

MINUTES OF THE GAME ANIMAL COUNCIL MEETING 24 NOVEMBER 2020

Held at North Canterbury Fish and Game Office, 95 Johns Road, Harewood, Christchurch

Present: Grant Dodson (Chair), Stephen Hall (Deputy), Tim Gale (General Manager), Rachael Dean, Steve McFall, Sharon Salmons, John Cook, Bruce Warburton, Erin Garrick, Don Patterson, Jenny Wotten (Executive Officer)

In attendance: Jacqui Bassett (DOC), Ben Reddiex (DOC), James Holborow (DOC), Garry Ottmann (ex-Councillor), Geoff Kerr (ex-Councillor), Roger Duxfield (ex-Councillor, via Zoom), Hayden Cox (Contractor), Rasmus Gabrielsson (Chief Executive, Fish and Game North Canterbury), Dave Hodder (NZDA North Canterbury)

Apologies: Ngaire Best

- 1. Welcome, Health & Safety, Agenda:** Rasmus Gabrielsson welcomed Councillors & guests and provided a Health & Safety overview for the premises. The Agenda was noted with the omission of the planned Minister's Zoom session.
- 2. Councillors only session:** Grant Dodson led a Councillor only session to discuss General Manager employment arrangements.

The Council only session considered the GM's employment agreement. The outcome was the GM's employment was reviewed for a further term, and remuneration was reviewed following the consideration of supporting benchmarking data.

- 3. Minutes of previous meeting 28 September 2020** were taken as read with minor alterations.

Motion 31/1: Moved Grant Dodson/Bruce Warburton: that the Minutes of the 28 September 2020 Meeting be accepted as a true and correct record of the meeting.	CARRIED
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- 4. Matters arising Minutes 28 September and Action Table update:**

- Firearms Licencing: Roger Duxfield to present at today's meeting.
- Conflicts of Interest: Councillors were reminded of the need to review and declare any conflicts of interest.
- Minor change proposed to Risk Management Report has been incorporated.
- Annual Report & Letter of Expectation: Chair Grant Dodson presented the final draft of the 2019-20 Game Animal Council Annual Report, Financial Statement, and draft Audit opinion. It was agreed that in future years improved alignment is required across the Letter of Expectations, the Council's Statement of Performance Expectations and the associated Annual Plan and Report.

Motion 31/2: Moved Grant Dodson/Stephen Hall: that the Annual Report for the year ended 30 June 2020 be approved.	CARRIED
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- Credit Cards: Agreed \$5000 limit would remain, split \$3000 to Jenny Wotten, \$2000 to Tim Gale.

Motion 31/3: Moved Sharon Salmons/Rachael Dean: that the credit card existing limit of \$5000 be split \$2000 to Tim Gale and \$3000 to Jenny Wotten, no change to total limits.	CARRIED
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- 5. Chairman's Report:** Grant Dodson circulated his report outlining priorities and areas of current focus.

Matters discussed included:

- An introductory meeting to be arranged with Minister Allan to discuss collective priorities.
- Council future funding sources. Report on progress. Noted that Grant will brief Jacqui Bassett on trophy export level next steps.
- Future deer and tahr work with the Department Council and other stakeholders. The Council has been involved from the initial stages in the deer discussion and is targeting a constructive outcome incorporating learnings from the tahr process. It was noted that different herds and regions across New Zealand will require customised management strategies.

Motion 31/4: Moved Grant Dodson/John Cook: that the Chairman's Report be approved. CARRIED

- 6. General Manager's Report:** Tim Gale provided an overview of stakeholders he has engaged with since the last Council Meeting. A large part of the General Manager's work this quarter has revolved around statutory reporting responsibilities such as the Annual Report and Statement of Performance Expectations.
- a. Funding sources update:** Focus is still on promoting and progressing a 3-tier staged funding model: Vote Conservation, Voluntary Contribution, Export Tag Levy.
- b. Venison Project Update:** The proposal to extend this project was rejected by potential funders. The harvesting of Fiordland deer and having it delivered as venison mince to organisations that support families in need was a huge success in the first round, well supported by DOC and the GAC and had great feedback from the Salvation Army and other recipients. The FWF have had to start culling already and with no funding provisions the meat is being culled to waste. Also developing a Sika Foundation submission for the Kaimahi for Nature Fund.
- c. Wallaby Control work:** Tim Gale has also written to MPI with a proposal for Wallaby Control work for the Commercial Hunting Sector.
- d. Deer Plan update & discussion:** DOC have led the development around scoping a potential Deer Plan for NZ. They have discussed this with the Council, iwi and other stakeholders. Depending on how this project evolves this work will be very significant to most NZ hunters. To ensure early engagement the Council has written to stakeholders, the DOC, and the previous Minister, met with the Sika Foundation and Landcare Research and Ngāi Tūhoe. Conversations have been around education, values & principles, funding, research, deer management, what success might look like for different sectors, what scientific data is available etc. An analysis of the responses will be undertaken followed by more consultation with stakeholders and DOC.
- e. Hunting Permit System Review:** DOC have engaged a new analyst for this work and the department made a presentation to the Council at the September 2020 Meeting. The GAC has been offering to help with a Permit Review since 2014 and is preparing a full list of suggested changes. It was noted that this is welcome and long overdue progress and has the potential to provide real benefits for conservation and hunters.
- f. Review of IT Services:** The General Manager presented a proposal that it is timely to review the Council's IT needs.

Councillors agreed to the recommendation that an analysis be undertaken to determine the IT needs of the GAC. Regardless of the results of the review the Council acknowledge the excellent service provided by the current IT service provider at very minimal cost.

Motion 31/5: Moved Grant Dodson/ John Cook: That the Council accepts the General Manager's Report.	CARRIED
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- 7. Hunters for Conservation (HFC):** Tim Gale provided an update on this project. The initiative is a forum to promote, encourage and educate on the role that hunters play in conservation. HFC has the full support of the Council who is helping with the establishment of a formal structure. Tim Gale to provide a briefing to Jacqui Bassett and provide further information at the next meeting.

Motion 31/6: Moved Grant Dodson/ Bruce Warburton: That the Council accepts the recommendation of the Council Paper re Hunters for Conservation Creation of a Trust.	CARRIED
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- 8. Communications Report:** Tim Gale and Hayden Cox provided an update covering the significant communications activities since the last Council Meeting, including the development of the BIM, and congratulating the new Minister on her appointment.
- 9. NZ Hunting App:** Tim Gale gave an overview of a proposed new Hunting App and options that could be explored. The project is beyond our current resourcing capabilities, but the Council and DOC could help develop guidelines for other organisations to ensure that useful data is gathered.
- 10. Tahr Talk:** Ben Reddiex presented to Council, providing an update on current tahr issues. James Holborow also attended the meeting. The update touched on:
- population estimates and results from aerial surveys (PCL only) over the past 4 years
 - tahr control over the past decade (on PCL in MUs)
 - tahr control operational plans since October 2018
 - tahr control outside the feral range 2019-20
 - the use of the Electronic Verification Tool
 - the tahr app for recreational hunters and website updates
 - DOC's relationship with Te Rūnanga o Ngāi Tahu and engagement on TCOPs
 - COVID-19 (ballots – tahr & deer)
 - fixed wing surveys of tahr populations on CPL
 - development of TCOP 2020/21
 - legal proceedings (Forest & Bird; NZ Tahr Foundation)
 - Tahr Control Operational Plans 2018-19 2019-20 and 2020-21
 - engagement with the GAC on operational detail (outside of National Parks MU)
 - tahr control on PCL in MUs
 - MU6 Landsborough, MU4 National Parks, MU3 Gammack Two Thumb
 - Research & Monitoring Strategy
 - The upcoming TPILG Meeting on 15 December 2020, Research & Monitoring Plan 2020-21, a refresh of the Terms of Reference for the TPILG and Tahr Control Operational Plan 2021-22 discussion.

Healthy debate about many of the points outlined by Ben Reddiex occurred. The Council maintains that tahr population estimates in some MUs require more monitoring and research. Some of the rhetoric concerning Mt Cook buttercup rhetoric, weevils etc is considered factually incorrect and not backed by sufficient scientific research.

The DOC BIM to Minister Allan regarding tahr issues was discussed. The Council had previously raised concerns with the Department for the BIM to reflect the current situation. The feedback was accepted by the Department with the publicly available BIM reflecting this.

The Council recommends that a review of parameters within the HTCP takes place as it believes aspects of the Plan are no longer accurate or fit for purpose. Review items could include revising intervention densities based on information about the effects of tahr, both across and within management units, and, taking into consideration stock-unit limits within the HTCP, rather than tahr-specific density limits. The current maximum population of tahr across all lands (Public Conservation Land, Crown Pastoral Lease and private) in the tahr feral ranges will not be adequate to sustain the future needs of the recreational and commercial hunting sector needs. As outlined by John Parkes work, the Council has reason to believe that higher densities of tahr in certain MU's and ecosystems may be feasible without compromising conservation values.

Council agreed to promote hunter representation on a range of conservation and environmental boards to promote a balanced view of game animal and hunter issues.

- 11. Tahr Research and Monitoring:** Geoff Kerr provided an update on his own research and developments of the Tahr Plan Implementation Liaison Group. In May 2019, Geoff Kerr and DOC co-hosted a research and monitoring workshop with stakeholders. At this forum, knowledge gaps were identified, including the impacts of tahr and sympatric herbivores on the environment, and tahr population densities consistent with conservation objectives. Geoff Kerr noted the current methodology for counting tahr is problematic for reasons of cost, delay, and precision. Accuracy is unknown. The GAC can work with DOC to validate alternative tahr population assessment methods that better meet management needs. Geoff's population modelling shows a significant effect from the cull, irrespective of starting populations. The removal of large numbers of breeding females has reduced herd fecundity to the extent that if DOC did no culling next year, there will still be less tahr the following year. Geoff Kerr and Garry Ottmann will attend the TPILG Meeting in December. Tim Gale will ensure that Bruce Warburton receives copies of all past research.
- 12. Briefing for incoming Minister** – discussion.
- 13. Firearms Update:** Roger Duxfield addressed Council via Zoom, providing an overview of the work he has been doing in the Firearms Community Advisory Forum, past and upcoming meetings, implementation of the Arms Legislation Act including regulations, his work on the Range Certification Engagement Group and answered questions about the proposed new documentation for obtaining a firearms licence.
- 14. Hunter Education:** Tim Gale provided an update on the draft Hunter Education Strategy. Minor change proposed to change the text to 'Education strategy framework developed and socialised with key partners, including DOC and specialist training delivery partners.' The alteration was agreed, and Tim Gale will continue to work with stakeholders that already have training and education programmes in place. The Council will work towards getting some training and education material on its website.
- 15. Stakeholder Engagement Update:**

Engagement with Ngāi Tūhoe: Tim Gale & Grant Dodson met with Tūhoe Chief and Chair of Te Urewera Trust Board Tāmāti Kruger and Tūhoe Chief Executive Kirsti Luke on 17 November 2020 at Taneatua, essentially to re-establish the relationship and offering GAC assistance if required. They outlined the functions of the GAC, the GAC Strategic Plan and current projects.

Engagement with Ngāti Tūwharetoa: Tim Gale confirmed to meet with Tom Loughlin of Ngāti Tūwharetoa, however, due to an unexpected change in schedules this hui never took place.

Engagement with Importers and Wholesalers: Tim Gale has written to wholesalers of firearms and ammunition and requested to meet with them to discuss GAC funding. Initial support for a voluntary contribution is positive.

Other: Tim Gale led a discussion about which other stakeholders he and Grant Dodson have met with and upcoming proposed engagements. Tim Gale attended the NZPHGA's AGM, met with the Tahr Foundation, DOC, talked to NZDA South Balclutha Branch. Don Patterson attended a thank you event hosted by the Salvation Army, recognising the role the GAC played in the FWF venison mince project.

- 16. Finance, Budget, and Administrative Matters:** Tim Gale spoke to the financial report as circulated. The Council Pack contains the latest GAC Monthly Financial Report and credit card expenditure since the last Council Meeting. Original SPE has been refined.

Motion 31/7: Moved Grant Dodson/Rachael Dean: that the Council approves the Statement of Performance Expectations 2020-21.	CARRIED
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Motion 31/8: Moved Rachael Dean/Sharon Salmons: that the Council accepts the financial reports and that expenditure to-date be approved.	CARRIED
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Motion 31/9: Moved Grant Dodson/Stephen Hall: that the Council approves the expenditure on the credit card.	CARRIED
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- 17. Policy on Acceptance of Donations:** The draft policy previously circulated was approved with minor changes. The Council has taken advice now also from the Treasury Department.

Motion 31/10: Moved Stephen Hall/Erin Garrick: that the Council approves the Policy on Acceptance of Donations.	CARRIED
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- 18. General Business:** Steve McFall briefly covered his report to the ABWCC providing an update of animal behaviour and welfare focussed activities. Steve McFall will be representing the Council at the NAWAC committee meeting in February 2021.

Steve McFall and Garry Ottmann will be representing the Council at an upcoming forum to discuss African Swine Fever and biosecurity issues should it come to New Zealand.

Further governance training for Councillors was discussed.

Chair Grant Dodson thanked Canterbury Fish and Game for the use of their premises and the excellent hospitality extended to the Council.

The next meeting of the Game Animal Council will be held on Friday 19 February, possibly in Wellington.

Meeting closed at 4.35pm.