

MINUTES OF THE GAME ANIMAL COUNCIL MEETING 25 FEBRUARY 2019

Held at The Waipuna Hotel & Conference Centre, Mt Wellington, Auckland

Present: Don Hammond (Chair), Geoff Kerr, Garry Ottmann, Carol Watson, Alec Mclver, Richard Burdon, Roger Duxfield, Jenny Wotten (Executive Officer)

Also in attendance: Minister Eugenie Sage, Mervyn English (DOC), Rod Treder (DOC), Ben Reddiex (DOC), Peter Morton (DOC), Mark Ryan (CIC International).

Apologies: Rachael Dean, Stephen Hall (due to flight disruption).

- 1. Welcome, Agenda, Health & Safety:** Don Hammond welcomed Councillors and visitors. Health & Safety and Emergency exits for the venue were discussed.
- 2. Agenda:** Discussion about foreign nationals hunting in NZ unguided added to the agenda.

Motion 22/1: Moved Richard Burdon/ Alec Mclver: that the agenda be confirmed.	CARRIED
--------------------------------------------------------------------------------------	---------

Motion 22/2: Moved Richard Burdon/Alec Mclver: That the meeting move into Committee.	CARRIED
---------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------	---------

Motion 22/3: Moved Don Hammond/Roger Duxfield: that the meeting move out of committee.	CARRIED
-----------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------	---------

- 3. Minutes of previous meeting 26 November 2018:** were taken as read with minor alterations.

Motion 22/4: Moved Carol Watson/Richard Burdon: that the Minutes of the 26 November 2018 Meeting be accepted as a true and correct record of the meeting.	CARRIED
------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------	---------

4. Matters arising – Minutes 26 November 2018:

- 4a Parliamentary Hunt**– There has been some interest already in the 2019 Parliamentary Hunt. The GAC will put out an early ‘hold the date’ notification.
- 7d Access Easements**- There has been no new developments and DOC is not sure who is responsible. GAC reiterated that this is a real issue across the country and hunters need to know what their responsibilities are. This is linked to the Tenure Review Process and there is a possibility of these two issues being brought together as part of one project.
- 7f Hunting Permit System** – The GAC asked for a DOC update on including firearms licence numbers & permanent addresses in the permit process to enable valuable data to be kept about overseas hunters coming to NZ. Similar issues keep popping up in discussions with DOC and stakeholder group meetings. The GAC hasn’t had the resources to follow it up properly. Action 18/7
- 8b new Auditor** – On 1 February 2018 we had advice from the Auditor General’s Office that the it would be necessary for us to change auditors due to the conflict of interest and a new auditor would be appointed. At the time of this meeting this issue has not been resolved and is urgent.
- 8e setting up payments in Xero** – The Executive Officer has been given a higher level of access. Previous financial support arrangements can now be ceased.
- 11h AATH** – The GAC asked DOC what is happening with the AATH regulations. We were advised that some work has been done on new AATH permit conditions but the main focus has been on compiling a comprehensive engagement/communication plan for the permitting process and the planning phase is expected to be finalised by 25 February 2019.
- 11c Deer repellent** – Covered in DOC report (attached).

- h. **Export Trophy Levy** – Contractor to do further work on this. Discussion about capturing data. If no one is keeping statistics then we don't have any figures, unless we go back to expeditors and gross the numbers. Presentation of a levy proposal to the Minister following consultation with stakeholders is urgent and a top priority for our contractor.
- h. **Overseas visitors applying for a Visitor Firearms Licence and visitors wanting to bring their own firearm into NZ** – GAC has been in communication with the NZ Police Firearms Act Service Delivery Team recently regarding the importation of firearms and applying for a Visitor Firearms Licence as a result of issues raised through the NZPHGA firearms (rifles and shotguns).
- i. **Kaweka Liaison Group** – This group has been frustrated by the Husheer Report. The KLG has written to the Department but there has been a change of staff. The KLG have expressed their wish to be involved in any work going forward. Previous undertaking by DOC that the GAC would be involved in any planned development for this area.
- j. **Tuhoe & Te Urewera** – Overview provided of meeting with Tuhoe at Taneatua on 20 February 2019 with Don Hammond, Alec McIvor & Cam Speedy present.

Deer management in Te Urewera is of considerable interest to Tuhoe and non Tuhoe hunters – it is a huge hunting area with a lot of game animals. The GAC can provide expertise if requested by Tuhoe. There is still a lot of confusion about its previous status as a National Park. The GAC will continue to work with Tuhoe. **Action item 22/1** – create a link from the GAC website to hunting information about Te Urewera and clarify what the hunting opportunities are.

5. **Minister Eugenie Sage & Mervyn English**– Mervyn English advised that new Councillor appointments were in hand and the Minister appreciates our patience as they work their way through the process. Minister Sage said she was really pleased to be able to engage with Councillors and get their views on issues. The Minister spoke about the upcoming meeting of the Tahr Liaison Group, Ben Reddiex coming in to lead the group, BFOB programme, DOCs commitment to working with the GAC in the best interests of hunters and with the use of deer repellent, the environmental damage done by game animals, her commitment to the GAC and funding for 2018/19. Don Hammond reported that the delayed appointment of new Councillors has resulted in a potential conflict with the new contractors engaged by the GAC but the GAC has done it's best to sort out the conflicts and kept the Minister and DOC informed along the way. There was a discussion about the Raukumaras following the Minister's recent visit to the area. Don Hammond was interested in the Minister's thoughts on the protection of that forest and land while still catering for the needs of regular users and hunters. Geoff compared the situation there to the Ruahines and elaborated on his work with DOC and the level of cooperation within the Ruahine Deer Management Group. There are similar issues happening in the Sika range. The Minister discussed mapping provided on the DOC website for the Ruahines with Geoff Kerr – Geoff reiterated the substantive and positive developments that have been made as a result of the goodwill shown in this group. Don Hammond said it is important that we educate and encourage a whole new generation of hunters to become skilled hunters and shoot more females to help manage numbers better.

The Minister asked about the current and previous roles of MSC and potential crossover with GAC.

6. **Ben Reddiex, Tahr Liaison Group** – The Annual Report on the Himalayan Tahr Control Plan (HTCP): 1 July 2017 to 30 June 2018, was supplied to the NZCA at their February 2019 meeting. The report stated there are between 6000 & 7000 tahr removed annually. These comprise organised recreational hunts, AATH offsets, commercial (AATH trophies and WARO) and recreational tahr ballot hunt returns but exclude unorganised recreational hunter kills. DOC's Tier 1 monitoring programme is being used to assess ecological integrity of alpine vegetation exposed to tahr grazing and is the subject of a Landcare Research Report to be published in early 2019. Tahr abundance estimate results from repeated aerial counts over several areas put the population between approximately 18,000 and 54,000 which exceeds the limit specified in the HTCP of 10,000.

Ben Reddiex advised that tahr control for this year will operate under the Tahr Control Operational Plan; October 2018 to August 2019. The plan seeks to reduce tahr numbers by 10,000 before September 2019. Ben Reddiex advised that control activity would be undertaken by the Department, WARO, AATH operators and recreational hunters. The Department would not shift their stance to not include tallies from recreational hunters due to matters around validating data. The GAC made its position clear that this stance was disappointing and frustrating and risked loss of support for the project from recreational hunters. The Council undertook to continue to encourage recreational hunters to record their kills so that at least there is some indication of the scale of their contribution. The GAC will help DOC to identify a way of capturing this data.

DOC has put some formal structures around the Tahr Control Plan, establishing a dedicated position to lead the programme, developing a strategy for the next 4 to 5 years to design and deliver annual plans and achieve targets, deliver reporting requirements and undertake engagement with key internal and external stakeholders. Ben Reddiex has recently provided results to date from the DOC Tahr Hunter return system.

The discussion that followed confirmed there is a need for further research on the impact of tahr on conservation values, bringing recreational hunter kills into the data, future composition of the Himalayan Tahr Control Plan Implementation Liaison Group and its Terms of Reference, and consideration of the HTCP (1993).

GAC to liaise with Ben Reddiex about operators who might not have recorded their kills or submitted kill numbers yet. The GAC commented that lack of communication from DOC has resulted in the hunting sector feeling lost, powerless and anxious about the recording process. Ben Reddiex coming into the position is a positive sign the process can get back on track and we can establish mutual trust and transparency of process. While there has been an expectation that the GAC would have a key role in identifying a method of recording recreational tahr kills, this has not eventuated. This has led to recreational hunters blaming the GAC and feeling rejected.

7. Peter Morton, DOC & BFOBs: Peter Morton thanked the GAC for the opportunity to engage directly with all Councillors, he has previously engaged only with certain Councillors. Peter Morton gave a broad overview of the BFOB program covering:

- Brief update on 2019 predator programme
- Hunter consultation working well
- Request for GAC/NZDA to provide an overview of hunter's experience
- Request for GAC/NZDA to support DOC on attacks against DOC staff.

A discussion was had about the anticipated 2019 beech mast event, seed falls (a report on this can be shared with GAC), their biggest ever budget for this operation, species at risk, and various operational details. Geoff Kerr has been heavily involved in the mitigation and says that even though there is not enough deer repellent cover all the sites, work is progressing to prioritise areas for its application. Don Hammond undertook to identify proposed mitigation measures for upcoming operations to DOC by the end of March **Action item 22/2**.

8. Management Team Reports: Management team reports summarised and subsequent discussion;

Future reports to be monthly and make recommendations to Council.

- a. Communications Strategy including website upgrade – Website redesign is underway.
- b. Tahr Liaison Group - Ben Reddiex has taken over accountability for the tahr programme. He has been tasked to update the Tahr Control Operational Plan 2018/19, supported by a detailed

implementation plan. In addition to the 10,000 tahr by August 2019, the Department expects to be undertaking some tahr related business as usual activity which sits outside the Tahr Control Operational Plan 2018/19.

Geoff Kerr gave his latest calculations on the current tahr population count. The Department's estimate is somewhere between 22,000 and 50,000. The Department is putting considerable resources into surveying the remaining 50 tier one sites on PCL within the tahr feral range. Geoff Kerr is concerned that there is not enough time left before the cull to get significant recreational hunter participation. He is concerned that the GAC has had no opportunities to be involved in cull planning since the helicopter accident and to marshal recreational hunters.

GAC have been advised by the Department that the kills reported so far by recreational hunters, will not be counted in the cull count, which could result in a huge loss of goodwill. The GAC has expressed its dissatisfaction with this outcome despite previous commitments made. The GAC did a lot of work putting together the Tahr Control Operational Plan to represent all hunter interests. Recreational hunters were keen to do their bit and duly went out and killed tahr and recorded their kills as instructed. The GAC asked the Department if it would be prepared to accept unsubstantiated numbers or to accept say 80% of the numbers but the Department is quite definite they will not accept them. The GAC said many hunters remain unaware of the site where kills are to be recorded and it hasn't been well publicised.

The NZPHGA Executive has appointed one of their Executive Members to liaise with the membership in an effort to collect accurate data on tahr numbers taken. There is a rising level of frustration and a danger we will end up at the same place as last year where conservationists criticize recreational hunters for not doing their bit to manage tahr numbers. The GAC needs to re-establish the trust of these hunters and involve as many hunters as possible to get the word out far and wide.

Management team to put together a one-page summary for Councillors. It is expected DOC will make further decisions after the meeting this Friday – the information will then be available on the DOC tahr control website and the GAC will circulate a link to that.

- c. Statutory Processes – The NZCA now has a new Chair, Edward Ellison. **Action item 22/3** Don Hammond to introduce himself and seek a meeting. Don Hammond asked Rod Treder why a lot of the NZCA Minutes are 'In confidence or in committee'. See Statutory Processes report and comments about the GAC's submissions on the Aoraki/Mt Cook and Westland/Tai Poutini National Park Management Plans. Processing of these plans is on hold pending resolution of jurisdictional matters arising from a court case between the Department and Ngai Tai.

The GAC has been in frequent contact with Peter Morton about Battle for Our Birds.

Brief discussion about GAC joint trial with ZIP, using tahr carcasses to attract Kea away from toxic baits. Confirmation has been received that the 300 tahr used in the project will be counted in the tahr cull count. The GAC is appreciative of the excellent level of cooperation between ZIP, Department and the GAC and a situation that logically prioritises conservation over hunting.

- d. Tenure review – The current Tenure review process has now been terminated and public consultation on the future of Crown pastoral land has been initiated. Submissions are due on 12 April 2019. The GAC will make a submission representing hunter's interests **Action item 22/4**.

Management team is putting together a list of Statutory and non-Statutory processes to prioritise which processes the GAC has the resources to be involved in, over the next few years.

- e. WARO – GAC attended the recent Fiordland Wapiti Foundation Meeting. The future of the management of Wapiti is very important to the GAC, as is the future of the Whakatipu white-tailed herd. The Wapiti program is going from strength to strength and there was a lot of positive feedback from the hunting community including the two commercial operators who share the workload between them. The target is 950 deer removed per year and for the first time they have started culling young bulls. Discussion about the viability and sustainability of the WARO industry, and how stronger relationships with these stakeholders can be achieved.
- f. Funding options – initial assessment of the possible funding streams has been undertaken. Many options would require a legislative or regulatory change and long lead times before collection systems could be implemented so it is unlikely the GAC would see any revenue from any of those options in the near term. Funding is the GAC's main priority at present.

The Trophy Export Levy proposal was put to the last government but not implemented. In the long term, the GAC would be looking for contributions from recreational hunters, commercial operators and government. Management team to come back to Council with firm proposals and a budget for 2019/2020. Funding options need to be sustainable, bankable and budgetable.

- 9. Mark Ryan, Deputy Director General, International Council for Game and Wildlife Conservation (CIC)** –The CIC is a worldwide community for the conservation of wildlife through sustainable use. CIC is based in Budapest, has 1200 members & 29 state members, experts and researchers, 40 National Delegations & sponsors and two working groups; female hunters and a young opinion group. They are concerned with wildlife, conservation and hunting and they bring hunters to the table to participate in policy development and decision making. They provide an international intergovernmental perspective to wildlife conservation. Part of their funding comes from a one euro levy on every hunter. They are trying to establish a branch in NZ. Mark encouraged the GAC to hold onto the NZ culture of hunting and look to make more of what is unique about hunting here. Don Hammond thanked Mark Ryan for his interesting and informative presentation.

- 10. Correspondence** - Correspondence was presented and discussed.

Motion 22/5: Moved Roger Duxfield/Alec Mclver: That inward correspondence be accepted and outward correspondence be approved.	CARRIED
--------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------	----------------

11. Action items from previous meetings:

- Action 3/2 – the contractor will be responsible for developing the promotion and sponsorship policy
 Action 10/7 – the Minister has put a hold on further HOSI development work (see also Action 17/6).
 Action 13/3 (and 8/9) – Don Hammond to write to the new NZCA Chair.
 Action 18/3 –link to educational material about CWD on the GAC website.
 Action 21/3, Rod Treder to keep the GAC abreast of developments about the hunting permit system.
 Action 20/3 – AATH permits were rolled over
 Action 21/3 – Rod Treder, Mark Beardsley and GAC to continue working on developments around the Hunter Permit System and the possibility of DOC including firearms licence numbers and permanent addresses to enable data to be kept about how many overseas hunters are coming here. GAC to pass on details of discrepancy to Rod Treder to pass on.
 Action 21/5 – DOC's new policy for fire control operations.

- 12. Finances** – A simplified Cashflow forecast was circulated and has been provided to DOC.

Motion 22/6: Moved Don Hammond/Alec Mclver: That the financial reports be accepted and approved.	CARRIED
---------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------	----------------

13. Bowhunters - The NZ Bowhunters Society Code of Ethics, previously considered by Council, was recirculated. Previous GAC comments have now been incorporated. To be circulated for final approval and GAC endorsement at a later date.

14. Freedom Hunting –could be the next big thing in NZ hunting for the 30-40 age group. If it catches on here as it has done in the States and Europe, then there would be a role for the GAC to provide advice on bringing firearms into NZ, Health & Safety awareness, permit advice and CWD implications. A long-term **Action item 22/5** will be for the GAC to analyse the problem and quantify it. This could be an opportunity to push the NZ hunting culture and potentially raise revenue through a unique ballot system.

15. DOC update- Rod Treder provided a DOC update which is attached to these Minutes – Attachment A. The DOC report covers the following:

- Tahr control
- WARO
- AATH
- Predator Free 2050 and BFOBs
- Deer repellent developments– Don Hammond asked why there hadn't been a corresponding increase in \$ spent on deer repellent when there has been a huge increase in funding for Predator Free 2050 and BFOB initiatives. And there has been a big increase in the area to be treated also so there should be an increase in the amount of deer repellent used. Also, based on the DOC report on this subject, if Orillion is only now entering the administrative pre-screening stage, then this situation is likely to drag out for the foreseeable future so what is DOC's Plan B? Geoff asked Rod to find out more information from Peter Morton about the status of both products and their ACVM registration and report back to the GAC. Given the beech mast for 2019 is expected to be massive, we need answers as soon as possible to start work on mitigation options. This also has implication for OSPRI which Don Hammond will raise with them **Action item 22/6**.
- Hunter safety and licences
- Kaweka Forest Park Deer Management
- New DOC fire control policy

16. General Business - Keith Briden of DOC recently sent the GAC some information about wilding pines which was circulated. Hunters could be encouraged to remove the wilding pine and make a note of where they found it growing, similar to shooting wild cats etc.

Next meeting will be in May 2019. Survey Councillors about their availability and get the date to the Minister as soon as possible.

Meeting closed 5pm.

DOC Report – GAC Meeting – 26 November 2018

Tahr programme

Ben Reddiex has been appointed DOC programme lead of the Tahr Control, and has initiated a range of work covering the details of the 2019 programme and the process for developing a longer-term collaborative plan for tahr control.

Ben will outline more at has an 11:30 am slot on the Council meeting agenda.

WARO permitting 2019

On 27 November DOC advised that following the June/July 2018 WARO land access consultation, it had reviewed its land access recommendations for the new national concession and initiated a second round of consultation on some changes to location specific WARO land recommendations.

Those who provided comment during the June/July 2018 consultation had until 15 February 2019 to comment on the revised land recommendations. Feedback was also sought on a proposal to move South Island WARO Roar closure dates for 'Permitted' (green) areas a week later, to better align with the actual Roar.

A decision on the terms of the 2019 national WARO permit could be made during March 2019 – with the interim permits providing continuity of operations in the meantime.

AATH code and permits

Since I reported following the GAC meeting on 27 November, some work has been done on new AATH permit conditions, but the main focus has been on compiling a comprehensive engagement /communication plan for the permitting process.

This planning phase is expected to be finalised by 25 February 2019.

Predator Free 2050 and Battle for our Birds

Predator free 2050 Limited has managed to secure \$19.5 million from the Government's Provincial Growth Fund for investing in (trap-based) predator control in the 'surge regions' of Northland, Bay of Plenty, East Cape, Hawke's Bay, Manawatu-Whanganui, and West Coast.

DOC's work on an overall Predator Free 2050 Strategy remains 'in progress'. A number of focus groups have been used to identify and discuss the strategic priorities for achieving the Predator Free 2050 goal. The findings from those groups were included in a 'Discussion Guide' published in late 2018 – with an invitation to comment open to the public until 30 January 2019.

In addition, a 4-Year DOC Plan is being developed to optimise DOC's work towards PF 2050. Development of regional plans will begin in early 2019.

Peter Morton, Landscape Manager, Predator Free 2050 will provide the meeting with an update on the state of planning for the 2019/20 DOC predator control programme, including:

- An update of the seed monitoring information and mapping;
- Observations from the GAC/NZDA facilitated hunter engagement programme;
- DOC's need for more information from hunters on their deer repellent priorities.

The meetings with hunters have identified that the main interests of hunters include: further use of deer repellent bait as by-kill risk mitigation; improved deer repellent baits and DOC's policy for their use; clearer information on the rationale and results from the predator control programme; and animal welfare issues associated with deer being poisoned through aerial 1080 operations.

Currently, DOC plans to apply deer repellent bait over about 40,000 hectares of public conservation land in 2019. The decision on which sites will receive deer repellent will be driven by the current consultation with hunters and subsequent work with the GACs and the NZDA executives.

Deer repellent developments

It was reported at the last meeting that both 1080 bait manufacturers (PCR in Christchurch and Orillion in Whanganui) are continuing to work with the Ministry of Primary Industries to obtain registration of their new deer repellent 1080 baits.

More recent advice from Orillion is that they started the process of registration only to find that the storage stability question had changed – requiring a longer period and delaying the completion of their storage trial until mid-Feb.

In effect Orillion appears to only now be entering the 'administrative pre-screening' stage of the ACVM registration process. If the ACVM application review group determines that the submitted data is sufficient, the application could be completed within than 6 months.

We have no update from PCR on the state of its ACVM registration application.

Hunter safety and licences

DOC has completed a reorganisation of its Heritage and Visitors Unit and has appointed Mark Beardsley (Service Designer) to coordinate a range of work that is of interest to the Council – and particularly the areas where Carol Watson has been attempting to get traction.

Mark is currently working on a plan for 2019-20, and is expecting it to include:

- Resolving all the bowhunting communications inconsistencies, and install the various updates around messaging, permits, DOC website etc
- Improving DOC's online hunting permit system - ensuring it is sustainable, maintained, and that updates for the online app are completed.
- Improving the information on the DOC website - to remove inconsistencies across regions, lift to one agreed standard, high quality, user friendly interface with hunters.
- Supporting the prospective cross agency working group to develop a comprehensive hunter safety and education plan – e.g. collaboration with the Game Animal Council

Kaweka Forest Park deer management

DOC has reviewed the data for the Kaweka forest and discussed it with hunters.

It is clear to DOC that it will need to develop an approach to deer management in the Kaweka in the future. However, DOC has given an assurance that when work on a Kaweka deer management plan commences, there will be engagement with the GAC.

The work is likely to commence in the new financial year.

DOC fire policy

Three new fire regulations came into force on 13 December 2018, but none relate to the restrictions on lighting of fires on PCL.

(The ones that came into force were: Fire and Emergency New Zealand (Fire Plans) Regulations 2018 (LI 2018/231); Fire and Emergency New Zealand (Fire Safety, Evacuation Procedures, and Evacuation Schemes) Amendment Regulations 2018 (LI 2018/230); and Fire and Emergency New Zealand (Offences) Regulations 2018 (LI 2018/229).

The policy information of the DOC webpages has not changed, although the information behind the link “check it’s alright” is frequently updated by FENZ to provide information on local restrictions.

Ian Imrie (DOC National Fire Advisor) is the contact for any comms coordination the GAC sees as beneficial.

Game Animal Council nominations

DOC is preparing a draft paper for discussion with you regarding new Councillors.

Mervyn may provide a verbal update at the meeting.

Rod Treder et al

DOC Feb 2019