

AUCKLAND/WAIKATO FISH & GAME

A Meeting of Council will be held by Zoom,
on Saturday 16 October 2021 commencing at 10 a.m.

AGENDA

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3. Minutes of previous meeting held on 14 August 2021. *	1
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12. Policy Review (attached)	
13. Auckland/Waikato Council Governance reports (attached)	
14. General Business.	

* Denotes attachments.

G. Annan
Chairman

5/10/2021



AUCKLAND/WAIKATO FISH & GAME

Minutes of a Meeting of Council
held at the NZ Deerstalkers Hall, Wairere Dr, Hamilton
on Saturday 14 August 2021 commencing at 11:00am.

PRESENT:

Chairman: G. Annan

Councillors: E. Williamson, D. Cocks, P. Shaw, G. Avery, C. Sherrard, S. Smith,
N. Juby (11:24), W. Howard (11:23).

Visitors: B. Barnes, G. Ralph, P. Hardy (DoC).

Staff: B. Wilson, J. Dyer, D. Klee.

1. APOLOGIES:

A. Kerr, C. Robertson, N. Juby (for lateness), A. Daniel

It was moved;

that apologies be accepted.

Shaw/Smith – CARRIED

2. POSSIBLE CONFLICTS OF INTEREST ARISING FROM MEETING AGENDA:

None declared.

3. MINUTES OF PREVIOUS MEETINGS OF 12th June 2021:

It was moved;

that the minutes of the previous meeting of 12th June 2021 be accepted as true and correct records.

Sherrard/Smith – CARRIED

4. MATTERS ARISING FROM PREVIOUS MINUTES:

Mr Wilson advised that the Chairman's letter to the Minister of the Environment had been acknowledged but otherwise there had been no reply to date.

The Chairman reported that a Merit Certificate had been given to Mr Gary Fraser, who expressed his appreciation to Councillors for this honour.

5. COUNCIL CORRESPONDENCE:

The reply to Council from the Minister of Conservation, Hon. Kiritapu Allan, was tabled.

Councillors discussed the Governance Review with concerns expressed over the lack of licence-holder representation and especially the reduced governance that would occur with any reduction in the number of councillors from 12.

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

Mr Dyer was asked about his report on the illegal selling of wild pheasants on TradeMe and whether he had received any feedback from DoC. Mr Dyer replied that no feedback had been received and he wasn't sure whether DoC would follow up his complaint.

Councillors discussed the impact of the new National Environmental Standards, especially in regard to grazing near wetlands and on stopbanks. It was noted that many stopbanks and wetlands in the lower Waikato would have to be fenced.

The Section 128 Review of the Whangamarino Weir consents were discussed. Mr Klee advised that he had recently attended a 2-day workshop to review the latest technical documents and provide feedback. A draft report had been prepared on the environmental and hydrological impacts of the weir, and when finalised this report will be sent to Councillors.

The Chairman spoke on the recent passing of Murray Fisher, who was a strong supporter of Fish & Game, and a great loss to the hunting community on the Hauraki Plains.

Mr Wilson introduced his financial report emphasising that licence sales had been higher than predicted and that a balance budget was likely despite the forecast deficit of \$101,619.

It was moved;

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

Juby/Smith – CARRIED

7. DRIFT DIVE REPORTS:

The drift dive reports prepared by Dr Daniel were tabled. The Chairman reported that the Mangatutu stream had been fishing well over the summer.

It was moved;

that the drift dive reports be accepted.

Juby/Smith – CARRIED

8. WARD RANCH UPDATE:

Mr Wilson reported that the High Court Judge, P.J. Andrew, had agreed to Ward Ranch discontinuing proceedings against Council.

9. 2021/22 BUDGET CONFIRMATION:

It was moved;

that the 2021/22 Operational Work Plan and budget of \$810,240 be approved.

Cocks/Smith – CARRIED

10. ESSENTIAL FRESHWATER PACKAGE: TE MANA O TE WAI:

Councillors discussed the government's recently issued national direction on the way freshwater is managed. Discussion followed on the impact of the new legislation on the Healthy Rivers appeals, and activity on Fish & Game land.

Councillor Juby emphasised that individual farmers were changing their farming practices to reduce their environment impact. He suggested that a generational change was occurring within the farming community with much more effort spent by farmers on achieving more environmentally sustainable farming.

11. TE AWA TUPUA: NOMINEE FOR TE KŌPUKA AND UPDATE:

The Te Awa Tupua update report was tabled. It was noted that Mr Glenn Maclean, Council's representative on Te Kōpuka, would be retiring at the end of the year and would be no longer available to represent Fish & Game on this strategy group for the Whanganui River.

It was moved;

that Allan Stancliff be Council's representative on Te Kōpuka.

Juby/Sherrard – CARRIED

12. GOVERNANCE REVIEW:

Councillors discussed the recommendation of the Strategic Financial Review Committee. Some concerns were expressed over the proposal for a zero-based budget for all councils every 5 years.

13. LEGALITY OF DRIFT SHOOTING IN AUCKLAND/WAIKATO REGION:

Ms Davis's report was discussed with staff emphasizing that they were concerned with the current situation where motorised vessels were often used for drift shooting and the

difficulties in enforcing the regulations. Ms Davis's report had clearly shown that drift shooting should be restricted to rowboats.

It was moved;

that there be an extensive PR campaign about the regulations for drift shooting with rangers taking an educational role in the 2022 game season.

Shaw/Howard – CARRIED

Lunch taken: 12:50pm – 1:30pm

14. LIVESTOCK GRAZING ON FISH AND GAME WETLANDS:

The reports from Mr Wilson and Mr Dyer were tabled.

It was noted that the Council's wetlands most affected by the new legislation would be the Central and North Shepherd where grazing was currently prohibited.

15. LAKE WAIKARE AND WHANGAMARION ADVOCACY:

Mr Wilson introduced his report on the advocacy efforts that Fish & Game had been involved with at a regional level for the restoration of Lake Waikare and the Whangamarino Wetland.

Councillor Williamson expressed his frustration that despite Council's efforts it would be unlikely that he would see any appreciable change in Lake Waikare water quality in his lifetime. Mr Klee agreed with Councillor Williamson that only an increase in water level could possibly have an immediate impact. Staff had tried to get the consent for the Lake Waikare water level reviewed as part of the recent (2014 - 2020) Section 128 review of the discharge from Lake Waikare to the Whangamarino Wetland but were unsuccessful. The current water level consents did not expire until 2037. However, there was a legal requirement under the *Vision and Strategy* for the lake to be swimmable and fishable within 80 years.

16. NZ COUNCIL MEETING 17TH JUNE & 20TH JULY 2021:

Councillors discussed the decision by the NZF&G Council to allow for the continuation of commercial pheasant preserves by allowing pheasants in designated properties to continue to be on Schedule 3 of the Wildlife Act. Councillors expressed their disappointment with the decision and especially the lack of consultation with regions despite the long-standing opposition of the Auckland/Waikato Council to commercialisation of pheasant hunting.

Councillors agreed to write to both the NZ Council and the Minister of Conservation expressing these concerns.

17. OSH:

It was moved;
that the OSH report for August 2021 be accepted.

Shaw/Juby – CARRIED

18. GENERAL BUSINESS:

Councillors discussed the recent publicity over Canada geese. Mr Wilson explained that Auckland Waikato Fish & Game had been dragged into the debate over geese because we were the only agency that had any long-term trend data for the geese population. It was agreed that geese were not Council's concern.

Councillors discussed the concept of having a "map book" available at meetings showing significant wetlands, rivers, and other areas of interest. Mr Wilson will investigate this further.

There being no further business the meeting concluded at 2:36pm.

UNCONFERMED



24 August 2021

Hon Kiritapu Allan
 Minister of Conservation Parliament Office
 Private Bag 18041
 Parliament Buildings
 Wellington 6160

Dear Minister

Commercial Game Preserves

The New Zealand Fish and Game Council (NZF&GC) at their meeting on 20th July 2021 resolved that they supported the establishment and operation of commercial game preserves throughout New Zealand. Therefore, the NZF&GC agreed to communicate to DOC that commercial game preserves could continue to operate per a Ministerial Notice and that pheasants could be deemed wildlife in these preserves as designated under Schedule 3 of the Wildlife Act.

Because of this decision, commercial gamebird preserves could become operational in the Auckland/Waikato region for the first time since the establishment of the Auckland Acclimatisation Society in 1862. This decision was made despite the longstanding opposition of the Auckland/Waikato Council and indeed of the vast majority of gamebird hunters in this region.

The Auckland/Waikato Council believe that the NZF&GC had no mandate or statutory authority to make this decision. The management of gamebirds in the Auckland/Waikato region is the statutory responsibility of the Auckland/Waikato Council. Therefore, the presence or otherwise of commercial game preserves in this region is a decision for the Auckland/Waikato Council, and not for the NZF&GC.

The Auckland/Waikato Council has worked closely with those individuals wanting to establish non-commercial preserves in our region. The resulting "syndicate model" has worked well and has required no change to the existing legislation, no Ministerial Notice, nor the transfer of any gamebird to Schedule 3. Consequently, we have five non-commercial preserves operating in our region. These preserves are run by syndicates of local hunters and enhance local hunting opportunities.

Auckland/Waikato Region

156 Brymer Rd, RD 9, Hamilton 3289, New Zealand. Telephone (07) 849 1666 Facsimile (07) 849 1648
 Email: aucklandwaikato@fishandgame.org.nz www.fishandgame.org.nz

Therefore, the Auckland/Waikato Council recommends that you accepted the advice of the NZF&GC in part only, by allowing new preserves to become established only when there is agreement of the appropriate regional Fish and Game council.

We consider that this suggestion allows for the continuation of the status quo while preserving regional autonomy. A sensible approach that allows for local communities to continue to manage their gamebird resource under the existing legislation and in accordance with ethical standards that have been well accepted in the Auckland/Waikato region for the last 160 years.

Yours sincerely

A handwritten signature in blue ink, appearing to read 'Grant Annan', with a stylized flourish at the end.

Grant Annan
Chairman



24 August 2021

Ray Grubb
Chief Executive
New Zealand Fish and Game Council
Via email

Dear Ray (copies to regional Chairs & NZF&GC councillors)

Commercial Game Preserves

Please find attached a letter from the Auckland/Waikato Council to the Minister of Conservation, Hon Kiritapu Allan, regarding the establishment and operation of commercial game preserves in the Auckland/Waikato region.

As you will be aware, the Auckland/Waikato Council has worked closely with those individuals wanting to establish non-commercial preserves in our region. The resulting “syndicate model” has worked well and has required no change to the existing legislation, no Ministerial Notice, nor the transfer of any gamebird to Schedule 3. Consequently, we have five non-commercial preserves operating in our region. These preserves are run by syndicates of local hunters and can enhance local hunting opportunities. They are a viable and proven alternative to commercialisation of the game bird resource.

The decision to allow commercial game preserves is a regional issue as it pertains to the management of local wild pheasant populations. We appreciate that there are some regions that support commercialisation of the game resource but that is their prerogative. However, the Auckland/Waikato Council, and our predecessor the Auckland Acclimatisation Society, has always vigorously opposed commercialisation of hunting and fishing.

Therefore, I request that the New Zealand Fish and Game Council (NZF&GC) supports our recommendation to the Minister that commercial pheasant preserves can only become established when there is agreement from the appropriate regional Fish and Game council.

I appreciate that the NZF&GC has a considerable workload at present due to the demands of the governance review, but I believe that communications with the regions on game preserves has been neglected, which I’m sure is more of an oversight than deliberate.

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Email: aucklandwaikato@fishandgame.org.nz www.fishandgame.org.nz

I look forward to hearing back from you on our request, and please contact me if you have any queries on the above.

Yours sincerely

A handwritten signature in blue ink, appearing to read 'Grant Annan', with a stylized flourish at the end.

Grant Annan
Chairman



Bruce Parkes
Deputy Director-General – Policy and Visitors
Te Papa Atawhai
Manners Street
Te Whanganui-a-Tara

16 Mahuru 2021

Tēnā koe Mr Parkes,

We are writing to you regarding the letter from Auckland/Waikato Fish and Game Council to the Minister of Conservation on the 24th of August 2021 requesting that no new commercial game preserves be established in any Fish and Game region without the approval of the relevant Fish and Game Council.

The New Zealand Fish and Game Council considered this at their meeting on the 28th of August and resolved to support the approach of the Auckland/Waikato Council and to recommend this approach to the Minister and DOC.

We are, therefore, writing to you to request that in preparing the advice to the Minister for a final decision on the legal framework around commercial game preserves that support is given for the Auckland/Waikato concept. This will preserve the intention of having regional Fish and Game Councils managing the sports fish and game bird resource within their regions, while providing a legal framework for the lawful operation of commercial game preserves.

If you require any future information, please contact Senior Policy Advisor Jack Kós at JKos@fishandgame.org.nz.

Nāku iti noa, nā

A handwritten signature in black ink, appearing to read 'Di Taylor', is written over a light-colored rectangular background.

Di Taylor
Acting Chief Executive

Hon Kiritapu Allan
Minita Mō Te Papa Atawhai
Pāremata
Te Whanganui-a-Tara

16 Mahuru 2021

Tēnā koe Minita,

Please find enclosed for your information a letter from the New Zealand Fish and Game Council to the Department of Conservation communicating their support for the approach advocated by the Auckland/Waikato Fish and Game Council regarding the establishment of new commercial game preserves in their letter to you dated 24th August 2021.

If you require any further information on this, please have your staff contact Senior Policy Advisor Jack Kós at jkos@fishandgame.org.nz.

Nāku iti noa, nā



Ray Grubb
Chair
NZ Fish and Game Council

Bi-Monthly Chief Executive's Report

Auckland/Waikato Fish & Game Meeting October 2021

OUTPUT 1: SPECIES MANAGEMENT

Project 5112: Banding

A report will be provided at the November council meeting with the latest set of data. As foreshadowed populations estimates and survival rates appear to be low. Increasing female survival rates remains a primary focus for our region.

Project 5114 Shoveler Study

National Shoveler Survey Results: The day of the survey coincided with a cold southerly storm across the country causing difficult counting conditions for surveyors. These poor weather conditions may have contributed to the lower-than-normal total count. A total of 10,342 shoveler duck were counted at 244 sites (cf. 2020, 11,325 shoveler at 240 sites) and was the lowest total count since 2010. Shoveler counted included 2,340 in one large flock on Lake Waikare, which is the NZ record count this year. Previously, Lake Poukawa, south of Hastings, has had 3,000 in one count.

Population change was examined using two methods: (1) a variant of the Route Regression and, (2) totals from 75 sites that have been counted each year for the 22 years. Over the 22 years the population at all the sites counted appears to be stable, (percentage change = -0.2%; 95% Bayesian Credible Interval (BCI) -1.2 – 0.8; $n=242^1$). Short term (2020-2021) indicates the population has decrease (mean = -17.7%; -33 – 1.2, 95% BCI; $n=228$). The 2021 total count for sites that have been counted every year ($n=75$) was 16% below the average (period 2000 – 2019), but was similar to last year's count (5,297 cf. 5,201 in 2020). The long-term trend at these 75 sites indicates no linear change over the last 22 years ($\beta_{yr}=70.38$, $t=1.45$, $P=0.163$).

We can only do this count across so much of our region with the very much appreciated help of volunteers assisting us.

Project 5121: Fish Harvest survey

Lake Arapuni sterile trout programme: Tags are still trickling in from Lake Arapuni from the tagged release last October of 1,000 sterile yearlings and 1,000 non-sterile. In the lower reaches of the lake (Arapuni Bridge) about 50% of the tagged trout caught are sterile fish. However, 100% of the tag returns from trout caught beneath the Waipapa dam were from non-sterile trout; presumably maturing fish that were running upstream searching for spawning water. It's still too early to be definite, but the occasional sterile trout has been much larger than expected.

Project 5122: Game Harvest survey

Supplementary Question: In recent years it has been put to us that the majority of hunter's support shifting the opening weekend to the start of June due to climate

change and lack of water in May. This makes some sense from a hunting perspective but there would be a negative biological trade off with extending the season further towards the start of the breeding. That is not to say that these potential changes should not be considered, but as with most regulation changes there is a need to balance social and biological needs. In order to sample an entirely random selection of game bird hunters we asked the question in this years GBHS. ***“Should the game bird hunting season be shifted to start on the first weekend in June”*** . Out of 137 responses 43% were in favour, 45% against and 12% were unsure.

The majority of hunters in favour of a shift sighted the lack of water and lack of birds in their hunting area during May. This is particularly relevant for ephemeral wetlands and larger swamps. Those against were largely of the opinion that shooting birds that are getting into their mating season in June would be counterproductive long-term.

Project 5161: Trout Releases

Lake Ototoa: Auckland City Council is continuing their research on Lake Ototoa (Rototoa) and will soon be testing out trammel nets to remove perch. Although we continue to release small numbers of trout in the lake, it will be advisable to wait until the netting programme has stopped before we release more. The City Council has also recently carried out a tracking programme on the perch using acoustic tags. Adam has requested data from the tracking programme and an updated on the councils netting plan.

Lake Moana-nui: This lake was drained by the South Waikato District Council in early August to control weed growth. Any trout in the lake from the May releases were probably flushed downstream through the control valve, with no possibility of return. We will delay future releases until after the lake is filled in mid-July.

Adam used the drone to survey the lake and look for remaining fish. The discharge from the drained lake was extremely turbid and no fish were spotted in the clear inflow at the top of the lakebed.



Lake Moana-nui 14 July 2021.

Project 5172: Game Gazette

The continuing existence of Closed Game Areas requires that they be advertised in our annual Gazette Notice. When a game season is declared in a region, technically these areas are exempted, so any gamebirds shot on them are treated in law as if they have been shot outside the game season, for instance, in terms of penalties. Shooting possums and other non-game remains quite legal. However, the location of Closed Game Areas and Wildlife Refuges are not as well signposted as they could be. To make hunters better aware of the location of these sites an online list, description and map is being put together by John Dyer.

OUTPUT 2: HABITAT PROTECTION/MANAGEMENT

Project 5211: RMA

Waikato District Plan: Waikato District Council has received approval from the Minister for the Environment to extend the deadline for a decision on the Proposed Waikato District Plan until 17 January 2022. We made extensive submissions on the Plan, most of which were accepted by WDC staff.

Paeroa Wastewater Treatment Plant (WWTP) Submissions: Clare made a submission on the Paeroa WWTP application for 5-year temporary consent. Further meetings are to be held between HDC, WDC's representative, Clare, David, and Adam to try to work through the consent conditions. Our main concern is the high nutrient load limits applied for, and we believe that significant reductions are necessary. Our other concern is to ensure that they have in place a long-term Strategy, which includes a development plan for what happens at the end of the 5-year consent. The applicants have agreed to producing a co-developed Botulism Management Plan to ensure the size and scale of outbreaks is mitigated.

Tatua Dairy Company Consent application: Clare and David have been consulting with the Tatua Dairy Company since December last year. Tatua has now applied for new consents, with submissions due on the 6th of October. Both the WRC and ourselves have issues about the proposal and the validity of data, with particular concern for the accuracy of the nutrient leaching rates and proposed application rates. Without transparent and accurate data, we do not feel confident in the proposal and are of the opinion that these matters should be addressed before the application is progressed. After talking to the WRC, it looks as if these issues are to be worked out post submission. Therefore, we will need to submit to ensure our concerns are heard. We are also consulting with DoC and the Ngati Haua Iwi Trust.

Fresh Water Farm Plan Stock Exclusion and Submission

Freshwater farm plans (FFP's) were introduced last year as part of the Government's Essential Freshwater package. They are a new legal instrument established under the RMA and will identify solutions to improve waterways that are tailored to a particular farm's circumstances, physical environment and what is important in the catchment that farm sits in. The Government is currently seeking feedback on the implementation of the FFP system, and recently released a discussion document on the regulations. Fish and Game prepared feedback on the discussion document, which will form part of a joint submission

with Forest and Bird and the Environment Defence Society. We raised the important point that central to the success of the FFP's is the competence of the certifier who certifies the FFP's. We highlighted our support for a structure where there is a national accreditation of certifiers and that certifiers are appointed by regional councils. Transparency is also important to the FFP system. As such we recommended that the FFPs be publicly available on a website just as resource consents are, with certain commercially sensitive information redacted. Without this a climate of distrust is created.

Natural and Built Environment Bill exposure draft – submission

The Government released and sought public feedback on an exposure draft of the proposed Natural and Built Environments Act (NBA) which will be the main replacement for the Resource Management Act (RMA) once enacted. In August, Fish and Game made a submission on the exposure draft. In our submission we noted our concern that the protection of trout and salmon habitat under the RMA has not been carried through in the NBA. While the habitat of trout and salmon is no longer protected, they are considered by way of 'introduced species' within the definition of 'natural environment' under the NBA. To address any potential conflicts between valued introduced and indigenous species, Fish and Game recommended adopting a framework similar to that in Policies 9 and 10 from the National Policy Statement for Freshwater Management 2020 where valued introduced species are only provided for to the extent that that can be done without being detrimental to indigenous species.

Other submission points we raised were:

- More directive wording included in the NBA. In places the exposure draft uses wording which creates uncertainty as to the direction it is providing. Phrases like "may", "promote" or "help to" gives the decision-maker an option *not* to take the required action. Similarly, other phrases such as "improve", "maintain" or "sustainable use", provide a general sense of direction but not specific detail on what is intended.
- Amenity values have been excluded from the exposure draft which means the way in which people interact with the environment, and the societal and cultural benefits of doing so is no longer considered. We therefore sought for recognition in the NBA that recreation and food harvesting are integral to people's well-being and critical for connection to the broader environment. Further, rural and coastal amenity values and should be reflected within the framework of plans under NBA.
- Specific changes to make the decision-making process more efficient – as Fish and Game's experience is that participating in local authority consent hearing processes can be inefficient and difficult to navigate, leading to cost and complexity barriers to participation.
- Fish and Game supports the recommendation by the Review for strong powers to review and change consent conditions. Review conditions are frequently generically worded and lack clear triggers tied to the consented activity and possible outcomes for review.

Managing our wetland's discussion document: The Ministry for the Environment (MfE) has released a discussion document seeking feedback on proposed changes to the National

Environmental Standards for Freshwater in regards to the management of wetlands. It sets out several proposals including how the definition of a “wetland” could be amended to ensure only those areas intended are captured by the regulations. Of particular concern to Fish and Game are the proposed changes to provide a consenting pathway for damaging extractive activities such as quarrying and mining in and around wetlands, making the drainage of wetlands much easier for developers, whilst minimal changes have been proposed to better provide for wetland restoration and maintenance, meaning substantial barriers remain to do such meaningful work. Fulfilling the many requirements that apply under the regulations effectively discourages landowners and agencies to conduct wetland restoration and enhancement activities. Unfortunately, many of the issues that Fish and Game highlighted in previous submissions have not been captured in the proposed changes and therefore whilst the proposed changes are an improvement in some cases still fall short of the mark. Further, the regulations still require resource consent for building wetland utility structures such as maimai, signs and boardwalks. In summary MfE are missing the mark to incentivise activities that restore and enhance wetlands whilst enabling activities that degrade and destroy them. Fish and Game will be preparing a submission on the discussion document highlighting the above concerns.

Fonterra Hautapu discharge consent

We have been in negotiation with Fonterra regarding their applications with the Waikato Regional Council for discharges to the Waikato River associated with a new wastewater management strategy for its dairy factory at Hautapu. We lodged a submission opposing the application in June last year and the application is now set to be heard this November. Whilst improvements have been made to the application since our submission was made, we still have concerns about the duration of the consent (a 35-year term), and uncertainties with the conditions of consent such as a lack of seasonal discharge limits meaning the Waikato River would not be protected during the critical times of the year. We will continue to work on negotiations to seek further changes before deciding whether or not to present at the hearing in November.

Whangamarino Weir Section 128 Review; See separate attached agenda item which gives a brief overview of the process to date. We are hopefully in the final throws of achieving goal 1. There are 4 or 5 points where the experts have not achieved unilateral agreement and some further data analysis is underway to help inform those outcomes.

Project 5221: Council Land

Comprehensive consent for wetland maintenance: The processing of the comprehensive consent proposal for wetland maintenance has been slightly delayed with the WRC officer dealing with the consent away on ACC recovery. The consent review has now been given to Gerry Kessels & Associates with a response expected by 21 October 2021.

Murray Young Wetland: A sign has been put up at the wetland and two kauri trees planted on either side. These were Murray’s favourite trees. The wetland reached capacity for the first time earlier this winter and the prolonged elevated levels were causing some of the plants to go into hydrological shock. 4 of the stop logs were removed from the weir in order to reduce water levels back to design levels. Unfortunately, a flood also raised water levels

in the adjacent drain and some Koi have infiltrated the wetland. One of the design features of the site is a release valve set at the bottom invert level of the wetland, so if large numbers of koi get into the area during a flood event, the site can be drained, koi removed and subsequently reflooded. In terms of the management of the site moving forward, Waka Kotahi, provided us with a lump sum payment to look after the wetland, however, we are yet to receive the licence to occupy the land as per the terms of our contract. We have been seeking this issue be resolved for the past 13 months and hope



that this issue will soon be resolved.



Project 5231: Other Land

Traps: David secured a trailer load of DOC 200 trap boxes from the Waterfowl Enhancement Trust at heavily reduced price to help facilitate wetland predator control projects in the region. Some of these are already being put to good use at a property adjoining the Cocks Wetland. Several weasels, in particular, but also a stoat, a ferret and numerous rats and hedgehogs have been caught so far. These traps are checked daily.

The hunters at one of our Whangamarino F&G Wetlands have received nearly \$5,000 for traps from the Waikato Regional Council Small-Scale Community Initiatives Fund. The adjoining block has now also been inspired to apply next year and the initial applicant has offered to help them do so.

A lifestyle property near Dairy Flat has received funding to create a large new dam. The Game Bird Habitat Trust, which funded this, also qualifies as a participant in the Government/MPI funded One Billion Trees programme so was able to fund native trees for the fenced off site as well. The ducks haven't waited for any sort of opening ceremony, both mallards and parries are already calling it home. Our Northern Gamebird Manager acted as a referee for these works, visiting and reporting on the proposed site, assisting with tree choice and later reporting on the completed project. All works have been done to a very high standard and even the courier driver who called in expressed how impressed he was by it all. Judging by how many shots were heard on the last/long weekend of the waterfowl season in this same general area, this new habitat should provide a benefit to quite a number of our licence holders.

Unfortunately, a small wetland project near Otua is probably on hold due to all the complications now around wetland consents. However, we can at least help with trees and the Franklin Acclimatisation Society Inc., with rat baits.

Consent Application: David has produced a consent application which has been submitted to WRC on behalf of a landowner for a wetland restoration and enhancement project. The application aims to grapple with several of the issues previously outlined regarding the new NES legislation. It is clear from the process to date that most landowners would not have the capacity to complete these themselves as they are a time consuming and laborious. If consultants were required to write them on a landowner's behalf, the costs would be high, and we estimate that the entire application process could cost somewhere between \$10,000-\$20,000 if it were outsourced. Staff remain of the opinion that the legislation provides strong disincentives for landowners to restore wetland habitat and not enough thought has been given to try and streamline permitted activity processes to help facilitate positive environmental initiatives.

Game Bird Habitat Trust Projects: David is assisting 5 landowners with projects but due to Covid delays we are yet to receive word from the GBHT if the applications we are involved with have been successful. Covid also meant that 2 planting projects that received funding from the GBHT/billion trees partnership were delayed, but have since been completed.

Opuatia Wetland Report: David has reviewed and given feedback on the assessment of future management options for the wetland. In our opinion further emphasis needs to be placed on hydrological restoration of the wetland rather than solely focusing on ecological factors such as pest plant control. Much like the Whangamarino, the Opuatia catchment has suffered from less water due to decreases in Waikato Riverbed and water levels. This means less tail water control and more free gradient drainage from the wetland due to a lower water table.

Project 5235: Trees

This year's tree order was received and distributed. We are collating this year's order and heavily oversubscribed. As soon as Covid-19 restrictions on travelling across the Mercer border are removed, (i.e. Level-2), it is planned to collect pin-oak seedlings from the Dean Wetland for growing on and establishing at a private property adjoining the Cocks Wetland at no cost to the Council's licence-holders.

OUTPUT 3: PARTICIPATION

Project 5311: Access negotiation

Waimiha River: Adam installed access signs and trail markers on the Whenuatupu-Ohinemoa trust property along the Waimiha River.

Waione Station: Adam installed the catch and release only sign at the Waione Station as per the request of the landowner. A formal rule revision will take early next year.

Lake Whatihua: The lake has risen by over a meter due to the spring rain and is now at its highest level in over five years. The newly installed platform is just underwater and may need to be lifted, as it was designed to do. The original height was set 900mm above water level, just over the highest known lake level. A 1m height above lake level would have required a handrail. The water level will be monitored after the lake level has stabilised in November.

Project 5331: F&G Newspapers

The spring newsletter (now an email) has been put on hold until Auckland is out of level 3. There is pronounced lack of interest from anglers that can't fish so we are waiting until there is an announcement about Auckland moving to level 2 to send out promotional material.

Project 5341: Other publications

Adam started the Fly Fishing Women of New Zealand Facebook Page to promote fishing for Women and make a safe location for women to share their experiences.

OUTPUT 4: PUBLIC PROMOTIONS

Project 5431: liaison advocacy

Waipa Lakes Accord Meeting: David attended the latest virtual meeting during lockdown.

Regional Pest Management Plan: I attended the hearing and presented our submission on the proposed Regional Pest Management Plan for the Waikato Region (RPMP). Our main concern was that the RPMP did not provide a list of pest plant species, and thus we now required consents to clear or spray any pest plants in a wetland under the Waikato Regional Plan's discretionary activity rule 4.3.9.3. (which states that you can clear pest plants without consent but only if they're listed in the regional pest management plan.)

The proposed RPMP is very different from previous pest management plans in that it is based on "sites" where control will be undertaken rather than on managing pests throughout the region. This brings their pest management in line with the National Policy Direction for Pest Management 2015.

The WRC staff have recommended that wetlands be considered "sites" and that designated pest plants can be managed within the site-led pest programme for wetlands. We supported this recommendation but consider that the definition of "wetland" in the RPMP should be the same as the definition given in the Waikato Regional Plan. Otherwise, a discretionary consent will be required to remove pest plants from those wetlands that are not covered by RPMP.

OUTPUT 5: LAW ENFORCEMENT

Project 5511 Ranging/Training

Mr Dyer passed on a complaint to DoC's law enforcement team about someone illegally selling pheasants on Trade Me. A search warrant was obtained, the person visited at their residence and the rules around obtaining the necessary permits explained.

A tip-off was received mid-September about 6 ducks apparently shot and left beside the true-right bank of the Waikato River, just upstream of our Piggott Wetland. Franklin Acclimatisation Society were invited to add this to their Facebook page asking anyone with information to come forward.

Project 5531: Legal

Shooting from motorised vessels: After the last council meeting David approached compliance staff in our neighbouring Eastern Region to see how they regulate the use of motorised vessels for drift shooting. Their interpretation is that providing a motorised vessel is for 'the time being' wholly propelled by oars, drift shooting from the vessel is fine. This means that if the engine is off for instance, and oars or paddles are used, then at the time being the vessel is a 'rowboat'. There is agreement that if a motorised vessel does not have oars on board it would be impossible to legally drift shoot from it. The legislation is unclear and has not been tested, but for now we are likely to use the same interpretation to ensure consistency. This will make compliance more difficult than just stating that motorised vessels cannot be used for drift shooting period. If problems persist in certain stretches of river where the chances of conflict or accidents with members of the public are high, it may mean that other options will need to be considered.

The most logical option may be to simply restrict the use of unmoored vessels from hunting certain stretches of river. This would mean that fixed stands or moored gunboats could still be used in locations where hunters have safe firing zones, but people could no longer drift through those stretches of river. By way of example there are 2 or 3 actively hunted fixed stands downstream of Narrows bridge on the Waikato River which point towards opposing banks and large areas of empty land. They are far enough away from nearby dwellings to make shooting from these locations a safe option. Conversely, we have had several issues with hunter's drifting/power shooting on this stretch of river with multiple AOS call outs and infamously photos of hunters shooting under power outside Hamilton gardens hitting the papers a few years ago. We will be upping our compliance efforts on rivers this year and all field staff are expected to contribute.

OUTPUT 8: PLANNING REPORTING

Project 5841: National liaison

Adam was asked to participate on selecting a new provider for the Fish & Game magazine. Adam is a qualified contracting officer as he formerly granted and reviewed large research grants.

A national F&G cookbook is being created and our staff have been asked to assist with text.

The National F&G Office has also been assisted by staff concerning the timing of mark-up day, in terms of needing 2 clear weeks of licences becoming available but also not clashing with Easter weekend. Good publicity of whatever day is chosen is obviously very important, but hunters need to also keep up to date with F&G messages in their inboxes.

OUTPUT 9: ADMINISTRATION

Sportsfish and Game Management Plan

We've received feedback from the national office of DoC who have suggested some relatively minor amendments, so these will be considered and then the plan resubmitted.

Project 5900: Admin / Overheads

Burglary - again

During the lockdown the office was again targeted by burglars; the third time in the last 6 months. I was notified by the security company monitoring the alarm that there had been multiple sensor activations. But it was clear from the security cameras that the burglars had already departed. I rang the police who quickly turned up, presumably because I mentioned firearms.

15 videos were taken by the security cameras, with a good view of the car but presumably false plates. Unfortunately, no good shots of the 3 dudes doing the break-in, they were wearing hoodies and if they're moving then any casual view of the face is

blurred. The camera at the entrance was wrenched off and then bizarrely taken and dropped by the back door – excellent photo of the guy’s distinctive sneakers! They also turned off several fuses and damaged the main fuse switch.

They got in thru the new sliding doors easily, not too much damage fortunately. Set off the alarm and bolted after less than a minute inside the building. I couldn’t find anything missing. The police were given copies of all the security camera videos.

**B. Wilson,
Chief Executive**