

## FISH & GAME'S CEO TALKS TO THE ADVOCATES

CEO BRYCE JOHNSON EXPLAINS FISH & GAME'S KEY ROLE IN FISHING AND CONSERVATION

**On 16 October this year, the Advocates were pleased to welcome Bryce Johnson, CEO of Fish & Game, to address us on the issues facing rivers and the recreational use of and implications for the Tongariro River.**

Bryce covered a range of issues, which are summarised here.

**BALANCE.** The 'B' word. Among others a politician's catchphrase. It is not a reasonable word to use in a debate over natural resource development and natural resource protection as it invariably leads to a reduction in the natural environment. It is a one-way process. He described it as a creeping killer of the natural environment – like a salami, the slicing off of a little bit more of what becomes a little bit less – but that which is gone is gone forever. Bryce has written on this topic in Special Edition 31 of *Fish & Game*.

**EXCLUSIVE CAPTURE.** Again, covered in the same *Fish & Game* edition. This comes about through changing access provisions for ordinary New Zealanders. The right of New Zealanders to have access to fishing water is the issue, though this means anglers are effectively barred from fishing water. It occurs where a land occupier uses the Trespass Act to effectively grant themselves de facto ownership of a fishery by denying others access to it and is particularly galling when the exclusive access rights are then sold to a guide or air charter operator.

Bryce then explained the formation of the 12 regional Fish & Game Councils and the responsibility to "manage, maintain and enhance sports fish and game", which is delegated to Fish & Game Councils by Parliament. Through this organisation, anglers and bird hunters are managers of their own affairs. The Act of Parliament sets out clearly the role of the organisation.



Head Office does national advocacy and endeavours to co-ordinate the regions – a bit like herding cats. Council strength is from regional passion. Fish & Game have a well qualified staff with most in the regions and only five in Head Office. Funding is from licence fees only (\$9 million), and the council must report annually to Parliament.

Attempts have been made to get rid of Fish & Game and to counter this, he sees public awareness as the key.

Issues identified:

- Clean water.
- Treaty issues. An opportunity and a threat.
- Trout farming.
- Performance of regional councils.
- Water conservation orders. The idea is that they give National Park status to rivers and lakes but are costly to introduce and take time but are the strongest protection for rivers.
- Tourism, but there is a need to protect the resource for New Zealanders.
- Non-resident licences.
- A guide's licence for catch and return information.
- Tenure review – preserve public access.
- Didymo.
- Canada geese – no one has a mortgage over wildlife.
- The Overseas Investment Act.

Bryce spoke on each issue and then developed the issues of habitat and access.

On the habitat matter, he spoke of the collaborative approach in Scandinavia where the 'dirty work' is handed to the factions and they work through to an acceptable solution for both parties, avoiding regulations.

On access, he spoke mainly of the Walking Access Commission and recommended the website [www.walkingaccess.govt.nz](http://www.walkingaccess.govt.nz) as an authoritative information source. At this time, work is well under way on an online mapping system to identify current legal public access ways, which it is hoped will be launched very soon. It is hoped that this exercise will clarify existing legal access.

## MESSAGE FROM THE PRESIDENT

Thanks to all members who took the time to complete our member survey, the results of which form the feature article in this edition of the newsletter. The Committee is greatly encouraged by members' overall satisfaction levels and the degree of support for the key issues we are focused on. We are about to review the Advocates' Strategic Plan and will incorporate members' feedback as part of the review process. Congratulations to Adrian Rickards of Whangarei who was the winner of our respondent prize draw for the \$100 dinner voucher.

We were privileged to have Fish & Game CEO Bryce Johnson speak at our recent seminar. Bryce's extensive knowledge and experience in advocating for New Zealand's freshwater fisheries at a national level gave us an insightful perspective on the Advocates' activities in a wider context. A synopsis on Bryce's speech will appear in our next Annual Report.

There have been four principal areas of activity over the past 6 months:

- Richard Kemp has led the development of a comprehensive AFTR submission on DoC's new draft Management Plan for the Taupo Fishery.
- Marja ter Haar has coordinated extensive clearing and replanting of more of the river reserves area.
- Ross Baker and John Wheeler persevere with the detailed scoping and planning of the Tongariro River Trail.
- Environment Waikato has acknowledged the efforts of John Toogood and others on eradicating wilding pines by awarding the Advocates their prestigious Weedbusters Award.

All these are covered in more detail in the newsletter. We hope you will enjoy reading it.

Kind regards

Stuart Crosbie  
President



## 10-YEAR FISHERY MANAGEMENT PLAN

**As members of the Taupo Fishery Advisory Committee, we have seen an early draft of the 10-year management plan produced by the Department of Conservation (DoC).**

Richard Kemp has been responsible for reviewing the draft plan, and a submission has been prepared for when the plan is put to the public early in 2011. The plan will be posted on the Department of Conservation website.

A précis of the submission:

- We appreciate the detail and consideration given by DoC to the plan.
  - We support many of the desirable management outcomes disclosed in the plan.
  - We have 11 provisions of concern.
1. A single governance body for the fishery. Tongariro Fishing Advisory Committee (TFAC) to be that body.
  2. Fishing management review. There be one body to manage

the freshwater fishery nationwide. DoC's policy to "recognise the mutual benefit to foster cooperative working relationships with Fish & Game NZ and other organisations to advance our common interest" is considered by the Advocates as a very positive move.

3. There be stronger scientific objectives stated viz food chain dynamics, genetics, the river as a nursery, river flow rates.
4. There is strong protection of the fishery against aquatic pests.
5. Smelt are the key to the fishery. Their replenishment and sustainability and management of the harvest is paramount.
6. River flow rates – no significant changes to affect the insect community and that the river be allowed to flush itself.
7. Enforcement of legal provisions against trout farming.
8. Reclassify catfish as a pest and explore ways and means to eradicate them.
9. Removal of willows from the river margins.

10. Maintain access.

11. Develop sustainable funding streams to allow management certainty and planning.



**A 10.2lb rainbow trout caught by John Milner on display at the National Trout Centre – the dream on which the Taupo Fishery is based.**

# MEMBER SURVEY SUMMARY 2010

REPORT BY STUART CROSBIE, PRESIDENT

Some 67 responses were received within 3 weeks of posting out the questionnaire as part of the July edition of the Advocates newsletter. Given there was no follow-up to repeatedly encourage members to complete their questionnaires, this response rate is encouraging in that it represents a third of our total membership.

## HOW WELL ARE WE ENGAGING WITH MEMBERS?

Figure 1 shows a very high level of satisfaction overall in aligning to members' concerns.

Comments highlighted the need for maintaining focus on our original mandate and core business, namely the protection and enhancement of the trout fishery together with maintaining our membership base. Those who scored low here are looking to interact with us more using the website and via email and so on.

## PREFERRED CHANNELS OF COMMUNICATION

Respondents were asked, "To what extent do you value or utilise the following existing communication channels and forums?"

There is a clear preference for written communication by respondents with the newsletter being particularly valued – see Figure 2. By contrast, meetings are not highly valued by members and neither is our website (although a number of members don't use the internet at all so this medium is simply not applicable rather than not liked per se).

For those familiar with computers, comments would suggest a need for more use of electronic channels of communication, particularly regular email updates.

We still need to retain printed media for others.

## RELATIVE IMPORTANCE OF ISSUES

Respondents were asked, "How critical are the issues that the Advocates are currently focused on?"

- Lack of integrated Tongariro River Catchment Management Plan across key stakeholder groups.
- Didymo prevention – advocate for North Island to be didymo-free and for special preventative controls for the Taupo fishery.
- River environs restoration – facilitate restoration of the river margin and continue with planting programme.
- Lake levels and river flow rates – seek power company cooperation in aiding the river to flush itself.
- Mangamawhitiwhiti Block – maintain watching brief on this and any other urban developments that might impact the river.
- Trout condition – ensure our world-class fishery is sustained through good science and effective management strategies.
- Access – gain improved access (for anglers and non-anglers alike) to a greater proportion of the Tongariro River .

Figure 3 shows a good level of support for all issues. That said, enhancing the river environs and monitoring the district plan for urban development such as the Mangamawhitiwhiti Block are not seen as important as the others. Particular importance is placed by respondents on the condition of the fishery, the threat of didymo and the impact of reduced river flows and high lake levels.

One respondent wrote a two page letter noting the declining numbers of anglers fishing the Tongariro, which, he conjectures, is due partly to poor fish runs caused by reduced water flow rates arising from Genesis Energy's management and diversion of water in the river.

A number of respondents commented on the condition of, and access to, the lower river (below the bridge); the following captures well the sentiments expressed by many. "There was a time when 90% of my fishing was focused on the lower river. It was a unique and beautiful place to fish. Even now, I still feel a little sick when thinking about what has been lost. If I could have one wish, it would be to see the lower river return to what it once was."

"Ongoing focus is needed on opening more river area for fishing access. While DoC has done a great job cutting back access tracks below SH1 bridge on the true right, the same is needed on the true left bank. Important to keep this issue in front of DoC to ensure walking/cycling access is not at the expense of angling access and enjoyment."

## RESPONDENTS' OVERALL IMPRESSION

Respondents were asked, "How would you describe your overall level of satisfaction with the Advocates?". Figure 4 is very encouraging in that it affirms respondents' high levels of satisfaction with the Advocates' performance overall. Less than 2% are ambivalent or worse and 75% are either highly satisfied or ecstatic!

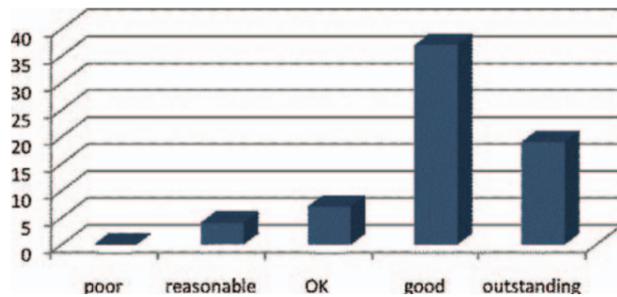


Figure 1: Extent to which Advocates understand and reflect members' concerns

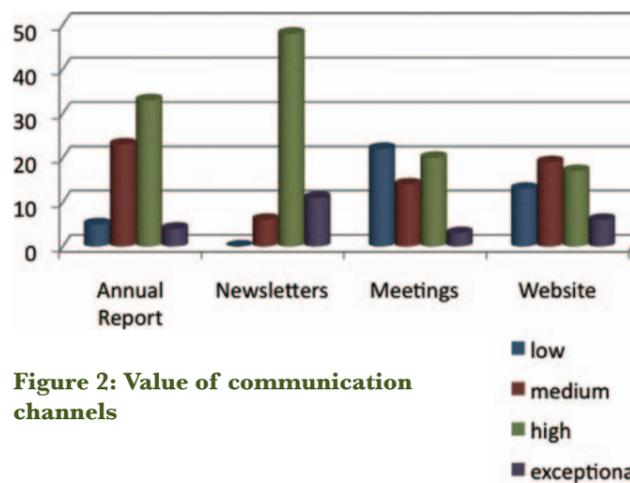


Figure 2: Value of communication channels

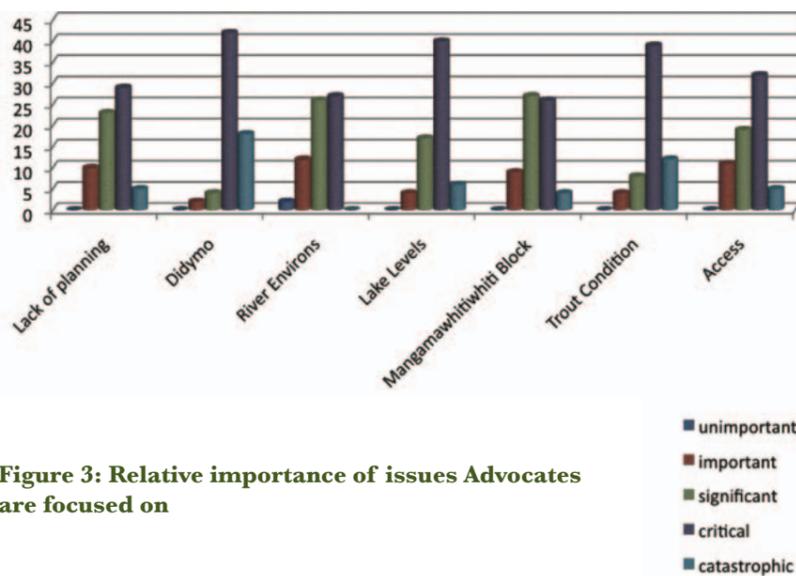


Figure 3: Relative importance of issues Advocates are focused on

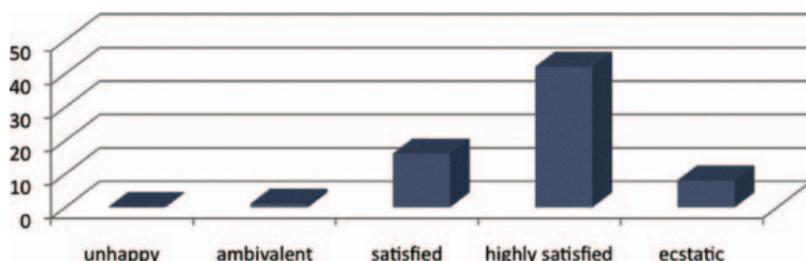


Figure 4: Overall level of satisfaction

## MESSAGE FROM THE SECRETARY

Included with this newsletter are:

- A subscription form – subscription year is 1.1.2011 to 31.12.2011
- a map of the river pools.

The subscription form is also available on our website. The facility exists for payments to be made online. Complete the form through our website [www.tongariroriver.org.nz](http://www.tongariroriver.org.nz) and then go to your bank website to make payment. Subs are \$25 for an individual, \$30 per household and \$60 for associate members. Your membership is valued.

The map of the river pools is free to members with this posting. There will be a charge of \$5 for this map sold at Sporting Life and other retailers.

The map is limited at this time to 2,000 copies. We recognise that there will be some changes required as they are brought to our attention. We also know that the river and its pools will change with the floods. It is our intention that we can upgrade the map when this happens. A copy is included for each member of AFTR listed in your household membership.

## THE RIVER ENVIRONMENT

### ASH AND GRAVEL EXTRACTION

Attendees at the meeting of the Turangi Forum were told of the actions for volcanic ash and gravel removal from the Tongariro River in the area between SH1 and the Bain Pool. Environment Waikato have lodged a consent in mid November that will probably be granted. There are issues involved with disposal of the ash material as it has no commercial value. Environment Waikato has received from Tonkin and Taylor a report that sets out trigger points to action future removal of material to further protect the town from flooding.

River users will notice that work has already commenced with tracks being established on the left bank below SH1 bridge. Willows on the left bank will be removed. Some 300,000 cubic metres of material is to be removed over the next 3 years.

Work each year is to be completed by the end of April.



### THE WILLOW THREAT

River users will be aware of the growth of willows along the river margins above SH1 bridge. The matter has been brought to the attention of both Department of Conservation and Environment Waikato. The problem is acknowledged, and we look forward to a solution. The greatest concern is from grey willow (pussy willow) as we are told that the seed can travel great distances in the wind. We think that the matter is more cost-effective if dealt with while the plants are small rather than wait for them to become trees. Crack willows are also growing but are seen by the agencies as less of a problem.

### THANK YOU COMMUNITY WORKERS

Marja ter Haar has worked heroically with community workers to clean up the left bank of the river from Te Aho Road to the Hydro Pool. We record our thanks to the workers for the fine work that they have done.

We now need to seek further funds to buy plants to cover the cleared area. We are pleased that a lot more kowhai are to be planted. The spring river walk with the tui in the flowering kowhai is spectacular.

### PINE PLANTATION TO BE REMOVED

The Department of Conservation has advised its intention for the pine plantation on the right bank upstream from SH1 bridge to be felled in the near future. It was last cleared in the 1970s. This time, the area will be replanted with indigenous species.