

New National WARO Concession - Continuing consultation



Wild Animal Recovery Operations (WARO)

- Nationally, the presence of deer is increasing across public conservation land.
- This means more control effort is needed to protect native vegetation from deer.
- WARO is a key tool, alongside recreational hunting, to control deer on public conservation land.

What is happening with the new national WARO concession?

- A WARO concession is needed any time an aircraft is used commercially on public conservation land to search for, shoot or recover wild animals (or parts of wild animals).
- DOC is working to establish a new national WARO concession. This work includes determining WARO access over public conservation land.
- Although the new national WARO concession does not include a publicly notified concession process, DOC has invited comment from key public conservation land user groups to help inform land access decisions.
- A decision on the wording of the new National WARO concession is expected in 2019 and the concession will be offered to operators soon after.
- Interim WARO concessions have been issued to eligible operators to allow continuity of WARO activity from the expiry of the 2015-2018 national WARO concession until a new concession can be issued.

How do we decide which land should be open to WARO?

- The overriding legislation for WARO concessions is the Wild Animal Control Act 1977. DOC also has a Policy Statement on Deer Control. Both require deer on public conservation land to be controlled to protect the land's natural values. The Deer Control Policy states, "*commercial and recreational hunters will generally have open access to public conservation land*".
- While taking into account the effects on other users, legislation and policy mean that DOC's over-riding concern is the protection of indigenous biodiversity. This is why some submission requests to further restrict WARO have not been adopted.
- Effects on other users, in most instances, are managed by permit conditions such as the WARO exclusion periods over Christmas, Easter and the deer roar.
- The default position for WARO access is that land should be open for WARO unless there is a specific reason for it to be excluded. Such reasons might include a conflicting land use (such as a grazing concession) or very high year-round public use area (e.g. Otago Central Rail Trail).

FAQs over the page

Frequently asked questions

Why do you need to control deer?

Deer eat native vegetation and they target their favourite species, such as Broadleaf, preventing regeneration. This can cause significant changes to the structure and composition of native ecosystems.

How did DOC consider the June/July feedback from stakeholders?

Districts and regions considered location-specific feedback and provided comments on these to a national panel. Feedback was assessed against the Wild Animal Control Act, Deer Control Policy, other legislation and relevant statutory planning documents. The national panel made revised recommendations based on all this information. For many locations, the feedback received wasn't consistent with the legislation or deer control policy and so couldn't be accepted.

Who is the national panel?

This is made up of DOC staff from Legal, Technical – threats and Permissions (concessions).

Why run another round of consultation?

When DOC began the June consultation, we informed stakeholders we would seek further feedback where land recommendations changed as a result of the consultation process. DOC wants to give all stakeholders who initially provided feedback the chance to have their say on the new, proposed changes.

How can you say the recommendations allow for recreational hunter effort, when we have told you WARO disincentivises recreational hunting?

DOC needs both recreational hunters and WARO to control wild animals. In general terms, both are also required by legislation (but depending on the land classification) and Deer Control Policy. History has shown if WARO is completely excluded, deer numbers generally increase. Recreational hunter effort is taken into account by having (as a minimum) WARO exclusion periods during Christmas, the Roar, and Easter, and by having some areas where WARO is excluded year-round.

Why is feedback for this second round of consultation limited to places only which have changed?

The purpose of consultation is to ensure we have feedback on the land recommendations to better inform the decision. Where the recommendations have not changed, we do not need additional feedback. Where land recommendations have changed, DOC wants to ensure previous submitters have the chance to comment on the change before decisions are made.

What will you do with this further feedback?

Further feedback will be considered and assessed against the Wild Animal Control Act, Deer Control Policy, other relevant legislation and statutory plans. Recommendations will then be finalised before going to the decision-maker (the Director Planning, Permissions & Land).

How does this process relate to the tahr control operation?

Tahr are not included in the national WARO concession. They are managed under the Himalayan Tahr Control Plan 1993 (HTCP). Any aerial shooting of tahr must be consistent with the Wild Animal Control Act and the HTCP. Separate authorisations are required for commercial aerial control of tahr.