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Long-term Insights Briefing Feedback

New Zealand Game Animal Council

The New Zealand Game Animal Council (GAC), established under the Game Animal Council Act 2013, is a statutory agency with responsibilities for, *inter alia*, advising and making recommendations (in relation to game animals) to the Minister of Conservation, raising awareness of the views of the hunting sector, and advising on and managing aspects of game animals and hunting.

Game animals are defined under the Game Animal Council Act 2013 as wild pigs, chamois, tahr and all species of deer. Game animals are also recognised as 'valued introduced species' in *Te Mana o te Taiao – the Aotearoa New Zealand Biodiversity Strategy 2020*.

Method

Due to time and resource restraints, and the enormity and complexity of this subject, this response comprises only brief responses to address the questions outlined in the consultation documentation provided.

The GAC has not responded to each question individually, instead, we have provided broad recommendations. We have focused on issues that sit within our statutory mandate, that affect the hunting sector and may impact the management of game animals.

Technologies

The use of advancing technologies is important for improving the management of game animals in New Zealand. Accordingly, the GAC supports exploration of these technologies overall but advises ongoing agency and community level discussions around the potential application of new technologies for biodiversity conservation and, where that application has implications for game animal management and hunting, such discussions should include the GAC and hunting sector.

The GAC is in agreeance with the opinions of others as mentioned, that non-gene-based methods are more acceptable for application in New Zealand than gene-based options. Of particular concern is the use of gene-editing and gene drive for eradication efforts, how this technology may be applied and to which species.

Unintended ecological impacts

Hunters have a deep connection to wild New Zealand and much of the wildlife within it. They understand that changing one part of the system can have a cascading effect and that eradication of any species from within a multispecies system may have far-reaching unforeseen ecological impacts that may not always be desirable. For example, the removal of predators would increase the survival of both indigenous and introduced bird species. However, introduced bird species may outcompete indigenous birds. Would management agencies then consider targeting introduced bird species with this technology, and should this also influence the ecosystem in an unanticipated way, begin targeting another species, and so on and so forth?

In essence, decisions to use such 'final solutions' should be considered with extreme caution and boundaries to their application be predetermined and immovable. There are some people who may support its use to seek to eradicate valued introduced species in New Zealand. The use of this technology for this purpose would be unacceptable to the hunting sector and some provision to ensure this would never be considered and approved for game animals is required to secure hunting sector support for its use, at a minimum.

Biodiversity leadership and engagement

Biodiversity management requires expertise across a broad array of fields and wide-reaching community support. The role of government should be ensuring the required expertise are employed, and to empower community effort by enabling and facilitating projects driven by communities, supporting in principle and through well directed funding, community participation and input.

Currently, there are many passionate people who volunteer to projects supporting biodiversity efforts. However, due to the increasing cost of living, it can be a struggle to balance committing time to voluntary passions and earning enough to support whanau. The value that volunteers provide for biodiversity protection should be acknowledged by government and support provided where it is required, to both maximise and futureproof voluntary efforts to biodiversity protection.

Resourcing biosecurity management and protection

Resourcing should be spent on undertaking science, whether traditional or citizen based, to understand the benefits and risks of applying new technologies, and to ensure that implementation of technologies achieves desired outcomes. In addition, resourcing should be allocated to support community-based projects, with advice provided by field experts and management facilities to minimise the administrative pressures of community projects on volunteers.

Further korero welcomed

The GAC reiterates that this brief response is given after only a first glance at the consultation document and that more extensive input, particularly in relation to game

animal management and hunting; the application of technologies, global leadership and building relationships, may be provided through further future discussions.

Contact

If you have any queries relating to this submission, please contact me on 021 688 531 or at tim.gale@nzgac.org.nz.

Yours sincerely

A handwritten signature in blue ink that reads "tim gale". The signature is written in a cursive, lowercase style.

Tim Gale
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New Zealand Game Animal Council