

Volunteer Salmon Hatchery

News Letter No 50.

December 2025.

Merry Christmas to all members and interested parties. It is again that time of year when we look forward to enjoying the company of family and friends, and if time permits to get out into our beautiful outdoors.

As many of you are aware it has been confirmed that the last wild salmon spawning run earlier this year was the worst ever on record following a series of very poor salmon returns to the rivers of the East coast South Island salmon fishery.

As a result of information received from anglers from surveys conducted by phone, on line to licence holders and the results of the salmon catch cards which were returned by licence holders Fish and Game have estimated that fewer than 25 salmon were caught in the Waitaki River by anglers.

We must acknowledge our members and interested parties who have made donations to our organisation. We thank the following; Chris Main, J & M Chetwin and Chris Paul. Your assistance is gratefully acknowledged.

To our corporate sponsors, Meridian power up Waitaki community fund, Waitaki Irrigators Collective, Morven Glenavy Ikawai Irrigation Company, Mt Cook Alpine Salmon and Oceania Dairy Ltd We thank you for your continued support of our organisation and acknowledge that without the contributions that you provide we would be struggling.

Our organisation is fundraising as well and we continue to process and sell firewood and we are still collecting used lead acid batteries. Please help us out with the battery collection as this is an easy fundraising method which provides much needed cash stream to our organisation.

Chris Paul donated two large blue gum trees to our organisation. After initially trying to find someone to cut these trees down the job was eventually done with the assistance of a hired cherry picker from TK Hire in Oamaru. The tree was de limbed and then processed. This job is still in progress and Blue Gum is available to those that would like to purchase it.

We do have a source of dry Black poplar as well.

As a result of information received from a member we have approached Port Blakely NZ Forestry seeking sponsorship. This company makes donations to community organisations that fit the companies criteria of eligibility.

We made the request but with a difference, not seeking a cash grant but seeking a sponsorship in the delivery of logs for processing into firewood as a fundraising activity. We very quickly received an enthusiastic reply acknowledging our request, which would be actioned in early January 2026.

Since our last news letter, Our brood stock was harvested over a period of 8 weeks. Again thanks to those that assisted in the sometimes freezing conditions and that included a number of the "Wednesday walkers" from Oamaru.

As a result we harvested about 220,000 eggs and these were placed in the incubation trays at Welcome stream.

Our volunteers soon discovered that the eggs were dying before they eyed up as well as being seriously affected by bacteria and fungal growth. As part of the egg care we use a Hydrogen peroxide solution to control the development of fungi and bacteria. The concentration was checked and double checked but with no improvement resulting. It was not until a member began searching for possible reasons, on line, for the egg deaths that it was discovered that Hydrogen peroxide has a very short shelf life, rendering the treatment ineffective. On our last Harvest ,the Hydrogen Peroxide treatment was discontinued, and we finally had some success in raising smolt. As at the time of writing we have about 3000 smolt at Welcome stream.

(Not exactly what we wanted, but better than last seasons harvest were we lost almost all of our developing eggs due to a man made pollution event in Welcome Stream. Which is still being investigated by the Otago Regional Council.)

After the last Harvest of the brood stock, 65 mature male and female salmon where released into the Waitaki river to spawn naturally. As can be seen this was more than the number of fish reportedly caught by anglers in the Waitaki River.

At Bells Pond our rising 1 year old echelon of brood stock was lost due to predation by black shags. This was not noticed because of discoloured water, until a shag was observed in the raceway by volunteers, subsequently when the river cleared sufficiently to allow observation of the contents of the raceway no rising one year old fish were seen. This is a loss of a single year of brood stock, which would have been classed as rising 2 year old.

We have approximately 350 brood stock in the raceway of rising 3 year , 4 year old and 5 year old fish. Again these are looking great and in excellent condition. Several of the larger 5 year old fish will be in the vicinity of 25-30lbs. This means for the fourth year we will have sufficient brood stock on hand for egg harvest in 2026.

Our organisation has been approached in by The Morven Glenavy Irrigation Company (MGI) advising of impending resource consent applications to ECAN for the removal of silt from Bells Pond and the possible construction of a fish screen on the irrigation intake from the Waitaki River. This work, when consented, will require the intake water race from the Waitaki river to be dewatered , thus allowing for mechanical access into the upper bells bond area for silt removal and placement of proposed fish screen. This will stop our water flow to our raceway for a period of two months.

MGI are working with us and the land owner and other organisations in the area , sourcing several alternative solutions to our water problem. Which are all achievable if everyone works together. Should this work take place, it is expected that it will be completed in the Winter months when irrigation water is not required. What year is unknown at this time.

Does anyone know how to modify a diesel motors 4l fuel tank to accommodate a much larger fuel container, to ensure a longer run time rather than 3hrs of running. Please advise a committee member of ideas and any assistance.

The north Otago Jet Boat association and the moving Waitaki River have combined to make the Jet Boat Ramp at the end of Maiharoa's Road usable again, but please be warned there has been gravel bar created by the river just above the main road bridge and while visibility is restricted please take care if you intend to use the ramp.

This news letter is sponsored by Oamaru Sports and outdoors, Please if you are purchasing sports equipment visit Richard and His team at Oamaru Sports and outdoors.

