

23 October 2020

NZ Game Animal Council – Submission on DRAFT Toitū Te Whenua Parks Network Plan 2020-30



1. The Game Animal Council

The Game Animal Council (GAC), established under the Game Animal Council Act 2013, is a statutory organisation with responsibilities for, *inter alia*, representing game animal hunters, and advising on and managing aspects of game animal hunting. Game animals are feral pigs, chamois, tahr, and all species of deer.

2. Hunting in New Zealand

Hunting is an integral part of life for more than 160,000 New Zealanders who participate each year.

Hunting promotes mental health and wellbeing and builds personal resilience. Hunting is an important means of providing food for whanau and in many parts of urban, rural and remote New Zealand hunting is the primary method of putting meat (protein) on the table. Hunting and the use of firearms is also required for the management of game animals and pest control.

2. Game animals as a resource for New Zealand

New Zealand's game animals are an important recreational, social, and economic resource. New Zealanders value game animals with an estimated 166,675 people harvesting small game, large game, or gamebirds each year.

All game species in New Zealand are harvested for food, and while deer farming accounts for the vast majority of game meat exports, shot wild game is significant in both export statistics and domestic consumption.

The combination of recreational hunting and aerial recovery expertise developed over the past 50 years allows privately funded control and management of New Zealand's big game populations at no cost to the government.

4. Valued Introduced Species in New Zealand

Game Animals (deer, tahr, chamois and pigs) are now recognised as valued introduced species in *Te Mana o Te Taiao - Aotearoa New Zealand Biodiversity Strategy 2020*. Deer, tahr, chamois and wild pigs, are legally Wild Animals under the Wild Animal Control Act or Game Animals under the Game Animal Council Act. Collectively with other species such as trout, salmon, ducks, pheasants, quail etc they are collectively known as valued introduced species. These animals are now part of New Zealand. The GAC recommends reference to game animals in the Park Network Plan to compliment the sentiment outlined in *Te Mana o Te Taiao - Aotearoa New Zealand Biodiversity Strategy 2020*.

5. Role of the GAC

The Game Animal Council has a history of working constructively and cooperatively with many agencies including GWRC and will continue this approach. The Council's role is more at the strategic level than at place. The Game Animal Council recommends that GWRC deals directly with local hunting organisations (such as the New Zealand Deerstalkers Association, Lower North Island Red Deer Foundation, New Zealand Pig Hunting Association) for individual plan design and implementation.

6. The DRAFT Parks Network Plan 2020-30

The GAC commends the GWRC on its drafting of the Draft Parks Network Plan 2020-30, however, there are concerns with inconsistencies related to hunting and hunting organisations and core principles set out in the Plan.

7. Key amendments and considerations

Section 2.3 Page 23

Conservation opportunities – Improving the ecosystem health of parks is a core goal of this Plan.

Hunting provides conservation benefits, however, there is limited mention of hunting or hunting organisations in the plan. Managing the impacts of game animals on the environment is one key positive outcome of hunting (provision of food (protein), social, cultural, economic, physical, mental are others).

The GAC recommends the contribution hunting makes to the integrity of the ecosystem and gains to societal health and wellbeing is considered and detailed in the drafting of the Plan.

The GAC recommends working in partnerships with hunting organisations in the Wellington region to provide coordinated and targeted game animal management in areas of concern to GWRC. Local hunting organisations are in a position to act as facilitators to mobilise their members to undertake hunting where and required.

8. Section 2.4 Page 27

Community collaboration opportunities

As is outlined, “Wherever Greater Wellington works in highly collaborative ways the benefits are apparent.” The GAC seeks for further collaboration with hunting organisations in the Wellington region to identify opportunities to contribute to enhancing the health of the Parks through hunting and also the potential for pest control (such as trapping for rats, stoats, possums). Again, as outlined in the Plan, “more benefits from parks (healthy parks, healthy people) can be realised with enhanced connections with our communities and an approach that supports and enables participation”. The GAC encourages establishing and building on partnerships with the hunting sector and the GAC can assist GWRC if required.

9. Hunting and the alignment with the GWRC Biodiversity Strategy 2011-2022

In respect of the Biodiversity Strategy 2011-2022, hunting contributes to the protection and restoration of high biodiversity areas by managing the impacts of goats, pigs, and deer on the environment.

Hunting contributes to ecosystem functions being maintained and restored across the landscape through managing the impacts that feral goats, pigs and deer have on the environment.

Hunting is also a gateway to further encourage people to contribute to protection of the habitat as a whole through activities such as predator trapping, environmental care (as simple as picking up rubbish), and encouraging others to engage with the outdoors.

Encouraging and facilitating greater use of regional parks to activities like hunting allows people to understand and value biodiversity through immersion with the environment.

10. Hunting and alignment with the GWRC RPMP 2019-2039

Encouraging and facilitating hunting in the region's parks will assist with management goals of the RPMP (and the KNE plans), which is predominantly site led control for deer, pigs, and goats in KNE's. Providing continued (and enhanced) access to the parks in the region will assist the achievement of the goals set out in the RPMP and complement biosecurity work undertaken by GWRC. Hunting is actively promoted by the GWRC biosecurity team; therefore, it comes as a surprise to see an erosion of access and discouragement of hunting within the region's parks. The hunting sector wishes to contribute to the protection and management of the region's parks and natural resources and to utilise their hunting and bush skills accordingly.

11. Reference to hunting in the Draft Plan

Throughout the document there is limited reference to hunting. The GAC strongly recommends an increased mention of hunting in sections talking about recreational activities within the park and region.

Hunting is a significant activity for many people in the Wellington region. For example, there are more than 1300 members in the New Zealand Deerstalkers Association Wellington region, there are also pig hunters, goat shooters and other non-affiliated hunters. Hunting provides benefits to the wellbeing of individuals and communities, is a healthy outdoor activity for many families, provides a source of protein and contributes to good conservation outcomes.

The GWRC is known for its ability to encourage people to work together. A greater inclusion of hunting alongside other conservation and recreation activities would properly represent the motto of the Draft Parks Network Plan “Everything is connected” (people in places) and ‘We’re all in this together, moving forward.’

12. Page 196 East Harbour Hunting

The GAC strongly opposes recreational hunting being prohibited in East Harbour and Wainuiomata by 2025. Relief sought - remove any reference to phasing out hunting in East Harbour Northern Forest backcountry areas.

13. Page 215

Re-categorise hunting in table to ‘High impact and High benefit’. Recreational hunting aligns with all the stated goals of the PNP.

14. Maintaining or Increasing Access

Access and removal of barriers is a core goal of the PNP, however access for recreational hunters is being restricted, and in the case of Wainuiomata and East Harbour, completely lost.

The GAC is a strong advocate for public recreational access to public land and therefore opposes restriction of access. Access for recreational hunters should be improved in the following ways:

Overnight access should be granted across all parks including the water reserve catchments Wainuiomata and Kaitoke. Allowing a partnership with the hunting community to manage

the impact of game animals is to ensure that recreational access and opportunities are maximised.

Accessing hunting areas can take hours, therefore in more remote areas, the ability to camp the night is required for a successful hunting trip. The GAC recommends working with local hunting organisations to develop a system to allow for the management of hunters in areas which have historically not allowed for overnights i.e. Hutt Water Collection Area.

Ballot extensions are required for Wainuiomata and East Harbour Parks. April roar ballots should not be limited to weekends only, and overnight visitation should be permitted. Moreover, spring ballots as well as other times of the year should be explored and enabled.

15. Pakuratahi Forest and Kaitoke Regional Park

The GAC strongly recommends amending the 'no hunting areas' demonstrated in map 1 to allow for hunting. This 'restricted area' borders GWRC administered areas where hunting is allowed and also land administered by the Department of Conservation which is governed by an open hunting permit.

It is understandable that adjoining landowners want to protect areas such as this for their personal enjoyment and 'private hunting rights', however this area should be administered for the good of the wider public. These areas encourage more hunters to use the parks for a short morning or evening hunt, connect with nature and have the opportunity to provide food for their whanau.



The GAC is available to discuss or clarify any aspects of this submission.

Yours sincerely, on behalf of the Game Animal Council.

Tim Gale
General Manager, New Zealand Game Animal Council
021 688 531
tim.gale@nzgac.org.nz