

## **Agenda Item 12:**

### **Lake Poerua Survey**

**Prepared by:** Glen Newton – Officer

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### **Context and Purpose**

A letter was received from a local angler requesting Lake Poerua be opened for fishing over the winter season. In response the West Coast Fish and Game Council requested staff undertake a survey of anglers during the 2019/20 sports fishing season to ascertain support for winter opening on Lake Poerua (Appendix one). Currently Lake Poerua is open 1 October to 30 April although historically it was open 1 November to 30 April. Lake Poerua holds brown trout although both rainbow trout and salmon were present historically.

The objective of regulation setting is to have appropriate regulations that maximise hunter and angler opportunity, whilst protecting the resource for future generations. The findings from this survey will be considered in this context and help provide a basis for proposed future regulations at Lake Poerua. These regulations will be presented to the Minister for approval prior to the 2020-2021 sports fish season.

### **Key findings**

The survey was undertaken at the start of the 2019/2020 sports fishing season with nine anglers surveyed on October 1<sup>st</sup> (opening day), eight on October 6<sup>th</sup>, six on October 13<sup>th</sup> and four on November 2<sup>nd</sup>. The vast majority of anglers surveyed were from the North Canterbury Region (78%) and male (96%) with the remaining anglers from the West Coast (18%) and Central South Island Regions (4%). Most anglers had visited Lake Poerua multiple times over a number of years (74%) although some anglers were visiting the lake for the first time (26%). Most anglers were opposed to the lake being open over winter (81%) while the remaining anglers were either supportive (11%), not worried either way (4%), or felt more research should be done before considering winter opening (4%) (see Appendix two).

### **Discussion**

Anglers who have been regular visitors to Lake Poerua over numerous years were nearly unanimous in their opinion the lake should not be opened for winter fishing. The main reasons were:

- 1) that there are plenty of other opportunities for winter fishing on the West Coast,
- 2) spawning sites need protection over the winter,
- 3) and fish would be spooky and harder to catch if they were targeted year-round.

The underlying perception of those surveyed is that angler satisfaction at Lake Poerua is higher than adjacent lakes (Brunner and Haupiri) as the trout are easier to catch, more abundant and in better condition as a result of the winter closure. In this respect Lake Poerua is unique, almost all other WC lakes are open during the winter. Lake Poerua provides anglers with an excellent early season opportunity.

Historic lake netting data collected by Fish & Game showed Poerua brown trout (in 2012) had better abundance and condition factor than Brunner (in 2011) although were slightly smaller. However, comparing data from different seasons and lakes is risky due to likely seasonal variability. It appears Brunner brown trout have declined in size since 2011 while Lake Poerua fish have not (pers. comm.). Both Poerua and Brunner will be part of a lake netting project this season which will give a better indication of the current abundance and condition of trout. The other benefit of winter closure is better protection of spawning fish, Lake Poerua has limited spawning habitat meaning fish can be easily targeted as they congregate before spawning.

Anglers new to the lake often saw winter opening as a new opportunity they could exploit. There appeared little regard for ongoing sustainability of the fishery and that increased angler pressure could potentially reduce fish abundance, make fish more spooky and harder to catch, and reduce angler satisfaction. They typically didn't appear to have the same appreciation of the uniqueness of the current fishing opportunity at Poerua.

### **Staff Recommendations for regulations**

- Maintain the current winter closure at Lake Poerua to maintain the unique angling opportunity it provides.
- Review the upcoming lake netting data obtained from Lake Poerua to ensure current regulations are maintaining the fish population at Lake Poerua.

## Appendix 1

Do you regularly visit Lake Poerua to fish?

Would you be supportive of Fish & Game opening Lake Poerua for the winter season? Why?

Any other observations about Lake Poerua?

## Appendix 2

### 1/10/2019 1000-1300hrs Glen

5145176 Male, 71 yrs, NC, I come here regularly, No, plenty of other water open.

5147385 Male 40 yrs, NC, I have been coming here since I was a child, no, give it a rest.

5139030 Male 71 yrs, NC, Yes, I've fished it for 40 years, no to winter season, has declined, used to be rainbows and salmon as well.

5136129 Male 66 yrs NC, first time, normally fish Brunner, no, let it rest.

5136128 Male 37 yrs NC, first time, normally fish Brunner, no, plenty of other opportunity

5151725 Male 58 yrs, CSI, I come here most seasons. no, should close other areas over winter as well, Haupiri

5148563 Male 50 yrs, WC, I come here every season. No, fish in better condition, more aggressive

5150530 Male 26 yrs, NC, I've been here every season for 10 years. No, look after a great fishery

5150530 Male 69 yrs, WC. I've been here last few seasons. No, Winter conditions are difficult, people wouldn't fish it anyway, dodgy weather

### 6/10/2019 1000-1200hrs Baylee

5154349 Male 33 yrs NC, Twice a year, Against – it needs a resting period.

5150026 Male 20yrs NC First time Against – it's good to rest water, makes great fishing when it opens.

5141171 male 50 yrs NC First time Support – doesn't mind year round fishing

5137068 Male 60yrs WC Fishes often – personal favourite lake to fish. Against – it would ruin this fantastic fishery and you have plenty other places to fish over winter. Comments- concerns about waratahs in the lake.

5136635 Male 75yrs NC Male Once a year for the last 55 years Against – Unnecessary Comments – believes shoreline has been over planted

5133660 Female 73yrs NC Three times a year Against – to close to spawning ground and fish need peace and quiet to do their thing.

5133659 Male 78yrs NC Three times a year Against – Spawning in school creek is right next to the lake and fishing year-round will make the fish spooky.

5151794 Male 55yrs NC First time fishing Support – increased fishing opportunities

**12/10/2019 0700-0900hrs Glen**

No Anglers present

**13/10/2019 1100-1400hrs Glen**

5131324 Male 80yrs NC Once a year for last 10 years. Not worried about winter season either way

5166944 Male 55yrs NC Once a year for 20+ years, no, doesn't need opening, plenty of other options.

5153987 Male 53yrs NC Once a year for last 25 years, no, a great place for family trips but wouldn't like to see it opened over winter

5153984 Male 20yrs NC Once a year for last 14 years, no issues with winter opening.

5135244 Male 54yrs NC Once a year for last 25 years, no.

5133055 Male 50yrs NC Once a year for last three years, Great lake and great weekend, how will winter season effect sustainability? If it doesn't then would be ok.

**2/11/2019 1000-1100 Baylee**

5137679 Male 64yrs WC Once a year for six years, opposed to winter opening, good lake gets rested over winter and great felling to fish on opening. Should release fish into Kapitea Reservoir.

5179902 Male 70 yrs WC First time fishing in life, ditto to above comments

5135999 Male 33 yrs NC Regular at start of season, opposed, plenty of opportunities at Lake Brunner over winter although Lake Poerua could handle it as high fish densities

5162343 Male 29yrs NC first time, opposed, plenty of other opportunities