

Minutes GM 18 November 2024, LV RSL and Zoom, 7.30pm

Zoom: Meeting ID: 830 1299 5447 Passcode: 007

Guest speaker: no guest speaker this GM

Present: Tony Abel, Mark Aspinall, Glenn Becher, Wayne Bellette, Rob Brodribb, Bryn Carmen, Norm Cribbin, Malcolm Crosse, Lyndon Cubbins, Tony Dell, Rob Dineen, Andrew Fisher, Corey Harris, Chris Hilton, Peter Langton, Tim Lewis, David Lipscombe, Paul Markey, Paul McCosh, Brian McCullagh, Robert Phillips, Peter Rasmussen, Andrew Reed, Colin Shepherd, John Smith, Ian Stokes, David Tarbath, David Travalia, Tom Woolley, David Young,

Zoom: Paul Markey, Norm Cribbin, John Smith, David Young, Tim Lewis

Apologies: Denis Abbott, Anna Bellette, Chris Berndt, Elliott Blackwood, Glenn Cannell, Andrew Hood, James Jones, Dave Long, James Mackay, Douglas Mosenthal, Peter Murphy, Chris Roberts, Noel Wilson,

Guests: Scott Parkinson, Frank Neasey

Minutes: Doug Miller, Tim Urbanc

Corro in and out:

Insurance – corro with Richard Hawley, FFCT, re relative shack insurance costs

New ATO taxation status self-assessment – Secretary corro with Honorary Solicitor

Rob Phillips re Little Pine ramp difficulties – photo circulated

Peter Rasmussen re changes with Cane Day and dinner

Peter Rasmussen re sale of donated books

Malcolm Crosse re TU – material circulated

Letter from Ian Stokes re AAT presentation GM 16 September and related matters – circulated at Ian's request

Arising:

Shacks insurance review – Committee: Discussed. The FFCT shacks – Pine, Penstock – are insured for some ~100% more than our own. Committee to review adequacy of our shack insured valuations.

New ATO taxation status self-assessment: Rob Phillips is clarifying a couple of legalities but it appears likely that our tax-free status is secure.

Cane Day – January club calendar changes: Peter Ras and Wayne outlined the day and the bookings re the dinner Saturday – please book for both on the calendar if intending to do both.

Views re Little Pine ramp: some concerns with the new arrangements including the jetty – built to high water level, high and dry at low water level, launching bigger boats on south side difficult to impossible. A safety boom now halfway down canal to bridge. Committee to consider further.

TU ideas: Tony and Malcolm to discuss further; likely to seek the Zoom presentation by Chris Wood following the recent US disaster – oops, election (Secretary slaps own wrist...).

Thanks Peter Ras re sale of donated books: all in all, a total of \$560 – well done, and many thanks, Peter.

Financial report October 2024: circulated, no pressing concerns at this point.

AAT meeting 10 October report, Wayne:

- AAT seeking new insurer for clubs; talking to FFA re theirs
- Little Pine electro fishing – numbers down for this season but better prognosis for next season
- Talbots picking up, low water level sorted, 4 Springs also picking up
- Crescent fishing well, IFS considering proposed bag limit of 1 fish over 500 and changes in Sorell to 5 fish, 2 over 500
- Some concern re small rainbow run @ Liaweenee – cormorants? Discussion re these – large flocks est 5000 Gippsland
- Woods fishing well, fish 320-400 and some 500+
- Shallow Waters discussion had most reps attending in agreement with several clubs and organisations not happy
- Various angler access work – 4 Springs, Talbots – but continuing problems re Silver Plains – ownership of road in dispute – Downie; TLC no longer involved. Tony Dell suggests need to go back to initial grants – a public road. IFS want this clarified before further expenditure, focus on Dago Pt in the interim
- Malcolm continuing the 5G upgrade work on the webcams but system now transitioning to private operator
- New Minister – Mr Abetz greeted with exclamation by former president – split off from DPI, which removes the problematic conflicts of interest.

Chris Hilton has stepped down as a club rep but remains on the AAT Executive. Chris outlined his experience of AAT as a rep very positively. They are a group of committed volunteers working across a wide range of issues collaboratively across agencies albeit with scant resources. Going forward, AAT and our fisheries will need the assistance of anglers to pursue research objectives, clarify and bring the issues of wide degradation and reduction of opportunity to political attention. Chris' resignation brought up the issue of his replacement and members are invited to express an interest.

Activities: Westy, tying tuition 3 November, RSL: Brian and assistants congratulated, excellent event as usual. David T pointed to the continuing discussion as to how to manage next steps for our participants, one of whom – Scott Parkinson – a guest tonight. Tony Dell pointed to the tying sessions he and Macca ran for years as such a mechanism, which could usefully be reinstated.

Activities forthcoming:

Bothwell dams: Stephen Butler reports Weasel is full and camping organised, toilet etc. No accommodation available at Dennistoun but the dams are available to fish.

Miena field trip 9-12 December: nothing to add at this point.

Xmas drinks 16 December 6pm: in the front bar area this year as the dining area booked. Partners welcome, as always.

Cane Day 26 January and meal evening prior: the Committee have decided this is now our official January dinner event, in conjunction with the FFCT. As above, Wayne will liaise with Peter Ras and between them and Tony manage information, reservations.

Shack reports:

Miena: all good bar the TV is not working, under exploration.

Sorell: Ken Fisher has progressed his materials lists to the point of close to starting on the framing – no firm date as yet.

General business: Nil

AAT presentation September GM: Tony Dell spoke on his letter to AAT and subsequent correspondence, followed by Ian Stokes and other speakers. The meeting was well-managed, orderly and respectful, with participants paying close attention. There were a few sound problems, so my apologies for any glaring omissions.

Tony outlined his disappointment with the France presentation and subsequent inappropriate AAT communications to the club. His greater concern was that the Shallow Waters/Penstock focus was an unfortunate displacement of AAT focus. He argues this narrow focus represents an unacceptable opportunity cost at the expense of all licensed anglers; rather, there are widespread water management issues state-wide which require concerted attention, not least so as to concentrate political attention on these matters. At present these decision-makers are getting a free pass on the most important issues. As emerged during discussion, this view is widely understood. The historical objective of AAT, it's rationale in the first place, is provision of a concerted voice for all anglers. Tony went on to suggest that AAT's structure is not presently conducive to the representation of all categories of the 24,000 licensees.

This view was expanded by Ian Stokes, who pointed out that the AAT constitutional structure is biased toward fly anglers insofar as the present club/association representation structure affords the opportunity for multiple (disproportionate) representation of their views. There are questions as to the awareness of AAT's roles and activities with trollers, bait fishermen/women and others. Ian further expressed his frustration with what he sees as a top-down approach by AAT – a propensity to turn up with solutions to problems and priorities which have not been widely or fully discussed with anglers. In part, from our Club perspective, this may reflect our own lack of a formally structured communication process – receiving information and requests from AAT, our mechanisms for considering and responding. In other part, it reflects also the information and consultative processes of AAT themselves. Concerns re AAT's communications and consultation found support during the discussion in a number of respects, discussed below.

Malcolm Crosse outlined the choice of Penstock as a trial in part by virtue of a considerable body of prior monitoring and evaluative data. Malcolm also explained the issue of the perceived lack of Duns came to be addressed by AAT at the request of Bill Becks question of “Where have all the duns gone” and the subsequent donation of funds from the Bill Beck fund foundation to have the matter investigated, these funds were generated by interested anglers. The Shallow Waters process included various agency contributions – IFS, MAST, the Hydro – and enlisted a range of scientific specialists namely, Dr Ron Thresher, Graham Hosie, Professor Nick Bond and John Gooderham and volunteer ‘citizen scientists’. It undertook limited studies as to sampling and measurement but otherwise relied on overseas work, some with questionable relevance and interpretation, particularly with respect to boating.

The meeting expressed wide support for the establishment of methodologies creating baseline data over time. However, critics contend that (a) as above, the present focus distracts political hearts and minds from the main game – over-arching water management – and in so doing, inappropriately uses scarce resources better directed elsewhere. Further, (b), in any case, the Report, as presented, reached various conclusions and recommendations not well-supported by the studies and analyses it cited, or indeed contradictory to some of them. In sum, the meeting and correspondence under discussion identified significant issues with system management priorities and concerns as to the rigor of the report. Malcolm also noted that this is an ongoing study and that volunteers are needed for a further insect study day on the 7th December.

As discussion progressed, it became clear that members strongly support re-focusing and re-prioritisation by AAT toward strategic facets of water management affecting native habitats. It was suggested that AAT should take a step back, clearly identifying strategic priorities, objectives, associated methodologies and use of resources over time. Strong strategic planning should ensure longitudinal consistency and empirical validity of data. Only substantiated knowledge of where we are now allows accurate evaluation of the effects of our inputs and this work must be systematic. Several speakers pointed to the wide variability of current estimates – for example, fish numbers in Penstock, predation rates of trout re mayflies, apparent variability of boat impacts on mayflies. Our knowledge of *what is* is so limited in many respects it is difficult to accurately ascertain the effects of what happens when we do X or Y – and we need that knowledge.

With respect to the issues raised and recommendations from the Shallow Waters report re Penstock there was acceptance that some of these should remain or continue; for example:

- mayfly mapping and sampling, with the clear expectation that this work be properly structured and oversighted by the relevant experts, in line with the principles outlined above;
- there was some support for lowering the speed limit to 3 knots though it is not unanimous that speed limits are the best mechanism for controlling boat behaviours and impacts nor as to the extent to which these are important;
- the notion of a Club self-imposed Code of Conduct for Penstock had some acceptance and will be considered by the Committee;
- a strong focus on educative mechanisms – better signage, behavioural influencing strategies, information about the lake – is widely accepted; the corridor is not universally warmly received – grudgingly by many –but managing drogues is supported.

Conclusions

As above, the meeting strongly endorsed an AAT refocus toward over-arching water management issues which present a strong and inclusive angler voice to decision-makers. Never stand between a Premier and a bucket of money, never stand between a politician and a bucket of votes. Throughout the evening and over the past several meetings there has been consistent reference to the methods and approaches of Trout Unlimited, including particularly their strategies of working collaboratively with other stakeholder participants where there are contested interests. In the case of our fisheries habitat management powerful organisations and interests include, particularly, irrigators and other farmers and graziers; the HEC; and the IFS. There are others such as Parks, Forestry and groups such as the TLC. The meeting identified strong concerns with respect to:

- irrigation draw-downs and the enduring failures to set in place sustainable standards and limits, including especially re Lakes Sorell and Crescent;
- reduced river and stream flows with resultant habitat and fishery degradation;
- agricultural and other chemical run-offs;
- problems such as insensitive and or poorly timed or inadequate water level management by the HEC.

All of these groups have vested interests, as do anglers and wider communities. All of these groups can claim some level or degree of social licence for their conflicting goals. These social licences are ultimately expressed as political licence. The TU approach is to encourage and enable discussion and collaboration between these system partners, identifying mutually acceptable outcomes and processes. TU's methodology includes a strong focus on understanding our ecologies scientifically – collaborative funding and implementation of research projects, the seeding of post-grad research and so forth to establish understandings and baselines.

It is fair to say AAT is cognitive of these issues. It remains that, as the putative voice of anglers, it must ensure it reflects the voice of all anglers and adjust it's priorities in these

terms. This meeting clearly identified the priorities of the members present. It urges AAT to continue to work collaboratively with our system partners, and to do so with scientific rigor.

Meeting closed: 9.42pm