



NZFFA October 2020 Newsletter

Welcome to Our Newsletter

The Federation's Executive:

President: Peter Trolove (Rakaia)

Treasurer: Strato Cotsilinis (Wellington)

Secretary: Rex Gibson (Christchurch)

Committee:

Steve Gerard (Central South island), Andi Cockroft (Wellington), Larry Burke (NZ Salmon Anglers), David Haynes (Nelson), Malcolm Francis (Kapiti), Zane Mirfin (Nelson), Michael Gregg (Marlborough), Brett Bensemman (Otago), Casey Cravens (Otago).

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

Co-opted: Alan Rennie (North Canterbury)

The Trout Farming Debate.

(Is the tail wagging the dog, or the trout?)

By Rex N. Gibson (Secretary NZFFA)

There was a paper presented at a recent Fish and Game National Council meeting from their Wellington-based National Office staff simply titled Agenda Item No. 11 Trout Farming. Alarm bells rang all over the motu amongst NZFFA members. It was the trout farming issue that galvanised anglers into action in the early 1970s. It is often credited as being the issue that toppled the National Party's Cabinet Ministers in Hawkes Bay and Taupo and contributed to the election of Norman Kirk's Labour government. Its opposition has since been an underlying principle for NZFFA ever since.

The Trout Farming Paper

The F & G paper is a politician's delight. It uses a clever tapestry of fact, myth and opinion in order to methodically present the case to open up the door for trout farming. A subsequent comment from CE Martin Taylor has claimed that it was only to "update" and "reassess" their position. Whichever way you look at it, the subsequent resolutions were a major step in opening the door to commercial trout farms. It is like opening the door in a strong north west wind; it can either be wrenched of its hinges or slammed shut with enough force to chop off your fingers. My email in-box has been full of anglers' comments; none of them supporting the National Council's position. Most want to slam the door on the council's fingers.

The paper contained several statements of the obvious such as "There is no disease-free fish farming in the world", but each time words like "however" followed these statements. In a similar vein other choice wordings included "concerns can however be mitigated by ...". New Zealand has already seen serious disease outbreaks in salmon farms. These have seriously damaged the Marlborough Sounds salmon farming image; as has the detritus that collects under the cages, but that is another story. Intensive fish farms are incubators for disease. The global bird flu epidemics earlier in the 2000s clearly showed that intensive farming systems generate disease pandemics. As have the "Granny Farms" we call rest homes and dementia units with Covid-19. These concentrations of our own species have also been disease batteries across the world, including New Zealand.

Is the wool being pulled over our eyes?

Biosecurity is almost dismissed by suggesting good husbandry is all you need. Yea right! It only takes one rogue operator and disasters of (almost) biblical proportions occur. Look at the effect of one rogue farmer with M-bovis had on New Zealand's dairy herds, or the varroa mite importer on bees, or the sources of the various new strains of Psa disease in kiwi fruit, plus the various fruit fly scares in recent years from careless border controls. All constituted damage

from unwanted imports; all cost their industries millions of dollars, and all were caused by people who felt that the rules do not apply to them. Will future trout farmers be any different? Let us not forget about the careless introduction of didymo either. Are we having the wool pulled over our eyes on the good husbandry answer?



Independent Research

Taylor asked for new independent research on trout farming. Is that not what we already have? “Independent” today is difficult when so many scientists’ contracts depend on getting answers that aid “repeat business”. One email received from Brian Jones contained the following:

*I worked for Fisheries Research (1970s to 1995) then left to become principal fish pathologist in Western Australia. I have first-hand experience of trout farming in Australia, and it is marginally economic there, assisted by the fierce resistance of Tasmania to imports of trout into Australia. That means that trout farmers in other states than Tasmania are protected, a condition that would not apply here. If trout are commercialised, **then it follows that the import ban here would go (it has to, under WTO rules)**. Search on [Alibaba.com](https://www.alibaba.com) and you will see that the international wholesale value of frozen trout is \$250 to \$500 US a tonne, out of Asia, achieved by industrial scale production, minimal wages and free land and water. I defy anybody in NZ to raise trout at that price and still make a profit. As soon as the border opens to imports, trout farming is dead. With imports of course, we see the import of disease.*

Sound scary? Look at what happened in Australia with WSSV in prawns. This disease got in through imported frozen prawns and devastated the local industry. The cost of the outbreak to Australia and Queensland has for both been in the

tens of millions of dollars.

NZFFA President, Dr Peter Trolove stated recently, in a letter to F & G's National Council, *"It seems stupid to put our valuable recreational fishery at risk in the light of this information. The trout farms would likely lose money and imported frozen trout poses a real disease threat to our wild stocks"*.

The Parasite Issue

As a scientist myself I have done post graduate work on various metazoan parasites (including tapeworms, flat worms and roundworms). I noted in the paper presented to the council an impressive list of potential parasites, including the cousins of those lovely beasts I worked with. The accompanying comment in the paper suggested that all it needed was: restricted access, foot baths and disinfectants; shades of Donald Trump's Covid-19 cure here. I can assure you that once these parasites are established in wild stock you will not be able to remove them. The paper's parasite table may have impressed councillors with its scientific terminology but the solutions to these parasites' infections are as hidden as their real agenda. This sort of thinking has to be politically driven; or at least ideologically. The audit of North Canterbury's hatcheries, before they were closed a few months ago, showed multiple failures on all fronts; health and safety, biosecurity, costings, physical security, etc. I was gobsmacked to see the trout farming paper's authors hold up the regional F & G hatcheries as a "no worries here" example. How do they know? Have the regional hatcheries been subject to an independent rigorous review like North Canterbury's was; of course not? I also seriously question whether recreational and commercial hatcheries are comparable; in terms of philosophy, function, staffing and finances.

Why must F & G's national council continue to push Neo-liberal philosophies (which involve an integrated economic ecosystem of the privatization of public economic sectors or services [and thus "The Commons"], the deregulation of private corporations, and sharp decrease of government debt and reduction of government spending?) The world is rapidly moving on from this "religion". Most anglers value both the quality the fishing environment unpolluted by rampant "economic effluent", and hold dear the egalitarian principal of non-commercialised fishing.

"When the last tree has been cut down, the last fish caught, the last river poisoned, only then will we realise that one cannot eat money." Anon.



A classic parasite example (studied “independently”) showed the devastation of Michigan’s trout fishery by whirling disease after one trout farmer brought in stock from an infected area. Beginning about 1968 it has since spread to 23 states. *Myxobolus cerebralis*, or whirling disease, has caused huge areas of western USA to lose 90% of their trout. No wonder their anglers flock here when the border is open. We could fill a page with URL connections to accounts of problems associated with farmed salmon (another article perhaps?). Dr Peter Trolove commented on Taylor et al’s statement of “there is no evidence of hatchery releases definitively spreading unwanted pest organisms or pathogens?” Peter asks “*So how did so many South Island rivers become infected with whirling disease? The late RM McDowell blamed salmon hatcheries where relatively symptomless salmon infected [closely related] susceptible rainbow trout. Because salmon are restricted to the South Island, the North Island’s rainbow trout dodged this one.*

Another surprise to me was the statement that “Our collective staff position is that Fish and Game could support trout farming “ How extensive was the consultation with staff across the country? Do they all support them? Note: Dr Trolove’ full letter can be read on our website.

Trout Poaching Potential

The big danger may not be the parasites, at least initially; it is the “licence to poach” that such a decision creates which is the biggest practical concern. Who will pay for the increased compliance cost? You will of course. That gem came out in the parliamentary select committee hearing on this topic of trout farming. Trout poaching is not comparable with salmon. Wild salmon, in good years at least, return to their home rivers to spawn at between 12 and 28 lbs depending on whether they are three or four year olds and how good the food supplies were at sea that year. It becomes uneconomic to farm salmon much over 6 lbs so they are harvested before then. It is not possible to claim that a poached 20 lb salmon came from a fishmonger purchase. Farmed trout will probably be

grown to weights up to 3 lb; a standard size for most wild trout. Trout poaching is already a problem in some areas. A Google search of trout being poached shows that in tough times, over the last 100 years, poaching has increased.

Our Scottish ancestors were reduced to dragging the streams at night while the gamekeepers slept.



Dr Trolove, whose qualifications include a degree in Aquaculture, finished his letter with the following: *The “conclusions” in the trout farming paper are spurious. Research over the past decades has found an increasing number of previously unidentified fish pathogens and there has been an increased awareness of environment damage associated with aquatic feed lots. An exotic disease introduced into New Zealand's aquatic environments will be here to stay despite layers of protocols, strategic plans, policies, audits, and other posturing. On this subject Martin Taylor is out of his depth”*

The Politics of it all

Dr Trolove's letter concluded ***“The NZFFA find this discussion paper on trout farming not to be in the interests of New Zealand anglers. The NZFFA finds this paper unworthy of the legacy of past acclimatisation societies. Is it so difficult to simply say NO?”***

Do the F & G National Council members have the courage to go back on their decision? Let us hope so for their sake and ours. After all it was incredibly arrogant of them to so rapidly put aside one of the basic tenets of our sport from F & G's inception. Opposition is truly nation-wide from anglers. Good politicians, despite being harassed by news media (for ‘flip flops’) correct past mistakes, like the Sea Bed & Foreshore Act for example. **If you do not take your stakeholders with you then your position and legacy is tenuous and can/will be undone in the future.**

If the real reason was to open the door for Tuwharetoa and others, in the Taupo region, then let DOC, who controls that area's fishery, fight that battle. We will support them. If it becomes a government political issue so be it. We can deal with the politicians when/if we need to. The Treaty of Waitangi arguments with any trout matters is full of holes. The best way to meet any Treaty obligations is to get Iwi representatives on our regional councils; as Ngai Tahu has done across Te Waipounamu. Their bottom up influence is effective and respected. A top down approach from National Council, or anywhere, is deliberately confrontational. F & G is a body charged with protecting the fishery for its licence holders. F & G is not a political party in its own right and should not act like it is one, or as a coalition partner; even if it does have to challenge politicians from time to time on specific issues. The National Council's role is to co-ordinate matters of concern to regions, not to act as dictators on issues. Am I old fashioned to revive the term "Public Servant"?

There is finally the economic damage to consider. Recent well-founded estimates put the value of freshwater angling to the economy at close to \$1.5 billion (petrol, 4WD, accommodation, meals, tackle shops, boating, guides, and so on: plus the psycho-social well-being it promotes). Can we, and the government, afford to let naïve experiments by a national council, with a questionable recent history, gamble with that?

This is an issue where F & G should be on the same page as anglers, including the Federation, not charging off like the tragic Don Quixote. His insane idealism and nobility were soon rendered useless by reality. The same is likely here.

Comments on this issue (on our website) are welcome.

Erosion of Democracy Should be Election Issue

Opinion by Tony Orman, Life Member NZFFA and past President of CORANZ

Over the last decade or two I have had increasing concern that democracy is being eroded and is under continuing siege. It should be an election issue. Democracy is precious and its integrity must be strongly guarded.

Earlier this year, the Council of Outdoor Recreation Associations of New Zealand (CORANZ) expressed concern that parliament's select committee democratic process was being undermined to the detriment of the public

giving submissions. Current CORANZ Chairman Andi Cockroft made an oral submission to a Parliamentary select committee dealing with the Resource Management Act (RMA). After being granted 15 minutes speaking time beforehand the chairman interrupted Andi's submission after five minutes and said the committee had heard enough thereby cutting the oral presentation short by ten minutes.

The rudeness and snub to democracy left Andi bewildered and angry.

It has been happening for some years now. Several years ago the ERMA 1080 poison review submitters were mostly given just a token five minute slot also. I said at the time, it was evident the ERMA 1080 review was nothing more than a "kangaroo court" and a "token nod" to consultation. And so it proved.

Currently the government under cover of the Covid19 scare, has been pushing law changes through which lack proper democratic scrutiny. Perhaps the Governor-General should be stepping in and giving government a stern reminder about its duty to democracy?

ECan Debacle

It's been happening for quite a while and in that light, it's fair to say the erosion of democracy is not confined to the current coalition government. The National coalition government (2008-2017) was guilty of a blatant breach of democracy when Environment Minister Nick Smith sacked the democratically elected Environment Canterbury council and grabbed control by installing its own "state puppet" commissioners.

Another example was Environment Minister Nick Smith taking resource contents over 1080 poison aerial drops away from regional council and public scrutiny and giving the government the sole, unassailable power to approve.

Politicians are treating the public with disdain, just making a token consultation to listening. After all MPs are in reality, public servants and the Prime Minister is not the people's leader but the most senior public servant.

Bureaucrats in the Shadows

Behind central and local government elected representatives were bureaucrats who seemed to manipulate MPs and the procedures to suit political and/or self-serving agendas. The public believe Parliament is the place of democracy - where you could get a fair hearing from elected representatives based on a historical and moral constitution of honour, truth and justice. It is not a charade.

The manner in which firearm law changes following the Christchurch March 15, 2019 mosque tragedy, were rushed through with "thoroughly indecent haste" showing a total disregard for democracy. Consider the manner of the select committee dealing with 13,000 submissions in just two days. It defies

credibility and shows a total lack of integrity. Forget the subject, i.e. assault firearms, the issue was democracy or rather the total lack of it.

Urgent Crisis

It was therefore a logical reaction for the public to rate politicians, political parties and governments as among the most untrustworthy. The capture of Government departments and regional councils by industry groups is even more blatant and worrisome. The latest example being the Waikato RC who has just granted farmers extra time to appeal their freshwater plans, but not anyone else, because they asked for it. There is an urgent crisis about the accelerating and alarming erosion of democracy and the strangling of the people's voice, he said. It needs strong reaction from an outraged public which is timely as this is an election year.

CORANZ has put out its usual election year charter to political parties. As I write his the deadline is almost up. Three parties in Parliament - ACT, Greens and NZ First - have responded. Two parties outside of Parliament - New Conservatives and the NZ Outdoors party have responded.

The two major parties National and Labour, with hours remaining to deadline, have not responded. I can only conclude the trio are not particularly interested in outdoor recreation or the environment. Well it's election time so think deeply on which party you vote for. And remember democracy on which our society is based on, even if Guy Fawkes Day is just around the corner.



Ominous warning

A letter from Minister Eugene Sage re: commercialisation of trout angling to Executive member David Haynes contained the following paragraph; *Regarding the possibility of legislation to prohibit commercial activity in relation to trout, the Primary Production Select Committee has recently reported back to parliament with a recommendation that "the government give serious consideration to commercialising trout farming". The government has yet to consider its response to the Select Committee.*

The current rules on the importation of trout flesh expire next September. Anglers must ensure their voice is heard loud and clear by whoever heads to government after the election. The Select Committee referred to above had members from National, NZ First and Labour.



A Stream with no Trout

After a 2019 trip to North Queensland I was reminded of Slim Dusty's 1957 classic Aussie song, "A Pub With No Beer". It was based on a poem written back...

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Just a Few Trout Flies Will Do

by John McNab One of the classics in fly fishing books is Englishman Franks Sawyer's "Nymphs and the Trout". Frank Sawyer in the 1940s and 1950s, became the father figure...

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The Whitebait - Trout Connection

by John McNab The first day of October still holds a magic for me, as for many of my earlier years, it heralded the opening of trout season after its...

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Some Trout Fishing Quotes Collected

by Ben Hope “They say you forget your troubles on a trout stream, but that’s not quite it. What happens is that you begin to see where your troubles fit...

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JUST HOW FAMILIAR ARE POLITICAL PARTIES WITH TROUT AND DUCKS?

In the annual Fish & Game Magazine, issued free to all licence holders, political parties were polled on their policies in respect of fishing and duck hunting. Fish & Game...

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An Open letter to the Chair and National Council Fish and Game NZ

A Discreditable Discussion Paper on Trout Farming Dear Councillors The New Zealand Federation of Freshwater Anglers, (NZFFA), has much in common with the objectives of the Acclimatization Societies of old...

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Sports trout fishery worth “over a billion dollars” annually threatened by trout farming proposal

New Zealand’s recreational trout fishery conservatively earns at least one billion dollars annually for the national economy and is now again threatened by a trout farming proposal, says the New...

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NZFFA Freshwater Policy

NZFFA Freshwater Policy A Litany of Broken Government Promises
Freshwater is the life blood of our planet. Without clean water our ecosystem, economy and society would be functionally extinct. Despite...

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