

## WELLINGTON FISH & GAME COUNCIL

### MINUTES OF MEETING OF THE WELLINGTON FISH & GAME COUNCIL, HELD ON TUESDAY 8 FEBRUARY 2022 AT 3.00PM HELD AS A ZOOM VIDEOCONFERENCING MEETING

1. **Present:**

Chairman Paul Dewar, Councillors Don Scott, Steve Brown, Steve Haslett, Jim Cook, Richard McIntyre, Aaron Passey, Andrew McGregor, Malcolm Francis, John Hancock, Colin Shore, Jennifer Yanko.

**In Attendance:**

**Fish and Game Staff:** Phil Teal, Dr Matt Kavermann, Hamish Carnachan

**Welcome and Confirmation of Agenda**

Chairman Dewar welcomed councillors and outlined the agenda for the meeting.

2. **Apologies:**

Apologies were received from Paul Shortis

It was moved

*that apologies be accepted*

**Jim Cook/Don Scott**

Carried

3. **Conflict of Interest**

The Conflicts of Interest Register was reviewed, and identification of additional conflicts were sought specific to the agenda.

Councillor Cook noted that he had recently been appointed as member of the Wellington Conservation Board.

Councillor Brown noted that his wife was the Chairperson of Horizons Regional Council and it was confirmed that he would not vote on any items relating directly to actions relating to Horizons Regional Council activities.

Councillor Haslett identified that he had an interest as a member of the Environmental Health Intelligence NZ - a research and consultancy group, specialising in environmental health information based out of Massey University.

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

### 4. Minutes of Previous Meeting of 7 December 2021:

After brief discussion it was moved that

*the Minutes of the meeting of the Wellington Fish & Game Council of 7 December 2021 be approved as a true and correct record of the proceedings of that meeting.*

Steve Brown/Malcolm Francis

Carried

### 5. Matters Arising:

Mr Teal confirmed that the Cawthron Institute would provide an overview of the Endeavour Fund project designed to get different perspectives of trout management in NZ, and then the proposal development of policy for future fisheries management.

The reports from studies co-ordinated by the Cawthron Institute were to be discussed in detail later in the agenda, but Councillor Haslett noted that only 13 interviewees were surveyed in work which resulted in various expressed views from a variety of interests. This gave the same weighting of more extreme views to moderate views and status quo positions. Councillor Haslett offered to draft a review paper regarding the evidence and quality of inference.

The timetable for schedule of meetings was confirmed.

### 6. NZ Fish and Game Council Business

Councillor McIntyre confirmed that there had not been a full meeting of NZ Council since 4 December 2021. He confirmed that the current Acting CE Di Taylor would stay for the next 5-6 months and then a permanent CE would be recruited (recruitment process anticipated May/June).

Councillor McIntyre noted that he was on a working group to establish a communications strategy with a view to getting things in place for a communications framework to assist with co-ordinating the regions' communication functions.

Councillor McIntyre noted that the NZ Council Communications Manager had resigned but had a relatively extended leaving strategy.

Councillor McIntyre noted that NZ Council was looking for options for governance training specific to Fish and Game training requirements. He noted that generic governance training was useful but also wider in scope

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that necessary and light on some aspects specific to Fish and Game. It was intended that a bespoke training unit to be conducted internally would be the most efficient way to proceed.

It was noted that the Firearms Legislation Review would become implemented in February and noted that while the provisions could have been better, they are relatively practical in application (relating to ammunition storage and transport of firearms). It was further noted that any communications to licence holders should meet the needs of the hunting fraternity.

Councillor Francis sought clarification on a timetable for the Review of Fish and Game noting that Wellington Council hadn't been given a formal framework or timeframes from the Implementation Group. He was aware of the Structure Review Group's report due for draft presentation at the end of February 2022 but wasn't aware how other workstreams and implementation initiatives were being progressed. He was concerned that lack of information was potentially creating apprehension from licence holders who were unaware of overall progress.

Councillor Brown noted that a topic appropriate for the strategic discussion also, was access maintenance improvement was important for anglers and hunters. It was discussed that the funding from the Game Bird Habitat Stamp Trust funds was good, there needed to be consideration of provisioning extra fund from the licence fee to purchase land and habitat. He considered that anglers would support a separate fund. Councillor McIntyre acknowledged the concept and would bring it up at an appropriate time at a NZ Council meeting.

After further brief discussion it was moved that

***The report by NZ Council appointee Councillor McIntyre on NZ Council business be received***

**Steve Haslett/Don Scott**

Carried

### **7. Regional Structure Review**

Chairman Dewar outlined the process and timetable that the Structure Review Group was working to – and it was anticipated that a draft report would be completed and distributed in late February which refines the list of 'long options' to 3-4 recommended options. Once the draft report is received it is anticipated that there will be an opportunity for feedback by Wellington Council.

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### 8. Public Forum

Chairman Dewar noted that due to COVID restrictions under Traffic Light System (Red) that meetings would be held via zoom. There had been no additional specific requests to attend this meeting by members of the public to make submission to Council on relevant issues.

### 9. Health and Safety Reporting

Mr Teal noted that staff had been reacting to different COVID-19 level restrictions by developing Health and Safety Plans for each level and then following the protocols recommended. This had also been relevant with the systemic change to the COVID Traffic Light System with the existing community transmission of Delta and Omicron variants.

Mr Teal noted that he had made the Health and Safety meetings of weekly frequency to deal with a dynamic situation, and also provide an opportunity for more regular health and safety discussions/updates.

It was moved that

***Council receive the Health and Safety Report for December 2021 and January 2022***

**Steve Brown/John Hancock**

Carried

### 10. Game Regulations Recommendations to Minister of Conservation:

Dr Kavermann provided an overview of the draft regulations and supporting information summarised in the documentation.

He noted that the Black Swan data had just been received from Nelson / Marlborough region but did not change the recommended bag limits for Wellington region.

He noted that the main changes to the bag limit recommendations were:

Mallard/grey ducks

12 birds per day (8 week duration)

Black Swan

Area A (EAST)	5 birds per day	7 May to 3 July 2022
Area B (WEST)	5 birds per day	7 May to 8 May 2022
Area B (WEST)	3 birds per day	9 May to 3 July 2022

The rest of the regulations remained the same as last season.

Dr Kavermann confirmed that while we were counting fixed and known sites for paradise shelduck, that staff were always looking for additional ponds

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used for moulting over January. It is likely that changes in moult sites will occur over time but locating 'new' sites where aggregations were noticeable were not that obvious.

Dr Kavermann confirmed that the monitoring of sparsely distributed clusters of upland game populations (such as quail) would require considerably more resources than currently allocated to provide a meaningful monitoring programme. The limits are consequently set quite conservatively and generally met hunter aspirations. It was noted that birds harvested at or adjacent to game preserves can skew results in the game bird harvest survey if a randomly selected hunter hunts at those locations. It was also clarified that red-legged partridge essentially exist in numbers that are harvestable are associated with releases from game preserves.

After discussion it was moved that

***The recommended game bird limits and season duration in game regulations for the 2022 game season provide the basis for the recommendation to go to the Minister of Conservation.***

**Jim Cook/Jennifer Yanko**

Carried

### 11. **Strategic Planning Discussion**

Chairman Dewar introduced discussions on defining a strategic overview of outcomes sought with a view to prioritising direction and outcomes sought for the next 2-3 years.

Mr Teal noted that there had been a regular strategic overview review and confirmation in recent years – and this summary could be used as a basis for discussion. He noted that if projects were identified that had not been previously funded then there needed to be either a contestable funding application made in the internal Fish and Game budgeting process or other work would be curtailed or cutback to accommodate resourcing the project.

It was acknowledged that Councillor Brown's earlier discussions on potentially establishing a separate fund to purchase land for habitat and access for hunters and anglers – with a view to funding originating from the licence fee or other sources.

Councillor Scott considered a high priority was to provide easy access to older anglers, and those that find river access difficult, the opportunity to safely fish, and that the current focus on reservoir fisheries in lakes and ponds (as put and take fisheries) is commendable. There were also opportunities to fund these programmes externally (e.g. external charity grants) and that this also supported the R3 marketing principles. He considered that there should remain an active search for suitable waters as a

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put and take fishery for new participants and those that might have difficulty of accessing bigger waters.

Councillor Francis considered that there needed to be a strategy for dealing with sites that are either declining or fluctuate in fish numbers where angling success is affected. He gave further examples of the Waikanae River where numbers had declined due to habitat modification and loss of pools, and need to address how anglers could continue to have accessibility to the resource. Dr Kavermann confirmed that Fish and Game needed to address the reasons for decline – such as habitat quality decline, overfishing, bird predation. Councillor Francis confirmed that supplementary resources such as the pond at Otaki could provide a useful fishing resource for anglers.

Councillor Francis noted that habitat affected by GWRC flood protection responsibilities and noted their inaction in mitigating effects of their management actions.

Councillor Haslett noted the dilemma and perception of releasing trout to increase numbers (albeit potentially temporarily) could be seen as releasing fish that might interact with native fish.

Councillor Brown requested that NZ Council develop a 20 year plan that includes reviewing rules around fishing – in that flyfishing rules appear elitist and focused on flyfishing participants. These perceived elitist values deter people from trout fishing and is exacerbated with complicated rules. He considered the opportunity for average participants to enter the pursuit. Councillor Scott noted the anecdotes on NZ Spinning for Trout Facebook page noting that there is a significant group of participants that practice spin fishing and is very popular.

Councillor McIntyre is interested in the line of thought for focusing on harvesting for food – and worthy of more detailed discussion on ethical hunting and fishing in the near future. Councillor Haslett noted that while trout couldn't be sold gives it inherent value (of harvested food only obtained through active fishing).

Councillor McIntyre noted that work needed to continue on developing partnerships and relationships with iwi and other stakeholders, but this needed to be extended into educating the wider public on the perceptions of sports fishing and game bird hunting. This related to concepts related to the social licence to continue activities.

Councillor Brown considered there should be work in bringing together iwi, regional councils, Forest and Bird and that we should all be working together.

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There were good examples where this is working but we needed to be represented in the groupings to ensure Fish and Game interests are promoted.

Councillor Brown considered there needs to be continued efforts to promote the benefits of the activity – getting into the outdoors, maintaining health, increasing well-being and increasing environmental awareness. Chairman Dewar confirmed that Fish and Game should promote the ‘good’ that Fish and Game does – including water quality advocacy and wetland management activities.

Councillor McIntyre noted that activities such as Family Fishing Days on Hokowhitu Lagoon provided a positive outlook for fishing as an activity.

Discussion ensued on the Fish For Future Project co-ordinated by Cawthron Institute. Councillor Scott noted that there was potential for preconceived ideas and to look for contributors to support viewpoint. Councillor Haslett considered that Fish and Game could look at recreational fishing surveys and provide design and input into external survey questions. It was noted that the pilot studies were well funded (as is the Endeavour Fund project) and may target perceptions.

Discussion ensued on a potential rebuttal to the focus of the research and having at least an understanding of the risks and progress of the research and policy development. Councillor Haslett offered to write a critique of the preliminary papers. Councillor McIntyre considered this would complement engaging with NZ Council to have a greater awareness of the project and how to manage potential risks. Discussion ensued on the potential extreme risks could stretch to: wholesale eradication of trout from valued fisheries, removal of fees and regulations for all, and Fish & Game being merged into a wider freshwater fisheries agency.

Mr Teal provided a brief overview of project which could broadly separated into two components: freshwater fish research looking at fish interactions in an open system, and policy development based on social science research. It was recognised that this was a considerable amount of funding that could result in material changes to freshwater fishery governance.

Councillor McIntyre confirmed that there was a meeting with Cawthron Institute in April at the Fish and Game Governors/ New Zealand Council meeting.

It was suggested that a briefing paper be prepared to allow a good briefing for informed discussions for governors at NZ Council and all Fish and Game

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governors. The briefing needed to include good questions prepared before the meeting with Cawthron Institute including questioning the processes that lead to the conclusions in the preliminary investigations. There was also support in getting other regions' governors informed and aware of any risks or consequences. It was agreed that a short covering synopsis of the work be prepared on the science research undertaken to-date and this needed to ensure that Fish and Game don't endorse without carefully constructed criticism.

Councillor Passey noted that we aren't going to change their higher-level agenda but we needed to make sure that they use robust science (that is interpreted correctly) rather conclusions based on opinion. It was suggested that an expert panel be established (such as notable statisticians) to critique the research at all stages of development.

It was agreed that a briefing paper be drafted for New Zealand Council before their meeting on 18 February 2022 and potentially a briefing paper for the April Governors/NZ Council forum.

It was also agreed that there should be efforts made to ensure there is adequate awareness of the issues in other Fish and Game regions. Chairman Dewar undertook to write to other regional Chairs to make sure they were informed of the project.

### 12. **R3 Marketing Report**

Mr Teal provided an overview of actions that had been undertaken to encourage participation and license purchase prior to Christmas: examples of sending out selected and targeted emails to previous licence holders.

It was acknowledged that debate was occurring in the US about the long-term sustainability of their R3 programmes – with some States concerned about limited resources and overcrowding. This has resulted in licence holders not enjoying the experience as much.

In discussion it was postulated that in New Zealand we haven't reached the saturation point and in fact there have been more resources available with COVID restrictions on non-resident anglers opening angling space for New Zealanders. There is still potential for retaining and directing existing customers in NZ and focusing on lowland fisheries with good access and success rate – rather than promoting the aspirational back country pristine fisheries which might be pressure sensitive. Councillor Brown did not think NZ had too many anglers had degraded angling experiences per se, evidenced by guiding trips that have regular customers per day.



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Councillor McGregor did note that public land is limited for hunting and potential for reduced quality of hunting given there are so few places for hunting after opening weekend. Dr Kavermann noted that more resources could be spent on creating wetlands and legitimately access on controlled land. It was noted that opportunities are not readily taken by Fish and Game in that Cawthron Institute received considerable funding for salmonid research which Fish and Game only has moderate influence in spending rather than control of funds.

It was then moved

***To receive the Marketing R3 report***

**Don Scott/Jim Cook**

Carried

**13. Policy Review**

Mr Teal noted that the Policy Review subcommittee had not been able to discuss the risk management policy and would be deferred until a subsequent meeting.

**14. Consultation Draft Wellington Sports Fish and Game Bird Management Plan**

Mr Teal noted that Wellington Region had a current draft of its 10-year plan – Sports Fish and Game Bird Management Plan that was ready for consultation. It was the intention of staff to start circulating the draft to iwi and DOC prior to the formal consultation process for initial comments.

**15. GWRC Western Rivers Global consents**

Mr Teal noted that no progress had been made by GWRC on engaging with iwi – therefore the Waikanae and Otaki river consents were being operated under their existing historical consents.

**16. One Plan – Plan Change 2 Environment Court Appeal**

Mr Teal noted that Horizons Regional Council were developing technical and legal advice on how to proceed with the Plan Change 2. A further meeting was held in December 2021 to progress mediation – with a potential focus on a risk matrix linking GMPs.

It was then moved to

***Receive the report on the One Plan – Plan Change 2 Environment Court Appeal***

**Paul Dewar/Malcolm Francis**

Carried

**17. GWRC Natural Resources Plan Environment Court Appeal**

Mr Teal provided a brief overview confirming that only administrative aspects of drafting consent orders remained.

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It was then moved to

***Receive the report on the GWRC Natural Resources Plan Environment Court Appeal***

**Jim Cook/Malcolm Francis**

Carried

### 18. **Wairarapa Moana Update**

Mr Teal outlined that the Treaty Settlement process which had been in quiescence due to High Court clarifications on iwi mandating, and has been stalled by legal action by factions within iwi.

Dr Kavermann confirmed that potentially more balloted positions would be processed in September/October 2022. There has been a more active response to match hunters to stands to set them up for success, but this has required more staff resources.

Wairarapa Moana have selected consultants to progress research proposals and wetland management projects (planting). Dr Kavermann noted that the research needed to be undertaken holistically not piecemeal, robust science used, statutory responsibilities taken into consideration, and projects dealing with JK Donald Wetland weir prioritised.

Staff are actively engaging with all parties to Wairarapa Moana to progress the weir proposal for JK Donald Wetland – with a meeting in late February anticipated with all key parties.

It was confirmed that an opportunity currently existed to improve access to the lake at Molly Dykes access at cost of \$2000 – just south of the Wairio Wetland.

The removal of a hut on the Wairio Wetland had not yet been progressed.

It was then moved to

***Receive the report on the Wairarapa Moana Projects and Issues***

**Malcolm Francis/John Hancock**

Carried

### 19. **Junior and Novice Participation Project**

Mr Teal provided a brief overview of the trout that are ordered for delivery to the Otaki pond site. Work has been completed on the site to ready it as a basis for a fishing pond. Councillor Francis gave a brief account of Kapiti Fly Fishing Club using the site for a Women on the Fly programme, and junior angler usage over the December and January period. He noted that there had been some work at the site that raised the outlet pipes that had caused

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them to be perched. Staff will follow up with GWRC and Winstones to remedy.

Trout were also released at Marton Reservoir to provide additional angler opportunities – for novice anglers and potentially families. Councillor Scott noted that Manawatu Freshwater Angling Club were aware of this site and supported the initiative. He further noted that trout are still present in good numbers in the Hokowhitu Lagoon from the October 2021 release and still fishable.

It was then moved to

***Receive the report on the Junior and Novice Participation projects***

**Jim Cook/Colin Shore**

Carried

### 20. **Research Update**

Mr Teal provided a brief overview of the research projects still active:

1. **eDNA project**: used winter data collection and have developed a manuscript and anticipate next draft in the first quarter of the calendar year.
2. **Native Fish/Trout Interactions**: draft has been completed for thesis work with expectation that completion at end of February. While this won't be published work, it is anticipated that two papers will result from this work.

It was then moved to

***Receive the report on the current Research Projects***

**Don Scott/Jim Cook**

Carried

### 21. **Access Management Issues Update**

Mr Teal no progress had been made on resolving helicopter access at the lower end of the Remote Experience Zone in the Upper Rangitikei River.

### 22. **Management Report for the Period 1 December 2021 to 31 January 2022**

Mr Teal provided an overview of the Management Report for the relevant period. He noted that the National Anglers Survey was now progressing with a contract with SIT (Southland Institute of Technology) to undertake the phone surveys and NIWA to manage and write up the project.

After further discussion and clarifications it was moved that

***Council receives the Management Report for period 1 December 2021 to 31 January 2022 be received.***

**Malcolm Francis/Aaron Passey**

Carried

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23. **Licence Sales Report – 1 September 2021 up to 31 January 2022**

Mr Teal noted that the start of the 2021/2022 season for fish licence sales were ahead of the previous year - about 150 LEQs better than last year at the same time. He noted that staff would be making efforts to maintain those licence sales in late summer and autumn but this is likely to be weather dependent.

After brief discussion it was moved that

***The licence sales reports for Fish Licence Sales 2021/2022 as at 31 January 2021 be received***

**Steve Brown/Richard McIntyre**

Carried

24. **Expenditure Report/Financial Transactions**

The summary of income and expenditure to 31 December 2021 was considered.

Mr Teal confirmed that a vehicle had been ordered for a vehicle replacement but delivery was taking longer than expected.

After brief discussion it was then moved

***Receive and Accept the Expenditure Reports to 31 December 2021 and Financial Transactions for November and December 2021.***

**Paul Dewar/Don Scott**

Carried

25. **Correspondence / Media**

No items of material discussion.

26. **Recognition and Contribution Awards**

Potential recipients were discussed, and additional nominations called for consideration at future meetings.

Mr Teal noted that Peter Taylor had passed away and that a presentation of his contribution medal would be made posthumously.

27. **Wellington Conservation Board - Liaison**

Councillors indicated that they wanted fisheries management and research for Wairarapa Moana to be discussed with the Wellington Conservation Board. Dr Kavermann and Councillor Shortis indicated that they were prepared to attend.

28. **General Business**

None.

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There being no further items of general business the meeting was closed at 5.47pm.

***Next Meeting to be held: Zoom Meeting on Tuesday, 22 March 2022 at 3pm.***

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

