

MINUTES OF THE GAME ANIMAL COUNCIL MEETING 10 June 2022
Held at Deerstalkers House, Wellington

Present: Grant Dodson (Chair), Stephen Hall (Deputy Chair), Sharon Salmons, Steve McFall, John Cook, Kevin Eastwood, Eugene Rewi, Bruce Warburton, Erin Garrick (zoom), Rachael Dean (zoom)

In attendance: Tim Gale (General Manager), Jenny Wotten (Executive Officer), Ben Reddiex, Sam Green, (DOC were only in attendance for part of the meeting), Larry Blair (GAC), Hayden Cox.

- 1. Welcome, apologies:** Apologies have been received from Minister Kiritapu Allan, Don Patterson and Jacqui Bassett. The Chair welcomed Councillors & DOC guests.

Motion 39/1: Moved Sharon Salmons/Eugene Rewi: that apologies are received.	CARRIED
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- 2. Chairman's welcome:** The Chair welcomed Councillors, staff and DOC governance advisors. Nice to meet in person again after zoom meetings in February, March and April 2022. The Chair also acknowledged the huge amount of work undertaken for the GAC by MartinJenkins, since the last GAC Meeting.
- 3. Environmental scan:** Open discussion about current issues, including recent correspondence. Grant Dodson and Tim Gale met with Minister Allan on 20 May 2022. Tim Gale attended the Kea Summit 2022 (Kea Conservation Trust). Other activities discussed included the Lake Sumner RHA Project, environmental issues, deer management, tahr management, the Roar, Te Ara ki Mua, Tenure Review, Kauri Dieback, Myrtle Rust, Swine Fever, partnering with iwi, Firearms Regulations (clubs, decreases in membership, age limits), effect of drought, funding, rubbish & waste left behind by some hunters and other forest recreation users, access into hunting areas, hunter safety & education, science & research, ballot system and hunters not releasing unused ballot blocks back to the system for others to use. Staffing arrangements were discussed in a Councillor only session.
- 4. Presentations to retiring Councillors:** Grant Dodson made a presentation to Stephen Hall (Deputy Chair) who's term is due to expire on 30 June 2022. Grant thanked Stephen for his service over five years, from 5 June 2017 to present. Stephen Hall reflected on his time as a Councillor. Rachael Dean and Don Patterson's terms are also due to expire on 30 June 2022. Grant Dodson thanked them for their service also.
- 5. Confirm the agenda:** the agenda was discussed and confirmed with no changes.

Motion 39/2: Moved Sharon Salmons/Steve McFall: that the agenda is confirmed.	CARRIED
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- 6. Conflict of Interest Register and Risk Register Review:** Councillors were reminded of the requirement to disclose any new conflicts of interest. The Risk Register was reviewed; minor changes to be made to the register regarding office arrangements and possible impact in the event of a change of government. Tim Gale will continue to progress a longer-term office arrangement. The Council would like to formally record its appreciation to Gary Rooney, of Rooney Group, for allowing the GAC to temporarily use office space in Timaru. Discussion about GAC liability during projects such as Lake Sumner – the GAC Act 2013 states that Councillors are not liable, and the GAC has insurance that should cover any staff liabilities.

ACTION 1: Consider appropriate gift or letter of appreciation to Gary Rooney, Rooney Group.

Motion 39/3: Moved Bruce Warburton/Steve McFall: that the updated Risk Management Register is received and noted. CARRIED

7. Wellbeing Budget: Through the Wellbeing Budget 2022, \$30 million was allocated over four years for ‘Implementing the Aotearoa New Zealand Biodiversity Strategy: Deer Management and Goat Control’. Securing sustainable funding has been one of the GAC’s primary focuses for many years and this funding increases our ability to focus on and deliver upon legislated functions. The Council’s baseline funding will increase from 2022-23 through 2025-26 as follows:

2022-23	2023-24	2024-25	2025-26
\$’000	\$’000	\$’000	\$’000
600	800	1,000	1,200

It is currently unknown if funding allocations are tagged or have limitations imposed on them. This will be disclosed in the Letter of Expectations 2022-23 which is expected to be with Council by mid-June 2022. Council received and noted the content of the paper.

Ben Reddiex noted that the Department is advertising a Wild Animal Manager position, with some recruitment to the team underway. Subsequent discussion regarding deer management and goat control, ecological outcomes, Sika Foundation, the adaptive management process, Jobs for Nature, Kaimanawa Forest Park, Ruahine Deer, Fiordland Wapiti Foundation, level of ungulates the forest can support and what that looks like, Regional Pest Management Plans, faecal pellet counts, the GAC’s Hunter Safety & Education Programme, short-term and long-term tactics which may include predator control, deer management, buffer zones, new technology such as satellite imaging, AI et al.

ACTION 2: Invite Nicola Toki, Chief Executive of Forest & Bird, to present to the GAC at a future meeting.

8. GAC Workplan 2021-22 Recap and Draft Work Plan 2022-23 Priorities: Discussion regarding End of Year Progress Report for the Revised Work Plan 2021-22 and consideration of high-level priorities for 1 July 2022 to 30 June 2023. Two broad categories: GAC Structure and Systems; and External Deliverables. Priorities align with the priorities and key tasks in the GAC Budget 2022/23-2025/26 and should be read in conjunction.

Consideration and inclusion of priorities outlined in the Minister’s Letter of Expectations 2022-23 (LOE) will be added to the work plan upon receipt of the Letter of Expectations 2022-23. A full work plan cannot be accurately developed until the LOE is received and Councillors provide feedback on the draft.

Discussion about priorities including: employing a Policy Advisor, looking for office space, reviewing contractor’s rates, reviewing the Strategic Plan, the increase in costs associated with extra Councillors and governance training for new Councillors, Hunter Safety & Education, research, among other priorities. Discussion about the Strategic Plan – as the GAC continues to grow, as a result of more certainty with funding, consider adding culture and values into the Strategic Plan and to put into words, where the Council sees itself in 5 and 10-years’ time.

Among the top five priorities of Council are (1) Developing and implementing Te Ara ki Mua, (2) Hunter Safety and Education (3) Policy development (4) Tahr and (5) HOSI as well as finding a permanent office for the General Manager and staff as necessary.

HOSI and Te Ara ki Mua – there will be a lot to learn from the adaptive management work currently being undertaken by the Sika Foundation with DOC. The Sika Foundation will be looking to have the Sika Herd approved as a HOSI. Discussion about timeframes, processes and other herds such as the Fiordland Wapiti Herd and the good work being done by the Fiordland Wapiti Foundation. These are examples of initiatives run by recreational hunters that lead to both good hunting and conservation outcomes. The legislation is already in place, in the GAC Act, but untested.

ACTION 3: Request to carryover tagged funds into the 2022-23 financial year (for progressing the implementation of the GAC funding strategy) with a breakdown of spend in the 2021-22 financial year.

Council received and noted the end of year progress report for 2021-22. Council reviewed, received and noted the priorities and notes any significant risks, workstreams and other items as reflected in the 2022-23 workplan.

ACTION 4: Progress engagement with the Federation of Māori Authorities (FOMA).

Discussion regarding the draft Annual Governance Calendar.

Motion 39/4: Moved Eugene Rewi/Kevin Eastwood: that Council approves the Annual Governance Calendar. CARRIED
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9. GAC Draft Budget 2022-23: The Department has verbally confirmed funding of \$600,000 for the 2022-23 financial year. The GAC also has additional funding of \$70,000 through Jobs for Nature. Before the draft Budget and Workplan 2022-23 can be fully developed, it has to consider priorities outlined in the annual Letter of Expectations from the Minister which hasn't been received as yet. The draft budget is provided for Council's consideration. Council noted that the General Manager has been using his own vehicle for work and travel.

ACTION 5: For budgeting purposes, the Council will try to capture the inherent value of the hours put in by volunteers and contractors who don't claim expenses and the value of the donated office, used by the General Manager.

ACTION 6: Review General Manager's kilometres, consider the use of own vehicle as part of total remuneration package.

Council noted the new direction of budget. It was not considered necessary to pass a resolution as budget requires refining.

10. Additional human resource: With four years of funding secured, and an increased budget for the 2022-23 year and beyond, the GAC is in a position to employ additional human resource to enable the delivery of the functions of the GAC. To date, the GAC has not had the necessary resources to implement many functions and sections of the GAC Act. The GAC's legislated mandate in relation to game animals, safety initiatives (including firearm safety) means that the Game Animal Council plays a critical role in many levels of society, from providing advice and making recommendations to the

Minister of Conservation, through to liaising with a multitude of stakeholders to improve hunting opportunities.

The GAC requires a person that will support the General Manager and working closely with the operations team to deliver on our legislated functions, Strategic Plan and annual Work Plan.

Policy Advisor is the most likely role description. The suitable applicant would ideally be based in Christchurch/Canterbury and start as soon as possible. Discussion about the experience and attributes needed for the successful applicant, the location and recruitment process and timeframe.

Motion 39/5: Moved Sharon Salmons/John Cook: that Council approves the General Manager to recruit a Policy Advisor. CARRIED

ACTION 7: Develop job description and advertisement to advertise Policy Advisor position.

11. Progressing a Sustainable Funding Strategy: The GAC and Martin Jenkins have been working to address the Department's comments in the Draft Funding Strategy and have also developed a Draft Budget 2022/23-2025/26 which outlines scaling options. Councillors were asked to consider the Draft Funding Strategy and accept it as the final Strategy.

Motion 39/6: Moved Stephen Hall/Steve McFall: that Council receives and approves the Draft Funding Strategy 2022/23-2026/27 as the final. CARRIED

The GAC Budget 2022/23 – 2025/26 Draft Report will be revisited once Council receives the Minister's Letter of Expectations 2022-23.

12. General Manager's Report to Council: Tim Gale provided an update on recent activities:

A. Te Ara Ki Mua - A workshop took place 27 May 2022, facilitated by the Department, to present and discuss the Te Ara ki Mua Framework with hunting sector NGOs, associations, organisations, and commercial operators. The GAC supported the discussion by providing initial context alongside the Department.

Attendees were asked to provide feedback on work they are doing in the game animal management space and perceived risks and opportunities. This was the first-time hunting sector NGOS etc have seen the Framework. Next steps are to develop an implementation plan.

B. Lake Sumner Project - The Lake Sumner pilot deer management programme undertaken by the Game Animal Council, in collaboration with the Department of Conservation, New Zealand Deerstalkers Association (NZDA) and local landowners (30 hunters across twenty something blocks) successfully removed 126 breeding hinds from the Lake Sumner Recreational Hunting Area (RHA). The pilot trial has seen an overwhelmingly positive response from the hunting sector.

An important aspect of the project was the removal of the jaw and uterus from the animals harvested. These will be analysed to determine the condition and reproductive status of the animals, which will provide important data on the health of the herd and the health of the environment. This will further inform development of the longer-term management plan and the next steps. A research report on this project will be prepared by Geoff Kerr.

Considerable effort and success has been achieved in this project, and social licence has been built within the hunting sector. Significant data will come out in the analysis. Ben Reddiex commended the Council on its good work coordinating this Project and the positive response it has received.

C. HOSI Process - No further updates since meeting in April 2022. Council considered the most likely candidate for a pilot herd for a HOSI.

D. Hunter Safety and Education Programme – Development of the online platform is progressing well. The name of the online platform and branding has for the most part been confirmed and developed.

E. Hunter-led management of tahr in Management Unit 1 – A successful meeting with Isaac Russell (Te Rūnanga o Arowhenua) and Ben Hodgson (Ngāi Tahu) took place in May 2022. DOC attended at the end of the day. Everyone is on the same page and highly motivated to work together on this.

Draft objectives have been developed and now working on a mission statement. We are finalising some minor points in the objectives before confirming their appropriateness with the various partners. It is a tricky balancing act, we need to concurrently confirm appropriateness with the partners (GAC, DOC, Arowhenua, Ngāi Tahu), obtain steering group approval, and ensure it works for the hunting sector stakeholders.

F. Tahr Control Operational Plan 2022/23 - The GAC provided advice to the Department on development of the 2022/23 Plan as part of the TPILG process and we are broadly supportive of the outcome as it builds on the management undertaken in 2021-22. The plan is rightly focused on places where tahr are actually causing problems and is adaptive and responsive to advice provided by GAC and the hunting sector.

The GAC remains unconvinced of the conservation benefit of removing recognisable male tahr from the two national parks and believe the resources spent on this could be better spent elsewhere, including managing breeding female (nanny) populations and/or possibly increased research and monitoring.

The GAC is also concerned at the impact and potential conflict that may arise between AATH and recreational hunters as international hunters return to NZ. The likelihood is with a reduced number of bulls in national parks that operators will be forced to take their clients outside national parks to more accessible areas, which will create issues with recreational hunters.

G. Submission on ‘Proposals for new regulations under the Arms Act 1983 (Phase Two)’ - The GAC made a submission on the ‘Proposals for new regulations under the Arms Act 1983 (Phase Two)’. The GAC does not support onerous administration and compliance costs being imposed on what is predominantly a volunteer group of New Zealanders. Shooting clubs and ranges provide safe places where hunters and other firearms users gain competency and training in the use of firearms.

The safe and accurate use of firearms by hunters is critical to the role that recreational hunting plays in the preservation of New Zealand’s biodiversity and ongoing game animal and pest management programmes. The full submission is here: [Proposals-for-new-regulations-under-the-Arms-Act-1983-Phase-Two-Shooting-clubs-and-ranges.pdf \(nzgameanimalcouncil.org.nz\)](https://nzgameanimalcouncil.org.nz/Proposals-for-new-regulations-under-the-Arms-Act-1983-Phase-Two-Shooting-clubs-and-ranges.pdf)

If possible, the GAC would like to speak to the Select Committee regarding under 16-year-olds being able to continue to train on ranges/youth training. There will be implications for the defence force and youth training if this regulation is adopted. It is concerning that people potentially affected by this proposal will not be aware of it.

ACTION 8: Write to the Minister and the Minister of Police around concerns regarding the Arms Regulation Act.

H. Nomination for Strategic Oversight Group for the Review of the Wildlife Act - The GAC was invited to provide nominations for the membership of a Strategic Oversight Group being established to support the review of the Wildlife Act 1953. Garry Ottmann was nominated. Garry has a Zoology Degree and significant experience in both the public and private sectors including as chair and member of governance groups, community groups, committees, forums, and has been involved in numerous public consultation processes. He has detailed knowledge of public processes as they relate to conservation having served on or chaired three separate government-appointed committees and has an in-depth knowledge of conservation legislation, and the policy making and implementation that flows from it.

ACTION 9: Find out if Garry Ottmann's nomination was successful (for the Strategic Oversight Group for the Review of the Wildlife Act).

I. Research - The GAC has embarked on a project *to research the current context on deer meat recovery associated with deer management activity*, including development of a final report that supports consideration of key factors for decision-making in future deer management operations. The research has been made possible through additional funding for the 2021/22 by the Department and the report will be provided to the Department in the near future.

J. VTA Permissions Framework Review - The Environmental Protection Authority (EPA) is undertaking a review of the permissions framework for vertebrate toxic agents under the Hazardous Substances and New Organisms Act 1996. The EPA is interested in understanding the GAC's perspective on the permissions framework and therefore invited a submission with any written information relevant to the Terms of Reference, and any submissions we wished to make about the effectiveness of the framework. Discussion about this by Stephen Hall and Bruce Warburton.

K. Animal Behaviour and Welfare Consultative Committee - This committee is having a rebrand to become the **Animal Welfare Network Aotearoa (AWNA)** with a reviewed and updated Terms of Reference. Councillors Steve McFall and Bruce Warburton have been involved in this forum. Terms of Reference available upon request. Councillors considered the importance of continued involvement in this forum. Steve McFall spoke to this. Also has links to NAWAC, which we should continue to have input to also.

Steve McFall to attend the next AWNA Meeting as GAC's representative.

Motion 39/7: Moved Sharon Salmons/Bruce Warburton: That Council receives the June 2022 General Manager's Report.	CARRIED
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Motion 39/8: Moved Erin Garrick/Rachael Dean: Moved the acceptance of the Quarterly Performance Report.	CARRIED
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13. Financial Reporting: Council received the Financial Reports.

Motion 39/9: Moved Rachael Dean/Eugene Rewi: that Council receives and notes the contents of the reports and approves the request to carry-over of funds, through DOC governance. CARRIED

14. Minutes of previous meeting 28 April 2022: were taken as read with minor alterations.

Motion 39/10: Moved Grant Dodson/Sharon Salmons: that the Minutes of the 28 April 2022 Meeting be accepted as a true and correct record of the meeting. CARRIED

15. Matters arising and action items: Councillors were advised of progress against action items arising from the previous Minutes. The Annual Report was tabled on 25 May 2022 and put on the GAC website on 24 May. Discussion about sponsorship, donations, future meetings and potential guests.

ACTION 10: Prepare a draft letter to Iwi Leader's Group and Ngāi Tahu.

16. General Business

Parliamentary Hunt – has historically always taken place during the NZ School 3rd term break as it also coincides with the Parliamentary recess. Minimal planning has taken place thus far. Location still to be determined, Central Otago. Invite all MPs from all parties.

ACTION 11: Progress Parliamentary Hunt planning and send invitations to Minister and MPs.

Meeting planning and Governance Calendar– discussion about planning for remainder of 2022 and 2023, including the Sika Show. Send meeting program to Minister.

NZ Conservation Authority – follow up correspondence sent to them by the GAC.

What is Game Animal Management – Population Dynamics: Bruce Warburton will present a session on this to Councillors at a future meeting.

ACTION 12: Schedule Population Dynamics presentation.

Formal motion of thanks from Council to Stephen Hall, Rachael Dean and Don Patterson on their retirement from Council. Stephen Hall has been the Deputy Chair and provided good leadership on governance issues. Rachael Dean has been the Finance Committee Chair and has helped develop financial policies and procedures.

Meeting Review by John Cook – John Cook reported back verbally on how the Council performed during this meeting (really enjoyed the Environmental scan, governance vs management discussions).

Next Meeting in August – meet from 3pm to 5pm on 25 August and full day meeting on 26 August 2022.

Meeting closed at 4pm.