



Addendum to the Officer's Report to Decision Maker

Request for further information from Michael Slater, Deputy Director General Operations.

You have been provided with an officer's report with an analysis of the current situation including the following options.

Options:

Option 1:

Retain the conditions of the permit as approved in June 2015, and continue conversations with all parties about future management at place through the sector wide WARO conversation and Wellington Conservation Management Strategy review/development - noting that the Ruahine Forest Park will be covered by the Wellington CMS.

Or

Option 2:

Consider such options as suggested by the WARO operators in the further discussion post engagement report:

- a. set up a measured trial for the recreational hunters in the red zones to demonstrate their effectiveness (without the presence of WARO at all), that can be used to inform future conversations about WARO zoning in the Ruahines. This can then be discussed with the data that will be collected, and other measurements made during term of the WARO permit of the areas open where WARO is taking place. Noting that through the information requirement conditions in the national WARO permit, WARO information will be collected and collated to show where it has been taking place.*
- b. The Minister's delegate considers making a decision to exclude the Ruahines in any future North Island permits applied for during the current national term - through to June 2018. Noting that if an operator wished to apply for the Ruahines separately this could be assessed on its own merits, and subject to its own concession process and processing fees.*

Or

Option 3:

Seek to formally negotiate a mutually agreed variation to the permit, with all the holders of North Island WARO permits, of the operating conditions. Noting that at this time WARO operators do not consider there are any mutually agreeable reductions to their existing authorisations about when and where WARO should take place in the Ruahines.

In addition to this report you would like further assessment undertaken on the risk and real impact to the existing operators of changing timeframes when the WARO activity may be undertaken back to the way the previous 2009-14 concession managed activity in the Ruahines. You understand that the impact of the change on the operators is not real until the 1st December. But you would like to understand when the optimal timing is for WARO activity and how this impacts on recreational hunting.

Assessment of the risk and real impact to the existing operators of changing timeframes back to the way the previous concession managed WARO activity in the Ruahines

The Department has not been made specifically aware of any contracts that the WARO operators have entered into for the period commencing 1 December 2015, and note that there may be effects on both the meat processor of any carcasses that may have been planned to be harvested during this time (in term of their business planning - the operation of their plant and any marketing of product) but also where the WARO operator is marketing their own product (and using the plant as a toll plant) - an impact on any supply agreements with customers who they may have entered supply agreements with and any

arrangements with the processor they have made in terms of receiving and processing the carcasses on a toll basis.

However one operator Garry Moar did write a letter to the Associate Minister of Conservation – Hon Dunne outlining his reasons for supporting continuing the extended season (see Appendix or doc-2642992). These include an assessment of the increasing wild animal population and the lack of effective impact the restricted WARO activity has been able to make on controlling these, and from a commercial perspective, that the previously restrictive access means their business effectively shuts down for five months of the year which interrupts continuity of supply to their markets and subsequently makes marketing ‘extremely difficult’. Mr Moar also considers that increased WARO would contribute to improving the quality of the wild animal population that would remain.

When asked whether or not there were any changes to the conditions around where and when WARO took place within the Ruahines – the local WARO operators specifically stated they did not wish to reduce the days, as with weather restrictions and the impact of the 2 km pesticide buffer they consider the opportunity is already reduced. How they might actually respond to any unilateral variation to their permits is unknown, although they would have the right to seek a review.

As of 11 December 2015, further discussions have been held with the two WARO operators who undertake the activity in the park. They have agreed to forgo undertaking WARO activity during the times when recreational hunters are more likely to be in the park, and to return to operating under a “restricted season” in the parts of the park where WARO activity may be carried out for the balance of the current WARO permit (through to 30 June 2018).

Both operators acknowledge the frustrations that have occurred around this process, and also made it clear that the population growth in deer is definitely causing impact on the natural environment of the park. The operators clearly articulated increasing numbers and the fact the animals are getting too small to be productive for WARO harvesting at some times of the year. This is a clear sign of competition for food associated with increasing numbers. The Department agreed to actively work with the WARO hunters and the recreational hunters to fully understand what is occurring here and finding solutions that work for all parties. This may include WARO activity being re-introduced to areas within the Park on a short-term basis outside the restricted season to facilitate wild animal control where this is considered necessary at the request of the Department.

[text redacted from public copy]

The Department (Reg Kemper – Lower NI Operations Director) has committed to undertaking monitoring to better understand the many anecdotal reports of increased wild animal numbers in the park and their effects on the values of the park. The Ruahine Forest Park Management Plan 1992 provides for departmental control operations to be undertaken should this prove to be necessary. As part of the discussions with affected WARO operators, it was agreed that where robust information identifies there are adverse effects on the park’s values at particular areas within the park, the Department will use these operators to in effect undertake departmental wild animal control through short-term WARO operations in these specific areas. These will be within the parts of the park where WARO activity may occur at other times of the year, as at this time it is not considered appropriate to extend into the prohibited “helicopter free” areas within the park.

It should be noted that further discussions have not been held with other non-affected operators, and their position remains as stated in the Officers Report for the review of the conditions around where and when WARO occurs in the Ruahine Forest Park.

When the optimal timing is for WARO activity and how this impacts on recreational hunting.

The most productive hunting season for WARO activity, as per statistics from MPI, is October – May. They note a lull in April – but this reflects the Roar closures, rather than any operational difficulty for WARO operators.

During Winter in the Ruahines the bulk of the deer retreat to below the bushline – making the harvesting of animals via WARO much less efficient for obvious reasons. However if the area was closed to WARO during this time – the WARO operators may be able to find access to private land that may need WARO control and may be more open country and therefore efficient/effective to hunt during this time.

Any further options available to decision maker?

Within the context of the current legislation the following further option(s) might be considered:

1. Closing the Ruahines to WARO during Winter (1 June – 30 September) each year when the impact on the WARO operators would be less because the animals would be wintering over in the bush, but would provide the recreational hunters with 4 months of extra WARO free activity over the standard Christmas and ROAR closures. On paper this would be in keeping with the provisions of the Wild Animal Control Act – in contributing to the coordination of hunting measures – i.e. making land available to one participant when the other party's effectiveness is restricted. In practicality the recreational hunters may not wish to hunt at this time of year due to the winter conditions.

OR

2. Extending the Christmas closure from its current end on 15 January through to until Waitangi Day each year to give recreational hunters three more weeks of WARO free activity during the summer holiday period. This would be more disruptive to the WARO operators in terms of continuity of supply during their main hunting season, as they would be unable to operate for almost seven weeks over that period rather than the current 3½ week closure, but may allow recreational hunters more time to hunt particularly when they may be on holidays

OR

3. Seek the mutual variation to the current North Island National WARO permits for affected WARO operators to return to the 2009 restrictions (where WARO hunting was authorised to occur only between 1 May – 30 November) in the Ruahine FP, while also where the Minister considers this necessary allowing for short-term WARO activity outside the restricted season at specific places and for specified times. [text redacted from public copy]

AND/ OR

4. As suggested in the original recommendations - The Minister's delegate considers making a decision to exclude the Ruahines in any future North Island permits applied for during the current national term - through to June 2018. Noting that if an operator wished to apply for the Ruahines separately this could be assessed on its own merits, and subject to its own concession process and processing fees.

With regard to the next three years through to June 2018, Option 1 may have the least impact on industry arrangements and in terms of setting a precedent of extending any closure times under the current legislation and statutory framework about controlling the effects of wild animals.

If through the proposed industry and sector wide conversation about the future of WARO on public conservation land, changes are agreed to at an industry level and suggested for implementation as to how and when WARO and recreational hunting are integrated across the landscape. And if any herds of special interest are established, these combined matters will change the framework that WARO is assessed against and their changes implemented either during the term of the current permit (in the case of herds of special interest being formally established) or at the expiry of the current permit for the other matters.

Recommendations to decision maker.

Upon consideration of the original officers report for the review of conditions about where and when WARO should take place in the Ruahines, plus the further options identified in this addendum.

Options:

Option 1:

Retain the conditions of the permit as approved in June 2015, and continue conversations with all parties about future management at place through the sector wide WARO conversation and Wellington Conservation Management Strategy review/development - noting that the Ruahine Forest Park will be covered by the Wellington CMS.

OR

Option 2:

Consider such options as suggested by the WARO operators in the further discussion post engagement report:

- a. set up a measured trial for the recreational hunters in the red zones to demonstrate their effectiveness (without the presence of WARO at all), that can be used to inform future conversations about WARO zoning in the Ruahines. This can then be discussed with the data that will be collected, and other measurements made during term of the WARO permit of the areas open where WARO is taking place. Noting that through the information requirement conditions in the national WARO permit, WARO information will be collected and collated to show where it has been taking place.
- b. Moved to option 6

OR

Option 3:

Agree to the mutual variation to the current NI National WARO permits for affected WARO operators to return to the 2009 restrictions (where WARO hunting was authorised to occur only between 1 May - 30 November) in the Ruahine FP, while also where the Minister considers this necessary allowing for short-term WARO activity outside the restricted season at specific places and for specified times.

[text redacted from public copy]

OR

Option 4 (note revised to have regard to new Option 3):

Seek to formally negotiate a mutually agreed variation to the permit operating conditions with all holders of North Island WARO permits. It should be noted that option 3 covers the 2 affected permit holders only.

Sub-Option 4a:

Should Options 3 and/or 7 be approved, agree to seek to formally negotiate with other current non-affected North Island WARO permit holders to mutually vary their permits to remove the Ruahines.

OR

Option 5:

Closing the Ruahines to WARO during Winter (1 June - 30 September) each year when the impact on the WARO operators would be less because the animals would be wintering over in the bush, but would provide the recreational hunters with 4 months of extra WARO free activity in addition to the standard Christmas and ROAR closures. On paper this would be in keeping with the provisions of the Wild Animal Control Act - in contributing to the coordination of hunting measures - i.e. making land available to one participant when the other party's effectiveness is restricted. In practicality the recreational hunters may not wish to hunt at this time of year due to the winter conditions.

OR

Option 6:

Extending the Christmas closure from its current end on 15 January through to until Waitangi Day each year to give recreational hunters three more weeks of WARO free activity during the summer holiday period. This would be more disruptive to the WARO operators in terms of continuity of supply during their main hunting season, as they would be unable to operate for almost seven weeks over that period rather than the current 3½ week closure, but may allow recreational hunters more time to hunt particularly when they may be on holidays etc.

AND/ OR

Option 7:

The Minister's delegate considers making a decision to exclude the Ruahines in any future North Island permits applied for during the current national term - through to June 2018. Noting that if an operator wished to apply for the Ruahines separately this could be assessed on its own merits, and subject to its own concession process and processing fees.

Decision:

Option 1

Option 2a

Option 3 **Approved**

[text redacted from public copy]

Option 4 **Approved**

Sub-option 4a

Option 5

Option 6

Option 7

Reason for decision:

Have considered this decision in the context of additional information provided whilst acknowledging there remain issues with regard to the residual deer population that will be assessed through a monitoring programme. Note the national North Island offer will reflect these changes to the dates.

Signed:

Michael Slater
Deputy Director General Operations
Date: 16/12/2015