

## MINUTES OF THE GAME ANIMAL COUNCIL MEETING 25 & 26 AUGUST 2022

Held at North Canterbury Fish and Game, 595 Johns Road, Harewood, Christchurch

**Present:** Grant Dodson (Chair), Sharon Salmons, Steve McFall, John Cook, Bruce Warburton, Eugene Rewi, Tui Keenan, Erin Garrick (zoom), Kevin Eastwood (zoom), Peter Swann (zoom)

**In attendance:** Tim Gale (General Manager), Jenny Wotten (Executive Officer), Hayden Cox, Tom Brookman (DOC, only in attendance for part of the meeting). Alex Gale and Garry Ottmann attended for part of the meeting.

- 1. Day one welcome:** The Chair welcomed Councillors & DOC guests. Introductions - the Chair welcomed Councillors, staff and introduced new Councillors Tui Keenan and Peter Swann.
- 2. Strategic Plan Review:** The first half day session involved a review of the Strategic Plan. Brief discussion about the Minister of Conservation's annual Letter of Expectations.

Grant Dodson explained by way of background for the new Councillors, that the GAC formulated its first five-year Strategic Plan in 2019. The Council reviewed the Plan in February 2020 and determined that it mostly remained fit for purpose, however, it was identified that reprioritisation based on the GAC's current and future funding and resources was required.

It has previously been determined that the Strategic Plan, rather than being constrained to a particular time period, would be a 'living document.' It allows others to see how the Council is enacting the legislation. Purpose, Mission, Values and Guiding Principles and Te Tiriti o Waitangi were discussed, to guide the way the Council works both internally and with others towards achieving our vision.

Discussion centred on further aligning the themes of the Strategic Plan to the Game Animal Council Act 2013, Functions of Council (Section 7) and incorporating some proposed values. Changes to the objectives were also discussed and agreed. Council also discussed forming a new Māori Issues sub-committee. Some changes to the Council's current objectives were discussed and agreed.

**ACTION 1:** A draft incorporating these changes will be considered at the next Council Meeting. The new Strategic Plan will be adopted at the start of the next financial year or thereabouts.

Meeting closed at 5.30pm.

- 3. Day two welcome, apologies:** Apologies have been received from Minister Poto Williams and Jacqui Bassett, DOC Governance Unit. The Chair thanked Councillors for their contribution to the Strategic Planning Workshop yesterday, a most productive day and an opportunity to refocus. Councillor Tui Keenan opened the meeting with karakia. A discussion about per diems was had to ensure Councillors are adequately compensated in accordance with the Fees Framework. Discussion about bank account signatories and the Official Information Act and how it applies to Council's communications.

**Motion 40/1:** Moved Sharon Salmons/Eugene Rewi: that apologies are received.

CARRIED

- 4. Environmental scan:** Open discussion about current issues, including recent correspondence. Discussion about carbon and forests, the NZDA Conference (attended by Grant Dodson, Tim Gale and

Kevin Eastwood), Te Ara ki Mua, upcoming local and national aerial 1080 operations and the GAC's role.

A round table discussion covered topics such as the National Animal Welfare Advisory Committee (NAWAC) and the Animal Behaviour and Welfare Consultative Committee (ABWCC) that has changed its name to the Animal Welfare Network Aotearoa (AWNA), support for a bid to host International Deer Biology Congress in Dunedin in 2026, recent research and game animal initiatives, upcoming workshops, game animal numbers & management, hunting areas and ballots (and local RHAs), access issues, Tenure Review, the GAC and NGOs working with DOC, firearms and licencing, community initiatives involving donations of venison, hunter education and safety, engaging with the Minister, culling operations.

Continuing on from yesterday's discussion, another in-depth discussion around Māori & iwi issues, mahingakai, kaitiakitanga, weaving stronger connections, hunting lands and the rights of Tangata whenua to hunt on their ancestral land, the Māori hunting community, hunting and kai gathering off the land, the use of te reo in Council's communications, landowner's rights, Jobs for Nature initiatives and progress, and the use of public conservation land. There was also a general round up of events & activities around the motu, as attended by Councillors.

**5. Councillor only session - General Manager Remuneration Package:** staff & contractors left the room for Councillor only discussion regarding the remuneration package for the General Manager.

Discussion - Noting the Letter of Expectations received from the Minister of Conservation on 30 June 2022 incorporating advice on future funding for the GAC it is recommended that the General Manager's employment arrangements be changed from a fixed term contract to a permanent employment agreement. This should be effective from 1 July 2022 to align with the financial year. The General Letter of Expectations received from the Minister of Finance was also noted and that to meet the requirements of this letter the Council needs to remunerate the General Manager fairly but not excessively for the role undertaken.

The finance committee had previously been provided with a draft copy of the General Managers employment contract and salary benchmarking information for review. The committee recommended the contract be legally reviewed and this was carried out by Galloway Cook Allen (Dunedin) with a number of minor amendments arising from the review being incorporated. The Chair noted that the proposed salary was in the midpoint of the benchmarked salary range and that advice had been received from Strategic Pay with a second reference point provided as part of the Martin Jenkins funding strategy work.

The Council discussed the General Manager's performance over the previous year and were satisfied that performance both meets expectations and had grown considerably as the role had expanded.

The Council discussed a number of points including:

- Ensuring the draft budget (to be discussed later in the meeting) correctly reflected the proposed employment contract arrangement and that there were sufficient funds available to meet the contract commitment.
- Discussion around the correct accounting for internet, office and travel costs to the appropriate cost centres. These are to be accounted for as claimable operating costs and are not part of the

employee's base remuneration although the ability to claim these expenses is noted in the employment contract.

- Discussion around the potential provision of Koru Membership for the General Manager, which was approved in principle for future implementation noting the increased travel commitments of the role and that the cost would be partially offset by not incurring other travel expenses i.e., meals. It was agreed that this be introduced in future as appropriate, potentially after the General Manager relocates to Christchurch.

Based on the finance committee's recommendation the Chair moved the resolution that follows:

**Motion 40/2:** Moved Grant Dodson/Sharon Salmons: That the proposed changes to the General Manager's employment arrangement be approved and implemented. CARRIED

6. **Confirm the agenda:** the agenda was discussed and confirmed with no changes.

**Motion 40/3:** Moved Eugene Rewi/Sharon Salmons: That the agenda is confirmed. CARRIED

7. **Minutes of previous meeting 10 June 2022:** were taken as read with minor alterations.

**Motion 40/4:** Moved Kevin Eastwood/Eugene Rewi: That the Minutes of the 10 June 2022 Meeting be accepted as a true and correct record of the meeting. CARRIED

8. **Matters arising and action items:** Councillors were advised of progress against action items arising from the previous Minutes. Grant Dodson has spoken to Forest & Bird CEO Nicola Toki. Council has advertised a Policy Advisor position. Garry Ottmann's nomination for the Strategic Overview Group for review of Wildlife Act, was successful. Greg Duley has been appointed to the NZCA. The GAC encourages more hunter representation on Conservation Boards also.

9. **Conflict of Interest Register and Risk Register Review:** Councillors were reminded of the requirement to disclose any new conflicts of interest. It was confirmed that the Conflicts of Interest applies only to the Councillors and the General Manager. Management has reviewed the Risk Register and has identified that significant risks have been mitigated therefore necessitating the Risk Register be changed in regard to the General Manager's office situation and use of private motor vehicle. Consequently, the risk ratings have been reduced. Other minor amendments such as funding sources were discussed, and changes agreed.

**Motion 40/5:** Moved Steve McFall/Bruce Warburton: That the updated Risk Management Register is received and noted. CARRIED

10. **Letter of Expectations:** The Annual Letter of Expectations 2022-23 was received from Minister Williams on 30 June 2022 (and attached the Enduring Letter of Expectations of all statutory Crown entities, from Hon Grant Robertson & Hon Chris Hipkins). It was recommended that the Council receives and notes the Minister's 2022-23 Letter of Expectations for the Council and note that a couple of statutory timeframes have not been achieved due to the lateness of receiving the Minister's 2022-23 Letter of Expectations. Ideally, the Minister's Letter of Expectations would be received in March (in the previous financial year) to allow the Council time to develop its workplan, budget and Statement of

Performance Expectations for the coming financial year. Further discussions with the DOC Governance Unit are ongoing, to understand how the timing of the LOE impacts timely development of the SPE.

**Motion 40/6:** Moved Grant Dodson/Sharon Salmons: That the Letter of Expectations from the Minister is received and noted and the Enduring Letter of Expectations of all statutory Crown Entities. CARRIED

**11. Council’s Statement of Performance Expectations (SPE) for the period 1 July 2022 to 30 June 2023:**

Councillors were provided with a draft Council’s Statement of Performance Expectations (SPE) and the opportunity to provide feedback. The Statement of Performance Expectations documents the GAC’s planned activities, performance targets and forecast financial information for the financial year 2022-23, while remaining within its mandate as defined by section 7 of the Game Animal Council Act 2013. The forecast financial statements forms part of the SPE and will be added, to be discussed further in the Budget agenda item.

At the last meeting in June 2022, the General Manager outlined recommended priorities for the coming year, with the highest priority being Te Ara ki Mua followed by five other top priorities. Further engagement with iwi and hapu is also a priority area for the Council for the coming year. Council has not been sufficiently resourced to do this previously.

The 2022-23 work plan focuses on seven of the eight themes and associated workstreams – discussion about whether these workstreams are achievable. A change from previous years (as outlined in the Letter of Expectations), is the new requirement for a Quarter 4 report, in addition to the Annual Report and the Council has been advised that funding increments will now be tied to receipt of the quarterly reports, starting immediately. GAC will continue to explore additional revenue streams as outlined in the GAC Funding Strategy 2022/23-2026/27.

**Motion 40/7:** Moved John Cook/Eugene Rewi: That the Statement of Performance Expectations for the period 1 July 2022 to 30 June 2023, is adopted. CARRIED

**12. 2022-23 Annual Work Plan:** The Work Plan is informed by the Game Animal Council Act and developed in line with the available budget, the Statement of Performance, the Strategic Plan and the Minister’s Letter of Expectations and Council’s priorities. The draft Work Plan outlines priorities, strategic themes, workstreams, activities and targets for and aligns with the Statement of Performance Expectations (see above). As discussed at the Council meeting on 10 June 2022, there were two broad categories of priorities for the 2022-23 Work Plan, being (1) GAC Structure and Systems; and (2) External Deliverables. Te Ara ki Mua is the biggest priority and covers many different areas. HOSI is one of the Council’s key statutory functions, so it is important to keep liaising with DOC to progress this.

The Minister’s Letter of Expectations contains two primary priorities: (1) development of a hunter safety and education training programme; and (2) game animal management plans and strategies being led by the Department, including the implementation of Te Ara ki Mua.

Discussion amongst Councillors confirming Council’s priorities for 2022-23, including progressing Te Ara ki Mua as a high priority. Further discussion about incorporating Te Reo phrases and concepts that relate to hunting and game animals, health of the forests, research opportunities and knowledge gaps.

**ACTION 2:** Look at Council’s options for a Research Strategy, to fill the knowledge gaps, as per section 7(1)(h) of the *Game Animal Council Act 2013*. It was agreed to add a section into the Annual Work Plan about developing a research strategy or research principles – paper to be developed with research themes and discussed at the next meeting to get agreement on top priorities. The Council will invite Manaaki Whenua Landcare Research scientists to attend future GAC Meetings to present to Councillors on a variety of areas, including carbon research.

Discussion about the status of HOSI – DOC are looking into legal processes around how HOSI can be implemented and how it fits in with other legislation. Over the past five years, DOC have engaged contractors to progress HOSI, but work has never been completed. The GAC is very keen to get it up and running but up until Council appointed a General Manager, there had not been adequate resources to keep the conversations going. The process for a HOSI has been drafted, now waiting on DOC.

Also to be added into the Annual Work Plan: Council will continue its regular (quarterly) liaisons with DOC, OSPRI and the NZDA, looking at aerial 1080 operations within the next two years and the Council’s role is to mitigate impacts on game animals and hunting by recommending when deer repellent should be used (where potential HOSI are sited, areas regularly frequented by hunters), timing of operations and pushing for ground control measures if appropriate.

The Parliamentary Hunt is to be added to the Work Plan also.

<b>Motion 40/8:</b> Moved Erin Garrick/Bruce Warburton: That Council receives and approves the 2022-23 Annual Work Plan.	CARRIED
--	---------

**13. Draft Budget for 2022/23 v2:** A draft budget was previously circulated to Councillors on 15 May 2022 and discussed at the 10 June 2022 Council Meeting. The draft budget was unable to be approved at that stage, as the Minister’s Letter of Expectations had not been received. This has now been received and Council funding has been confirmed, an increased allocation through Vote Conservation from \$400k to \$600k.

Discussion regarding the draft Budget: Tim Gale identified revenue sources including donations, and changes to the draft budget that have occurred since the draft was presented to Councillors. There will be an overall increase in operating costs in general.

**ACTION 3:** Governance training to be scheduled for new Councillors next financial year – in the meantime they have been provided with DOC and Board Works governance training material.

**ACTION 4:** A Board Evaluation process is to be undertaken, as per the Council’s Letter of Expectations – to be added into the Council’s Annual Governance Work Plan schedule for later this year or early next year.

**ACTION 5:** Schedule Council Te Tiriti o Waitangi/tikanga training this year & professional training/mentoring for the General Manager next financial year.

<b>Motion 40/9:</b> Moved Sharon Salmons/Steve McFall: That Council receives and approves the 2022-23 Budget v2.	CARRIED
--	---------

**14. Annual Report** – The draft Annual Report (minus the Statement of Financial Performance) was provided to Councillors for feedback. The financial section is still being developed. Discussion about statutory timeframes, processes, reporting against key themes and projects. The GAC Auditors have quoted \$6,351.51 for the audit.

Council received and noted the Draft Annual Report for the year ended 30 June 2022. The full report (including audited Statement of Financial Performance) will be approved by Council when it becomes available – information has been provided to the GAC’s Accountant and we are on track to meet statutory timeframes.

**15. Financial Reporting:** Councillors were provided with financial reports outlining the Council’s financial performance for the financial year 1 July 2021 to 30 June 2022, pending audit. Councillors were also provided with financial reports for the year to date (month of July 2022). Following Council approval of the GAC Budget 2022-23 at this meeting, a Forecast Cashflow Statement will be developed. The Department has been invoiced \$300,000, but no payment has been received through Vote Conservation. New requirements from DOC Governance require quarterly reports to be presented with invoices and split into four payments of \$150,000 so this will be amended. Discussion followed.

**Motion 40/10:** Moved Grant Dodson/Steve McFall: That Council receives and notes the Financial Reports and Variances Report for the 12 months ending 30 June 2022, pending audit. CARRIED

**Motion 40/11:** Moved Eugene Rewi/Sharon Salmons: That Council receives and approves the Financial Reports and Variances Report, year to date, to 31 July 2022. CARRIED

**16. General Manager’s Report:** Tim Gale provided an update on recent activities.

Te Ara ki Mua: As part of the annual Work Plan development, draft Te Ara ki Mua priorities have been identified for the NZGAC in 2022-23. These priorities are to be read in conjunction with the Te Ara ki Mua Framework. Following the finalisation of these priorities we will liaise with the DOC and stakeholders to progress implementation.

Closed roads and access: Several main access roads to the southwestern parts of the Kaimanawas are (or to be) closed to the public. Rotoaira Forest Trust who look after the Rangipo North Blocks on behalf of multiple Māori owners, are closing access due to increasing abuse of their lands by uncontrolled public access.

Historically, public access to the Kaimanawa State Forest Park from the Desert Road and Turangi area for recreational pursuits like tramping, hunting, angling and four-wheel driving have used formed roadways like Waipakihi, Rangipo Intake. Roads previously created for the Tongariro Power Scheme in the 1960s are now being returned to the original owners and the roads will become private roads on private land. Herenga ā Nuku Aotearoa will work to assess the options for public access to the Kaimanawa State Forest Park. Council will liaise with Rotoaira Forest Trust and the Outdoor Access Commission to improve (Maintain) hunting opportunities.

Lake Sumner Project: Geoff Kerr has drafted a report on the project and outcome. The interim report will be circulated to Council and participants; full research report will be published by Geoff Kerr by December 2022.

HOSI Process: No further updates since meeting in April 2022. We have contacted the DOC three times, 28 June; 14 July; 05 August and were meant to meet further on 19 August seeking updates but no progress from DOC. DOC were going to assess their internal legal opinion they had sought a few years ago, and what it means for the DOC and the GAC.

Hunter Safety & Education Programme: Development of the online platform is progressing well with a snapshot of content shown at the NZDA conference in Hamilton. The Project Team is regularly meeting with DOC as part of the Jobs for Nature Funding requirements and continuing to develop content in collaboration with the NZDA and other stakeholders.

Establishing the Hunter-Led management program for MU1: A Steering Group that includes representatives from DOC, Te Rūnanga o Arowhenua and the GAC has been established to have oversight of the project. Plan development is being undertaken by representatives from Te Rūnanga o Arowhenua, Te Rūnanga o Ngai Tahu, and the GAC, with a hui attended in Christchurch on 4th May, supported by DOC. Post this there have been further discussions by email and zoom.

The next stage is to translate objectives into management actions within an adaptive management framework including actions for the 2022-2023 operational year. There will be further engagement during this process. The intention is to formalise the Hunter-led management program for MU1 via a community agreement with the Department of Conservation during the 2022- 23 Tahr Control Operational Plan operative period.

Tahr Control Operational Plan 2022/23: We undertook the midpoint review on 8 August 2022, for the TCOP 2022-23. DOC outlined the progress to date. We raised awareness of the views of the hunting sector on the balance of work still to be done. We will continue to liaise with stakeholders regarding how we can use the hours allocated for MU1, and if and how it can be integrated with MU1 Hunter-led Management.

Meeting with New Zealand Professional Hunting Guides Association and New Zealand Association of Game Estates: Tim Gale met with Simon Guild and James Cagney on 6 July 2022 to discuss hunting in general, funding, voluntary certification of guides, game animal management, HOSI, Te Ara ki Mua, the commercial sector outlook and priority issues. Priority issues and feedback received from the Guides Association include:

- they are expecting a buoyant season this year and next, guides are fully booked for deer & tahr hunting.
- brand New Zealand has taken a big hit with Covid-19 lockdowns and closed borders
- international hunter's firearms import permits are an important issue for guides right now
- illegal hunting workshop

South Island Heritage Red Deer Foundation (SIHRDF): became an Incorporated Society as of 18 July 2022. Management of the Rakaia deer herd is one of the key initial focuses of the SIHRDF.

Submissions: Since the 10 June Council meeting, the GAC has made several submissions. These were:

- Submission to DOC – Conservation Management and Processes Consultation.
- Submission to the Ministry for the Environment – Draft National Policy Statement for Indigenous Biodiversity.

- Submission to DOC – West Coast Stewardship Land Reclassification.
- Submission to DOC - Rangitahi Molesworth Recreation Reserve Conservation Management Plan Review.
- Submission to LINZ - proposed new regulations and standards Supporting the Crown Pastoral Land Reform Act 2022.

These submissions are significant in terms of resource required and effort, and potential impact on hunting and game animals.

Remote Experience Zone – Sika Management: The Central North Island Sika Foundation undertook an aerial management operation in the Kaimanawa Remote Experience Zone (REZ). A low number of deer were encountered with approximately 30 hinds shot.

Research #1: 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. This research has been made possible through additional funding for the 2021/22 by the Department. The full Project Charter is available upon request.

Research #2: Manaaki Whenua Landcare Research receives \$17.4 million per year for two science platforms - Land-based ecosystems and Enhancing land use. Upon request, Bruce Warburton has provided some information on projects that are being undertaken, enabled by this funding, which are relevant to game animals and hunting. Projects relevant to the Game Animal Council are:

- Understand ungulate impacts on vegetation and ecosystem processes. This includes goats, deer, and tahr, so not exclusively 'deer.'
- Some work aligned to a MBIE programme (working with Iwi) looking at ecological benefits of goat control.
- Some SSIF supporting deer monitoring using trail cameras. Associated with monitoring deer repellent for OSPRI.

Council will continue to liaise with Manaaki Whenua Landcare Research to understand project and research objectives, timelines and findings.

Animal Welfare Network Aotearoa (AWNA): The Ministry for Primary Industries has developed a Deer Code of Welfare. The draft code is currently with the National Animal Welfare Advisory Committee (NAWAC). Ex Councillor Don Patterson and Councillor Steve McFall reviewed the draft code, working with the New Zealand Professional Hunting Guides Association and New Zealand Association of Game Estates.

Other activities: Tim Gale was a guest speaker at the NZDA AGM and has been invited as a guest speaker to several upcoming NZDA Branch Meetings, as well as a guest speaker at the NZPHGA AGM on 27 October 2022. Tim Gale spoke about game animal management at Lincoln University recently and did the same presentation at the Land Safety Forum on 24 August 2022. The GAC is to work with the NZ Police to convene a Workshop on Illegal Hunting. Councillors were provided with a Communications Update.

**Motion 40/12:** Moved Kevin Eastwood/Erin Garrick: That Council receives and notes the August 2022 General Manager's Report and approves the recommendations. CARRIED

**17. Update on the process of establishing the Hunter-Led management program for MU1:**

Garry Ottmann presented to the GAC, thanking Geoff Kerr, Tom Brookman (Tahr Control Lead, DOC) and Bruce Warburton as joint developers of the program, a collaborative effort with DOC to implement and design tahr management in MU1. Management Unit 1 includes South Rakaia and Upper Rangitata. Hunter led management is enabled both through the HTPC and through the Tahr Control Operational Plan which DOC and stakeholders put together on an annual basis to undertake tahr management for that particular year. Very much a collaborative effort, led by the hunting sector and community, in partnership with DOC.

Next stage is for the Steering Group to get back to Garry Ottmann and the Project Team and the feedback can be translated into more of a formal plan with actions for 2022-23 year and ongoing.

Discussion about densities, management units, environmental monitoring, science and research, TPILG Meeting on 16 September, next 3-year plan for tahr, ways to address the disconnect between when the plan was written in 1993 and present. Tom Brookman concluded this segment with some words to appreciate and acknowledge Garry Ottmann's and Geoff Kerr's contributions, the constructive and collaborative approach being taken and the huge role of the GAC in moderating the environment over the last few years. Garry Ottmann also acknowledged Ben Reddiex and all the work he has done to get us to where we are today.

**18. Presentation by Bruce Warburton – Game Animal Management:** Bruce Warburton Game Animal Management Population Dynamics presentation.

**19. Sika Show Planning:** Tim Gale and Jenny Wotten outlined arrangements thus far for the Sika Show.

**20. General Business:**

**Parliamentary Hunt Planning** – to take place during the 10 to 14 October, in Central Otago. All MPs have been invited.

**Meeting planning and Governance Calendar** – discussion about planning for remainder of 2022 and 2023. See if there is sufficient time during the November meeting for Te Tiriti o Waitangi training.

**Meeting Review by Bruce Warburton** – Bruce Warburton provided feedback on how the Council performed during this meeting. It was good to start yesterday with Strategic Plan as it focussed discussions and Council should think about revisiting the Plan regularly. Good to start and finish the meetings with karakia. The environmental scan this morning was a big improvement on past meetings, and we may need to allocate more time in the future. Good to have observers at the meeting today also.

**Next Meeting** – Pre meeting dinner on 16 November, Meeting on 17 November. Likely to be held in Christchurch.

Closing karakia. Meeting closed at 2.30pm.