

**CONFIRMED MINUTES OF THE 187<sup>th</sup> MEETING OF THE EASTERN FISH AND  
GAME COUNCIL, HELD AT THE ROTORUA OFFICES OF FISH & GAME NEW  
ZEALAND ON THURSDAY 11<sup>th</sup> FEBRUARY 2021 AT 12.00PM**

**Present**

Crs David Woolner, Murray Ferris, Barry Roderick, Laurance Tamati, Alan Baird, Debbie Oakley, Lindsay Lyons, Ken Coombes, and Ngahi Bidois.

**IN ATTENDANCE**

Andy Garrick, Kate Thompson, Matt Osborne, Eben Herbert, Lloyd Gledhill, Anthony van Dorp (Eastern Fish & Game); Carmel Veitch (New Zealand Fish & Game).

**1.0 WELCOME AND KARAKIA**

1.1 Cr David Woolner (Chairman) opened the meeting at 12.04pm, welcomed all present, and invited Cr Ngahi Bidois to open the meeting with a karakia.

**2.0 APOLOGIES**

2.1 Apologies were received from Cr Geoff Thomas, Dave Conley (Department of Conservation), and Zane Jensen (Bay of Plenty Conservation Board).

2.2 *Agreed (Murray Ferris/Ken Coombes) that the apologies for the 187<sup>th</sup> meeting of the Eastern Region Fish and Game Council be sustained. [21/02/2.2]*

**3.0 MINUTES OF THE PREVIOUS MEETING (3 DECEMBER 2020)**

3.1 *Agreed (Murray Ferris/Alan Baird) that the minutes of the meeting held on 3 December 2020 be confirmed as a true and correct record. [21/02/3.1]*

**4.0 IDENTIFICATION OF RESOLUTIONS FOR INCLUSION IN COUNCIL POLICY**

4.1 *Agreed (??) that Item 9.10 relating to litter which includes any refuse, animal or game remains, or waste matter, or items of any type used in the course of hunting, and 9.12 relating to the prohibition of the use of drones to disturb game birds be included in Council policy. [21/02/4.1]*

4.2 Cr Debbie Oakley queried the use of the word “disturb” as she felt it was not clear what this meant. Eben Herbert advised that the wording of the regulation when it was developed for inclusion in the gazette notice would clarify this. The intention was to prevent birds from being put to flight to enhance hunting opportunities or being harassed for no good reason, as opposed to being chased off a crop for example, or directed towards hunters as part of a culling exercise.

**5.0 MATTERS ARISING**

5.1 There were no matters arising from the minutes of the meeting of 3 December 2020.

**6.0 NOTIFICATION OF ITEMS FOR GENERAL BUSINESS**

- Cr Alan Baird - Water quality
- Cr Murray Ferris - Waikaremoana fishing competition
- Andy Garrick - Official Information Act requests
- Andy Garrick - Cawthron research programme

**7.0 CONFLICT OF INTEREST REGISTER**

7.1 Councillors were asked to inform the chair of any conflicts of interest. No conflicts of interest were recorded.

**8.0 GOALS AND PRIORITIES FOR THE 2021-2022 OPERATIONAL WORK PLAN**

8.1 Cr Barry Roderick opened the discussion stating that the Eastern Fish and Game Council needed to support the external review of Fish & Game as he had heard that some other regions were choosing to do otherwise. Cr Murray Ferris and Andy Garrick queried the latter as neither had any knowledge of this. Cr Debbie Oakley felt it wasn't appropriate to stand behind the external review at this point as we were not aware of its findings or recommendations. Debbie noted that the review had been completed and the Minister had advised that it would be ready by the end of March in time for the New Zealand Council's (NZC) April meeting. She suggested while there may be a need to adjust work programmes and budgets once we know the report's content, we shouldn't sit and put planning on hold until then, and added that work currently underway may align well with outcomes from the review. Cr David Woolner added that over the Christmas period and up until now a lot of potential changes had been signalled by the NZ Council, and while no decisions had been made a lot of information had been collected and reviews undertaken or in progress. He commented that there was a lot we don't know at this stage and that it would be sensible not to depart too far from our current goals, priorities and projects for the year ahead. Cr Debbie Oakley suggested Council should work on the basis of 'business as usual' until more information comes to light.

8.2 Andy Garrick advised that we had not yet received confirmation of base funding for the 2021-2022 financial year and hoped that would be coming shortly from the upcoming NZC meeting. He noted it's important to recognise that we are still affected by Covid and are likely to be for quite some time, and that the indications are we'll be asked to restrict our budget to the same level as we've had for this year. Andy advised that we needed to submit a draft budget for 2021-2022 to the NZC office by 24 March, along with any contestable fund bids we might have, for the NZC to consider/approve at its mid April meeting. Andy reminded Council that the 24 March deadline meant that it would not be able to formally review the draft and CF bids prior to these being despatched to the NZC (via Carmel), but as has been the case in previous years, the documents would be up for discussion at our next meeting on 8 April. Council will have the opportunity then to endorse and/or amend the draft budget, and endorse or reject CF bids or applications to use reserve funds. Any changes it might choose to make can then be communicated to the NZC ahead of its meeting on 16/17 April.

8.3 Cr David Woolner noted that the priorities proposed in the agenda paper are pretty much a roll over, business as usual approach, and suggested that no radical deviation in the next little while was the wise thing to do.

8.4 Andy Garrick advised that last year staff had put forward three contestable fund bids for use of its non-resident reserve funds which were subsequently withdrawn due to Covid19. He wanted to resubmit at least two of these with the highest priority being to fund the implementation of a succession plan for hatchery staff, something that needed to be funded whether it be via use of non-resident reserves or not. He said the role in the hatchery was a specialised job and not something that you can pull anyone in off the street for. His ambition was to recruit a partially qualified trainee to work alongside Mark Sherburn and Lloyd Gledhill, and learn the ropes prior to Lloyd's retirement. A graduate in aquaculture from Toi Ohomai or the University of Waikato would be a good

place to start looking for such a person. Cr Murray Ferris agreed that there was a need to recruit/train while the experts are here. Cr David Woolner also agreed having read the Central South Island Region's Governance Policies which included a section on risk management, and felt that this was something that needed to be supported given the major risk to this region if the lake fisheries were unable to be maintained by the hatchery programme.

8.5 Andy Garrick noted that the NZC had passed a resolution late last year to transfer all non-resident managed reserve funds in the regions to a national pool that would be managed by the NZC as a contestable fund pool. This had however, been done with no consultation with regional Fish & Game and regions had asked for the resolution to be rescinded pending a proper consultation process. Whether the NZC will be receptive to receiving applications to utilise non-resident reserves by regions in the meantime is unclear, but Andy is of the opinion we need to give this a go and asked whether or not Council was supportive of doing so. Council briefly discussed the background of the resolution made without consultation to pool the non-resident reserves, and agreed that regardless of the outcomes of further deliberations we needed to put a strong case forward for this proposal.

**8.6 *Agreed (Murray Ferris/Lindsay Lyons) that Council supports the proposal to put forward a contestable fund bid for a succession plan for Hatchery Management staff. [21/02/8.6]***

8.7 The second proposal Andy had in mind for putting forward again, was for \$5,000 to improve access to the Whirinaki River which is in line with the Council's goal of opening up new angling opportunities.

8.8 Cr Lindsay Lyons suggested that an application be put forward to purchase SMS cameras for duck banding as he was concerned about the high cost involved in getting staff and volunteers on site to band when duck numbers in traps were unknown beforehand. He advised that there were solar operated cameras available which cost in the vicinity of \$400. Staff's view was that this was impractical and it wasn't reasonable to turn away volunteers at the very last minute after they had made arrangements to be available on the day. Staff noted it was only very occasionally that trapping totally failed on the day, and it was very rare not to get sufficient numbers of birds to warrant the effort and numbers of staff and volunteers organised to be there.

8.9 Lindsay also felt that a drone would be a useful tool for checking wetlands and rivers and that \$4,000 should be sought for this. He noted that this could again reduce the high number of man hours involved in field work which could possibly be done more efficiently with the use of a drone.

8.10 Cr Barry Roderick agreed with Lindsay, commenting that banding was very resource hungry and his understanding was that Matt McDougall was now in a position to be able to predict population size based on weather during the breeding season. He questioned whether rather than running a trapping and banding programme it would be better to feed young birds as Matt had previously indicated the duck population was influenced not only by breeding but also by food supply in summer? Eben Herbert advised that research done in the past had shown very low mortality between January and opening. He said the indications were that the population this year is low as the juvenile to adult ratio in the traps was low, but the condition of birds was generally very good and for that reason he didn't see any point in putting funds towards supplementary feeding. Andy Garrick noted that ducks generally consume about 100 grams of grain per night, and based on estimates of the Eastern Region's duck population being in the order of 200,000 birds in recent years, we would need to feed out around 5 tonnes of

of food per day to support just 25% of the population. He added that it is not often that we capture very few ducks as had happened on the occasion referred to recently, and agreed that a drone would be a useful tool but not something we need to rush into, particularly if we're going to be asked to put up a conservative with our budgeting again this year.

- 8.11 Cr Ngahi Bidois commented we need to get on with this meeting and approach it from a governance level as it seems to have lapsed into something of a wish list. His thoughts were that proposals for the OWP seem good, and that we should spend some money on getting someone to improve licence sales.
- 8.12 Cr Lindsay Lyons asked that staff undertake more regular visits to agents and to pursue the tag fish promotion later in the year such as in March.
- 8.13 Cr Barry Roderick asked whether we had a risk matrix for the hatchery water supply. Andy Garrick confirmed that this was in progress and that we were aiming for it to be completed this year.

## **9.0 REGIONAL RESOURCE ALLOCATION**

- 9.1 Cr David Woolner provided an overview of the Regional Resource Allocation project that had been undertaken by Concept Consulting and noted that the results of many of the detailed analyses it undertook were not unexpected. He questioned the merits of a key and very arbitrary recommendation made in the report (as an alternative to resetting budgets from a zero basis) of applying a -10% 'flex factor' to create a nationally contestable pool as a start towards resetting budgets. Council discussed the document at some length, and agreed that there was little point delving too deeply into the detail until the findings from the Fish & Game Ministerial review were known. Andy Garrick agreed that since the terms of reference for this project had been established and contracted out there were many other processes going on, and informed Council that the NZC was interested in feedback on general principles rather than detailed comment on everything contained within the report. He felt that 'Funding based on Activity' was not an appropriate method of resource allocation as the cost of and what was required to manage a resource, was extremely variable across the regions. A better approach would be to review the needs of each region in terms of what it needed to do to manage, maintain and enhance opportunities for sustainable sports fish angling and game bird hunting. To establish needs, operational audits also needed to be undertaken of what regions were doing, whether it represented best management practice, and whether it was being done cost effectively. Cr Barry Roderick expressed concern that activity results reported will have been skewed by the Taupo Fishery, that the physical aspects of this region and the role of the hatchery hadn't been considered, nor the unjustifiable variations in pay scales for some managers particularly in some of the smaller regions. In response to the latter Andy advised that there was work currently underway to review salaries and remuneration of all staff across the country, and noted there were many disparities. In the interests of both employers and employees and being fair and reasonable, there needed to be greater transparency and consistency. Cr Debbie Oakley noted that 'other income' generated by some regions was not recognised, and Cr Ngahi Bidois endorsed the concept of funding being based on needs rather than licence sales.
- 9.2 Council agreed with this approach and endorsed the four sub-goals on page 26 of the agenda for feedback to the New Zealand Council, these being:

- *Fish and Game NZ should allocate sufficient resources at the regional level to reflect the current operational needs of different Councils.*

- *Fish and Game NZ should allocate sufficient resources to NZ Council to meet current operational needs at the national level.*
- *Fish and Game NZ should explicitly consider the future strategic needs of the organisation – and ensure sufficient resource is allocated to achieve this at the regional or national level.*
- *Fish and Game NZ should obtain the best value for money from its spending (i.e. maximise efficiency) at both the regional or national levels.*

## **10.0 ANGLERS NOTICE REVIEW**

10.1 Council discussed the change to the opening of lakes Tarawera, Okataina, and Rotoiti to the first Saturday in October and the resulting need to amend the regulations for the Winter Shoreline fishing dates. To avoid adding complexity to the regulations Council supported leaving Winter Shoreline areas on these lakes open all year round.

**10.2 *Agreed (Ken Coombes/Lindsay Lyons) that Winter Shoreline Areas on lakes Tarawera, Rotoiti, and Okataina will remain open all year round. [21/02/10.2]***

10.3 Cr Debbie Oakley suggested there may be a need to amend the resolution made in June 2020 (*Agreed (Ngahi Bidois/ Lawrence Tamati) to change the season opening dates for lakes Tarawera, Rotoiti and Okataina from 1 October to the first Saturday in October. Carried 6/3. [20/06/8.13]*) to record that the move to changing the opening of these lakes was a trial. Anthony van Dorp recalled the angst over this change and suggested that it be considered as a trial that could be reversed if necessary, as the word ‘trial’ could not be included within the Angler’s Notice. Matt Osborne agreed that the background could be explained in an article in the Fish & Game magazine and that there was no barrier to altering the anglers notice again later. Cr Ngahi Bidois advised he did not recall discussion of a trial period but would have expected to give it 3-5 years and that a change would come about if anglers did not like it. Ngahi suggested it needed to be given a good shot and be reviewed in 2-3 years’ time. Cr David Woolner felt that there was no need to change the prior minute as the wording was correct. Eben Herbert advised that the change would need to be revoked if Council didn’t support it rather than putting it in for a trial period. By doing the latter you were pre-empting a future Council’s decision. The Anglers Notice was open for review every year but decisions on legal matters could not be pre-empted. Council agreed that there was no need to revisit the resolution.

10.4 Council did not identify any other matters it considered required urgent attention.

## **11.0 GAME BIRD GUIDES’ LICENCE PROVISIONS**

11.1 Council briefly discussed the background to the Game Bird guide licence provisions and agreed that it was rarely utilised and not required.

**11.2 *Agreed (Murray Ferris/Ngahi Bidois) that Council does not see a need to retain the game bird guides licence provisions in the Wildlife Amendment Act 1996. [21/02/11.2]***

## **12.0 2021 END OF YEAR MEETING DATES**

12.1 Council reviewed the need to alter the final two meetings of the year to align with regional Fish and Game Council elections.

**12.2** *Agreed (Murray Ferris/Alan Baird) that the Council meetings currently scheduled for 7 October and 2 December 2021 be rescheduled to 28 October and 9 December 2021 respectively. [21/02/12.2]*

**13.0 EASTERN REGION GOVERNANCE POLICY**

13.1 Council discussed the requirement to review its current Governance Policies three yearly acknowledging it was overdue but agreed that its review should be deferred pending the outcomes of the Ministerial Review. Cr Debbie Oakley suggested some policies could be developed at a National level and applied to all regions.

**13.2** *Agreed (Ngahi Bidois/Murray Ferris) that Council defers the review of its Governance Policies for 12 months at which time results from the Ministerial review would be available. [21/02/13.2]*

13.3 Cr Lindsay Lyons had read the Central South Island Council's policy document provided in the Papers for Information and felt that it was very well written and suggested that it could be put to the New Zealand Council. Cr Barry Roderick agreed and wished to acknowledge the quality of the Central South Island document and thanked Andy Garrick for bringing it to Council.

**14.0 LIAISON OFFICERS REPORTS**

**14.1** *Conservation Boards*

Zane Jensen had called earlier to update Andy Garrick on Conservation Board matters advising that the Board had met in early December but there was nothing of real interest to Fish & Game on the agenda. He said that the CMS had been delayed and will be well into the new year before this was finalised. Zane had advised that he was happy to take any Council matters to the Board and very happy to assist Council with any work to increase participation through his role at Sport Bay of Plenty.

**14.2** *Department of Conservation*

No report.

**14.3** *The New Zealand Fish and Game Council*

Debbie Oakley informed Council that Cr Paul Shortis, the Wellington Region appointee to the New Zealand Council, had been appointed temporarily to the role of acting CE (unpaid). She advised that because of the review in progress Council could not yet advertise the position as it was unknown what the role would entail. The Council hoped Paul would be able to remain Acting CE until the role was filled and most Councillors agreed that he should be paid to do this. He was very well experienced for the role.

**15.0 OPERATIONAL REPORTS**

15.1 The following topics were briefly discussed;

- Meeting with anglers re Lake Tarawera.
- Improvement in condition of Lake Rotorua trout caught at the Awahou mouth.
- Official Information Act requests.
- Ray Grubb, Andy Garrick and Brian Anderton (F&G) meeting with Dairy NZ.
- Opening of wetland reserves for maimai maintenance.
- Deep Creek wetland spraying investigations.

**15.2** *Agreed (Laurance Tamati/Murray Ferris) that Council receives the Management Report and Health and Safety reports. [21/02/15.2]*

**15.3** *Agreed (Ken Coombes/Laurance Tamati) that Council receives the Finance Report and approves payments for November and December 2020 totalling \$313,888.11. [21/02/15.3]*

15.4 Kate Thompson provided an update on licence sales and advised that licence sales had slowed with very few non-resident sales and fewer locals purchasing compared to earlier in the season when there had been higher than normal sales. Cr Lindsay Lyons informed Council that he had heard that Covid was likely to have an impact in NZ for some seven years to come so we should be aiming to cater for the local market for some time yet. Cr Barry Roderick commented on feedback from Sporting Life in Turangi where they had seen significant numbers of anglers in January but February had been very quiet. He asked if there was an opportunity to promote autumn angling within our R3 programme. Andy Garrick confirmed that we would and had been utilising media to promote angling opportunities and we still have a few more large fish in stock that could be released as an incentive to get out and buy a licence. Cr David Woolner suggested there should be a national promotion. Andy Garrick agreed advising that Steve Doughty typically took the lead on these kind of programmes and Andy would be enquiring what's in the pipeline between now and winter.

## **16.0 GENERAL BUSINESS**

16.1 Andy Garrick spoke to a one page document on page 96 of the Papers for Information accompanying this agenda. This was an overview of a Cawthron Institute research proposal for five years of funding to investigate native and introduced freshwater fish interactions that was about to be submitted to MBIE. Regional Fish & Game only became aware of this late last month when Cawthron had made contact with regions where it anticipated much of the research would be undertaken, Eastern Region being one of those. Unbeknown to us however, NZC staff had been contacted last November, and the NZC CE in an undated letter following on from discussions they had then, had registered Fish & Game's support for the proposal though at that stage (as indeed we understand is still the case), they were apparently unaware of any detail around what was proposed. Cawthron has advised us on the eve of submitting the proposal that the programme comprises both social and biological research. Some of what is proposed may augment the food web work we've sponsored on Lake Tarawera which would be good. So too is the principle of gathering additional science to assist with the future management of both indigenous and introduced freshwater fish species. However, what sets this proposal apart from what Cawthron typically undertakes as a research provider, is that the programme has a third element to it which involves setting up a policy working group with Te Wai Maori Trust, DOC and Fish & Game, Cawthron's aim being to facilitate "reconciliation discussions" and it appears, "broker solutions/develop policy options" for moving forward. Cr Laurance Tamati advised that Te Arawa Lakes Trust had only just yesterday had contact with Cawthron, but what they were proposing aligns with what TALT is wanting, though they would want a direct relationship with them, not via Te Wai Maori Trust.

16.2 Alan Baird raised concerns about the inequities of what the government was proposing around the improvement of water quality and the implications of implementing the new legislation on both farming and the environment. He felt farmers were being unfairly targeted and metropolitan pollution overlooked. Recommendations for land use change, reduction in stock numbers and more forestry being planted wouldn't achieve the improvements the government was seeking, as more forestry would result in more siltation and the ongoing degeneration of rivers and estuaries and their biodiversity. Alan suggested Fish & Game needed to do more to highlight the impact of urban environments and forestry on water quality. Council discussed the concerns Alan raised along with Fish & Game's mandate and what it could or couldn't get involved with,

what the NPS and NES for freshwater were attempting to do, and the shift in Fish & Game's focus from dairy farming to putting the pressure on regional authorities to do what they should be doing.

- 16.3 Cr Murray Ferris thanked staff for their attendance at the Waikaremoana Boating & Fishing Association's recent fishing competition, and advised he had received a lot of positive feedback from anglers. Anthony van Dorp acknowledged and congratulated Murray on his MC role, and noted the success of the competition.
- 16.4 Cr David Woolner noted that the other topic to be discussed in general business (Official Information Act requests) had already been dealt with when Operational Reports were considered.
- 16.5 Cr Lindsay Lyons requested a correspondence schedule on future agendas for Council related matters.

**17.0 MEETING CLOSED**

- 17.1 The meeting closed at 3pm with a closing karakia by Cr Ngahi Bidois.



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**David Woolner**  
**Chairman**



## SUMMARY OF RESOLUTIONS

### 2.0 APOLOGIES

2.2 *Agreed (Murray Ferris/Ken Coombes) that the apologies for the 187th meeting of the Eastern Region Fish and Game Council be sustained. [21/02/2.2]*

### 3.0 MINUTES OF THE PREVIOUS MEETING (3 DECEMBER 2020)

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### 10.0 ANGLERS NOTICE REVIEW

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