Corina Jordan informed Council of the intention of the Wellington and Taranaki Fish & Game Councils decision to undertake an operational amalgamation. The New Zealand Council team will provide support to help them with this and will document it as test case for other regions should they be interested.

9.0 OPERATIONAL REPORTS

9.1 *Health and Safety Report* – Arash Alaeinia was happy to report no Health & Safety issues and the team continue to adhere to health & safety policies and appropriate communication is maintained.

9.2 *Agreed (Lindsay Lyons/Kevin Coutts) that Council receives the Health and Safety report. [22/12/9.2]*

9.3 *Finance Report* – Finance report was taken as read.

9.4 *Agreed (Ken Coombes/Mike Jarvie) that Council receives the Finance Report and approves payments for September and October 2022 totalling \$277,289.18. [22/12/9.4]*

9.5 *Agreed (Debbie Oakley/Murray Ferris) that Council approves the proposed budget figures for the Statement of Financial Position, Statement of Financial Performance and Cashflow for the 2022-2023 financial year. [22/12/9.5]*

9.6 *Management Report* – Cr Mark Sceats queried the “Error” references in item 1123 - Gamebird Hunter Survey. Matt McDougall explained that these were hyperlinks which were included in the full report but for this extract he had omitted to remove them and suggested to refer to the main document included within the papers for information. Other matters raised and discussed included:

D Oakley - Licence holder query re liberations to the crater lake at Rerewhakaaitu

L Lyons - Reduction in the number of ballots this year

K Coutts - Staff safety when attending ranging call outs

A Simmonds - Loss of access to fisheries and impact on licence sales eg Kaingaroa

9.7 *Licence Sales Report* – Kate Thompson provided a more recent update on licence sales and handed out some charts she had prepared prior to the meeting. Key points noted were:

- The variance to last season increased around opening of the Fishing season and is likely due to the poor weather at that time, however we are still tracking below last season YTD.
- 2022-23 LEQ's for resident anglers have declined by some 500 YTD when compared with the pre-covid season of 2018-19. For non-residents that figure was 126 YTD.
- Interestingly for the 2020-21 Season where we had next to no non-residents the resident LEQ's increased by 250 odd YTD compared with the 2018-19 season.
- Are we heading into a recession, people aren't spending the same, boat fishery regions have tended to be impacted more significantly than river fisheries.

Cr Lindsay Lyons was concerned with the decline in resident anglers and felt we need to do a better job of marketing to our local market prior to them arriving in the city for their holidays. Arash Alaeinia agreed with Lindsay's comments and spoke of projects

to be undertaken with RotoruaNZ but acknowledged that these will take time and results will not be seen straight away. He also reminded Council that we are still feeling the effects from the Covid era, we are also now going into a recession, and we are competing with lots of activities that are out there. There is also a plan from National to support a national campaign to promote fishing and hunting. Arash was more than happy to receive ideas from Councillors.

9.8 Chief Executive Review & Update

Arash Alaeinia updated Council further on more recent meetings he had undertaken with various parties in the Gisborne area and with staff of the Department of Conservation.

10.0 2021-22 PERFORMANCE REPORT

10.1 Cr Ngahi Bidois informed Council that he had been contacted by the auditor and commented that the audit report was excellent. He asked for questions from the floor. Barry Roderick asked whether any issues had been identified, Arash Alaeinia confirmed that there were none.

10.2 *Agreed (Mike Jarvie/Jay Tapsell) that Council adopts the Performance Report of the Eastern Fish and Game Council for the 2021-2022 year. [22/12/10.2]*

11.0 2023 GAME SEASON CONDITIONS

11.1 Matt McDougall informed Council that many of the 2023 Game Season Conditions were business as usual. He provided his reasoning behind the dates selected for the special black swan and pukeko seasons and additional information for consideration of the proposal to allow a one hen pheasant harvest. Since writing the item on the hen pheasant harvest, he had the opportunity to discuss with Nigel Simpson who had made some additional points to consider:

- by targeting hens, it is possible to take out a local population
- pheasant populations in many locations in NZ were not great
- consider a limited harvest in some areas where we know more about the populations
- introduce a permit system to limit the number of hens taken

Matt also informed Council that we have had a great mallard breeding season this year but unfortunately the hen population is still low. Over the last 4 years the mallard population has been quite depressed, so we are hoping, that with this year's positive breeding season, to see that turn around.

11.2 *Agreed (Ken Coombes/Mike Jarvie) that there is a special black swan season in Management Area A1 coinciding with the same period for a proposed special pukeko season 17 February - 25 February 2024 (i.e. one week and two weekends). [22/12/11.2]*

11.3 *Agreed (Lindsay Lyons/Kevin Coutts) that there is a special pukeko season 17 February - 25 February 2024 (i.e. one week and two weekends) for the Eastern Region. [22/12/11.3]*

11.4 *Agreed (Kevin Coutts/Lindsay Lyons) that the season for brown quail in the Eastern Region remains closed for the 2023-24 season. [22/12/11.4]*

11.5 Cr Ken Coombes had been in touch with the Wildfowlers Association who had been strongly opposed harvesting of hen pheasants the last time it was raised, and they remain strongly opposed. He believed a permit system would create a lot of work for our staff for no real benefit and did not see a strong demand from our licence holders

for this. Cr Kevin Coutts supported the status quo as he believed enough hens were taken accidentally.

11.6 *Agreed (Ken Coombes/Jay Tapsell) that Council does not support a one hen pheasant harvest for the 2023-24 Game Bird Season. [22/12/11.6]*

11.7 Crs Debbie Oakley and Mark Sceats were concerned about the remaining gaps in the Game Bird Schedule where dates and limits were yet to be completed.

11.8 Matt McDougall explained that we have a set policy (page 52/53 of agenda) that will determine the remaining season lengths and limits for species for which monitoring continues over the summer period. The policy is needed as the Game Season Conditions are required to be confirmed to the NZ Council in January before the Council meets again in February.

12.0 KAITUNA WETLAND BALLOT HOLDER ACCESS

12.1 In view of limited time for discussion Crs Kevin Coutts and Lindsay Lyons suggested holding over this item until the next meeting. Matt McDougall advised that he needed to know the outcome of this discussion as he was due to send out ballot holder permits which detailed access times. Cr Coutts was concerned that this was seen as an operational matter whereas he felt 'Access' is most certainly a governance issue.

12.1 Arash Alaeinia agreed that Governance does cover 'Access' but in the umbrella form and not in the nuances of each aspect. If we want to put it into policy form, then we should consider a policy for "Wetland Access" which would cover all wetlands. In relation to this incident, he believes the staff have come up with a viable access that deals with the issues that were raised. He also highlighted that only 3 of 75 people had commented as others have appreciated lack of vehicles because it means they have a better environment without vehicles scaring birds and causing reflections. We have suggested that we will issue a key (subject to \$50 bond) to those that have difficulty accessing their maimais due to a disability. He felt from an operational point of view we have dealt with the issue that was brought up, however if Council wished to create a policy, then he believed this should be for all wetland access.

12.2 Cr Debbie Oakley agreed that the proposal put forward by staff and management provided for the issues raised and Cr Ken Coombes suggested that in the future we could potentially allocate maimais which were closer to the gate for people who had difficulty walking into the reserve.

13.0 FUTURE TREATMENT OF NON-RESIDENT LEVY

13.1 Carmel Veitch provided some background to the introduction of the Non-Resident Licence and how the difference in price between the resident season category and the non-resident licence was to be classified as a levy. This Minister of Conservation had approved the Non-Resident licence on the basis that the additional 'levy' component would be set aside for improvement of back country fisheries management and the NZ Council resolved that each region would retain these funds as a dedicated fund in their region. In 2019/20 the Minister confirmed that the levy could be utilised for any fisheries management.

13.2 Cr Lindsay Lyons & Debbie Oakley both supported a National Pool for the additional funds as some Regions saw many non-resident anglers, but their licences were purchased in other larger regions. Kate Thompson wished to point out that due to this non-resident levy not being included in the calculations for budgets and licence fees previously it meant that we were in a stronger position when Covid saw non-resident

licence sales plummet than we would have been if we were relying on that revenue to support our operational budgets.

13.3 Council voted on the proposal to include the non-resident levy as general licence income from the 2023/24 financial year onward. Council agreed with this proposal nine in favour, one abstained.

13.4 *Agreed (Murray Ferris/Lindsay Lyons) that Council supported Option C regarding the use of existing non-resident levy reserves which outlines that these reserves should be maintained in the Regions for use until 2024/25 after which any balance will be merged into a National Pool. [22/12/13.4]*

14.0 1 OCTOBER OPENING

14.1 Cr Ngahi Bidois summarised the background to the Council's decision to change opening of lakes Tarawera, Rotoiti, and Okataina to the first Saturday in October and thanked Council for having the courage try something different. One of the key reasons for the change was to increase licence sales however he acknowledged licence sales have continued to decline. He said if we keep doing the same thing, we will continue to get the same result, so we must look at opportunities to increase participation. We have since had more feedback from our licence holders, our staff, and following further discussion at the October meeting it was clear to Council that our licence holders prefer the 1st of October opening.

14.2 Arash Alaeinia wish to acknowledge the work of Julian Hughes and Pat Swift who have campaigned hard on behalf of other anglers to have opening of the fishing season return to 1 October.

14.3 Pat Swift and Julian Hughes spoke to Council in support of changing the opening of these lakes back to 1 October. Pat believed that the main predictor of licence sales around opening was the weather, this year the weather was poor, and participation was down. Pat highlighted that next season the 1st Saturday opening would fall on the last weekend of the school holidays meaning two weeks of licence sales to those holidaying here would be lost. He also believed that with Taupo fishing so well recently many Taupo anglers were no longer buying the Fish & Game licence.

14.4 Cr Lindsay Lyons remained supportive of the 1st Saturday opening as his responsibility as a Councillor is to look at opportunities to increase participation and licence sales. He believed there was huge opportunity lost to those who were unable to take time of work during the week for the 1 October opening.

14.5 *Agreed (Debbie Oakley/Kevin Coutts) that Council withdraws the current state of Opening the 3 lakes (Tarawera, Rotoiti, Okataina) from 1st Saturday in October to the 1st of October. 9 in favour, 1 against (Cr Lindsay Lyons) [22/12/14.5]*

15.0 LIAISON OFFICER REPORTS

15.1 *Report from the Bay of Plenty Conservation Board.*

Arash Alaeinia advised that this report was included within the papers for information and Sara Carley had sent her apologies.

15.2 *Report from the Department of Conservation*

Arash advised that Zane Jensen had also sent his apologies.

15.3 *Report from the New Zealand Council*

Debbie Oakley's update had been circulated by email. Debbie had attended the recent Chairs meeting in Christchurch and wanted to point out that some of the legislative changes which were now not proceeding included amalgamations of regions, councillor numbers, and governance changes such as paid appointments. Barry Roderick

wanted to acknowledge the huge stresses placed on the Chairs of the New Zealand Fish & Game Council and believed that the sooner an independent chair is appointed on a paid basis the better. Debbie Oakley advised that unfortunately this is one matter that also required legislative change.

16.0 GENERAL BUSINESS

16.1 *Little Waihi Estuary*

Cr Jay Tapsell read his email that he had forwarded to the Chair and Manager regarding the degradation and pollution of the Little Waihi Estuary. As the estuary sits within the Eastern Fish & Game Region Jay was keen to hear the thoughts of the CE and staff about the negative impacts the poor water quality might have on our Fish & Game species and specifically our waterfowl. Key comments from the discussion follow:

- a small number of farmers have been wintering stock on the stop banks of the Pongakawa and Kaikokopu rivers feeding into the estuary.
- some farmers are doing great environmental work and are calling on Fish & Game to help but Fish & Game seems to have been muffled on matters relating to poor farming practices.
- ducks who locate themselves on effluent ponds seem to have a high resistance to E. coli, the main issue in our area is botulism which can get out of control very quickly if the conditions are right.
- environmental grievances are always very distressing for all of us, but we are however limited to battels that we can fight especially where it doesn't directly impact the species we manage.
- Fish & Game are incredibly supportive of any initiative to improve water quality, but in this case, we are torn as to whether Fish and Game should be the lead agency.
- given farmers have approached Fish & Game on this particular issue we should take interest in it.
- in prior years the Dirty Dairying campaign was very aggressive, and this Council was concerned over relationships with our farmers, but now Fish & Game seems to be standing back a bit too much.

17.0 PUBLIC EXCLUDED SESSION

17.1 *Agreed (Murray Ferris/Mike Jarvie) that pursuant to Section 48 (1) of the Local Government Official Information and Meetings Act 1987, the public be excluded at 2.34pm from the following parts of the proceedings of this meeting, namely, a discussion on sensitive matters pertaining to natural people. [22/12/17.1]*

The general subject of each matter to be considered while the public is excluded, the reason for passing this resolution in relation to each matter and the specific grounds under Section 48(1) of the Local Government Official Information and Meetings Act 1987 for the passing of this resolution are as follows:

GENERAL SUBJECT OF EACH MATTER TO BE CONSIDERED	REASON FOR PASSING THIS RESOLUTION IN RELATION TO EACH MATTER	GROUND(S) UNDER SECTION 48(1) FOR THE PASSING OF THIS RESOLUTION
Confirmation of public excluded minutes from Council meetings on 9 December 2021 and 7 April 2022.	Good reason to withhold exists under section 9 of the Official Information Act 1982	Section 48(1)(a)(ii)

This resolution is made in reliance on Section 48(1)(a) of the Local Government Official Information and Meetings Act 1987 and the particular interest or interests protected by Section 9 of that Act which would be prejudiced by the holding of the whole or relevant part of the proceedings of the meeting in public are as follows:

ITEM	REASON UNDER ACT	SECTION	PLAIN ENGLISH REASON
Protect the privacy of natural persons.	Sec. 9(2)(a)	Information provided identifies a particular person or can easily be connected with a particular person.	Once the person to whom the information relates consents to its disclosure.
Protect information which is subject to an obligation of confidence ... where the making available of the information would be likely to prejudice the supply of similar information, or information from the same source, and it is in the public interest that such information should continue to be supplied.	Sec 9(2)(ba)(i)	Disclosing the information would jeopardise the relationship with the supplier because the supplier may no longer trust the Council to hold its information in confidence.	Not unless there is a public interest in disclosure of the specific information.

Note:

Section 48(4) of the Local Government Official Information and Meetings Act 1987 provides as follows:

“(4) Every resolution to exclude the public shall be put at a time when the meeting is open to the public, and the text of that resolution (or copies thereof):

- (a) Shall be available to any member of the public who is present; and
- (b) Shall form part of the minutes of the Council.”

17.2 Agreed (Murray Ferris/Mike Jarvie) that Council moves out of public excluded at 3.20 pm. [22/12/17.2]

17.3 Agreed (Murray Ferris/Mike Jarvie) that the public be re-admitted to the meeting at 3.20pm. [22/12/17.3]

18.0 MEETING CLOSED

The meeting closed at 3.21pm.



Ngahi Bidois
Chairman

SUMMARY OF RESOLUTIONS

APOLOGIES

2.2 *Agreed (Murray Ferris/Ken Coombes) that the apologies for the 199th meeting of the Eastern Region Fish and Game Council be sustained. [22/12/2.2]*

3.0 MINUTES OF THE PREVIOUS MEETING (6 OCTOBER 2022)

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Remove date "19th of October 2022". [22/12/3.1]*

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9.4 *Agreed (Ken Coombes/Mike Jarvie) that Council receives the Finance Report and approves payments for September and October 2022 totalling \$277,289.18. [22/12/9.4]*

9.5 *Agreed (Debbie Oakley/Murray Ferris) that Council approves the proposed budget figures for the Statement of Financial Position, Statement of Financial Performance and Cashflow for the 2022-2023 financial year. [22/12/9.5]*

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Protect information which is subject to an obligation of confidence ... where the making available of the information would be likely to prejudice the supply of similar information, or information from the same source, and it is in the public interest that such information should continue to be supplied.	Sec 9(2)(ba)(i)	Disclosing the information would jeopardise the relationship with the supplier because the supplier may no longer trust the Council to hold its information in confidence.	Not unless there is a public interest in disclosure of the specific information.

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