

**MINUTES, GAME ANIMAL COUNCIL MEETING, 18 AUGUST 2023
CONSERVATION HOUSE, MANNERS STREET WELLINGTON**

Meeting opened 9am

Council Members present: Grant Dodson (Chair), Steve McFall, Eugene Rewi, Kevin Eastwood, Peter Swann, John Cook, Sharon Salmons, Melissa Jackson, Callum Sheridan, Andrew Simpson, Tui Keenan (via Zoom).

Also in attendance: Tim Gale (General Manager), Jenny Wotten (Executive Administrator), Kaylyn Pinney (Policy Advisor), Larry Blair (Hunter Safety & Education), Hayden Cox (Communications).

Part attendance: Minister Willow-Jean Prime and Harry Evans from her office attended for part of the meeting. Ben Reddiex, Philip Colquhoun, Grace Xu & Charlotte Parson all from DOC (Department of Conservation), attended for part of the meeting. Roger Duxfield attended and presented for part of the meeting. Michael Dowling, Chair of COLFO attended for part of the meeting and presented agenda item 14.

- 1. Welcome, Apologies, Karakia.** Councillor Kevin Eastwood gave the Karakia to start the meeting. Ben Reddiex provided the health and safety overview for the building. There were no apologies.
- 2. Chairman's Welcome:** Grant Dodson welcomed Councillors, staff, contractors, guests, and presenters and outlined the meeting rules. DOC staff will join the meeting for various agenda items. Councillor Tui Keenan is joining today's meeting via zoom. The Chair reminded Councillors and staff about the requirement for government organisations to remain politically neutral in the lead up to the election.
- 3. Introduction of new Councillors:** Grant Dodson welcomed new Councillors Callum Sheridan, Melissa Jackson and Andrew Simpson and invited them to introduce themselves to the group. Other attendees introduced themselves also.
- 4. Council only session - Environmental scan** – 'Environment scan' identification of key matters. Councillors raised a wide range of issues for discussion around regional and topical issues.
- 5. Confirm the agenda:** the agenda was discussed and confirmed. An update from DOC was added to the agenda.

Motion 45/1: Moved Sharon Salmons/Peter Swann: That the revised agenda is confirmed. CARRIED

- 6. Conflict of Interest Register:** Councillors were reminded of the requirement to disclose any new conflicts of interest. Advice of conflicts provided out of session have been incorporated in the updated register.

Motion 45/2: Moved Grant Dodson/Eugene Rewi: That the updated Conflict of Interest Register is received and noted. CARRIED

- 7. Minutes of previous meeting 16 June 2023:** were taken as read with minor changes.

Motion 45/3: Moved Steve McFall/Kevin Eastwood: That the Minutes of the 16 June 2023 Meeting be accepted as a true and correct record of the meeting. CARRIED

- 8. Standing items - Electronic approval of Submissions & correspondence received outside of Meetings.** Council Discussion about documents finalised and approved between meetings. Note that the Statement of Performance Expectations 2023-24 was Tabled in Parliament on 9 August 2023. Philip Colquhoun acknowledged receipt of letter regarding per diems increase and this will be actioned.

Motion 45/4: Moved Sharon Salmons/Steve McFall: Council ratifies the acceptance of submissions & correspondence circulated & electronically approved by Councillors between meetings. CARRIED

- 9. Action items carried forward from 16 June 2023 Meeting and matters arising:** Discussion about action items arising and status of each item.

- 10. Minister Prime's address to Council:** Eugene Rewi welcomed Minister Prime and her Private Secretary, Harry Evans to the meeting. Introductions were made and the Minister acknowledged the important statutory role of Council and addressed all attendees.

Grant Dodson raised the impending launch of the Hunter Safety & Education Programme 'Better Hunting,' at the Sika Show 2023 and being delivered ahead of the schedule (as per the Jobs for Nature commitment to deliver by February 2024). Minister Prime acknowledged the importance of the programme and that she hopes to attend the Show herself.

Grant Dodson raised mahinga kai and food sovereignty issues, particularly in the Central North Island and East Coast areas of the North Island, with an unprecedented demand for meat from foodbanks (MPI involvement). A lot of meat is being donated by the hunting community. Some Game Animal Council (GAC) Councillors are directly involved with this kai gathering. The Minister acknowledged the food issues. Discussion about DOC led biodiversity programmes, aerial 1080 drops and the impact on hunting areas and the ability to safely gather kai. Other topics briefly discussed were recreational hunter access, the National Goat Hunting Competition, wild food processing and MPI certification.

Grant Dodson asked the Minister if she had any feedback on the Council's letter to her about the WARO Land Schedule. WARO is an important part of the game animal management system, but its management needs to ensure that WARO is complementary to other parts of the hunting system. The Land Schedule decision concerning the Kaimanawas is one example of hunting sector concerns. Allowing WARO access to this area conflicts with existing crown-funded projects and has the potential for significant implications. The Minister advised that her team are still developing a response to the WARO letter the GAC sent her, and she is waiting for DOC to brief her.

Further discussion about Game Animal Management in general, liaising with stakeholders, communities and iwi and the need for adaptive management plans which allows for the management of valued introduced species recognising their importance as a food source (recreation, trophies, and commerce). The Council is committed to quality managed game animals, healthy environments, both on public conservation land and private land. The GAC is effectively liaising to implement Te Ara ki Mua and Herds of Special Interest. The Fiordland Wapiti Foundation has now been overseeing the management of 175,000 hectares of Fiordland National Park, harvesting deer for approximately 20 years with monitoring being undertaken by DOC, and there are great opportunities to mirror this model in other areas, with the Sika Foundation and the Heritage Red Deer Foundation.

The Minister thanked everyone for the opportunity to address Council, meet directly with Councillors and she looks forward to the DOC team providing her with advice on the matters raised. Grant Dodson and Eugene Rewi thanked the Minister for attending the Council Meeting and look forward to seeing her at the Sika Show 2023.

- 11. Review of Risk Register - discussion and approval of new format:** The Risk Register has been reformatted. Discussion about new format with input from Councillors. Councillors agreed to adopt new format but with explanatory page being moved to the end as an Appendix.

Motion 45/5: Moved Andrew Simpson/Steve McFall: That the new format of the Risk Management Register is approved an adopted pending the explanatory page being moved to the end. CARRIED

- 12. Policy Update - Health and Safety Policy:** The current policy was developed in April 2020. Minor wording changes are proposed, to incorporate staff, contractors, and Councillors. Discussion about including additional health & safety hazards associated with driving, travel, and roads – these additions to be approved at a future meeting.

Motion 45/6: Moved Grant Dodson/Sharon Salmons: That Council approves the updated Health and Safety Policy, in principle. Additional health & safety hazards associated with driving, travel, and roads with these additions to be approved at a future meeting. CARRIED

- 13. Financial Management Review:** An independent Financial Management Review was completed in February 2023. Councillors were provided with the final documentation relating to the review and asked to note the recommendations and action items arising from the review. An additional recommendation was for the Council to approve a new policy outlining the measuring of the quality of advice provided to the Minister of Conservation. Grant Dodson provided context for the review and consultant's input and recommendations. Discussion with DOC about the implementation of measures contained in the Financial Management Review and GAC meeting our reporting requirements. The GAC is committed to continuously improving the reporting process.

Motion 45/7: Moved Andrew Simpson/Eugene Rewi: That Council receives and approves the (a) Independent Financial Management Review – 28 February 2023 and the recommendations made in the review. That Council approves the (b) GAC Management responses, and any action items arising from those recommendations; and (c) Draft Policy 'Measuring the quality of advice to the Minister of Conservation. CARRIED

- 14. Guest Presentation – Michael Dowling, Chair Council of Licenced Firearms Owners:** Michael Dowling addressed Council and provided an overview of the COLFO organisation and current issues and opportunities it is facing. Michael Dowling shared a PowerPoint presentation covering its history, objectives, 10-Year Strategy and Vision, relevant legislation, consultation, parliamentary processes, Police Ministers Arms Advisory Group (MAAG) membership and role, Police Firearms Community Advisory Forum (FCAF) membership and purpose.

Discussion about firing ranges and fears that some will close due to new rules. Discussion about mahinga kai, liaison with NZDA and other NGOs, the good that hunters do in the community, hunting with family, hunting for rural community sustenance, mental health & wellbeing, involvement of

Māori and iwi and the growth of hunting rural community sustenance, economic survival, and benefits of firearms ownership.

Michael Dowling took questions from the floor. Grant Dodson thanked Michael Dowling for his presentation and attendance at the meeting.

15. Annual Council Evaluation: On 21 February 2023, Councillors were requested to complete a Council Evaluation Survey (as discussed at the Council Meeting on 16 February 2023). The survey was undertaken to support the Game Animal Council with its annual Council governance evaluation. The survey was in the form of a self-evaluation exercise for Councillors only and all answers were treated as anonymous. It was recommended that Council receives and notes the survey results and determines any further actions.

Discussion about the survey and next steps included:

- the Council continuing to grow and improve its governance
- Governance Training scheduled for November 2023 to help Councillors understand their role
- the frequency & timing of Governance Training.

Motion 45/8: Moved Grant Dodson/Callum Sheridan: That Council receives and notes the survey results and determines any further actions. CARRIED

16. General Manager's Report: Tim Gale spoke to his report highlighting:

- Te Ara ki Mua – the Wild Animal Management Coordination group was established by the Department of Conservation with the first meeting in Wellington on the 26th of June 2023.
- The GAC has been invited to design and co-facilitate a workshop with the Department of Conservation to clarify and build on our respective roles and responsibilities as partners in implementing Te Ara ki Mua. We envisage that this workshop will be held in Q2 2023/2024.
- External engagements
 - Fiordland Wapiti Foundation, Winter Wapiti Weekend
 - co-facilitation of a Hunters and Anglers Influencers Forum, with Fish & Game
 - NZDA Annual Conference, Ashburton
- Wild Animal Management Contractors Workshop - Tim commended Mike Perry and DOC team on the collaborative event and hard mahi (attendees said they wanted pathways to get people into hunting, apprentice schemes, establishment of a working group, improvements to the procurement process amongst other things).
- The Herds of Special Interest (HOSI) process, attendance at a workshop to run through a mock HOSI process and framework – Ben Reddiex provided some background on the development of HOSI back in 2014. Kevin queried what other policy work needs to be done. Tim said we have identified the Deer Policy 2001 as policy that is inconsistent to modern best practice ungulate management approaches.
- Unlawful Hunting Workshop recap was provided.
- Hunter Safety & Education Programme (Better Hunting) – currently in a period of user testing and module refinement
- Whakatipu white-tailed deer and Dart/Caples 1080 operation – no update since May 2023.

- Rakaia Red Deer Research and Management - the researcher presented the premise of the research and process at the NZDA conference.
- GAC Submission – Conservation of wildlife in Aotearoa New Zealand.
- Research 1 - Manaaki Whenua - Landcare Research Crown Research Institute analysis of peer reviewed literature on ungulates and carbon
- Research 2 - current context on deer meat recovery associated with deer management activity.
- Wild Animal Recovery Operations (WARO) systems analysis - the GAC's work with Phoenix Facilitation Ltd, and the DOC Wild Animals Team has now been completed. While the GAC was largely supportive of the draft report, there were issues the GAC raised that were not worked through. The report produced has been provided to DOC for review, so some of these concerns may be addressed throughout this process.
- WARO Land Schedule - the finalised WARO Land Schedule was released, which has yet to consider the findings of the WARO system analysis. This has created a significant negative response from some hunting sector stakeholders. The GAC has not been provided with a process for how the WARO system analysis findings are to be considered with respect to the bulk issuing of WARO permits. The issuing of WARO permits has been indicated by DOC on their website to occur by Spring, now only a few weeks away. The GAC wrote to Minister Prime to raise awareness of the concerns about the process on 27 July 2023 – no response has been received to-date.
- Stewart Island/Rakiura white-tailed deer - A survey went out in June via social media and electronic direct mail, with 622 responses. This work was supported by the Rakiura Hunter Camp Trust. Its purpose was to enable the GAC to raise awareness of the views of the hunting sector around hunting on Stewart Island, as hunting on the island has become topical in the Southland Conservation Board meetings and Predator Free 2050 discussions. The results have been categorised and we are now working through how to present them.
- ICT Review - The assessment process has been completed and Focus Technology Group (NZ) Ltd will be the GAC's new ICT provider. The transfer is currently taking place.
- Review of Councillor's per diems – the GAC emailed the DOC Governance Unit on 21 June 2023 to initiate an increase in Meeting Fees (Per Diems) paid to Game Animal Council Councillors. The DOC noted the request and will action it.
- Recent risks and opportunities to the Council, hunting, and game animals - The closure, or pending closure, of ranges across New Zealand is of significant concern for firearms and community safety across New Zealand. These closures are due to impractical and onerous regulations. A letter to the New Zealand Police has been sent with further work required to understand impacts.

Kaylyn Pinney and Ben Reddiex provided additional context about the WARO Analysis – report has been drafted and went to DOC for a decision about next steps, and the signing off process. DOC will continue to liaise with the GAC on the WARO Analysis.

<p>Motion 45/9: Moved Sharon Salmons/Peter Swann: That Council receives and notes the August 2023 General Manager's Report.</p>	<p>CARRIED</p>
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17. DOC Update: Ben Reddiex, Director National Programmes provided an update on the department's wild animal related work. Discussion included council funding (relating to export trophy levy work in

2016/17 and then current state) and Wild Animal Manager Mike Perry's contribution over the last year in his role including improving the way DOC works/engages with others. Summary of highlights of 2022/23 were mentioned, all of which are linked back to the three pou within Te Ara ki Mua: deer free areas maintained (e.g., understand deer presence, surveillance work, removal of deer from Russell Forest and Fiordland islands), goat suppression and the National Wild Goat Hunting Competition DOC is running in conjunction with the NZDA, best practice around goat control methods, HOSI, Wild Animal Management Contractor's Workshop, WARO systems analysis, delivering the tahr programme, national panel for ground control contractors being established, safe aerial hunting system training and competency framework, and the upcoming national coordination group meeting in November. Ben Reddiex took questions from the floor. Discussion about pathways for recreational hunters as part of DOC ground control contractors training. Grant Dodson thanked Ben Reddiex for this update and acknowledged the ongoing liaison between GAC & DOC.

18. Financial Reporting: Councillors were provided with the Financial Performance Executive Summary to 30 June 2023, Balance Sheet as at 30 June 2023, Statement of Financial Position as at 30 June 2023 and Statement of Cash Flows for the year ended 30 June 2023.

Tim Gale spoke to the Financial Reporting and Variances Report, documenting income, and expenditure versus annual budgeted figures for 1 July 2022 to 30 June 2023. The 2022-23 Budget used in this Report is the Game Animal Council Budget of \$672,900 approved in Council, 26 August 2022.

The Council's financial performance for the year to 30 June 2023 remained within budget, resulting in a net deficit of \$28,966. This is favourable compared to the budget deficit of \$110,550. Surplus cashflow will be appropriated in 2023-24 to initiate a reserves policy as approved by in Council in May 2023. The reduction in the planned deficit for the year to 30 June 2023 year was due to small savings across the board, some of the notable savings detailed in the report. The Council is on track to meet reporting requirements for Audit and the Annual Report.

Motion 45/10: Moved Eugene Rewi/Sharon Salmons: That Council receives and notes the Financial Reporting and Variances report for the month ending 30 June 2023, the Financial Performance Executive Summary to 30 June 2023, Balance Sheet as at 30 June 2023, the Statement of Financial Position as at 30 June 2023 and the Statement of Cash Flows for the year ended 30 June 2023 and the Quarterly Report Q4 of 2022-2023. CARRIED

Motion 45/11: Moved Grant Dodson/Sharon Salmons: That Council receives and notes the Quarterly Report Q4 of 2022-2023. CARRIED

19. Firearms and Range Update: Roger Duxfield addressed the Council via zoom to provide an update. Roger Duxfield will be attending and representing the GAC at a Range Certification meeting tonight and Firearms Community Advisory Forum tomorrow night. Shooting Ranges are closing, including ranges used by DOC. Roger Duxfield discussed exploring options to provide bullet catches (as used overseas), and putting in sighting in ranges. Roger Duxfield provided approximate statistics regarding the number of firearms that have been registered, information about his interactions with the CEO of the Firearms Safety Authority. Roger Duxfield outlined some of the measures being put in place by the NZ Professional Hunting Guides Association and licenced guides.

20. GAC Hunter Safety and Education Programme – Better Hunting approval: Tim Gale and Larry Blair presented this programme to Council, outlining the stakeholder engagement and review process for Better Hunting and various stages. Council was provided with information about the development and release phases (one, two and three) for Better Hunting, education design and structure and learning outcomes for Better Hunting, and the risks to the programme and funding. Council considered the detailed recommendations in the Council Paper.

Larry Blair and Tim Gale took questions from the floor about the programme, the launch at the Sika Show 2023 and stages after the launch also. The GAC has applied for funding from the Lottery Outdoor Safety Grant. Tim Gale acknowledged the excellent work being done by Larry Blair.

Motion 45/12: Moved Andrew Simpson/Callum Sheridan: That Council approves the stakeholder engagement and review process for Better Hunting, notes the education design and structure for Better Hunting, approves the development and release of phases one and two for Better Hunting, notes phase three requires a training needs and impact analysis, notes the learning outcomes for Better Hunting and notes and considers the risks to the programme and the funding opportunity.

CARRIED

21. Sika Show Planning 2023: Tim Gale and Jenny Wotten outlined the plan for this year’s Sika Show and other meeting dates during 2023-24. Relevant dates are as follows:

- Sika Show 2023, set up date is 27 October. Show is on 28 & 29 October 2023, Mystery Creek.
- Council Meeting 9 & 10 November 2023 - Christchurch
- Council Meeting 23 February 2024 - Wellington
- Proposed 10-year anniversary event 9 May 2024- Christchurch
- Council Meeting 10 May 2024 - Christchurch
- Council Meeting 20 June 2024 – Zoom (to approve statutory documentation)
- August 2024 – date tba, Wellington
- Council Meeting 21 & 22 November 2024, Christchurch

22. General Business: Grant Dodson thanked the Department of Conservation for the use of the meeting venue and invited Councillors to bring forward any items of General Business. Council received the paper regarding the change of title of the Executive Office to Executive Administrator.

Motion 45/13: Moved Grant Dodson/Kevin Eastwood: That Council receives, and notes change of title of the Executive Officer to Executive Administrator.

CARRIED

23. Meeting Review: Councillor Peter Swan provided feedback on how the Council performed during this meeting, with the following reflections. Peter said timing was good, covered everything off well, alternate opening and closing karakia, good to see people using te reo when they can. Peter acknowledged the comprehensive Health & Safety briefing at the start of the meeting. Grant thanked DOC for allowing us to have the Council meeting at Conservation House.

Kevin Eastwood closed the meeting with a karakia. Meeting closed at 3.55pm.