



## NZFFA February 2022 Newsletter

{name} - Welcome to Your Newsletter

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### **Editor's Note:**

Welcome to the February issue. You may note that we a tad light on content this month, with several of our regular commentators away hunting and/or fishing.

As always though, if you have any contributions you feel would be of interest to other Members, please send them through to [editor@nzffa.com](mailto:editor@nzffa.com)

Could be a letter to the editor, or perhaps an article from one of your own Club newsletters.

Looking forward to your help with March's edition.

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### **President's comments February 2022**

#### **Angling Advocacy – becoming an environmentalist**

To be an advocate for freshwater angling it is necessary to become an advocate for the habitat of freshwater fish. In essence through enlightened self-interest you end up becoming an environmentalist.

Over time you realize that the messages environmentalists convey are not wanted by the wider society; politicians enact legislation purportedly to protect the environment, regional councils make a

pretence of giving effect to this legislation, while those whose wealth is dependent on destroying the environment use their power and resources to circumvent environmental laws and deflect public outrage through control of the media.

If you are to believe the propaganda we receive from both the national and farming press, New Zealand has a "clean and green" economy and any minor environmental aberrations can be simply solved by planting a tree or setting traps for predators.

In my third year as president of the NZFFA I have few illusions left about how difficult it is to communicate the harm that is being done to Canterbury's freshwater ecosystems. The Canterbury Regional Council prefers to pass off nitrate pollution of the region's groundwater as a legacy issue while working to ensure the continuing pollution will be an even worse legacy for future generations. Some Ecan responses:

*"Thank you for your citizen science"*

*"Would you like another meeting?"*

*"In a democracy you do not always get what you want"*

*"Peter I see you as the problem as you are not being collaborative!"*

My correspondence with Ecan is more likely to be in the form of LGOIMA requests where my requests are artfully deflected or I am given answers unrelated to my questions.

The response from friends and veterinary colleagues is much the same:

*"Are you anti-dairying?"*

*"So what!"*

*"Don't tell me the problems, give me the solutions"*

*"Well you have got to get ahead don't you?"*

It was therefore reassuring to be made aware of Andy Kenworthy's writings where he pretty much sums up my thoughts.

**It seems no one in New Zealand is prepared to consider that our glamour dairy industry might be unsustainable in the longer term**

Andy Kenworthy's articles are worth a read.

[Environmentalism, surrender and indoctrination \(substack.com\)](#)

[An Introduction to Sustainable - by Andy Kenworthy \(substack.com\)](#)

## **2. Canterbury Water Quality**

I am continuing with the NZFFA's monthly monitoring of nitrate levels in the lowland streams and drains in the lower Selwyn District.

The usual seasonal influences are apparent with nitrate levels peaking around September/October before rampant growth of algae and macrophytes see nitrate levels drop as this nutrient is taken up by aquatic plants under warmer conditions.

The lower Selwyn River has experienced major floods which has kept the upper and lower reaches connected for longer periods. This has resulted in lower nitrate readings due to the lower proportion of flow contributed by groundwater.

Conversely other streams and drains that are primarily groundwater sourced show little change.

I posted an article on toxic algae recently which is exacerbated by warm weather and the high nutrient loads entering Te Waihora and many Canterbury streams.

## **3. Compliance of the Rakaia National Water Conservation Order**

There have been a few developments since Newsroom's senior

environment reporter David Williams reported on a leaked Ecan report revealing that Trustpower's budgeting of water "stored" in Lake Coleridge for sale to Central Plains Water Ltd and other contracted irrigation schemes may not comply with the Rakaia River NWCO. It was further recorded in the leaked report that Ecan did not have the means to monitor or manage compliance of the remaining consents to abstract irrigation water from the Rakaia River.

Ecan has responded by playing down the leaked report by claiming it was an incomplete document for internal use only.

The NZFFA has done some homework and found this is not the case. The damming report written over two and a half years had been both internally and externally reviewed.

The NZFFA has been given advice by an independent hydrologist that the report was impressive and comprehensive but contained "politically uncomfortable conclusions".

The National Council of F&G and the Environment Defence Society have both responded with letters from their lawyers directed at Ecan.

<https://www.newsroom.co.nz/legal-threat-looms-over-ecans-hidden-river-report>

On 29<sup>th</sup> January representatives of NZFFA, NZ Salmon Anglers, and other Rakaia River advocates met to plan a joint response to Ecan's apparent inaction.

This is a work in progress, the NZFFA hopes to work with North Canterbury F&G and any other parties with an interest in the Rakaia River to get a better outcome for this river which has seen significant losses to the native and recreational fisheries since the NWCO was amended in 2013.

This will be a major project for the NZFFA in the coming year.

Steve Gerard, Central South Island F&G councillor, David Haynes, Nelson/Tasman F&G councillor and myself (all NZFFA executive members), took the opportunity to have a great day trout fishing the Hydra waters following the January meeting.

Steve had been a fishing guide in the upper Rakaia and was a great

help ensuring we all had success while relaying how the upper Rakaia River has seen its fishery deteriorate in addition to the lower river since the Rakaia River NWCO was amended.

We had less success when Bill Southward, David and I fished the top end of Lake Coleridge and the Harper River.

A first time visitor to this area, David was appalled at the scale of the earthworks required to divert the Harper and Wilberforce rivers into Lake Coleridge. From our vantage we were unable to see if any water was left to flow past to the Rakaia River. From the dry shingle expanse below the extensive shingle barriers it was apparent that most of the Wilberforce was being diverted to the Oakden Canal.

Despite Canterbury Regional council consents intended to minimise the amount of sediment entering Lake Coleridge it was significant to note that the bridge over the Harper River diversion had been destroyed by recent high flows while the barriers on the bridge over the Oakden canal had had to be replaced. Both structures are on the lake side of the control gates. Clear evidence these consents have been ignored by Trustpower.

*Steve Gerard assisting David Haynes land one of several trout caught in the upper Rakaia River*

National Water Conservations Orders are an instrument designed to

give waterways of national significance protections equivalent to a National Park.

It is a function of the Minister for the Environment to manage NWCOS

The Rakaia River NWCO is administered by the Ministry for the Environment

It is a function of regional councils (Ecan) to give effect to NWCOS

The Environment Protection Authority may take enforcement action if the local authority has not commenced taking enforcement action where required under the RMA 1991.

The NZFFA is concerned that the National Water Conservation (Rakaia River) Order 1988 is no longer protecting the:

**Outstanding characteristics and features;**

**(a) an outstanding natural characteristic in the form of a braided river**

**(b) outstanding wildlife habitat above and below the Rakaia Gorge, outstanding fisheries, and outstanding recreational angling, and jet boating features.**

This is evidenced by the disappearance of the endangered Stokell's smelt, the collapse of the once outstanding sea trout fishery, the poor breeding success of the endangered Black Billed Gulls and White Fronted Terns, and the necessity for Ecan to annually douse the braids and floodplain with high concentrations of glyphosate and toxic surfactants due to the invasion of woody plants – the result of sustained lowered flows.

Since the Rakaia River WCO was amended the river has experienced declines in fish and birdlife that are much greater than "minor or less than minor".

At issue is whether the amended Rakaia NWCO is still fit for purpose or whether the problem is simply a failure by MfE to administer the order &/or Ecan to give effect to the order.

**If one NWCO fails to be managed in accordance with existing legislation then all of New Zealand's NWCOS are at risk.**

Dr Peter Trolove

President

NZFFA

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## The Perch is a Valued Sporting Fish – not a Pest

### Opinion by Tony Orman

A couple of years ago, Fisheries NZ has a discussion document open for public submissions, in which it was proposed to list perch as a “pest fish” – contrary to the current legal status of perch as a “sporting fish.”

Over the years there has been an on-going periodic moves to list perch as “pests.”

I recall a couple of years ago I sat in a meeting where a draft Regional Pest Management Strategy was presented by some Marlborough District Council officers.

It was almost bizarre - perhaps it was. For instance listed as a major threat was the wallaby. Now wallabies don't exist in Marlborough. But there it was - wallabies a major pest threat, not in reality but in a hazy bureaucratic day-dream..

“Oh they could be if they got here,” was the response

Yes the same might be said of rhinoceros, hippopotamus or cougars.

It lends strong weight to the growing public opinion that New Zealand's governments-central and local – have been and still are in the grip of a “pest phobia.” But what caught my eye in the Marlborough District Council pest document under “noxious fish” was **perch**. I checked with Nelson-Marlborough Fish and Game.

“Closest perch populations to Marlborough are West Coast,” came the reply.

There are no perch in Marlborough or Nelson.

Besides perch were and are regarded as a sporting fish, an acclimatised fish under the jurisdiction of Fish and Game.

## **Ignorant Bureaucrats**

To place perch in a “noxious fish” category is ignorant and reinforces the “pest phobia” suspicion.

Problem is the “pest phobia” activity gives rise to mis-spending of public money and a raft of bureaucrats all for a totally unjustified purpose.

My first steps as an angler in the 1950s were on perch. They were in the Mangaone River that in those days flowed on the western side of Palmerston North and into the Manawatu River near Longburn. Today the curving course of the Mangaone of the 1950s is gone, destroyed by urban sprawl and straightening and channelising the once magical stream into a sterile ditch.

In the 1950s, my father and I used minnows, which we swung out on greenheart fly rods. Sometimes we used worms. The perch were mostly small but I did catch two or three monsters of 1.5 kgs and more. Those big perch were usually solitary or in pairs, the smaller in shoals.

The minnows we used were names not found in sport shops today. The Green Willeenden was a favourite but we also made minnow bodies from butterfly chrysalis hanging from tree branches.

## **Mr Crabtree**

As a boy I had a book written by a UK angling guru called Bernard Venables. In his book set out with text and “comic book” styled sequences of drawings, a Mr Crabtree was shown teaching youngsters how to fish for UK species such as tench, pike, chub and others that included perch. The art work was by Bernard Venables himself. The color paintings were great, so skilfully done, and I would gaze for long periods admiring the perch one, because those were the fish I angled for in the Mangaone.,

The perch is a handsome splendidly coloured fish, with a defiant, pugnacious air about it. The bottom edge of the caudal fin is bright red-orange, as are the anal and pectoral fins. Several dark bands run down their sides. These features make perch easy to recognize.

Like myself, many a boy was set upon the road to becoming a lifelong angler by catching a perch.

## **From Tasmania**

New Zealand perch were imported in the late 19th century, from Tasmanian stocks that before that came from England. They became well established in Otago and Southland, but also occur in many other



parts of New Zealand, such as around Auckland, the Waikato and in west coast coastal lakes south of Taranaki, South Island's West Coast, Canterbury, Southland and other places..

I've caught them in the Manawatu River, in ox-bow lagoons of the lower Manawatu such as south of Longburn, in the Wairarapa, Hawkes Bay, Otago and Canterbury. I've caught them in the better trout rivers such as the Pomohaka, Manawatu, Ruamahunga, lower Taieri and one or two others.

Perch have firm white flesh, that is sweet eating. Perch are ideal sports fish for youngsters because they are relatively easy to catch. Most perch in New Zealand are about 1 kg in weight, but not infrequently bigger.

Perch prefer slow-flowing and still-water habitats.

### **Perch No Pest**

Are perch damaging to trout fisheries?

I doubt it. When I fished the Manawatu as a kid, perch were in the Manawatu and the Manawatu was chocker with trout, with incredible evening rises. And the Ruamahunga and Pomohaka where I've caught perch, are excellent trout rivers. The best evening rise I ever experienced anywhere, was on the Ruamahunga, near Gladstone.

Many years ago somewhere about 1950, in response to angler claims that perch in Lake Maherangi, Otago, were eating trout, a study was done to examine the relationship. That became plural, i.e. relationships as shags entered the equation.

Basically the findings were:-

- § Shags fed on perch particularly perch fry, tending to divert the birds away from trout.
- § Trout fed heavily on perch fry. Perch lay eggs in massive clusters on underwater debris and thousands of fry hatch.
- § Perch did occasionally prey on young trout.

In a few words, overall trout benefited from a co-existence with perch.

### **Nonsensical**

In 2016 the authors of an Otago University “study” described perch as “invasive,” arguing they preyed on native fish such as whitebait. Now to me, that is absolute nonsense. Remember perch were introduced back in 1870. So they’ve had almost 150 years to evolve into the ecosystem and food chains, just as European humans and their associated sheep, cattle, potatoes and pumpkins, blackbirds and bumblebees have.

In a few words, it’s now an evolved 21st century ecosystem.

Perch here for almost 150 years can hardly be classed as invasive now. But beware terms like “invasive species”, “predators” and “pests” are buzz words in some academic circles and certainly in the bowels of bureaucracy where often empires are spawned and jobs created around the “pest-predator” myths.

I don’t know whether Fish and Game NZ and in particular the Nelson-Marlborough Fish and Game objected to the Marlborough District Council’s classification of perch as a “pest fish”. They should have. I would be disappointed if they didn’t!

### **Youngsters**

The perch is a great little sports fish and as stated earlier, especially for youngsters. Species like perch may become very important in the face of dwindling flows in rivers and warmer temperatures with the climate cycle.

In the broader picture, it seems so misplaced that Fisheries NZ is dabbling into areas of ignorance and prejudice based on a “pest phobia”, when the New Zealand saltwater fishery is in a mess, beset with the market-force driven quota management system, (QMS) and it’s consequences of

an industry plagued by corporate company domination, political party donations, fish dumping, poor surveillance of commercial boats (camera issue) and a ministry and succession of fisheries ministers beholden to the commercial corporate fishing industry.

The end result is over-fished stocks. The Ministry of Fisheries should be using its meagre talents to focus on the beleaguered sea fishery industry than demonising perch.

### **Blue Cod Bungling**

Here in Marlborough the Marlborough Sounds blue cod resource has undergone bureaucratic bungling, poor methodology in the “science”, ludicrous laws (slot rule) that destroyed tens of thousands of blue cod breeding females, discrimination against the recreational public and after seven years of undue harsh measures on recreational fishers, an almost complete lack of scientific research to ascertain management fundamentals as to where and when blue cod spawn.

Meanwhile the NZ consumer pays \$60 a kg for blue cod on Blenheim supermarket shelves.

Other species are struggling with examples being severely depleted kahawai and tarakihi stocks while Fisheries NZ looks away and wants to set up species such as perch as a pest.

It is a case of “Nero fiddles while Rome burns.”

Fisheries NZ should be using its meagre talents to focus on much needed review of the QMS, shedding the shackles of corporate domination, reordering its priorities to where the urgent needs are and bringing sea fish to the consumer at an affordable price.

© Perch can grow to a large size.

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## **Postings From the Website**

**Some of our more recent posts from the website (see <https://nzffa.com>)**

### **Toxic Algae – Freshwater**

Canterbury Regional Council (Ecan) signs warning of toxic algae at Coes Ford  
Introduction There are a number of toxic algae species associated with freshwater, brackish water, and sea water. Fish...

**Read more...**

### **Outdoor Groups Urge a “New Look’ for DoC**

Special Report Some outdoor recreation-conservation groups are calling for a revision of the Department of Conservation priorities and targets following a recent National Radio interview with the department’s newly appointed...

**Read more...**

### **Access- The Need for "Three Little Words" Languishes Due to Inertia**

by Tony Orman If you go trout fishing, a landowner is not permitted by law, to charge you a fee to go fishing. It's all to do with "The Section...

**Read more...**

### **Nitrate Contamination of Freshwater is not just about the risk of "blue baby" deaths**

by Dr Peter Trolove, President NZFFA New Zealanders deserve to be better informed about the risks to human and environmental health from increasing levels of nitrate pollution from New Zealand's...

**Read more...**

### **An Unhappy New Year!**

From the Land, Air Water, Aotearoa, LAWA website recreational water quality Canterbury. (Site visited 3rd January 2022) Caution Advised ASHBURTON RIVER off Boundary Road 65.7 km Issued: 08 Dec 2021...

**Read more...**

### **Canterbury's Conflict and Confusion With ECan**

Conflict and confusion continues with Environment Canterbury's changes to the Canterbury Land and Water Regional Plan CLWRP (Plan change 7 and Plan Change 2). Dr Peter Trolove, president of the...

**Read more...**

### **COME HELL OR HIGH water**

by Dylan Evans Introduction by Dr. Peter Trolove As president of the NZFFA I am thrilled to be given permission to post this article by Dylan Evans, a 2021 year 13...

**Read more...**

### **Well-deserved recognition for a life time of volunteer work and advocacy for the Rakaia River Fisheries**

Bill Southward was a popular recipient of the Ian McCrory trophy for the volunteer of the year award at the December Annual General Meeting of North Canterbury Fish & Game....

**Read more...**

### **An Engaging Book About a Great Polar Explorer**

Book Review "Shackleton" by Ranulph Fiennes, published by Michael Joseph (Penguin, Random House NZ) Price \$38. Reviewed by Tony Orman Let me say at the outset, "Shackleton"- a biography on the...

**Read more...**

### **TrustPower Corporate "Scandalous" Take of Rakaia River Water Questioned**

Special Report TrustPower a NZX corporation, has allegedly been selling water to irrigators outside limits laid down by the 2013 amended Rakaia Water Conservation Order (WCO) says the New Zealand...

**Read more...**

## **The Federation's Executive:**

President: Peter Trolove (Rakaia)

Treasurer: David Haynes (Nelson)

Secretary: David Haynes (Nelson)

### Committee:

Steve Gerard (Central South Island), Andi Cockroft (Wellington), Larry Burke (NZ Salmon Anglers), Zane Mirfin (Nelson), Brett Bensemann (Otago), Casey Cravens (Otago), Colin Taylor (Nelson), Grant Henderson (Auckland), Rex Gibson (Canterbury)

Life Members, Tony Orman, (Marlborough), Sandy Bull (Gisborne), Ian Rodger (Auckland) and Ken Sims (Manawatu) are automatically on the committee

Co-opted: Alan Rennie (North Canterbury)

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## **Disclaimer**

The opinion pieces and submitted articles are provided for your interest and information. They do not necessarily represent the views of all of the Executive members but are seen as vital to promote active debate around the issues that fit the aims and objectives of the Federation.

If you have not already done so feel free to comment on any of the articles on our website. The discussions always open up many valid points.

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