

**MINUTES OF THE GAME ANIMAL COUNCIL MEETING 5 NOVEMBER 2021**  
**Held at Deerstalkers House, 3 Collina Terrace, Thorndon, Wellington**

**Present:** Grant Dodson (Chair), Tim Gale (General Manager), Rachael Dean, Sharon Salmons, Bruce Warburton, Erin Garrick, Don Patterson, Jenny Wotten (Executive Officer)

**In attendance:** Councillor Steve McFall and Councillor John Cook via Zoom, Ben Reddiex (DOC), Gwyn Thurlow (NZDA), John Page (Boardworks)

**Apologies:** Minister Kiritapu Allan, Stephen Hall (Deputy Chair), Hayden Cox, Jacqui Bassett, Ngaire Best, Sam Green from DOC.

- 1. Chairman's Update:** The Chair welcomed Councillors & guests. Councillors were reminded of the requirement to disclose any new conflicts of interest. The Chair introduced John Page of Boardworks to undertake the Governance Training. Minor amendment to the agenda – discussion about contractor's hours and GAC office arrangements. Rules of meeting, and conflicts of interest reviewed. Risk Management Register minor modifications and reviewed & approved.
- 2. Governance Training and Evaluation:** John Page from Boardworks provided governance training and evaluation - as per the Council's Letter of Expectations from the Minister.

ACTION: Council & General Manager to review evaluation, agenda format and other suggestions for improvement.

- 3. Minutes of previous meeting 30 August 2021:** were taken as read with minor alterations.

**Motion 35/1:** Moved Sharon Salmons /Bruce Warburton: that the Minutes of the 30 August 2021 Meeting be accepted as a true and correct record of the meeting. CARRIED

- 4. Parliamentary Hunt:** Grant Dodson and Tim Gale provided a summary of the recent Parliamentary Hunt. Following the hunt, the GAC provided the Minister with a letter summarising some of the key priorities. Key priorities include:

- The Game Animal Council Funding Strategy
- Hunter Safety & Education Programme
- Game Animal Management
- Herds of Special Interest process
- Te Ara Ki Mua - The Path Ahead - Deer in Aotearoa
  - Lake Sumner Recreational Hunting Area deer management trial
  - Ruahine deer management project
  - Review of Wild Animal Recovery Operations (WARO)
- Hunter-led management of tahr

Council received and noted the content of the report (Council has already endorsed the letter by email). Chair and General Manager will ask to meet with the new Director-General Penny Nelson, as soon as possible. A letter of introduction has been sent.

ACTION: Grant Dodson and Tim Gale to meet with new DOC Director-General Penny Nelson.

## **5. Deer Management:**

Lake Sumner RHA potential project - The Lake Sumner Recreational Hunting Area (RHA) is an important hunting, tramping and family recreation area close to Christchurch that currently suffers from an overpopulation of red deer, which if left unchecked will result in over-browsing of native vegetation. There are various reasons for this rise in deer numbers, but most stakeholders agree that a short-term intensive deer control programme is required to prevent impacts on native species and also to improve the quality of this important hunting resource.

The GAC proposes that a project be established jointly between the Department of Conservation and GAC to undertake improved deer management in the RHA initially through a control operation using WARO operators potentially harvesting a significant number of breeding animals from the Lake Sumner RHA. To facilitate stakeholder buy-in and to eliminate waste, the project would ideally incorporate carcass recovery and processing to provide free venison mince to foodbanks and charities around the country similar to the Fiordland Wapiti Venison Project of 2020.

In order to progress this with urgency and with appropriate people and financial resources to ensure a successful outcome a joint project with the Department is required. The GAC considers that early winter (May-June) 2022 would be an ideal time to avoid the fawn drop and the busy roar hunting period. Initial discussions with the Department on this matter have been positive and the GAC intends to delve into more specific details on the development of this project; resources needed, available contractors and associated costs.

Te Ara Ki Mua Deer – The GAC has been engaged with the DOC since late 2019 to develop a ‘pathway’ for sustainable deer management into the future. The GAC has worked closely with DOC, providing input into drafting the document: Te Ara Ki Mua – The Path Ahead: Deer in Aotearoa. The GAC provided feedback on the latest draft and attended meetings with DOC staff.

ACTION: The Council will continue to engage with the Department on the Te Ara Ki Mua work.

Ruahine Deer Management Project – The Council has asked the Department for an update on where this project is at as the DOC had indicated in June 2021 that they would soon be re-commencing engagement with stakeholders and this hasn’t occurred as yet. The Department’s intention remains to re-commence this work, which will include design work for improving knowledge of the health of the environment, and the efficacy of management. The GAC asked the Department to elevate the priority of this project as soon as possible as it is considered to be a good template for other areas.

Discussion about Sika Deer and the Raukumara Restoration Project and a request to the Department to prioritise working with the GAC and other hunting groups on these projects also. Council noted the contents of the Deer Management Update Meeting Paper.

## **6. Tahr Control Operational Plan (TCOP) 2021-22 Implementation: Hunter-led management of tahr in MU1:** Discussion about the good progress currently being made in the tahr management space and the encouraging environment of cooperation and collaboration across the various stakeholders on the Tahr Plan Implementation Liaison Group.

The GAC sees considerable benefits from hunter-led management in this area from:

- Improved vegetation conditions
- Better monitoring of the tahr population
- Improved herd structure, improving hunting outcomes and reducing risk of rapid tahr population growth

A full day meeting attended by the Department, the GAC and Ngai Tahu on 19 October 2021 made significant progress on framing a potential agreement. The GAC will continue to work with both the Department and hunting sector stakeholders such as the Tahr Foundation, to implement this project.

Population monitoring and population management was discussed. The GAC has requested that DOC ensures adequate resourcing is provided to coordinate the monitoring and that regular feedback is provided to the Tahr Plan Implementation Group. Council received and noted the contents of the Tahr Control Operational Plan (TCOP) 2021-22 Implementation Meeting Paper and the details around Hunter-led Management MU1.

**Motion 35/2:** Moved Steve McFall/Rachael Dean that: Council receives and notes the content of the report. CARRIED

**7. Update on progressing a sustainable funding strategy:** Council is working towards establishing its proposed 3-pronged equitable funding strategy to enable the GAC to undertake its statutory functions and deliver on its strategic plan. The 3-prongs identified for immediate progression are:

1. Vote Conservation
2. Game Trophy Export Levy
3. Contribution from firearms and ammunition sales.

At the Council meeting on 11 June 2021, Council agreed to the development of a Project Plan and Budget to progress the Game Trophy Export Levy Project to implementation stage; and for a Heads of Agreement (Accord) to be developed for consideration by Council and suppliers.

In its letter to the Minister dated 1 November 2021, Council asked Minister Allan to consider and approve the 3-pronged funding strategy. The previous detailed Council funding analysis was prepared in 2017 but has recently been updated to reflect the current situation and workplan. Issues such as Free Trade Agreements and closed borders continue to hamper any certainty about the future international market, but it is considered necessary that the GAC has a strategy in place to be considered sustainable now and a viable entity for the future.

Chair Grant Dodson has raised these issues with GAC governance advisors in DOC and will continue to formally communicate them to Minister Allan, alongside other discussions around the GAC workplan and performance expectations.

ACTION: Council aims to complete some research and risk analysis around the funding strategy, by end of November 2021.

**Motion 35/3:** Moved John Cook/Bruce Warburton: that Council receives and notes the report on Progressing the Funding Strategy, Game Trophy Export Levy & Contribution. CARRIED

- 8. Draft Annual Report 2020-21:** Councillors considered the now completed Draft Annual Report 2020-21. The Council has received advice from the Office of the Auditor General that our audit will most likely not be completed until the first few months of 2022 (because of COVID-19 and an acute shortage of senior auditors in New Zealand). Parliament has enacted legislation to extend statutory reporting time frames (in the Crown Entities Act 2004 and the Local Government Act 2002). Chair Grant Dodson congratulated the management team on producing an excellent Annual Report.
- 9. Draft Statement of Performance 2021-22:** Tim Gale presented the draft Statement of Performance which has been modified slightly to include changes due to COVID-19, Jobs for Nature specifications, Forecast Financial Statements and a couple other minor revisions. Depending on the timing of the audit, Council may need to meet again in December via Zoom to approve the final Statement of Performance and Financial Statements (incorporating any changes as advised by the Minister and Department).

**Motion 35/4:** Moved Sharon Salmons/Erin Garrick: that Council approves the Draft Statement of Performance and Forecast Financial Statements.

CARRIED

- 10. General Manager's Report:** The General Manager presented his November 2021 report. Discussion about the points covered:

- resourcing – contractor's hours and volunteer hours
- impact of Covid-19 – government focus on COVID-19 has impacted progress of some projects
- funding – MartinJenkins has developed a straw person funding strategy
- deer management – GAC to facilitate relationships between hunting sector and other organisations to provide solutions for deer management
- tahr management – including hunter-led management in MU1
- working with the NZ Police – on firearms safety initiatives & collaborative workshops (and Rule 3 of the Seven Firearms Safety Rules)
- financial performance reporting
- recent Parliamentary Hunt – and letter to Minister setting out GAC projects & priorities
- Land Safety Forum – collaborative workshops for 17 'land-based' activity organisations
- OSPRI – mitigating effects of 1080 operations on game animals and hunters
- recent interactions with DOC's Heritage & Visitor's Strategy Unit – feedback to be provided
- quarterly meetings with hunting sector NGOs
- Hunter Education Programme Lead – role was advertised on 3 November 2021
- voluntary certification of hunting guides
- Statutory reporting requirements: draft Annual Report; delayed audit; Statement of Performance Expectations
- July to September 2021 Quarterly report

Chair Grant Dodson acknowledged the huge amount of work over many months and conveyed his thanks to General Manager Tim Gale and GAC contractors.

ACTION: Hunter Education and Safety Programme Lead interviews & selection process.

ACTION: Provide feedback to DOC's Heritage & Visitor's Strategy Unit.

ACTION: Follow up audit commencement date.

**Motion 35/5:** Moved Rachael Dean/Bruce Warburton: that Council approves the General Manager's November Report. CARRIED

**11. Financial Reports:** Tim Gale presented the Council's Profit & Loss Report, Balance Sheet and Statement of Cash Flows. Motion to reinstate the Executive Officer's hours back to 18 hours per week and to locate an office for the General Manager to work from.

ACTION: investigate options for a suitable office for the General Manager to work from.

**Motion 35/6:** Moved Erin Garrick/Don Patterson: that Council approves:  
 a) the Profit and Loss Statement for the 3 months ended 30 September 2021  
 b) the Balance Sheet as at 30 September 2021.  
 c) the Statement of Cash Flows for the quarter ended 30 September 2021  
 d) increase in Executive Officer's hours to 18 hours per week.  
 e) locate a suitable office for the General Manager to work from. CARRIED

## 12. General Business:

Firearms Safety Initiatives - Council received and considered the report 35/CP07 and noted the content. Council commended Roger Duxfield for his work with the NZ Police.

**Motion 35/7:** Moved Sharon Salmons/Bruce Warburton: that Council receives and notes the content of the report on Firearms Safety Initiatives.

CARRIED

Appointment of Councillors - Council noted the Council Paper and that Council is awaiting the Minister's advice concerning the appointment and/or reappointment of Councillors.

ACTION: Follow up appointment of new Councillors with the NZCA and DOC.

Resourcing administration function of the Council - additional discussion about the General Managers workload, the GM relocating to Christchurch and establishing an office to enable building a team and managing workload and finding staff with the right skills sets to participate in GAC projects.

ACTIONS: Ensure the Council is achieving its obligations to be a Good Employer by assessing all aspects of the current workload and working arrangements of the General Manager, involving him in the process.

Other - Council approved the minor changes to the Risk Management Register. Commentary about why the changes were made, including increased demand on General Manager's time.

Meeting closed at 4.20pm. Next meeting – potentially prior to the Sika Show in February 2022, location to be advised.