

November 2025

# Fiordland Wapiti Herd of Special Interest

## Draft Herd Management Plan



**Te Kāwanatanga  
o Aotearoa**  
New Zealand Government

Cover: Fiordland Wapiti Area. *Photo: Department of Conservation*

**Fiordland Wapiti Herd of Special Interest Draft Herd Management Plan**

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## Foreword

Welcome to the *Fiordland Wapiti Herd of Special Interest Draft Herd Management Plan*.

This is the first draft herd management plan prepared in accordance with the Game Animal Council Act 2013 to be publicly notified for submissions. It relates only to the management of Fiordland wapiti and the designation of a herd of special interest within the Wapiti Area in Fiordland National Park.

The Plan seeks to recognise the outstanding values of Fiordland National Park, the World Heritage Area status of Te Wāhipounamu – South West New Zealand, and the unique place Fiordland wapiti have come to have within the Park. In doing so, the Plan attempts to balance the critically important task of conserving New Zealand's most precious wild spaces in their natural state with the day-to-day realities of conservation and wild animal management.

The Plan also acknowledges the connection that Treaty partners and iwi Māori have to the area and seeks to recognise the significance of Fiordland National Park to all New Zealanders.

This Plan represents the culmination of years of effort by individuals and organisations, including the Fiordland Wapiti Foundation and the New Zealand Game Animal Council.

I expect there to be a range of benefits from managing Fiordland wapiti for hunting purposes. These will be set out in a future Gazette notice should I ultimately decide to designate a Fiordland Wapiti Herd of Special Interest. However, it is helpful to briefly comment on expected benefits at this stage in the process.

Of particular importance are the benefits of improved ecological outcomes for indigenous species and ecosystems through targeted population management, regular monitoring and responsible harvest decision making by the hunting community.

Similarly, I expect there to be a range of benefits for hunters, particularly the enhancement of an already high-quality and highly sought after hunting experience where hunters enjoy a unique wilderness experience.

It is my hope that there will also be a range of benefits for iwi, hapū and local communities. These include opportunities for Papatipu Rūnanga to be involved in Fiordland wapiti management activities and for the hunting community to be empowered and actively involved in the management of Fiordland wapiti. I anticipate that this will foster a sense of responsibility and stewardship among the hunting community and promote connections to the cultural and natural heritage of the Wapiti Area, with hunters increasingly contributing to a range of conservation efforts, such as chamois and deer control, environmental monitoring, maintenance of recreation facilities, and predator control initiatives.

I expect that managing Fiordland wapiti for hunting purposes will also lead to sustainable non-government funding for the management of the Wapiti Area and will have economic and social benefits for local communities. In this respect, I anticipate commercial benefits associated with hunter tourism, social benefits arising from the hunting community supporting local initiatives, and the retention of specialist expertise and capability in wild deer management, control, recovery and monitoring activities through ongoing management.

If approved, this Plan will provide direction for management of the Fiordland Wapiti Herd of Special Interest over the next 5 years.

This is the starting point, and I now invite submissions on this Plan. The submission period closes on Monday 8 December 2025.



Hon James Meager

Minister for Hunting and Fishing

10 November 2025

# 1 Introduction

A 'herd of special interest' is a herd of game animals within a defined area of public conservation land that the responsible Minister has, in accordance with the Game Animal Council Act 2013, formally designated to be managed for hunting purposes while ensuring that conservation values continue to be protected.

The *Fiordland Wapiti Herd of Special Interest Draft Herd Management Plan* (the Plan) has been prepared in accordance with section 19 of the Game Animal Council Act and only becomes effective if the herd of wapiti (*Cervus canadensis*) in Fiordland is designated as a herd of special interest under section 16 of that Act.

## Purpose of this Plan

This Plan directs management of the Fiordland Wapiti Herd of Special Interest on behalf of the Minister for Hunting and Fishing. It establishes objectives and strategies for the management of wapiti in the Fiordland Wapiti Herd of Special Interest Area (the Wapiti Area) to achieve the benefits expected to be gained by managing this herd of deer for hunting purposes.

This Plan applies to all species of deer in genus *Cervus* that occur in the Wapiti Area in Fiordland National Park, as shown in Map 1, **Appendix 1**. These animals are collectively referred to as 'Fiordland wapiti'.

The Plan allows for responsive and adaptive management, while also providing clarity on intended outcomes. It does not contain the day-to-day details of operational management. However, the objectives and strategies set the framework for operational management, monitoring and reporting.

## Application of the Plan and statutory context

This Plan takes effect from the date stated in the New Zealand Gazette notice formally designating the Fiordland Wapiti Herd of Special Interest. It continues to apply until formally amended or replaced by the responsible Minister.

The Fiordland Wapiti Herd of Special Interest designation and this Plan apply only to Fiordland wapiti and their management. They do not apply to the wider Fiordland National Park area or conservation management activities provided for by the National Parks Act 1980, Conservation Act 1987, Wild Animal Control Act 1977 or relevant statutory planning documents. Those Acts and planning documents continue to apply alongside this Plan. For example, they continue to regulate non-hunting-related concessions and authorisations and guide conservation and other animal management activities, such as predator control.

The Game Animal Council Act is listed in Schedule 1 of the Conservation Act. This means that the Game Animal Council Act must be so interpreted and administered as to give effect to the principles of the Treaty of Waitangi.<sup>1</sup>

A glossary of key terms is provided in **Appendix 2**.

## Overriding considerations

This Plan has been prepared to be consistent with the overriding considerations identified in the Game Animal Council Act. For this Plan, the relevant overriding considerations are the:

- welfare and management of public conservation land and resources generally;
- *General Policy for National Parks 2005*;<sup>2</sup>
- *Southland Murihiku Conservation Management Strategy 2016*;<sup>3</sup>
- *Fiordland National Park Management Plan 2007*;<sup>4</sup> and
- pest management strategies and plans made under the Biosecurity Act 1993.

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<sup>1</sup> Conservation Act 1987, section 4.

<sup>2</sup> New Zealand Conservation Authority. 2005. *General Policy for National Parks*. Wellington: Department of Conservation. [doc.govt.nz/national-park-policy](http://doc.govt.nz/national-park-policy)

<sup>3</sup> Department of Conservation. 2016. *Southland Murihiku Conservation Management Strategy*. Wellington: Department of Conservation. [doc.govt.nz/southlandcms](http://doc.govt.nz/southlandcms)

<sup>4</sup> Department of Conservation. 2007. *Fiordland National Park Management Plan*. Invercargill: Department of Conservation. [doc.govt.nz/fnp-management-plan](http://doc.govt.nz/fnp-management-plan)

## Key parties and relationships relevant to this Plan

### Minister for Hunting and Fishing

The Game Animal Council Act provides a ministerial power to establish herds of special interest, by way of notice, and to manage herds of special interest.

The Minister for Hunting and Fishing is the relevant Minister for the purposes of the Game Animal Council Act, including for the designation of a herd of special interest and development of a related herd management plan. The Minister for Hunting and Fishing has exercised these powers in the making of this Plan and designation of the Fiordland Wapiti Herd of Special Interest.

The Minister for Hunting and Fishing may delegate their herd of special interest management powers under the Game Animal Council Act to the New Zealand Game Animal Council (the Game Animal Council), and the Department of Conservation Te Papa Atawhai (the Department) may carry out functions on behalf of the Minister for Hunting and Fishing.

### Ngāi Tahu

Ngāi Tahu are the tangata whenua with rangatiratanga or mana whenua (tribal authority) over the area covered by this Plan. Ngāi Tahu are the Crown's Treaty partner under the Treaty of Waitangi, and this Plan acknowledges the Crown's obligations to give effect to the principles of the Treaty as set out in section 4 of the Conservation Act, as well as its obligations under the Ngāi Tahu Deed of Settlement 1997, Ngāi Tahu (Pounamu Vesting) Act 1997 and Ngāi Tahu Claims Settlement Act 1998.

The relationship between Ngāi Tahu and the Minister of Conservation is the primary relationship with respect to the management of Fiordland National Park. This Plan is subject to the protocols required under section 282 of the Ngāi Tahu Claims Settlement Act.<sup>5</sup>

Lake Te Anau (Te Ana-au), which forms part of the eastern boundary of the Wapiti Area, is a Deed of Recognition site acknowledged by the Ngāi Tahu Claims Settlement Act.<sup>6</sup> Many bird and plant species that are recognised as taonga (treasures) to Ngāi Tahu can be found within the Wapiti Area.<sup>7</sup>

The Wapiti Area is within the takiwā of the four Papatipu Rūnanga (Rūnaka) of Murihiku (Southland), which include:

- Ōraka-Aparima Rūnaka;
- Hokonui Rūnanga;
- Waihōpai Rūnaka; and
- Te Rūnaka o Awarua.

References to Papatipu Rūnanga in this Plan refer to these four rūnanga.

### New Zealand Game Animal Council

The Game Animal Council is a statutory entity established under the Game Animal Council Act.

This Council has a range of functions in relation to game animals, which include deer, tahr, chamois and wild pigs. These functions include advising and making recommendations to the Minister for Hunting and Fishing, raising awareness of the views of the hunting sector, providing information and education, promoting codes of conduct and operating certification schemes, and liaising with hunters, representatives of tangata whenua and organisations to improve hunting opportunities.

The Minister for Hunting and Fishing may delegate powers to manage a herd of special interest to the Game Animal Council. These powers must be exercised for the effective management of the herd, consistent with the management of public conservation lands and resources generally, and in accordance with the Game Animal Council Act. Subject to the terms of any delegations, the Game Animal Council will work closely with the Fiordland Wapiti Foundation and the Department to implement this Plan.

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<sup>5</sup> As found on the Te Rūnanga o Ngāi Tahu website ([ngaitahu.iwi.nz](http://ngaitahu.iwi.nz)) and in Appendix 13 of the *Southland Murihiku Conservation Management Strategy 2016* ([doc.govt.nz/southlandcms](http://doc.govt.nz/southlandcms)).

<sup>6</sup> Deed of Settlement between Te Rūnanga o Ngāi Tahu and Her Majesty the Queen, 22 October 1998, Section 12: Mahinga Kai, Attachment 12.111. [govt.nz/assets/Documents/OTS/Ngai-Tahu/Ngai-Tahu-Deed-of-Settlement-Section-12-Mahinga-kai-general-21-Nov-1997.pdf](http://govt.nz/assets/Documents/OTS/Ngai-Tahu/Ngai-Tahu-Deed-of-Settlement-Section-12-Mahinga-kai-general-21-Nov-1997.pdf)

<sup>7</sup> Taonga species as per Schedules 97 and 98 of the Ngāi Tahu Claims Settlement Act 1998.

Under the Game Animal Council Act, the Game Animal Council also has a function to assess the costs of managing Fiordland wapiti as a herd of special interest (and herds of special interest more broadly) and to make recommendations to the Minister for Hunting and Fishing on ways to recover those costs.

### **Fiordland Wapiti Foundation**

The Fiordland Wapiti Foundation is an incorporated society that was established in 1993 and undertakes a range of management, community and conservation initiatives relating to wapiti in the Wapiti Area and wider Fiordland National Park.

Since 2005, the Fiordland Wapiti Foundation has undertaken an animal control programme in the Wapiti Area, working closely with the Department via a community agreement with the Director-General under section 53 of the Conservation Act. The Foundation's work has included managing the control and removal of around 900–1,100 deer from the Wapiti Area annually and managing recreational hunting in the Wapiti Area during key times, such as the bugle.

The Fiordland Wapiti Foundation also undertakes a range of predator trapping work, bird surveys, and facility maintenance and upkeep in the Wapiti Area as part of the community agreement.

In early 2025, the Fiordland Wapiti Foundation proposed that the Minister for Hunting and Fishing initiate a process to consider designating Fiordland wapiti as a herd of special interest under the Game Animal Council Act. The Fiordland Wapiti Foundation will likely be engaged to undertake many aspects of the day-to-day implementation and delivery of this Plan, including animal management and control, hunter management, and educational initiatives.

### **Department of Conservation Te Papa Atawhai**

The Department is responsible for administering conservation legislation such as the Conservation Act, National Parks Act and Wild Animal Control Act. It has a responsibility to promote conservation of New Zealand's natural and historic heritage resources, foster recreation, and allow tourism. The Department also has a responsibility under section 4 of the Conservation Act to give effect to the principles of the Treaty of Waitangi.

On behalf of the Minister for Hunting and Fishing, the Department leads the statutory process to develop herd management plans and ensure that legislative requirements are met. The Department will support implementation of this Plan in accordance with delegations and directions of the Minister for Hunting and Fishing.

## 2 Values and key context

### Natural heritage and conservation values

Fiordland National Park became a national park in 1952 and covers over 1.2 million hectares. It is treasured for its pristine and dramatic landscapes, rich indigenous biodiversity, and unique flora and fauna. Its forest cover of ancient and mature southern beech and podocarps contains unique communities of native flora that are adapted to the local climate and soil conditions. In the subalpine zone, tussock grasses and daisy species thrive, and higher in the alpine zone, there are herbfields.

This Park, along with Westland Tai Poutini, Aoraki / Mount Cook and Mount Aspiring National Parks, forms part of Te Wāhipounamu – South West New Zealand World Heritage Area.

Fiordland is a sacred place that is bound up in the heritage of the three principal historical iwi of Te Waipounamu (the South Island): Waitaha, Ngāti Māmoë and Ngāi Tahu. The area was also one of the sites of early exploration, exploitation and settlement of New Zealand by Europeans.

The Wapiti Area covers approximately 15% of Fiordland National Park's total area, or 190,700 hectares (including lakes and waterbodies). The area is bounded by Lake Te Anau to the east and deep fiords and the rugged Tasman Sea to the west, with the Franklin and Stuart Mountains rising to nearly 2,000 metres above sea level in the central area.

Throughout the Wapiti Area, the treeline is low (850–1,000 metres), with a discontinuous zone of scrub, tussock grasslands and sensitive alpine herbfields extending up to around 1,500–1,600 metres. While rock and snow predominate at higher elevations, plants can still be found in favourable niches.

The Wapiti Area does not contain any ecological management areas or units that have been identified by the Department's existing statutory management plans, but it is home to indigenous endemic birds, including pīwauwau / rock wren, whio / blue duck, mōhua / yellowhead, kākā, kea, tokoeka / southern brown kiwi and tawaki / Fiordland crested penguin. Indigenous vegetation across the Wapiti Area is complex and unique, with wet mosses, liverworts, lichens and filmy ferns on the ground and tree trunks. The forest understorey includes diverse shrub species, including karamu / coprosma, kāpuka / broadleaf, puahou / five finger and various ferns. Tawhai / silver beech and tawhairauriki / mountain beech are widespread in the canopy, and rimu, mataī, miro and tōtara can be prominent in areas near lakes and fiords.

Within the Wapiti Area – particularly in the Nitz Creek, Glaisnock River, Lugar Burn, Stillwater Creek, Doon River and Edith River catchments – there are comparatively broad U-shaped valleys, with open areas of grassland breaking up vast tracks of forest and wetland. The western coast of the Wapiti Area is broken by large fiords, from Te Hāpua / Sutherland Sound in the northwest to Hāwea / Bligh, Te Houhou / George and Taitetimu / Caswell Sounds in the centre west and Taiporoporo / Charles Sound at the southern extent.

The Wapiti Area includes the 123,800-hectare gazetted Glaisnock Wilderness Area, which is renowned by self-reliant and highly experienced recreationists for its substantially unmodified landscapes, solitude, natural quiet and limited recreational facilities. The remainder of the area is within the 'Western Remote' visitor setting described in the *Fiordland National Park Management Plan 2007*, which has similar recreation and wilderness values to those found in the adjoining Glaisnock Wilderness Area.

### Conservation and introduced species

Introduced animal species, including wapiti, can have significant and long-lasting impacts on an area. Deer browse can suppress forest regeneration, change plant communities and threaten biodiversity. Deer are selective feeders, so where they negatively affect native plant communities, species that are preferred by deer suffer more damage than species that are avoided.

Research indicates that regeneration is possible with intensive management, but this is generally slow, location specific and costly to sustain. Plant growth also depends on light and nutrient availability, so competition from deer-avoided species may slow down the recovery process, leading to long-term changes in forest composition.

Biodiversity declines and changes in plant community composition can reduce ecological resilience, including resilience to the impacts of climate change.



An objective of the *Fiordland National Park Management Plan 2007* is to reduce and control introduced animals (including Fiordland wapiti) by all available means to a level that allows for the regeneration of browsed indigenous flora.

Deer control is expensive, with eradication and the maintenance of deer-free areas costing significantly more than suppression (population reduction) activities over the same area. Therefore, prioritisation is undertaken, and emphasis is placed on controlling deer to protect priority areas and species.

Accordingly, control work by the Department in Fiordland National Park is generally focused on maintaining deer-free areas (such as Secretary and Coal Islands, and the Cleddau valley) and continued intensive suppression to support habitat for the Takahē Recovery Programme in the Murchison Mountains.

Since 2005, the Department has worked closely with the Fiordland Wapiti Foundation on an annual control programme in the Wapiti Area using a combination of recreational hunter effort and coordinated professional control operations. In other areas, the main method of deer removal is commercial wild animal recovery operations and/or recreational hunting.

Intensive control, commercial wild animal recovery operations and community-led programmes have resulted in variable suppression of the deer population over time in Fiordland National Park. While extensive commercial venison recovery significantly reduced deer numbers in the 1970s to 1990s, market conditions have been increasingly unfavourable for commercial operations since then. Resourcing for official control work has also been variable over time. By contrast, the Fiordland Wapiti Foundation's control programme has resulted in relatively consistent levels of management activity since 2005, with operational costs routinely being covered by recreational hunters and coordinated wild animal recovery operations within the Wapiti Area.

## Hunting and recreation values

### Fiordland wapiti herd

The Fiordland wapiti herd holds historic significance to many New Zealanders and is a New Zealand hunting icon. Ten wapiti bulls (males) and eight wapiti cows (females) were released into Fiordland National Park at the head of Te Houhou / George Sound in 1905. Ten of these animals were gifted to New Zealand from the United States of America by then President Theodore Roosevelt and the remainder were purchased by the Tourism Department. Wapiti were initially protected to enable them to breed and establish in the area, with the first hunting licence being issued in 1923.

Red deer (*Cervus elaphus*) are also present in the Wapiti Area. It is not possible to physically separate the species within the Wapiti Area, and the two species interbreed. As a result, there are very few, if any, pure-bred wapiti or red deer present in this area. The herd largely comprises wapiti–red hybrids, with individual animals having more or less wapiti traits.

Fiordland wapiti have been sought-after trophy animals for many years, as they produce the largest round-antler trophies of any deer species in New Zealand and the only wild hunting opportunity for wapiti-type deer in the Southern Hemisphere. Hunters voluntarily support efforts to preserve the genetic integrity of the Fiordland wapiti herd.

### Hunting and managing for hunting purposes

Hunting Fiordland wapiti is a unique experience in the challenging yet rewarding environment of this remote part of Fiordland National Park. With no road access and few huts, the area provides an extreme wilderness experience and is a drawcard for thousands of hunters each year.

The favoured hunting period is during the bugle or rut, when emboldened bulls are vocal to attract cows. The bugle runs from mid-March to late April, and hunting access during this time has been managed by a ballot administered by the Fiordland Wapiti Foundation for over 20 years. The ballot involves the allocation of hunting opportunities to 25 hunting blocks (as shown on Map 2, **Appendix 1**) to around 600 recreational hunters. Within this framework, hunter activity within the blocks has been managed across four 10-day periods. The number of entries into the bugle ballot has far exceeded the hunting block allocations available for the past 10 years.

This Plan sets objectives and strategies for the management of Fiordland wapiti within the Wapiti Area for hunting purposes in a way that is consistent with the overriding considerations outlined in section 1 and in accordance with the Game Animal Council Act. This involves focusing on improving conservation outcomes and habitat health to improve animal quality and enhance the Fiordland wapiti hunting experience. It

encourages hunters to act as caretakers for the Wapiti Area (and the environment more broadly) rather than end-use consumers. A herd of special interest designation is the only management tool that specifically provides for the management of game animals for hunting purposes on public conservation land.

Managing the Fiordland Wapiti Herd of Special Interest for hunting purposes enables management to also focus on hunting experiences and outcomes, which includes improving herd genetics via selective targeting of Fiordland wapiti that have less wapiti-like traits. Over time, this can improve herd quality and promote animal and trophy characteristics that are sought by hunters.

Adoption of the Fiordland Wapiti Herd of Special Interest management approach is intended to encourage collective and concerted action for Fiordland wapiti management and the conservation of indigenous flora and fauna in the Wapiti Area. It seeks to do this by recognising and providing for a range of values, conservation outcomes, communities and recreational activities, and by building on recent collaborative efforts between the Fiordland Wapiti Foundation and the Department to improve Fiordland wapiti management. This, in turn, is expected to expand the number of people contributing to conservation efforts more broadly. Working with hunters and other interested parties to increase understanding of the impacts Fiordland wapiti and other introduced species have on indigenous species can contribute to hunters adopting a conservation mindset when hunting.

It is important to recognise the contribution hunters can and, in particular areas, already do make to conservation. The work of the Fiordland Wapiti Foundation in the Wapiti Area reflects this – through both management of the Fiordland wapiti population itself and wider conservation efforts, such as predator trapping and control work, hut restoration, and support for the Murchison Mountains Takahē Specially Protected Area.

### **Monitoring, research and reporting to support management**

Monitoring is an important aspect of herd management, as it provides information that allows the effectiveness of management actions to be evaluated and the objectives for managing Fiordland wapiti for hunting purposes to be met. A range of methods and tools are available to be used and adapted annually to ensure that the most appropriate method is being implemented to build on the data already collected within the timeframe in which the information is needed.

Research will allow the effectiveness of management to be improved and support the objectives and strategies for managing Fiordland wapiti for hunting purposes being met.

Reporting on herd management activities shows progress in meeting the objectives and strategies. This provides transparency and accountability to Treaty partners, stakeholders and members of the public who are interested in the management of Fiordland wapiti. Regular reporting will also support an efficient and effective plan review process.

### **Culture, heritage, community and stewardship values**

There are a range of views on Fiordland wapiti and how they should be managed. Some see Fiordland wapiti as an introduced species and so think that the animals should be removed. Others seek to realise the value of the herd as a part of the contemporary cultural and community context of Fiordland National Park. To support hunting, recreation and management of the Park, a network of huts was developed in the Wapiti Area over many years, with some dating back over a century. Today, huts remain at the head of George and Caswell Sounds, on the shores of Lakes Hankinson and Thomson, and in the Glaisnock and Worsley valleys. The Fiordland Wapiti Foundation has worked closely with the Department to maintain the huts under a community agreement since 2005. This builds on conservation projects undertaken by the Foundation to help protect indigenous species and habitats in the Wapiti Area, including:

- the deployment and operation of over 500 predator control traps;
- a range of native bird and animal surveys; and
- the removal of chamois when sighted during deer control and recovery operations.

As with the management of Fiordland wapiti, the Fiordland Wapiti Foundation's conservation and facility maintenance work has contributed to the management and preservation of conservation, recreation, cultural and heritage values associated with the Wapiti Area, enabling the Department to focus its resources on other priority areas.

Work by the Fiordland Wapiti Foundation and other groups that are committed to undertaking conservation activities contributes to the management and protection of public conservation land and should be acknowledged and recognised.

This reflects the values many associate with the Wapiti Area, particularly the Glaisnock Wilderness Area, which is highly valued for its remoteness and its landscape, which is relatively unmodified by human activity.

Most activities other than hunting in this part of Fiordland National Park occur on the boundaries of the Wapiti Area during the summer period and outside the peak hunting times. There is very little concessionaire activity in the Wapiti Area, particularly in the Glaisnock Wilderness Area, where applications to undertake commercial activity can only be granted where they are provided for in the *Fiordland National Park Management Plan 2007*.

The George Sound Route within the Wapiti Area is managed for its remote almost wilderness experience, with users needing to be experienced and self-reliant.

### 3 Objectives and strategies

This section sets out the approach to be taken for managing the Fiordland Wapiti Herd of Special Interest to ensure that the objectives for managing Fiordland wapiti for hunting purposes are met.

#### Objectives

Objective	Description
1	Fiordland wapiti are managed in a manner that allows for the maintenance of natural biodiversity by restoring ecological processes and communities of browsed indigenous flora and preventing the loss of indigenous species from their current range.
2	The Fiordland wapiti hunting experience is enhanced, and the Fiordland wapiti herd produces high-quality bulls for balloted hunters to take annually during the bugle.
3	Generate sufficient revenue through partnerships and sponsorships, seek to recover costs from the hunting community, and in-kind support is increased to ensure the delivery of this Plan is wholly or largely self-funded.
4	Engage the hunting community in the management of Fiordland wapiti and the Wapiti Area so the community provides support for local conservation and social initiatives.
5	The Treaty partner relationship with Papatipu Rūnanga and Te Rūnanga o Ngāi Tahu is strengthened, and opportunities for Papatipu Rūnanga to be involved and participate in the management of Fiordland wapiti are increased.
6	Knowledge and understanding of the dynamics between Fiordland wapiti and indigenous species and ecosystems are improved.
7	Monitoring enables adaptive management and demonstrates whether the management of Fiordland wapiti is achieving the objectives and strategies of this Plan.
8	Research supports and enhances management of Fiordland wapiti and the Wapiti Area.
9	Public reporting provides information on whether the Plan is achieving the Objectives.

#### Strategies

Strategy	Description
<b>1</b>	<b>Use a range of tools to manage the Fiordland Wapiti Herd of Special Interest and improve the hunting experience.</b>
<b>General</b>	
1.1	Set and review annual Fiordland wapiti control targets to align management of the populations with the objectives and strategies of this Plan.
1.2	Coordinate and manage recreational hunting and commercial and professional control operations to selectively remove Fiordland wapiti in a way that: <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>a) protects and enhances the hunting experience during the annual bugle;</li> <li>b) optimises genetic selection and minimises hybridisation;</li> <li>c) maintains a sex ratio of 1.1 bulls per cow; and</li> <li>d) achieves a proportional increase in older bulls in the herd.</li> </ul>
<b>Recreational hunting</b>	
1.3	Operate a hunting authorisation system for hunting Fiordland wapiti within the Wapiti Area, and require hunters to obtain an authorisation and adhere to its conditions.
1.4	Specify hunting conditions by notice in the Gazette, including conditions relating to the periods and times when Fiordland wapiti may be hunted and specific dates that apply to the bugle period. <sup>8</sup>
1.5	Use a ballot and block system during the bugle period to allocate authorisations and manage recreational hunting of Fiordland wapiti.

<sup>8</sup> Game Animal Council Act 2013, section 18(2).



Strategy	Description
1.6	Allow recreational hunting outside the bugle period that focuses on Fiordland wapiti with fewer wapiti-like traits and cows rather than bulls.
1.7	Seek to charge fees to hunt Fiordland wapiti to cover costs associated with managing the Fiordland Wapiti Herd of Special Interest, such as advertising, hunter education and management, and animal management and control activities undertaken throughout the year.
1.8	Use any revenue generated through fees, additional to that required for management of the Fiordland Wapiti Herd of Special Interest, for conservation initiatives within the Wapiti Area or other areas of Fiordland National Park.
<b>Commercial recovery and professional control operations</b>	
1.9	Use authorised commercial recovery and professional control operations as part of Fiordland wapiti management, applying the following criteria: <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>a) Seek to incentivise commercial recovery contributions to control targets where necessary through subsidies funded by fees, sponsorship and other commercial partnerships associated with the Fiordland Wapiti Herd of Special Interest.</li> <li>b) Focus professional control operations on difficult-to-access areas where recreational hunting and commercial recovery operations cannot meet control targets, or doing so is not commercially viable.</li> <li>c) Seek to meet professional control operation costs through fees, sponsorship and other commercial partnerships associated with the Fiordland Wapiti Herd of Special Interest.</li> <li>d) Focus commercial recovery and professional control operations on deer with the least wapiti-like characteristics.</li> </ul>
<b>2</b>	<b>Undertake monitoring and research to support management and decision making.</b>
<b>Monitoring</b>	
2.1	Develop and implement a monitoring programme that includes the following: <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>a) Ecological monitoring that covers both alpine areas (above the bushline) and forested areas (below the bushline), which may include, but is not limited to, the following methods and tools: <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>i. Seedling ratio index</li> <li>ii. Permanent 20 x 20 metre plots</li> <li>iii. Alpine deer browse</li> <li>iv. Faecal pellet counts</li> </ul> </li> <li>b) Exploring the use of new monitoring methods, tools and technologies, and seeking the views of Papatipu Rūnanga, the Southland Conservation Board and the Department prior to their use in the Wapiti Area.</li> <li>c) Monitoring the hunter harvest, which may include, but is not limited to, monitoring the hunter contribution to control targets and the age and length of jaws to determine herd age structure, genetic integrity and growth rates.</li> <li>d) Monitoring voluntary and partnership contributions to the key management objectives.</li> <li>e) Monitoring hunter satisfaction with the management of Fiordland wapiti, including, but not limited to the: <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>i. quality of Fiordland wapiti available; and</li> <li>ii. ballot and authorisation process, including the information available to hunters prior to and after their hunting trips.</li> </ul> </li> </ul>
2.2	Undertake ecological monitoring in accordance with relevant standards used or set by the Department.
2.3	Include the results from all monitoring in an annual report (see strategy 4 below).

Strategy	Description
<b>Research</b>	
2.4	Seek opportunities to undertake or support research relevant to the management of Fiordland wapiti and/or their effects within the Wapiti Area.
2.5	Explore opportunities with Papatipu Rūnanga to incorporate mātauranga Māori (Māori knowledge) in management and research activities, and increase understanding of the impact of Fiordland wapiti on taonga species.
2.6	Undertake relevant research that may relate to, but is not limited to, the: <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>a) changes in herd health and genetic composition of the Fiordland wapiti herd;</li> <li>b) spread, behaviours and effects of Fiordland wapiti on indigenous flora, and how this compares with that of other deer species;</li> <li>c) movement patterns and habitat utilisation of Fiordland wapiti within the Wapiti Area; and</li> <li>d) potential impacts of aerial hunting on the movements and habitat utilisation of Fiordland wapiti.</li> </ul>
2.7	Address relevant research findings in an annual report.
<b>3</b>	<b>Foster partnerships and community stewardship.</b>
<b>Partnerships</b>	
3.1	Seek to develop partnerships and commercial opportunities associated with Fiordland wapiti to help meet the costs of implementing this Plan.
3.2	Engage with Papatipu Rūnanga when developing partnerships with others to ensure that the interests and values of Ngāi Tahu in relation to such partnerships are considered.
3.3	Actively promote the Fiordland wapiti hunting experience to domestic and international markets.
<b>Stewardship</b>	
3.4	Provide educational opportunities for communities, hunters and interested parties about the: <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>a) contribution that managing Fiordland wapiti for hunting purposes makes to improving forest and herd health;</li> <li>b) impacts of Fiordland wapiti on the environment and conservation values, and what the objectives of this Plan are working to achieve;</li> <li>c) selection of Fiordland wapiti when hunting to improve conservation, herd health and recreational outcomes;</li> <li>d) Fiordland wapiti hunting experience;</li> <li>e) visitor requirements and behaviours in Fiordland National Park; and</li> <li>f) requirements for hunting safely.</li> </ul>
3.5	Seek opportunities to work with Papatipu Rūnanga when developing hunter authorisation, education and promotional materials to ensure that Ngāi Tahu values and cultural information are recognised and provided for.
3.6	Seek opportunities to work with Papatipu Rūnanga to ensure that management activities recognise and reflect Ngāi Tahu values.
3.7	Provide a range of opportunities for the hunting community and other interested parties to actively contribute to Fiordland wapiti herd management and control activities.
3.8	Work with local communities in Te Anau and Southland to develop opportunities to participate in activities such as open days, hunter training and education days.
3.9	Work with the commercial and recreational hunting communities to facilitate and support social initiatives.
3.10	Seek to provide a range of opportunities for the hunting community and other interested parties to contribute to wider conservation initiatives within the Wapiti Area, such as predator trapping and control programmes and the maintenance of historic huts and public recreation infrastructure.

Strategy	Description
<b>4</b>	<b>Undertake annual planning and reporting on management activities.</b>
<i>Annual operational plan</i>	
4.1	<p>Develop an annual operational plan for the activities planned for the coming year to help achieve the objectives. This operational plan should include, but is not limited to:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>a) setting annual population management and control targets, including the sex ratio of Fiordland wapiti and specific locations within the Wapiti Area for control;</li> <li>b) outlining methods to achieve targets, such as managed recreational hunting, commercial wild animal recovery operations and professional control operations;</li> <li>c) determining the annual ballot process (including ballot times and a breakdown of block dates);</li> <li>d) identifying any other planned work or initiatives; and</li> <li>e) identifying parties or entities responsible for management activities and related timeframes.</li> </ul>
<i>Annual report</i>	
4.2	<p>Prepare and publish an annual report detailing the activities undertaken in the previous year, including, but not limited to:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>a) overall herd management, including the number of Fiordland wapiti controlled, the control method(s) used, areas where control occurred and the control effort;</li> <li>b) results and outcomes of monitoring activities, such as ecological monitoring and hunter participation and satisfaction evaluations;</li> <li>c) key metrics of the ballot process and related outcomes, such as the total numbers of ballot entrants, bugle participants and Fiordland wapiti taken during the ballot period, and the condition and quality of the animals;</li> <li>d) sponsorships and commercial partnerships;</li> <li>e) hunter training, education and community initiatives;</li> <li>f) wider conservation activities supported; and</li> <li>g) opportunities to improve management going forward.</li> </ul>
4.3	<p>Include financial reporting in the annual report in relation to:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>a) ballot processes and fees;</li> <li>b) Fiordland wapiti control and other conservation activities;</li> <li>c) overall expenditure on management of the Fiordland Wapiti Herd of Special Interest and contributions from the Department and/or central government; and</li> <li>d) monitoring.</li> </ul>
4.4	Work with the Department when preparing the annual report prior to its finalisation and public release.
4.5	Present the annual report to Papatipu Rūnanga and the Southland Conservation Board, if requested.

## **4 Compliance, review and enforcement**

### **Plan compliance and review**

This Plan binds the Game Animal Council.

It must be reviewed at intervals of not more than five years, in accordance with section 19 of the Game Animal Council Act. Unless otherwise directed by the Minister for Hunting and Fishing, Plan reviews are to be initiated early in the fourth year of a five-year Plan cycle.

The review will consider annual reports, monitoring data and results, and relevant research as part of an assessment of whether the Plan's objectives and strategies are delivering the benefits expected to be gained by managing the Fiordland wapiti for hunting purposes. The review will also address the overriding considerations.

Depending on review findings, the Minister for Hunting and Fishing may determine amendment to the Plan is not required.

Where the Minister for Hunting and Fishing considers review findings warrant amendment of this Plan, any such amendments will be made following the process set out in the Game Animal Council Act. This includes the public notification of an amended Plan and an opportunity for interested parties to make submissions.

### **Fiordland Wapiti Herd of Special Interest compliance and enforcement**

Schedule 1 of the Game Animal Council Act sets out the compliance and enforcement framework that applies to the Fiordland Wapiti Herd of Special Interest (if designated).

The Director-General of the Department may appoint and remove enforcement officers and honorary enforcement officers. Officers have the power to prevent or stop offending, require personal details, to search, stop any activity, and seize any animal, animal product or thing that provides evidence that an offence has been committed.

A person who hunts or kills any animal in a designated area for a herd of special interest without the appropriate authorisation, licence or permit is liable on conviction to a fine not exceeding \$5,000.<sup>9</sup>

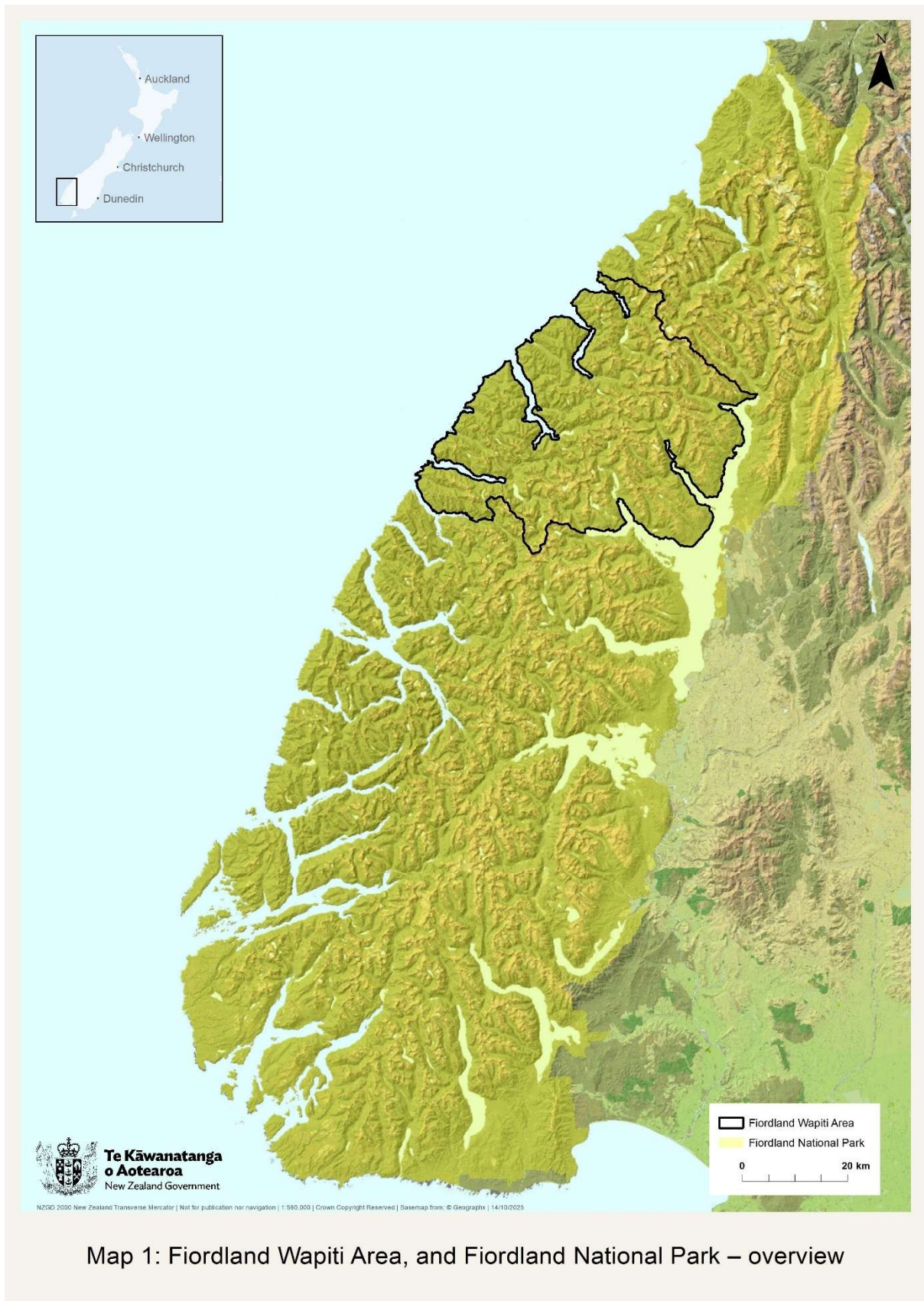
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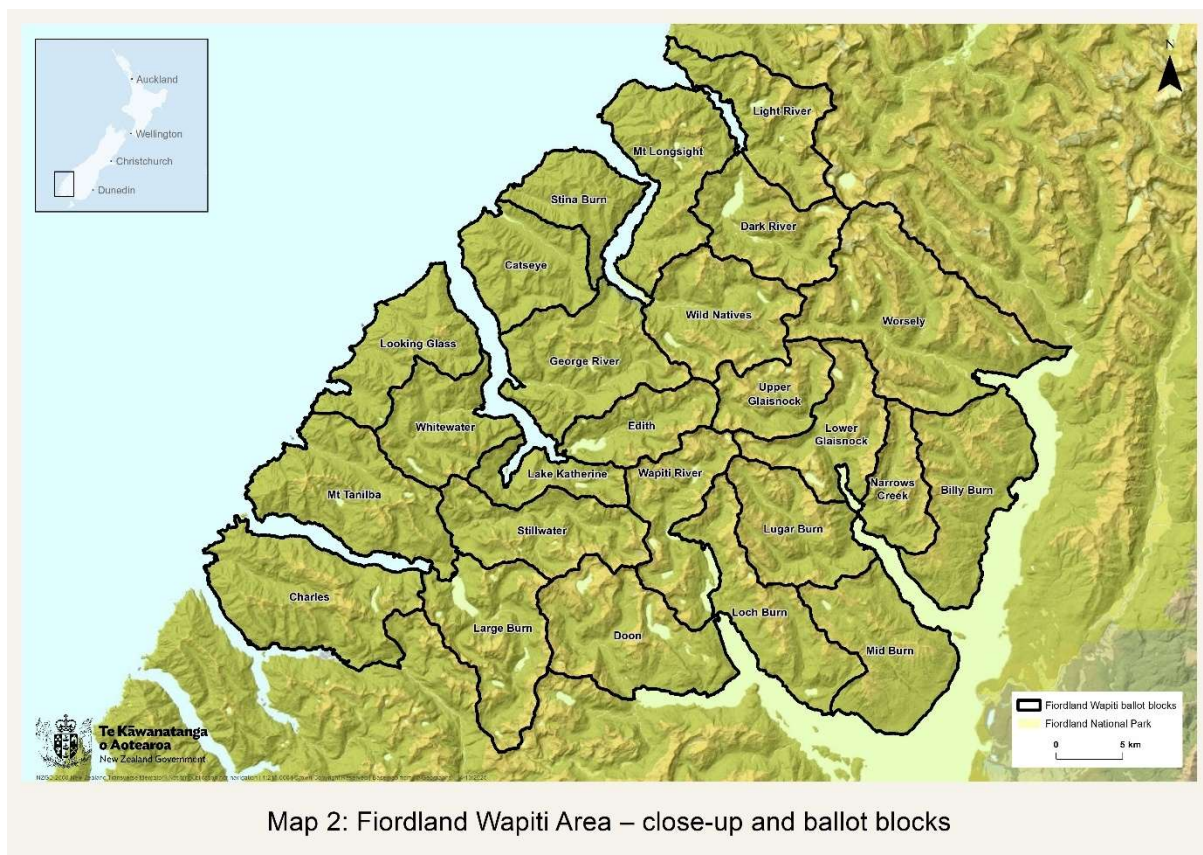
<sup>9</sup> Game Animal Council Act 2013, section 30(1).



## Appendices

### Appendix 1: Maps





## Appendix 2: Glossary

### Authorisation

Collective term for types of approvals (whether permits or otherwise) issued by the Minister for Hunting and Fishing under section 18 of the Game Animal Council Act 2013.

### Ballot and block system

An annual lottery process that is used to allocate pre-defined hunting areas to hunters through a random ballot draw. Those who are successful in a ballot receive an authorisation to hunt in a particular block for specified dates within the ballot period (for example, a 10-day period). Ballot systems can be used to protect and enhance the hunting experience during peak times.

### Bugle

A distinctive, high-pitched, whistle-like sound produced by bull wapiti during the wapiti breeding season to attract cows. The breeding season generally occurs from mid-March to late April in the Wapiti Area and is known amongst hunters as the 'bugle period'. This is when wapiti bulls are most vocal and less cautious, which enhances the hunting experience.

### Commercial hunting

Hunting undertaken by professional hunters for their livelihood and intended to maximise the take or kill of animals. This does not include guided recreational hunting, transportation of recreational hunters or other means of assistance for recreational hunting for which a consideration is paid.

### Community

Any individual or group (whether statutory or non-statutory, formal or informal, commercial or non-commercial) with an interest in a particular conservation issue.

### Conservation board

An independent body established under section 6L of the Conservation Act 1987. The primary functions and powers of conservation boards are set out in sections 6M and 6N of the Conservation Act and section 30 of the National Parks Act 1980. These functions include advising the New Zealand Conservation Authority or Director-General of the Department of Conservation on conservation matters of importance in their area. They also have an important conservation advocacy role. The relevant conservation board for this Plan is the Southland Conservation Board.

### Control target

A target number of deer to be removed from the Wapiti Area via recreational hunting, commercial hunting and professional control operations on an annual basis, as set out in an annual operation plan.

### Fiordland wapiti

Hybrids between wapiti deer (*Cervus canadensis*) and red deer (*Cervus elaphus*) that occur within the Wapiti Area and are subject to the Gazette notice designating the Fiordland Wapiti Herd of Special Interest.

### Fiordland Wapiti Herd of Special Interest Area (Wapiti Area)

The area within Fiordland National Park that is subject to the Gazette notice designating the Fiordland Wapiti Herd of Special Interest, as shown on the maps in **Appendix 1**. This area reflects the Wapiti Hunting Area identified on Map 7 – Visitor Setting in the *Fiordland National Park Management Plan 2007*.<sup>10</sup>

### Herd of special interest

A species of game animal in a specified area of public conservation land that the responsible Minister has, in accordance with the Game Animal Council Act 2013, formally designated to be managed for hunting purposes while ensuring that conservation values continue to be protected.

### Indigenous flora

Plants that have established in New Zealand without the assistance of humans, vehicles or aircraft. This includes species that are unique to New Zealand, as well as those that may be found elsewhere in the world.

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<sup>10</sup> [doc.govt.nz/fnp-management-plan](http://doc.govt.nz/fnp-management-plan)

**Minister for Hunting and Fishing**

The Minister responsible for the Game Animal Council Act 2013.

**Professional control operation**

Activities to search for and shoot wild animals as a non-recreational and non-commercial activity specifically to help achieve control targets. Professional control operations generally do not involve recovery of the animals or any parts of the animals. Professional control operations may selectively target wapiti based on the sex and condition of individual animals.

**Recreational hunting**

Hunting undertaken by recreationists where there is no commercial gain involved in the activity.

**World Heritage Area**

A site designated under the United Nations Educational, Scientific and Cultural Organization (UNESCO) World Heritage Convention as being of outstanding universal value for its cultural or natural heritage.

**Wild animal recovery / venison recovery**

Wild animal recovery refers to activities involving the use of an aircraft to search for, shoot or immobilise wild animals and the recovery of those wild animals (whether dead or alive) or any part of those animals. Venison recovery refers to the above activities when specifically recovering venison meat from a dead deer.

**Wilderness area**

Any part of a national park that has been set apart as a wilderness area under section 14 of the National Parks Act 1980.