

## **WELLINGTON FISH & GAME COUNCIL**

**MINUTES OF MEETING OF THE WELLINGTON FISH & GAME COUNCIL, HELD ON TUESDAY 23 MARCH 2021 AT 4.00PM HELD AT CLUB WAIRARAPA, 20 ESSEX STREET, MASTERTON.**

**1. Present:**

Chairman Strato Cotsilinis, Councillors Malcolm Francis, Aaron Passey, Paul Shortis, Don Scott, John Hancock, Colin Shore, Jim Cook\*, Richard McIntyre\*

\* Via Zoom video link

**In Attendance:**

Fish and Game Staff: Phil Teal (Regional Manager), Dr Matt Kavermann.

Licence Holders: Bryce Johnson, Robert Sowman.

**2. Apologies:**

Councillors Andy Tannock, Andrew McGregor, Chris O'Meara, Richard McIntyre (part), Jim Cook (part)

Staff: Hamish Carnachan, Nathan Field

It was moved

***that apologies be accepted***

**Aaron Passey/Malcolm Francis**

Carried

**Welcome and Confirmation of Agenda**

Chairman Cotsilinis welcomed the Council and public, and outlined potential changes to the agenda due to time constraints and to prioritise items that needed immediate decisions and/or Council endorsement. He acknowledged that the meeting was delayed allowing local councillors to attend a bereavement function.

**3. Conflict of Interest**

Councillor Shortis identified a potential conflict of interest on certain items in that he was currently Acting Chief Executive of NZ Fish and Game Council.

There were no other additional conflicts of interest that were identified specific to the agenda.

Mr Teal confirmed that the Conflict of Interest management plan would be updated if new conflicts of interest were identified or Council chose to deal with a managing a conflict in a different way.

**4. Minutes of Previous Meeting of 9 February 2021:**

After brief discussion it was moved that

***the Minutes of the meeting of the Wellington Fish & Game Council of 9 February 2021 be approved as a true and correct record of the proceedings of that meeting.***

**Don Scott/Colin Shore**

Carried

**5. Matters Arising:**

It was confirmed that Robin Holmes from Cawthron Institute would be invited at a subsequent Wellington Council meeting and that there had been no announcements of confirmation of funding of the application to the Endeavour Fund to consider the project relating to freshwater fisheries governance.

Councillor Shortis noted that there were considerable funding opportunities through FORST which were not even being considered by Fish and Game (either sole or multi-party collaboration).

It was confirmed that each of the TLA's would be asked for rates rebate for conservation purpose land.

Mr Teal confirmed the actions completed from the previous meeting but no specific matters arising were discussed.

**6. NZ Fish and Game Council Business**

Councillor Shortis noted that there had recently been a Zoom video meeting of NZ Council to discussion principles for budget foundations.

Councillor Shortis confirmed that a recruitment process was underway for the position of Chief Executive of NZ Fish and Game Council and was being undertaken by an external agency.

Councillor Shortis confirmed that the release of the Ministerial Review was planned for just after Easter (post 6 April 2021). It was being proposed for release to all councillors in a tiered release basis – NZ Fish and Game Council, regional Fish and Game Council chairs, regional CEs/Managers, regional Fish and Game staff, regional Fish and Game councillors, and then publicly. The exact nature of how the release would occur will be informed closer to the date of release agreed by the Minister.

Councillor Shortis explained that an interim short-term contractor was sought for the Chief Executive's role while the full time position appointment was being confirmed – but there were no candidates willing to uptake the role given the short term nature of the role. He reconfirmed that he would abstain from any votes that conflict with Wellington Council's position and statutory role and NZ Fish and Game Council's role and positions. He had an expectation that there would be a period of about three months for the recruiting process and transition requirements of any prospective successful candidate. The timetable for CE recruitment was also complicated by the Ministerial Review release – as any offer would not be made until after the Review is released.

Councillor Passey sought clarification as to whether there was time in the recruiting process for the CE NZF&GC for NZ Council to review the long-term strategy and align the CE's attributes to that strategy. It was confirmed that there would be an obvious awareness of the requirements of the candidates and the tasks facing the new CE following appointment.

Councillor Shortis confirmed that the purpose of the Fish and Game Governors meeting on 16 April 2021 was to socialise the Ministerial Review recommendations and determine how any implementation processes would proceed.

After further brief discussion it was moved that

***The report from Councillor Shortis as Wellington appointee on NZ Fish and Game Council of NZ Fish and Game Council activities for February and part March 2021 be received***

**Malcolm Francis/Don Scott**

Carried

**7. Election of Wellington Appointee for NZ Fish and Game Council**

Chairman Cotsilinis outlined the requirement to elect an alternate appointee to NZ Fish and Game Council.

The current appointee for Wellington region to the NZ Fish and Game Council, Paul Shortis, has taken up the role of acting Chief Executive of NZ Fish and Game Council for a short period until a full-time replacement had been selected and appointed. This placed Councillor Shortis in a position where there may be a perceived conflict of interest – which has been proactively managed up until this time.

As discussed earlier in the meeting, Mr Shortis was confirmed in the acting CE role for an extended period following a search for other suitable

candidates to undertake the duties for a short period – but no candidates were suitable for that time frame. NZ Council considered it was a better option to retain Mr Shortis in that role – and actively seek a full-time replacement and work in with follow up requirements from the Ministerial Review.

An appropriate way to manage the perceived conflict was agreed for Wellington Fish and Game Council to appoint someone else for at least the duration of Councillor Shortis having the acting CE role – noting that it would be up to the discretion of Wellington Council if this was a temporary or permanent appointment.

It was then moved that nominations be accepted for appointee for Wellington region to NZ Fish and Game Council

***Richard McIntyre***

**Strato Cotsilinis/Don Scott**

There being no further nominations Councillor McIntyre was confirmed as Wellington region Appointee to NZ Fish and Game Council.

**8. Public Forum**

Chairman Cotsilinis invited members of the public to present items for discussion in the public forum.

There were no specific items brought forward for discussion to Council.

**9. 2021/2022 Draft Annual Budget and Plan**

Chairman Cotsilinis and Mr Teal outlined the principles by which the budget was drafted:

- set on previous year's budget constraints to deal with uncertainties associated with the COVID-19 pandemic response (based on 5% savings on base funding and up to 10% could be taken from reserves)
- the funding for the position of Senior Environmental Planner (\$~80K) be transferred to NZ F&GC budget for Resource Management Advocacy.
- Contestable funding would be limited to addressing changes in RM advocacy arrangements in the short term, and funding approaches that would be applied commonly across all regions.
- noting that budgets might be affected by licence sales and
- noting that budgets might be affected by changes outlined in the Ministerial Review depending on the how quickly the implementation of changes occurred.

Councillor Shortis noted that the RM advocacy resources in larger regions were adequate for most consenting processes and for some, but not all, regional planning processes. Part of the existing (but vacant) senior environmental planner's role was to co-ordinate functions across the country and the intention was for the CE of NZF&GC to develop a framework to co-ordinate the function collaboratively with regional RM staff.

Mr Teal confirmed that a contestable fund application would be appropriate to conclude regional planning processes that we are currently engaged in GWRC Natural Resources Plan, Horizons Plan Change2 One Plan, and also the Marlborough regional plan and Hawke's Bay plan changes to their regional plan. This would be seen in lieu of what services were expected from the role had it been maintained.

Mr Teal confirmed that most regional Fish and Game councils would be seeking consideration of at least CPI on staff salaries, and it would be prudent to seek a budget adjustment for Wellington region.

Mr Teal also noted that the extraordinarily low interest rates on term deposits had affected several regions (as this was considered a material income item) – but this affected Wellington region less so as he had conservatively matched this to managing the asset replacement fund reserve.

Chairman Cotsilinis noted that it is made harder without the findings of the Ministerial Review being released, but Fish and Game councils had to continue with the budgeting process with what was currently known. He further noted that even if some material changes occurred as a result of the review that any large-scale changes would likely be reflected over a relatively long timeframe for implementation.

It was confirmed that all projects additional to those planned in the Annual Plan that required funding needed to be budgeted now, and potentially a contestable fund bid prepared if it could not be incorporated in the current proposed draft budget.

Councillor Francis noted that a fishing site located at Otaki had been used previously to generate the interest of potential young anglers (9-15 years old), but currently there were no facilities to provide an opportunity to catch fish. He noted that there had been an increase in interest by public and membership for freshwater angling opportunities from this project, and he expressed the preference for a more permanent site to manage, including other sites that might become available (e.g. Otara Park, Waikanae). Councillor Scott noted that the facility could focus on a wide range of age

groups including retaining older anglers in the pursuit. Chairman Cotsilinis considered that this should be revisited in strategic discussions in the future (such as those summarised in the agenda on pages 37-39) but given the potential budget constraints principles being used it would not be put forward as a contestable fund application for this upcoming year.

It was then moved that the

***Draft budget and annual plan for 2021-2022 used for the organisation's internal budget setting process be approved.***

***Contestable funding projects would be limited to the common regional approach being taken to CPI salary adjustments, the common regional approach in dealing with deferred interest revenue, and funds to transition the RM advocacy resource for cases currently in train given the change in RM advocacy arrangements.***

**Aaron Passey/Don Scott**

Carried

**10. Application to Hold Game Birds – Wellington Bird Rehabilitation Trust**

Dr Kavermann outlined the application to DOC from the Wellington Bird Rehabilitation Trust and the liaison required by DOC with Fish and Game in consideration of the application. Dr Kavermann considered that there was not enough information provided and that DOC should seek that further information. This included clarification on the poor animal husbandry practice of using cable ties as markers on released birds.

It was moved that

***Advice be provided to DOC to decline the application until further and full information is provided***

**Aaron Passey/John Hancock**

Carried

It was agreed that the Bird Rehabilitation Trust provides a positive function of rehabilitating birds that have numerous causes of illness or injury, and that Fish and Game would proactively work with DOC and the Trust to complete the application fully. It was confirmed that there are several templates available (including Eastern Region staff – Dr Kavermann to request copy) on defining the permits to hold and this application should not be treated any differently.

**11. Management Report for the Period 1 February 2021 to 12 March 2021**

Mr Teal provided an overview of the Management Report for the recent period. He highlighted work undertaken by Ami Coughlan (RM/Research Officer) which provided guidance of where native fish that are susceptible to

predation are located in rivers and lakes in NZ and is being further refined for potential guidance on management actions for Fish and Game.

Mr Teal noted that the GWRC Natural Resources Plan appeals continue – and that this has been complicated with the departure of the senior environmental planner who had been the principal representative in the mediation hearings of recent months. It appears that there is only one main unresolved issue around how the plan deals with consenting of land intensification in parts of the (principally the Ruamahanga) catchment that are over-allocated.

Mr Teal noted that \$3.5M funding had been allocated for work on Wairarapa Moana as part of a central government sponsored ‘spade ready’ project to create jobs. The workshop to provide input into funding options for the monies was cancelled – and relying on broad conceptual plans and removes transparency for funding and/or effectiveness (especially in terms of jobs created). There was reference to GWRC consulting with Fish and Game on project developments – which stemmed from the Governance Board meeting in February.

Mr Teal noted that the Waikanae River conservation collective have not publicly communicated the details on how jobs will be created and details on the extent of fencing and planting in the catchment. There has been \$8.5M allocated to the project and Fish and Game is still seeking details on the expected conservation legacy outcomes and over 90 jobs developed.

Councillor Passey sought clarification as to whether trout had been excluded from at Mt Bruce/Pukaha stream – with it confirmed that only limited efforts were made in that regard several years ago.

Councillor Passey also sought clarification on the actions being undertaken by Horizons Regional Council on the lowering of Lake Kaikokopu – the Horizons’ compliance team have an awareness of the issues around the lake outlet but resolution appears long term and compliance action unlikely due to lack of robust evidential data.

Councillor McIntyre joined the meeting at 4.55pm (via zoom video link).

After further brief discussion it was moved that

***Council receive the Management Report for period 1 February 2021 to 12 March 2021 be received.***

**Malcolm Francis/Don Scott**

Carried

Chairman Cotsilinis acknowledged with Councillor McIntyre that he had been elected as Wellington region appointee for NZ Fish and Game Council. (acclamation).

**12. Licence Sales report**

Chairman Cotsilinis provided an overview of the fishing licence sales noting that 2020/21 fish licence sales LEQs were up significantly (7.5%) compared to last year (+150 LEQs). Mr Teal noted that while non-resident licence sales Wellington had declined (from 152 to 24 over the same period as previous year), there was a resurgence in interest from NZ anglers that resulted in more domestic licence sales. This was also reflected across most regions across NZ – with low non-resident licence sales (due to restricted travel during COVID 19 restrictions), and higher local angler participation. This had been the best sales figures since the introduction of sub-category licences in 2017.

After brief discussion it was moved that

***The licence sales reports for Fish Licence Sales 2020/2021 as at 4 March 2021 be received***

**Colin Shore/John Hancock**

Carried

The potential to track non-resident licence holders from the US and the effectiveness of requesting a potential for gift was relatively limited in effectiveness (about \$6000 generated) – with some comments considering it appeared to be a ‘begging’ letter rather than providing a personal value added proposition.

Councillor Francis queried whether there are/will be any plans for promotion of winter fishing opportunities to Australian anglers to partially make up the downturn in the non-resident licence sales. Councillor Shortis confirmed that around half of the overseas anglers were Australian in origin – and a principal destination was likely to be Otago/Southland regions – with local anglers in those regions appearing resistant to lots of Australian anglers fishing waters open in winter.

**13. Expenditure Report/Financial Transactions**

The summary of income and expenditure to 28 February 2021 was considered. Chairman Cotsilinis noted that the actual revenue was tracking well to budget but the gamebird licence sales were yet to be come. Councillor Shortis noted that it would likely be a challenge to get 100% of licence sales and 90% achievement of budget would be seen as positive. The anecdotal accounts are that many are unable to travel overseas and have



been looking for NZ domestic tourism opportunities and activities to undertake – which has benefitted licence sales for trout fishing.

It was noted that there were delays (up to 6-9 months) in processing Firearms Licences by NZ Police and this might impact on game hunting licence sales given the extent of backlog – and technical nature of use and storage of firearms with a valid firearms licence. It was noted that a letter had been sent from NZ Fish & Game Council to the Minister of Police requesting extension of the expiry date of the firearms licences concerned (e.g. a one-year grace period) but no response had yet been received.

It was then moved

***Receive and Accept the Expenditure Reports to 28 February 2021 and Financial Transactions for January and February 2021.***

**Don Scott/Aaron Passey**

Carried

Mr Teal noted that he would be actively assessing vehicle replacement as it had been deferred for over six months in the planned conservative replacement cycle.

Mr Teal noted he had received an update to the standard accepted travel expense rate recommended by the IRD, after which it was moved

***that the travel expense per km for any vehicle be update to 82 cents per km***

**Aaron Passey/Coln Shore**

Carried

Mr Teal informed Council that their main bank ANZ Bank required an update of various items to provide modern banking options.

**1. Update signatories:**

After brief discussion it was moved

***Confirm that the signatories for Wellington Fish and Game Council ANZ bank accounts:***

***Strato Cotsilinis Chairman***

***Phil Teal Chief Executive/Regional Manager***

***Corinne Deans Administration Manager***

***Jilli Steedman Financial Reporting***

***Confirm Remove Susan Wray***

***Retired/Casual worker***

**Malcolm Francis/Aaron Passey**

Carried

## **2. Processing Monthly Payments**

Mr Teal provided an overview of the current double electronic authorisation protocols used in ANZ Directonline - but this service option is likely to be discontinued. ANZ have advised that it is possible to retain the principles of current protocols to authorise payments and retain double electronic authorisation using a mobile APP.

After brief discussion it was moved

***Wellington Fish and Game Council request ANZ Bank to update the current authorisation protocol to allow for mobile APP double authorisation by any of the two signatories nominated above.***

**Richard McIntyre/Don Scott**

Carried

## **3. Update Cheque Account Capabilities:**

Mr Teal outlined that there will no longer be cheques available for issuing at ANZ Bank and this was one mechanism for establishing a cash float. It was agreed in consultation with ANZ Bank that the most appropriate option to progress would be the issuance of a Debit Card to one person – named – and the most likely person be required to use it.

After brief discussion it was moved

***Wellington Fish and Game Council request a Debit Card to access to the existing -00 account only and the card (debit card) be issued to the Administration Manager (Corinne Deans) for PIN protection.***

**Malcolm Francis/John Hancock**

Carried

## **4. Credit Card Operatives and Limits**

Mr Teal explained the difficulties in currently operating the credit cards account given the limits for monthly spend rendered the option unworkable if any relatively large sums (e.g. software licencing, conference fees) were charged in any given month. Mr Teal noted that the credit card expenses were scrupulously scrutinised to be within policy for sensitive expenditure and the establishment of a credit card facility was at the recommendation of the financial auditors.

After brief discussion it was moved

***Confirm Credit Cards available for use to named individuals :***

<b><i>Phil Teal</i></b>	<b><i>Chief Executive/Regional Manager</i></b>	<b><i>\$2000 limit</i></b>
<b><i>Corinne Deans</i></b>	<b><i>Administration Manager</i></b>	<b><i>\$2000 limit</i></b>
<b><i>Hamish Carnachan</i></b>	<b><i>Senior Comms/F&amp;G Officer</i></b>	<b><i>\$ 500 limit</i></b>
<b><i>Matt Kavermann</i></b>	<b><i>Senior Fish and Game Officer</i></b>	<b><i>\$ 500 limit</i></b>

***The total monthly spend limit be requested to be removed by ANZ Bank – for clarity (payments can add to total) to account for large spend months.***

**Malcolm Francis/Aaron Passey**

Carried

**14. Wellington Conservation Board - Liaison**

Councillor Scott and Councillor Hancock that they may be available to attend future Wellington Conservation Board meetings.

Items of mutual interest suggested included the transparency and planning updates for “spade ready” projects.

Councillor Scott left the meeting at 5.30pm.

**15. Policy Review – Special Permit Purpose for Aquatic Pest Species**

Discussion ensued on the paper Special Permit Purpose for Aquatic Pest Species – Written submission to Ministry of Primary Industries by NZ Fish and Game Council dated 9 March 2021. This submission was in response to Ministry of Primary Industries proposed permit protocols for assessing special permits to removal aquatic pest species. After brief discussion on each of the recommendations, Council concurred with:

- ‘pest aquatic life’ should be defined as being listed in a national or regional pest management plan;
- ‘pest aquatic life’ should be defined for noxious fish under the Freshwater Fisheries Regulations or an unwanted organism under the Biosecurity Act.
- Alignment of various mechanisms to issue permits for removal or transfer of freshwater fish.
- That existing permits should be dealt with under existing legislation s97(1)(a)(iii).
- That Fish and Game have a determinative role in applications pertaining to sports fish.
- All permits to be science driven not ideology driven;

- Permit holders shouldn't be able to fish multiple waterways without clean facilities and procedures;
- No sale of pest species is permitted
- Impacts on non-target species need to be negligible when using set nets.

Dr Kavermann noted that the initial draft has a clause to merely consult with Fish and Game – which would not provide a determinative ability for Fish and Game relating to sports fish. This could cause issues if DOC / MPI or the applicant considered anything non-native as a pest species – especially if sports fish are essentially disregarded as a valued species. It was also ambiguous whether this permit process would apply to both MPI and DOC permit processes. Dr Kavermann indicated that Fish and Game still needed to assess critically any outcomes that might result from permits being issued.

Councillor Shortis noted that some work could be undertaken on listing waterways with significance to sports fish presence and other significant water bodies. Continuation of the project to identify (or re-confirm) trout spawning streams gives more strength for advocacy in the current RM advocacy processes.

Dr Kavermann noted that providing this type of information including noting data on the NIWA management national freshwater database provides information for advocacy but also for extent of distribution. He noted that he had recently found juvenile trout in a local Wairarapa stream using electrofishing machine - a consultant working for a development project had sampled the site in mid-summer and found no trout leading to a false conclusion that trout are not present in the stream throughout the year. GWRC consenting team (and the consultants) will be informed in due course.

Chairman Cotsilinis noted that the submission had been compiled following internal consultation and collaboration and asked Councillor Shortis to pass on positive comments to NZFGC staff as to the process undertaken and recommendations submitted.

Council then considered a paper by Nigel Paragreen (Otago Fish and Game Council) entitled Co-ordinating Planning, Policy and Environmental Advocacy dated 26 February 2021. Councillor Shortis noted that this could be a catalyst for national co-ordination of the RM advocacy function – including assessing what advocacy priorities are coming up in the next few years (including Otago Regional Council's plan change 7 and 8. with a scheduled 6 weeks of hearings to define water resources that are currently over allocated).

It was then moved

*To receive the reports on policy development and submissions*

Malcolm Francis/Aaron Passey

Carried

**16. Health and Safety Reporting**

Mr Teal outlined the work undertaken in the Palmerston North office to install a more efficient and upgraded more fit-for-purpose air conditioning system.

It was moved that

*Council receive the Health and Safety Report for February 2021*

Colin Shore/Malcolm Francis

Carried

Councillor McIntyre left the meeting at 5.30pm

**17. Draft Sports Fish and Game Management Plan**

After brief discussion it was agreed that consultation on the draft Sports Fish and Game Management Plan could commence following identification of interested stakeholders, but would be postponed until the recommendations of the Ministerial Review are known.

**18. R3 Marketing Update**

Mr Teal provided a brief overview of communications linked to the R3 Marketing aspect. He noted that the Both Barrels e-zone communication could be improved in presentation and communication style to hunters.

Councillor Passey noted that there had been some social media developments since the previous council meeting – including establishment of an Instagram page. This had received positive feedback with content being non-political and information regarding what Fish and Game staff were providing licenceholders (126 followers currently). It was noted that Facebook was not a preferred social media channel as it required frequent staff resources for moderation (and monitoring).

It was then moved

*To receive the reports on R3 Marketing activity*

Aaron Passey/Colin Shore

Carried

**19. General Business**

Bryce Johnson sought clarification on how Horizons Regional Council were dealing with the 'spray and pray' practice of vegetation clearance in the Rangitikei catchment given that he had recently experienced dense mats of filamentous algae in the mid reaches of the Rangitikei River. Dr Kavermann

noted that trout numbers were excellent in the reaches drift dived. It was noted that changes to MCI and ecosystem health may be occurring but needed to identify the contributors to water quality changes. A report by Dr Canning is near completion to identify monitoring sites for the Rangitikei River to be able to detect change in water quality – rather than relying on gross changes in instream conditions (such as algal presence). It was further noted that extended periods of warm weather and consistent flows were more frequently resulting in more dense algal mats, but the extent of these can change very quickly with a fresh in the river,

Chairman Cotsilinis suspended the meeting for dinner at 5.55pm and reconvened the meeting at 6.25pm.

**20. Lake Wairarapa Management Update**

Mr Teal and Dr Kavermann provide a brief overview of maimai management and allocation undertaken recently.

There being no items of general business the meeting was closed at 6.55pm.

Next Meeting to be held: ***Upper Hutt Cossie Club, 11 Logan St, Upper Hutt on 8 June 2021 at 3pm.***

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