



## **Better understanding the key to recreational access**

WorkSafe NZ's recent policy clarification regarding the Health and Safety at Work Act and the current Walking Access Act Review are timely initiatives that will help preserve New Zealanders access to recreational opportunities, according to Game Animal Council Chair Don Hammond.

"The ability to responsibly access public conservation land and other recreational assets is a key part of what make New Zealand a haven for outdoor enthusiasts," says Hammond.

"Unfortunately, over recent years we have seen this access threatened as visitor numbers have increased, public behaviour has at times not lived up to expectations and uncertainty has existed over the responsibility provisions within the 2015 Health and Safety at Work Act."

The Walking Access Act Review gives hunters and other outdoor recreationists the perfect opportunity to identify barriers to access as well as giving landowners the opportunity to explain the challenges they face providing for access in certain circumstances.

"It is our hope that this process will lead to better understanding of the issue from both sides of the fence and it is therefore very important that as many hunters as possible take part in the Review. The Game Animal Council will also be submitting on behalf of the sector."

The Game Animal Council is extremely encouraged by the recent policy clarification that has come out of WorkSafe NZ regarding how the Health and Safety at Work Act should be applied to recreational access.

"The clarification quite clearly removes the uncertainty that has led to the erosion of public access to recreational opportunities in a number of locations around New Zealand."

WorkSafe has found that the Health and Safety at Work Act only applies to recreational access when that is affected by workplace activities or is part of a workplace. This means a landowner whose property is being accessed for recreation is only responsible for risks arising from the work

or workplace, and is not responsible for the risks associated with the recreational activities.

“The clarification is very clear that landowners, including farmers are not expected to manage the risks from recreational activity on their land.”

“The Game Animal Council is grateful to those organisations that sought this clarification and we look forward to a better understanding of responsibilities and the enhancement of public access as a result.”

“The Game Animal Council also encourages both landowners and users to advise each other of any hazards as safety is not just driven by legislation, but is ultimately everyone’s responsibility,” says Hammond.

The Walking Access Act Review’s public submission process closes on 2 July and is available at <https://www.mpi.govt.nz/law-and-policy/legislation/walkingaccessreview/>.

*The NZ Game Animal Council is a statutory organisation responsible for the sustainable management of game animals and hunting for recreation, commerce and conservation.*

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