

**MINUTES - GAME ANIMAL COUNCIL MEETING, 22 & 23 FEBRUARY 2024 - WELLINGTON
DEERSTALKERS HOUSE 22 FEB 2024 (1/2 DAY) - CONSERVATION HOUSE 23 FEB 2024 (FULL DAY)**

DAY 1 – Strategy Session – opened 1.30pm, 22 February 2024, Deerstalkers House

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

Also in attendance: Tim Gale (General Manager) Kaylyn Pinney (late) (Policy Advisor), Hayden Cox (GAC Comms), Larry Blair (Hunter Safety and Education Programme Lead), Jenny Wotten (Executive Administrator).

Part attendance: Roy Sloan (Fiordland Wapiti Foundation), Ben Reddiex (DOC), Gwyn Thurlow (NZDA).

Apologies: Tui Keenan

- 1. Welcome, Apologies, Karakia:** Karakia to start the meeting – Councillor Eugene Rewi. Apologies received from Tui Keenan. Callum Sheridan, Peter Swann, Kevin Eastwood and Andrew Simpson joined the meeting via Teams.

Motion 47/1: Moved Grant Dodson/Sharon Salmons: That apologies are accepted.	CARRIED
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- 2. Strategy Session:** Grant Dodson provided some context for the Strategy Session – arising from the November 2023 Council Meeting re: GAC priorities. Discussion about issues that arose during the informal lunch with the Minister and the letter the GAC sent to Penny Nelson re. GAC priorities. Council expects to receive the Letter of Expectations 2024/25 from the Minister within the next month.

During the course of the Strategy Session the following issues were discussed:

- Recent meeting with the Minister for Hunting and Fishing on 12 February 2024.
- Research Strategy formulation, hunter take & demographic.
- Launch of NZ Game Animal Hunting Research Project (survey) on GAC website, distributed via electronic direct mail in the Stalk newsletter, on GAC social media pages.
- Proposed continuation of Hunter Safety & Education Programme Lead role now that Jobs for Nature (JfN) funding is to cease, permanency of position, level of remuneration, extension & evolution of role.
- Engagement of new Communications Advisor as the current contractor is finishing, permanency of position and level of remuneration.
- Herd of Special Interest (HOSI): geographic/herd values matrix, prioritisation.
- Consideration of future funding proposals and funding mechanisms.
- Possible future development of an access threats and opportunities mapping system for public conservation land
- Further discussion on the GAC priorities as outlined in the letter to DOC Director- General and how these fit into the GAC workplan 2024-25.
- The current nomination process underway by the Minister for Hunting and Fishing to appoint new Councillors or reappoint current Councillors.
- Bank signatories.

Motion 47/2: Moved Grant Dodson/Steve McFall: That Council receives paper on the evolution of Hunter Safety and Education Programme Lead role, has considered the points listed, agrees that the incumbent staff member has done an excellent job, endorses the change of job title and the key responsibilities of the role and endorses the change of role permanence from a fixed term employment agreement to a permanent employment agreement to be incorporated in the 2024-25 budget process. Councillors noted that it will be presented with an approval process for all staff remuneration as part of the budget setting process for 2024-25. CARRIED

Motion 47/3: Moved John Cook/Sharon Salmons: That Council receives the paper on Better Hunting performance update and has considered the points listed. CARRIED

ACTION: Make necessary employment arrangements for continuation of Hunter Safety & Education role (permanent staff member as opposed to fixed term employee).

Motion 47/4: Moved Eugene Rewi/Melissa Jackson: That Council receives the paper on the proposed change to Communications & Government Relations Advisor role, has discussed and agreed the next steps outlined under the Considerations Heading, and approves in principle the GAC recruiting a Communications Advisor as a permanent employee of the Council. CARRIED

ACTION: Make necessary arrangements to advertise the vacancy and begin recruitment process. The current contractor will help transition the new employee into the job.

During the HOSI discussion a number of issues were raised around who will do the work, who will oversee the work and (who owns the) management plan, how will this affect the GAC workplan, at what stage does the GAC go out for engagement and consultation and how will it be funded.

Presentation by Roy Sloan (General Manager, Fiordland Wapiti Foundation)

Roy Sloan provided context and background on what is currently happening with the Fiordland Wapiti Foundation. Roy provided some background and context for the Community Agreement it has with the Department of Conservation that allows controlled hunting of the deer in Fiordland National Park, and the impending legal challenge by Forest and Bird around the Community Agreement which they say is in contravention of Section 4(2)(b) of the National Parks Act 1980, stating that the agreement aims to manage but not eradicate the wapiti population.

- 3. Strategy Session continued:** Tim Gale spoke to a draft proposal paper outlining funding opportunities that could be pursued by the GAC. The paper discusses potential funding opportunities through the International Visitor Conservation and Tourism Levy for:
- Developing a long term 'Management of Game Animals in New Zealand Master Plan'
 - Developing an access threats and opportunities mapping system for public conservation land

Discussion took place around the following issues:

- the level of funding
- the value of various projects and their social implications
- how to rank and cost the projects (and how to source the data)
- where the data could be drawn from
- the importance of consultation and engagement, including engagement with iwi
- the value of the projects' findings

Council endorsed the proposal to pursue these opportunities in principle and agreed for management to continue progress.

Karakia to finish the day – Councillor Eugene Rewi. Meeting adjourned at 5.30pm.

DAY 2 - Council Meeting – Meeting opened at 8.35am, 23 February 2024, Conservation House

Council Members present: Grant Dodson (Chair), Steve McFall, Eugene Rewi, John Cook, Sharon Salmons, Melissa Jackson, Peter Swann (Teams), Kevin Eastwood (Teams) and Callum Sheridan (Teams).

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

Part Attendance: Andrew Simpson (Teams), Fiona Harnett (MacGregor Jamee Limited), Ben Reddix (DOC).

Apologies: Tui Keenan. Andrew Simpson apologised for having to miss a small part of the meeting due to another commitment.

4. Welcome, Apologies, Karakia: Karakia to start the meeting - Councillor Melissa Jackson. As per yesterday's meeting, reconfirmed apologies from Tui Keenan. Ben Reddix undertook a Health & Safety briefing for the room and building.

5. Chairman's Welcome: Grant Dodson welcomed Councillors, staff, contractors and guests and outlined the meeting rules. Grant Dodson acknowledged the productive Strategy Session yesterday and the informal lunch with the new Minister for Hunting and Fishing, Hon Todd McClay.

Discussion about the transfer of authority by the Prime Minister, from the Minister of Conservation to the Minister for Hunting and Fishing. The Minister of Hunting and Fishing will administer those parts of conservation legislation that relate to recreational and commercial hunting of deer, tahr, chamois and feral pigs on public conservation land. This includes Ministerial statutory powers relating to the Game Animal Council as well as matters relating to recreational and commercial hunting under the Wild Animal Control Act 1977, including aerially-assisted trophy hunting and wild animal recovery operations. This transfer of authority and functions has been approved by legislative authorisation.

Grant Dodson recapped issues from yesterday. Reminder of the value of the Council, our role, the success of Better Hunting Programme achieved for relatively small amount of public money.

6. Council Only Session - Environmental Scan: Councillors raised a wide range of issues for discussion around regional and topical issues including; yesterday's strategy development, current areas of concern and interest. Grant Dodson thanked Callum Sheridan for NZDA support of the DOC/NZDA Goat Competition.

ACTION(S): Send Better Hunting posters to Councillors who requested them. Send follow up email to Tokoroa Pig Hunt Club.

7. Confirm the Agenda: the agenda was discussed and confirmed. Councillor Melissa Jackson will speak about the issue of Tongariro huts during General Business, also raised by Callum Sheridan.

Motion 47/5: Moved Grant Dodson/Melissa Jackson: That the revised agenda is confirmed.

CARRIED

8. Conflict of Interest Register: Council Paper 47/CP04 provides an overview of the legislative requirements for members of statutory entity boards and what must be disclosed, the consequences of having an 'interest in a matter', good governance, managing the process, disclosing conflicts of interest during a Council meeting, the importance of the Conflicts of Interest Register and recent publications by the Office of the Auditor-General.

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.

It has been noted that John Cook has an involvement with the Sika Foundation (and the Sika Herd is a potential HOSI) and Council will address this 'as and when' appropriate. A conflict will be declared and noted in the Minutes and if there is a vote or a decision to be made, John Cook will leave the room or abstain from voting. It is valuable to have someone in the room who knows what they are talking about and it will be managed through the conflict process.

Following discussion, it was agreed to fine-tune the Council's Conflict of Interests:

- Step 1: identify and register what conflicts the Councillors have
 - Declaration of all actual or perceived material interests, including organisations, business interests, spousal interests and family trusts
 - determine if one of those interests comes into conflict with Council business
 - If an actual or perceived conflict is deemed to exist, record there is a conflict and consider how to manage it.
- Step 2: as a separate process, ask Councillors to declare any actual or perceived interests with regard to any agenda items to be discussed at the current meeting.

ACTION: 1. Adjust Conflict of Interests Register. 2. Develop new form for conflicts with agenda items.

Motion 47/6: Moved Grant Dodson/Melissa Jackson: That the updated Conflict of Interest Register is received and noted.

CARRIED

9. Minutes of Previous Meeting 9 and 10 November 2023: were taken as read with minor changes.

Motion 47/7: Moved Grant Dodson/Sharon Salmons: That the Minutes of the 9 & 10 November 2023 meeting be accepted as a true and correct record of the meeting.

CARRIED

STRATEGY & PERFORMANCE REPORTING

10. General Manager's Report: Tim Gale presented the priorities part of his General Manager's Report covering:

- The impact the GAC is having across the hunting sector.
- Meeting the Statement of Performance Expectations 2023-24 Targets – discussion around engagement with iwi, hapu, rūnanga and mana whenua. The Te Kāhui Maori Sub Committee will develop a Terms of Reference and responsibilities for the subcommittee.
- Top of the South Project – Kotahitanga mō te Taiao (KMTT) Alliance.

- Recording individual GAC functions as part of the monthly accounts process – tweak the secondary account codes.
- GAC Councillor Appointments process.

Motion 47/8: Moved Sharon Salmons/Eugene Rewi: That the General Manager’s Report Priorities, is received and noted.

CARRIED

ACTION: Te Kāhui Maori Sub-Committee to develop a Terms of Reference.

Motion 47/9: Moved Grant Dodson/Sharon Salmons: That Council approves Councillor Callum Sheridan and Councillor Andrew Simpson to be new signatories on the GAC’s Kiwibank accounts.

CARRIED

Motion 47/10: Moved Grant Dodson/Sharon Salmons: That Council approves the composition of the Te Kāhui Maori Sub Committee as Councillors Eugene Rewi, Peter Swann, Tui Keenan, Kevin Eastwood and Melissa Jackson.

CARRIED

11. Letter to Penny Nelson: At the Game Animal Council Meeting on 10 November 2023 a short list of GAC priorities was developed. Following further consultation with Councillors a letter containing the GAC’s short-to-medium term priority projects was emailed to Penny Nelson on 7 February 2024. Councillors received and noted Council Paper 47/CP06: Letter to Penny Nelson.

12. Herds of Special Interest (HOSI) process development update: Tim Gale and Kaylyn Pinney spoke to Council Paper 47/CP07. The GAC staff have been working with the Department of Conservation Statutory Planning and Wild Animals Teams and an independent contractor to develop a best practice guide, proposer templates and statutory process flow charts that incorporate best practice, legislation requirements and reporting and review processes. The council was presented a draft version of this work on 21 December 2023 by video conference. Work has continued in Q3.

Discussion about the issues raised in the Council Paper, the process, the template, next steps and risks, the costs of establishing the herd and game animal management. Discussion with DOC about how they see the process and roles and responsibilities at each stage. For the collaboration to work well, the GAC needs to have access to DOC documents regarding HOSI. The GAC would like to see the HOSI Briefing provided to the Minister by DOC. The GAC doesn’t want DOC to be advising the Minister in isolation on this matter.

Motion 47/11: Moved Grant Dodson/Melissa Jackson: That the Herds of Special Interest (HOSI) paper is received and noted.

CARRIED

13. Statement of Performance Expectations 2024-25 – Output Classes: Fiona Harnett and Tim Gale presented to Councillors regarding a change in output classes for the GAC’s Statement of Performance Expectations for 2024-25.

In accordance with the Letter of Expectations 2023-24 from the Minister of Conservation, the GAC is required to report against the non-financial performance measures and the financial forecasts outlined in the Statement of Performance Expectations (SPE) 2023-24 and its annual workplan on a quarterly basis. Council Paper 47/CP08 provides an outline of the transition from one to two Output Classes and to provide the Council with context regarding the application of the CE Act. Historically, the GAC has had a single output class:

- *Providing advice to the Minister of Conservation on matters relating to game animals and hunting.*

Each Statement of Performance Expectations must identify each reportable class of outputs for the financial year.

Through the formation of the Statement of Performance Expectations 2023-24 we have created two output classes to reflect the full range of 'output classes' more accurately:

- *Provide advice and make recommendations to the Minister for Hunting and Fishing on matters relating to game animals and hunting.*
- *Enable community engagement and collaboration for improved game animal management and to promote safe and responsible hunting practices.*

During discussion there was consideration of whether the GAC should gradually transition to report on more than 2 output classes. Andrew Simpson argued that more than two output classes are necessary to properly account for the several outcomes to which GAC resources are directed. However, it was agreed by the majority that the GAC is a only a small organisation and reporting on more than 2 output classes would be onerous and increase management workload unnecessarily. If a HOSI is established it could potentially be an extra.

Grant Dodson thanked Fiona Harnett for her presentation and advised the GAC would adopt the two suggested output classes for now and review this in a couple years' time.

Motion 47/12: Moved Grant Dodson/Andrew Simpson: That the Council receives and notes the paper on new output measures and has considered a new approach for the 2024-25 Statement of Service Performance Expectations Output Classes to meet the requirements of Section 149E of the Crown Entities Act 2004, formally adopt two output classes and delegate to management to implement that. CARRIED

14.Conservation Law Reform: Tim Gale provided some context for this agenda item. At the 10 November 2023 Council meeting, Council Paper 46/CP02 provided an update on the conservation law reform process and the repealing and replacing of the Wildlife Act 1953. The Council Paper outlined key issues and raised points for Council consideration. A recommendation was made that Council receives the paper, considers points listed, and approves the funding of a sub-contractor(s) to develop a joint position paper(s) with New Zealand Fish & Game.

Management provided an update on what has happened since the November 2023 Meeting and responded to some of the points raised at that time. Councillors received and noted the Conservation Law Reform Paper.

ACTION: Councillors to familiarise themselves with the Issues & Options Paper.

15.Firearms Safety Authority New Zealand: Mike McIlraith, Director Partnerships and Ewan Kelsall, Partnerships Manager addressed the Council and provided an update on the Firearms Safety Authority New Zealand. Topics discussed with Council included: illegal hunting issues; the reduction in waiting times for licence renewal; storage and transportation of firearms; improving hunter access to PCL; the recent DOC/NZDA Goat Competition; and transferring ownership of guns (and ways to streamline this).

Grant Dodson raised the issue of unlawful hunting and consequences for licence holders who get caught unlawfully hunting.

ACTION: Send letter to the Firearms Safety Authority and the NZ Police Commissioner to follow up on the discussion about Unlawful Hunting.

16. Department of Conservation update: Ben Reddiex, Director National Programmes, addressed Council and provided an update on the Wild Animals Management Programme and draft Action Plan 2024-2030. The document describes DOC's actions towards meeting programme objectives and implementing Te Ara ki Mua. Although there are many actions under each section, a large majority of DOC's work sits within the 'protecting and restoring', with resources focussed on wild animal management for protection of biodiversity and ecosystems.

DOC is working with the Minister for Hunting and Fishing on lines of engagement, responsibilities and delegations. This will be explained to Council in the Letter of Expectations.

A National Wild Animals Coordination Group Workshop was held on 14 November 2023, to prioritise and coordinate actions for effective wild animal management. Mana whenua, Maori organisations, hunting sector representatives, conservation sector representatives, primary industry representatives and research organisations attended the forum. The next meeting of this group is on 13 March 2024 in Wellington, including GAC/NZDA/NZPHGA attendees.

The National Wild Goat Hunting Competition was very successful with good coverage across media and social media. Over 10,000 wild goats were removed.

National Predator Control Programme – Topics covered include beech seeding model, seed production per square metre, climate modelling, control methods.

Tahr Control Operation Plan (TCOP) 2024-25 - Currently over halfway through the 2023-24 TCOP. Second draft 2024-25 TCOP sent to Tahr Plan Implementation Liaison Group (TPILG). Due to be finalised by May 2024. Key changes: increase in control effort, building understanding of tahr on other land tenures, AATH offsets, delay in start date for control in National Parks, MU1 hunter led – want to get this up and running as soon as possible. DOC has drafted a community plan and this has gone to interested parties.

NZ Tahr Foundation Ground Control Update:

- 3-year community agreement started in 2022.
- 2023: took 82 tahr from the Makaawhio and expanded operations into the Mahitahi – took a further 330 tahr.
- 2024: same valleys plus additional site (likely further south).

Access

Council reiterated to DOC that access is still seen as the major impediment for recreational hunters to managing game animal numbers on PCL and there is some frustration at the lack of action. In particular, the Council would like to know what is happening with the Ruahines as there are hunter led opportunities in the Ruahine Forest Park and the Council is keen to see a deer management plan in place.

FINANCIAL MATTERS

17. Financial Reporting & Variances: Tim Gale presented to Council on the financial performance and position of Council for the 2023-24 financial year and income and expenditure versus budget for the period 1 July 2023 to 31 January 2024.

Motion 47/13: Moved Sharon Salmons/Steve McFall: That Council (1) receives and notes the Financial Reporting & Variances Report for the period 1 July 2023 to 31 January 2024 (Profit and Loss Report for the month ended 31 January 2024 & Balance Sheet as at 31 January 2024); and (2) approves the changes to section 3.8.3 of the Council's Financial Delegations Policy as outlined in the Report; and (3) approves the changes to section 4.5.2 of the Council's Financial Delegations Policy as outlined in the Report CARRIED

18. NZGAC Quarterly Performance Report – Q2 2023-24: Tim Gale reported that the GAC is making strong progress to meet the Statement of Performance Expectations 2023-24 (SPE) performance measures and associated targets, with 13 of the 28 targets having already been achieved to Q2. The Quarterly Report was provided to the Department on 31 January 2024. A Statement of Performance outlining achievement/non-achievement of all targets will be presented in the 2023-24 Annual Report.

Motion 47/14: Moved Eugene Rewi/Steve McFall: That Council receives the NZGAC Quarterly Performance Report – Q2 2023-24 and notes the contents of the Report. CARRIED

CONSENT AGENDA – RECEIVE AND NOTE

19. Risk Management Register Review: Management has reviewed the Risk Register and made some minor changes to: (1) reflect the change of responsible Minister and creation of Minister for Hunting and Fishing; and (2) Reference made to the Fraud Prevention Policy adopted by Council in November 2023. The revised Risk Register is included in the Meeting Papers for consideration and approval/discussion.

Motion 47/15: Moved Grant Dodson/Andrew Simpson: That Council receives and notes the updated Risk Register and approves the minor changes. CARRIED

20. General Manager's Report – other issues: Tim Gale addressed the second half of his General Manager's Report covering Te Ara ki Mua, external engagements, roar safety, unlawful hunting work, Visitor's Firearms Licences, Whakatipu white tailed deer and Dart/Caples 1080 operation, submissions made since the last Council Meeting, Tahr Management, Aerial 1080 operations, WARO Systems Analysis – Permits, AATH Systems Analysis, foreseeable risks and two Research projects:

- Game animal hunting in New Zealand: per capita effort, harvest and expenditure
- Wild Deer Management and Meat Recovery

The General Manager asked that the second half of his Report be taken as read. DOC will share the GAC Survey through their networks (Game animal hunting in NZ: per capita effort, harvest and expenditure).

An AATH Workshop was facilitated by DOC on 21 November 2023. The purpose of the workshop was to present what was discovered through the analysis to date and provided a platform for

robust discussion. Tim Gale acknowledged Kaylyn Pinney's input, providing mutually beneficial solutions to long held intersectoral issues and challenges.

Motion 47/16: Moved Sharon Salmons/John Cook: The second half of the General Manager's was taken as read. CARRIED

21. Action items and matters arising: Councillors considered the list of action items and progress made against each. A reply had been sent to the President of the Tokoroa Pig Hunt Club.

22. Standing items – Electronic approval of submissions & correspondence received outside of meetings: Council discussion about documents finalised and approved between meetings. It was noted that the GAC's Annual Report was tabled in Parliament on 21 February 2024. The delay was a result of the new Minister needing to approve it to be presented.

23. Meeting Planning 2024: Jenny Wotten reported on the Council Meeting dates that had been agreed for the remainder of 2024 and attendance at the Sika Show 2024. Additionally, the Council will be looking to hold a Parliamentary Hunt during the school holidays and Parliamentary Recess, between Saturday 28 September to Sunday 13 October 2024. Councillors received and noted the paper and dates.

Discussion about the date and location of the GAC's Ten-Year Anniversary event.

24. General Business:

Tongariro Forest Huts – Councillors raised this issue for discussion and advice on how to respond to members of the local community who have sought advice on this issue. NZDA and DOC have provided support and the Backcountry Trust has provided examples of community agreements which could be used. Grant Dodson and Tim Gale apologised for the delay in responding to Councillors earlier.

25. Meeting Review: Councillor Sharon Salmons provided feedback on how the Council had performed over the day & a half meeting. Stayed on track, stayed in governance mode, provided governance to enable management to do their job, finished the meeting on time, all agenda times met, time discipline was good.

Grant Dodson thanked DOC for the use of the meeting room.

Karakia to close the meeting – Councillor Melissa Jackson. Meeting closed at 4.15pm.

Next Meeting is on 9 May 2024.