

WELLINGTON FISH & GAME COUNCIL

**MINUTES OF MEETING OF THE WELLINGTON FISH & GAME COUNCIL, HELD ON
TUESDAY 26 MARCH 2019 AT 3.00PM AT UPPER HUTT COSMOPOLITAN CLUB, 11 LOGAN
STREET, UPPER HUTT**

1. Present:

Chairman Strato Cotsilinis, Councillors Paul Shortis, Colin Shore, Jim Cook, Richard McIntyre, Andrew McGregor, Aaron Passey, John Hancock, Chris O'Meara, Don Scott, Malcolm Francis,

2. In Attendance:

Staff: Phil Teal (Manager),

Wellington Conservation Board Member: Barry Ward

Licenceholders: Graham Milestone, Vivian Curruthan

3. Apologies:

Councillor Andy Tannock.

Staff: Dr Matt Kavermann, Hamish Carnachan Peter Wilson, Dr Adam Canning

It was then moved that:

the apologies be accepted.

Chris O'Meara/Don Scott

Carried

4. Confirmation of Agenda

Chairman Cotsilinis confirmed that an urgent late agenda item on the proposed changes to the firearms regulations would be inserted as item 5(a) – (after Matters Arising).

5. Conflicts of Interest

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

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

6. **Minutes of Previous Meeting of 12 February 2019**

After a brief discussion it was moved that:

the Minutes of the Meeting of Wellington Fish & Game Council of 12 February 2019 be approved as a true and correct record of the proceedings of that meeting.

Malcolm Francis/Chris O'Meara

Carried

7. **Matters Arising from Previous Meeting 12 February 2019**

Councillor Scott indicated that he didn't agree with Mr Smaile's comments that the relationship between farmers and Fish & Game was degrading, but Chairman Cottilinis noted that this was Mr Smaile's personal view that he was bringing this observation to the attention of Council.

Councillor O'Meara considered that members of the public at the previous Council meeting on 12 February 2019 were given too much latitude to speak during the formal part of the meeting. Further discussion suggested that it was preferential to take all input into subjects from members of the public attending (within reason) and such input shouldn't be confined at the Public Comments section of the meeting. It was confirmed that Councillors have the regular speaking rights during the meeting and potentially excessive input from the public at meetings would be actively managed if required.

8. **Minutes of Wellington Fish & Game Council Telephone Conference of 1 February 2019**

After a brief discussion of the information provided for paradise shelduck and black swan season condition recommendations made on 12 February 2019, it was moved that:

the Minutes of the Telephone Conference of Wellington Fish & Game Council of 1 February 2019 be approved as a true and correct record of the proceedings of that meeting.

Chris O'Meara/Colin Shore

Carried

9. **Proposed Firearms Control Legislation 2019**

Discussion ensued on the Arms (Prohibited Firearms, Magazines, and Parts) Amendment Bill and NZ Fish & Game Council's media and formal responses to the issue. The Bill seeks to remove semi-automatic firearms (defined as Military Style Semi-Automatics (MSSAs)), from circulation and the Bill achieves this by prohibiting semi-automatic firearms, magazines, and parts that can be used to assemble prohibited firearms.

Councillor McGregor sought clarification on interpreting whether any bans would apply to limits to the magazine capacity – including five shot capacity (of the magazine), and if detachable then may be illegal. Councillor Shortis also sought clarification as to how many hunters in the Wellington region would be affected by a ban on capacity in the magazine in excess of five limit. Councillor McGregor confirmed that Wellington region had a ban on the use of (non-factory fitted) magazine extensions for a number of years but magazine extensions are still commonly used by South Island hunters.

Councillor O’Meara did not agree with the approach undertaken by NZ Fish & Game Council on the firearms control debate. He considered that NZ F&GC CE should have kept a lower profile in the media rather than sacrificing the interests of a group of legal firearms owners – further expressing concerns that firearms controls that affect Fish & Game’s interests may result in the longer term.

Chairman Cotsilinis considered that NZ Fish & Game Council had taken that approach in order to have some influence in the direction of changes – or risk having none if they didn’t get involved. Councillor Shortis noted that on the Saturday morning (16 March 2019) that NZ F&GC had a teleconference that NZ F&GC would be asked for a public opinion on the matter and it would not be good to have ‘no comment’. The first press release for Monday was achieved by NZ F&GC consensus even though there was contrary opinion expressed during deliberations. The letter from NZ F&GC to the Prime Minister on Wednesday (20 March 2019) was intended to ensure Fish & Game would remain consulted in the political discussions that were ensuing.

Councillor Shortis indicated that he had just received a copy of the draft submission by NZ F&GC to the Select Committee that reiterates the media release. Councillor Shortis verbally covered the main points of the submission:

1. Ban all military style semi-automatic rifles
2. Ban all military style semi-automatic shotguns
3. High capacity shotgun and rifle magazines
4. All existing shotguns be “irreversibly modified” to limit capacity to five shots
5. Properly fund a buy-back scheme of all firearms affected.

There were also some questions on exemptions for pest control purposes and a potential argument for exemptions for goose control but this would have to be strictly controlled.

Councillor McGregor noted that the magazine capacity for shotguns is proposed to be five but was unsure why Fish & Game would be actively

commented on rifles. There was an awareness of trying to get an industry approach to advise Government, but he considered that NZ F&GC's CE's comments were not Fish & Game's mandate, and comment should be limited to shotguns. Councillor Francis noted that comment should focus on what is relevant to Fish & Game (and to the licenceholders). Further discussion considered that rifles could be included if referring to the wider definition of "hunter" (and cross-over of those using both rifles and shotguns) and whether there was a moral obligation to protect all hunters' interests. It was acknowledged that Fish & Game were trying to protect the interests of ~40,000 licenceholders and garner political capital and public opinion support. It was concluded that Fish & Game should not comment outside its legislation. Councillor Shortis noted that the approach undertaken on the NZ F&GC CE was to acknowledge the anti-firearm climate and the need to find the middle ground where Fish & Game could be instructive and supportive to maintain game bird hunting activity.

Further discussion ensued on the firearms registers and their potential (in)effectiveness – and also given that there are no statistics on numbers of magazines required to be modified. Councillor Shortis noted that the submission was developed to support the activities of the vast majority of firearm owners who hunt game birds. Discussion ensued on the practicality of modifying guns which could be expensive and void warranties – with options for this small group of hunters likely to be:

- (1) modify,
- (2) buy-back,
- (3) phase out period, and
- (4) (a suggested option) for stricter control,

It was then moved that

Wellington Fish & Game Council encourage NZ Fish & Game Council to focus on its own legislative responsibilities and not submit on proposed firearms laws that involve rifles;

Wellington Fish & Game Council encourage NZ Fish & Game Council to advocate for another option to deal with field shotguns with capacity in excess of five in magazine to have a special stricter control category.

Malcolm Francis/Aaron Passey

Carried

It was acknowledged that Councillor Shortis might be most effective in expressing the views of Wellington Council directly to NZF&GC given the timeframes involved.

10. NZ Council Meeting – 16 February 2019

Councillor Shortis provided an overview of the governors meeting on Friday 15 February 2019 and the NZ Council meeting on Saturday 16 February 2019. He noted that there were good speakers that were designed to align all councillors on their governance roles and responsibilities for Fish & Game.

Chairman Cotsilinis confirmed that the Governors meeting focused on governance responsibilities. Chairman Cotsilinis noted that while the NZ F&GC CE had previously indicated that significant changes were necessary for the sustainability of the organisation, this was not a major focus of the forum. It was noted that if any significant changes or decisions are made, these needed to be communicated wider and be more inclusive, rather than appearing as a directive from centralised decision-making. It was noted that three audits on regional Fish & Game Council governance had given a signal to all Fish & Game regions to make sure governance practices were in order.

Councillor Shortis confirmed that for the NZ Fish & Game Council on 16 February 2019 was largely held with in –committee conditions. He indicated that the main points of the meeting were:

- Finance and finance structures;
- Raising external funds (committee was set up)
- An overview of the R3 programme was presented
- Issue of potential restructuring the non-resident fishing licence (more of an issue for other areas in the South Island than Wellington region) – no resolution.

Discussion ensued on how resource allocations could be actively managed – Councillor Francis noted in the US some rivers were only open for ‘local’ resident anglers; Other tools existed usch as allocating 30% overseas anglers/70% NZ anglers although there had been several submissions made to the Human Rights Commission (by mainly Australian anglers) contesting the legality of this approach.

The In-Committee discussions focused on the three audits:

1. North Canterbury – audit complete. North Canterbury Fish & Game Council has accepted all 10 recommendations.
2. Central South Island – currently a completed draft that has been provided to CSI for comment.
3. Hawke’s Bay – focused on governance issues – but principal purpose of audit is looking at potential and/or perceived conflict of interests.

This has provided an opportunity for wider discussion on what is ‘a conflict of interest’ and Fish & Game need to be sure that they are managed well.

Currently conflicts of interest are dealt with in Council meetings by determining if the person leaves the room, has no vote but can talk on the issues, or waive conflict of interest as being no more than minor. All this must be well recorded especially if later challenged and audits are undertaken.

Chairman Cotsilinis reinforced that all councillors were at meetings as governors to look after issues affecting fish and game (and licence holders interests) and other issues are secondary when topics are discussed. It is preferred to include all councillors in any discussions as this provides for full and frank considerations of issues.

Councillor Shortis confirmed that he had been voted onto the executive committee of the NZ F&GC.

It was then moved

That the report of Councillor Shortis on the NZ Fish & Game Council meeting held on 16 February 2019 be received

Colin Shore/Malcolm Francis

Carried

11. Public Participation

Barry Ward (Deputy Chair Wellington Conservation Board) noted that Fish & Game is a key partner. He noted that the new Conservation Management Strategy was operational in January of this year, and implementing actions that result from the strategy will be elements that involve Fish & Game.

Vivien Curruthans noted that she was impressed with the way issues had been dealt with at this Council meeting. She expressed a concern on the works on the Hutt River and Ruamahanga rivers with flood protection works being undertaken by the regional council. Councillor Shortis noted that there was much work being undertaken by Fish & Game including submissions on the Upper Ruamahanga Floodplain Management Plan. Mr Teal also provided an overview of the work by staff on liaising with GWRC on the works on the Hutt River to protect State Highway 2, submissions on the Upper Ruamahanga FWMP, and global consents for the western rivers of GWRC region.

12. Health & Safety Update

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

It was then moved that

The Health & Safety Report for February and March be received

Chris O'Meara/Paul Shortis

Carried

13. Strategy Planning Discussions

Mr Teal provided an overview of the *Strategic Discussion Summary* that had been undertaken at the previous Council meeting. Councillor Scott noted that Wellington F&GC needed to confirm its strategic initiatives including developing wider participation of younger and older anglers through easy access reservoir fish out ponds.

It was then moved

to receive the report Summary of Strategic Discussions – Wellington Fish & Game Council

Jim Cook/Don Scott

Carried

14. Draft Budget for 2019/2020 Annual Plan

Mr Teal provided an overview of the budget prepared for the 2019/2020 financial year outlining changes in project priority if required. There were several elements discussed that required determination as to whether to absorb increased costs or to seek additional contestable funding during the budget process from the wider organisation:

- Budget deficit approved by NZ Council- which essentially required funding from reserves.
- CPI increase for salaries in-line with contractual conditions and organisational consistency, and other salary adjustments
- Office premises expenses required modest adjustment;
- Staff resources to support junior angling and fish in schools programme – currently over allocated for time resources.
- Backcountry Public Liability Insurance for Upper Rangitikei River reduced to approximately \$2000.

Council discussed salary reviews including separating out:

- Market adjustments – due to market pressures
- Merit adjustments – recognising moving through pay bands
- CPI adjustments

Council noted that it was necessary to retain good staff and it was seen as a requirement to pay accordingly – in both relative terms to the organisation and the wider market.

It was moved that

Wellington Fish and Game Council approve contestable fund bids for salary adjustments for both salary merit adjustments, salary market adjustments, and appropriate organisational CPI adjustments.

Paul Shortis/Malcolm Francis

Carried

It was then moved that

Wellington Fish and Game Council adopt the draft 2019/2020 budget for the Annual Plan (subject to contestable funding application process)

Don Scott/Jim Cook

Carried

15. Infringement Notice Compliance and Enforcement Policy

Mr Teal outlined the document “*Fish & Game New Zealand Infringement Notice Compliance and Enforcement Policy*” dated February 2019, which is intended to form the basis for discussions of draft National Policy in the near future.

Councillor Scott commended the good quality of preparation of the documents and made specific comments on the draft National Policy for Prosecutions for future reference when formal consultation was being undertaken:

- Paragraph 10 – signals that Council needs to formally delegate powers to appear in court to the regional manager/chief executive;
- Paragraph 14 – refers to reparation – which will not continue
- Appendix 1- The ‘Public Interest’ test Paragraph 4 (j) refers to reparation – which will not continue

It was then moved

To receive the documents “Fish & Game New Zealand Infringement Compliance and Enforcement Policy” dated February 2019 and draft National Policy on Prosecutions

Don Scott/Jim Cook

Carried

16. Policy Review Update

Mr Teal updated Council on listing a policy review timetable. Councillor Scott offered assistance in developing a list of policy review priorities.

17. Upland Game Properties

Mr Teal provided an overview of the progress made by NZ F&G Council and Department of Conservation to list several of the Game Preserves under schedule 3 of the Wildlife Act rather than processing under the Game Notice. At this stage three of the four properties had indicated their preference for consideration from schedule 3 and one was ambivalent to being considered as previous seasons.

It was then moved

That Council receive the update report on treatment of Upland Game Properties with Special Conditions as at March 2019

Malcolm Francis/Chris O’Meara

18. Fish Regulations Review

Preliminary consideration of conditions for sports fishing to be recommended in the Angling Notice in June, was given by Council - topics that had been brought to the attention of staff.

Treble Hook Overview

Mr Teal gave a brief overview that angling clubs had been discussing the issue, citing specific local examples.

Councillor Francis confirmed that he had contact angling clubs for their opinions and feedback. There was concern that treble hooks are not used in Taupo fishing district, and that specific examples of dead fish had been attributed to use of treble hooks (or by mishandling during catch and release). There had been several scientific studies undertaken that had preliminary indications that smaller fish had more stress from catch and release than larger fish – but there was no compelling reasons to ban treble hooks. There examples of a number of popular spinners that do not function as effectively without treble hooks attached – and for some it might be a specific requirement .

Councillor Scott had also researched some aspects of treble hook use and concluded that they are not that bad, certainly on larger fish. He considered that education on how to treat and release fish might be more beneficial.

It was agreed that Councillor Francis would attempt to get the summary of the use of treble hooks from Taupo District researcher that formed a basis for decision making there. Councillor Shortis would also seek further information to assist in developing an impact report.

Councillor O’Meara noted that this issue had been canvassed many years ago with the conclusion that treble hooks per se were not a problem overall.

19. R3 Marketing Programme

Steve Doughty (Consultant to NZ F&GC) presented an overview of the R3 programme. He confirmed that the biggest motivating factor was compliance - to procuring a licence was to legally fish or hunt. He noted that there had been a change in perceptions in the last ten years where the perceived value for money (a surrogate measure for satisfaction) had gone from 67% in 2001 to 52% in 2012 to 40% in 2019. He outlined the social support model where new anglers and hunters recruited into the pursuit were supported by mentors or peers. He reaffirmed that Fish & Game

needed customer insight for motivations and identification of customer needs.

Mr Doughty outlined a case study of Fish Out Days to recruit and retain anglers – and concluded that you predominantly needed adult (parent) retention for child retention.

Mr Doughty concluded that **Reel Life** ezine was not popular, was considered old hat, and had a diehard core group of readers getting information they didn't really want. He summarised that **Reel Life** was intended to be subscriber based and be based on an Electronic Delivery Mail System (EDMS). He considered that **Reel Life** as a communication tool was the best opportunity to communicate with anglers but currently was very messy with confusing messaging. Councillor Shortis noted that the recent surveys focussed on existing **Reel Life** readers so any results would be skewed from existing readers – even though 5000 responses were garnered. Councillor Francis questioned why so much of the **Reel Life** content had been persisted with.

Mr Doughty noted that there was not currently a resource for marketing. He considered the main issues to focus on were:

1. Access – standardise a format for access and a template to complete, with a commitment to keep up to date
2. EZIne – need to develop content and enhance user experience. The 'brand' **Reel Life** is "dead" and its replacement should become a primary source of information for the customer
3. Lapsed Customer Contact – what is being done for reactivation of lapsed customers.

Mr Doughty also noted that the website requires significant upgrade to improve customer experience.

Council thanked Mr Doughty for his presentation and discussion.

Council business was suspended at 6.20pm for dinner and reconvened at 7.05pm.

20. Indigenous Fish Bill Update

Mr Teal indicated that the Select Committee had extended their hearing period till 4 April 2019 to allow for hearing of individual submissions.

21. One Plan Implementation Update

Mr Teal noted that there had not been any external progress made by Horizons Regional Council on potential changes to Table 14.2 of the One Plan and potential plan changes to be more permissive under specific circumstances.

22. Wairarapa Water Irrigation Project Update

There had been no formal updates from Water Wairarapa but the (Wairarapa Economic Development Strategy) WEDS Governance Group chair, Dame Margaret Bazley had confirmed in news reports that applications had been made to the Ministry of Regional Economic Development for further funding of irrigation project feasibility.

23. Lake Wairarapa Management Update

Mr Teal noted that there had been no progress publicly on the Treaty settlement.

Councillor Shortis noted that enthusiasm for raising the lake had waned since the issues of flooding wader habitat had been highlighted by Birders NZ and DoC.

Mr Teal drew attention to the paper by Dr Kavermann "*Yules Lagoon Restoration and Management for the 2019 Gamebird Season.*" Councillor Shore noted that willow spraying on Yules Lagoon should not proceed until November and up to three maimais needed replacing - once the willows had been sprayed.

24. Research Update

Mr Teal presented a summary of the research needs for the organisation following an exercise that he had undertaken to identify information needs and then undertake a prioritisation of these. This should form the basis for research moving forward and can be updated each year.

25. Junior / Novice Participation

Mr Teal provided a brief overview of the Otaki Fishing Day held in mid-February 2019 and it was acknowledged the contribution of Dr Kavermann in making the event a success – as well as the great support from the two angling clubs in the District: Horowhenua Freshwater Angling Club and Kapiti Fly Fishing Club.

26. Access Issues Update

Mr Teal provide a brief update of access issues at sites listed, with active management for hunters required at several sites: Otaki River Mouth, Pencarrow lakes, Koitiata lake, and Waitarere Forest. It is unlikely that

access will be achieved for hunters at Tangimoana Forest or Tawhirihoe Scientific Reserve for this year.

It was moved

That Council receive the Access Issues update report

Jim Cook/Paul Shortis

Carried

27. Management Report - 1 February to 14 March 2019

Clarification was sought on a number of matters, with it confirmed that Zealandia Sanctuary are initiating discussions with Regional Council and DoC to poison the lower lake reservoir.

It was then moved that

The Management Report for the period 1 February 2019 – 14 March 2019 be received.

Malcolm Francis/Chris O'Meara

Carried

28. Fish & Game Licence Sales

Mr Teal referred to the summary in the project report documents noting that licence sales for fish were similar to previous year's sales.

It was moved that

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

Don Scott /Chris O'Meara

Carried

29. Expenditure and Financial Report

Chairman Cottilinis provided an overview of the key financial reporting.

After brief discussion it was moved

That the Expenditure Report to 28 February 2019 and Financial Transactions for January and February 2019 be received

Don Scott/Richard McIntyre

Carried

30. Correspondence

Correspondence and media items were briefly discussed.

31. Contribution Recognition

This item was deferred as no recipients were available for this meeting.

32. General Business

There being no further business the meeting was concluded at 7.40pm.

Next Meeting to be held: Wairarapa RSA and Club , 20 Essex Street
Masterton on 11 June 2019 at 3.00pm.

Chairman _____ Date _____