

08 December 2024

Let's Protect Our Environment  
Auckland Council  
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## **Auckland Council's Let's Protect Our Environment**

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### **About the New Zealand Game Animal Council**

1. The New Zealand Game Animal Council (GAC), established under the Game Animal Council Act 2013, is a statutory entity with responsibilities for, among other things:
  - a. Advising and making recommendations (in relation to game animals) to the Minister for Hunting and Fishing (previously Minister of Conservation).
  - b. Raising awareness of the views of the hunting sector.
  - c. Liaising on and managing aspects of game animal hunting and management.

### **New Zealand Hunting Sector**

2. It is estimated that 50-60,000+ New Zealanders are involved in large game animal hunting each year with around 34,000 individuals obtaining permits to hunt on public conservation land each year.
3. Hunters play a key role in game animal management, and it is estimated that recreational hunters alone are responsible for harvesting approximately half a million game animals and pest goats each year.<sup>1</sup>
4. Recreational hunting and wild food gathering are an important part of many New Zealand communities.
5. Access to public conservation lands and game animals is critical to ensure that hunters can reach the places they value for recreation, food gathering and to contribute to conservation.
6. The value of recreation is recognised in legislation, including the National Parks Act 1980 and the Conservation Act 1987. Both these Acts require the fostering of recreational activities, such as hunting on public conservation land.

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<sup>1</sup> GN Kerr & W Abell (2014) Big game hunting in New Zealand: per capita effort, harvest and expenditure in 2011–2012, *New Zealand Journal of Zoology*, 41:2, 124-138, DOI: 10.1080/03014223.2013.870586

## Valued introduced species

7. Game animals are defined under the Game Animal Council Act 2013 as wild pigs, chamois, tahr and all species of deer.
8. Game animals are also recognised as ‘valued introduced species’ in Te Mana o te Taiao – the Aotearoa New Zealand Biodiversity Strategy 2020 (ANZBS).
9. The GAC worked with the Department of Conservation on giving effect to the ANZBS and developed the Te Ara ki Mua<sup>2</sup> adaptive management framework.
10. Te Ara ki Mua is an adaptive management framework for wild goats, deer, wild pigs, tahr and chamois, and gives effect to the ANZBS the framework.<sup>3</sup>
11. It seeks to balance the recreational, cultural and economic benefits to our communities of game animals (deer, chamois, tahr and wild pigs) with their environmental impacts,
12. Te Ara Ku Mua recognises there is no one-size-fits-all approach to game animal management.
13. Different game animal populations in different places require different management strategies that need to be grounded in science and involve multiple stakeholders including recreational and commercial hunters, local communities and iwi.
14. Te Ara ki Mua ensures a balanced, realistic and progressive approach to the management of game animals and provides the opportunity to create enduring solutions through regional and site-based management programmes that involve local communities, including hunters.
15. It provides an opportunity to move past the historic ‘boom and bust’, divisive and fragmented approach to game animal management, and institute more realistic and regionally responsive management that involves local communities and hunters.
16. Much of the management focus needs to be on targeting breeding females, as it is the females that determine the future population of the herd. A female focused harvest herd produces fewer but better-quality animals.
17. In this way, management will deliver benefits to conservation while also enhancing the quality of the hunting resource.
18. The GAC encourages Auckland Council to consider and integrate the principles of Te Ara ki Mua in any game animal management included as part of the ‘Let’s Protect Our Environment’ plan.

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<sup>2</sup> Department of Conservation - [Te ara ki mua](#)

<sup>3</sup> Wild goats are subject to the Wild Animal Control Act 1977 only and are not part of the Game Animal Council’s statutory responsibilities.

## Quality game animal management

19. Quality game animal management (QGAM) uses both scientific principles of game animal management and conservation, community, recreation and commercial values to inform management actions.
  20. QGAM is made up of four key components:
    - a. Herd management – what do we want a herd to look like and how could we achieve this?
    - b. Habitat management – how many animals can the habitat sustain and remain healthy?
    - c. Hunter management – who harvests, when and what animals to support herd and habitat management?
    - d. Herd monitoring – are management actions working to achieve desirable outcomes – what adjustments are needed?
  21. QGAM is a tailored approach that incorporates the values of a game animal species into the way it is managed. This means management plans will be tailored to hunters and habitat needs within the management area.
  22. The GAC encourages Auckland Council to consider and incorporate the QGAM framework in any game animal management included as part of the ‘Let’s Protect Our Environment’ plan.
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## Local engagement and valued hunting areas

23. A big part of the GAC’s philosophy is empowering hunters and community funded organisations to undertake their own management programmes in partnership with responsible agencies to achieve both conservation and hunting outcomes.
24. The GAC commends Auckland Council for consulting before drafting the plan, to understand community views about how the region’s environment should be managed.
25. The Auckland region has many valued hunting areas:
  - a. Woodhill, where an [annual ballot](#) is highly sought after by hunters of the region.
  - b. The entire south Kaipara Head.
  - c. South Head of the Manukau Harbour and south towards the Auckland Waikato boundary.
  - d. Hunua Ranges.
  - e. Dome Forest.

- f. Waitakere ranges (predominantly pigs) which have heavy restrictions on hunting it and being mainly private land.
  - g. Goldie Bush, Bethells Beach and running north to Muriwai, which have several species hunters value.
26. DOC has prioritised different areas (mapped) for current and future work in the Auckland region, and we encourage Auckland Council to engage with the Department of Conservation's Wild Animal Team regarding this work.
27. The GAC trusts the necessary consultation will take place with local landowners, hunting sector agencies and groups to understand their views regarding areas with hunting areas and opportunities, access, and game animal management across the region.
28. The GAC also encourages Auckland Council to have ongoing communication with these local agencies and groups to further include recreational hunters as part of the solution to any game animal management issue or actions required in the future.
29. The GAC is readily available to assist in identifying local hunting organisations and clubs, should this support be required.
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## **Access**

30. Hunters are one of the biggest users of public conservation land.
31. The GAC undertook a survey of hunters in 2022, with 67% of respondents telling us that access was the thing that most impacted hunting in their region.
32. The difficulties associated with access to public conservation land in some places is a concern. Hunters cannot help manage game animal populations if they are not allowed to access an area or access is heavily restricted.
33. The Minister for Hunting and Fishing recently announced an Access Charter for Recreational Hunting and Fishing on Public Conservation Land and Waters.
34. The Charter outlines the principles and commitments to ensure that recreational hunting and fishing on public conservation land and waters is recognised and safeguarded for current and future generations.
35. The GAC sees the activation of this Charter as a positive step in the Government's commitment to providing more consistent access to public conservation land.
36. The GAC encourages Auckland Council to integrate the Charter's principles into their plans and policies.
37. The Charter can be seen at [doc.govt.nz/access-charter](https://doc.govt.nz/access-charter)

If you have any queries relating to this feedback, please contact me on 021 688 531 or at [tim.gale@nzgac.org.nz](mailto:tim.gale@nzgac.org.nz).

Yours sincerely

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

**Tim Gale**  
General Manager  
New Zealand Game Animal Council