

Memo for CORM-1500: Response to letter from Minister James Meager

To	Minister of Conservation	Date submitted	12 February 2025	Security Level	In Confidence
From	Sam Thomas, Director, Policy, s9(2)(a)				
Attachments	Attachment A – draft response for CORM-1500				

Purpose – Te aronga

1. This paper provides you with further information on the Minister for Hunting and Fishing's legislative bids and broader work programme. A letter accepting his request for a meeting is at Attachment A.

Background and context – Te horopaki

2. The new Minister for Hunting and Fishing, Hon. James Meager, recently sent you a letter explaining his bids for the 2025 legislative agenda. As some of these bids overlap with areas within your portfolio, he suggested a meeting to discuss these matters. There are other issues of interest you may also wish to explore in a meeting.

The Minister for Hunting and Fishing has three legislative bids

Game Animal Council Act Amendment Bill

3. This bid relates to the Cabinet paper you recently received for Ministerial consultation titled: "Amendments to the Game Animal Council Act 2013 to clarify the provision for Herds of Special Interest in national parks."
4. A Herd of Special Interest (HOSI) allows a herd of animals on public land, including national parks, to be managed specifically for hunting outcomes while preserving conservation outcomes. No HOSI have been introduced to date.
5. DOC considers this legislative change will remove existing risks of legal challenge and provide greater certainty for managing introduced species with associated conservation benefits in National Parks.
6. Minister Meager intends to take this legislation under urgency on Budget night. We expect that this may take some conservation stakeholders by surprise. This may result in increased contact with you or the Minister for Hunting and Fishing to question why they were not involved in a consultation process.
7. You have two portfolio interests in this legislation.
 - **National Parks Act 1980.** The proposed legislative amendment would clarify that the National Parks Act requirement to 'exterminate introduced animals as far as possible' does not apply to animals that are part of a HOSI. This would negate the need for a determination from the New Zealand Conservation Authority to establish a HOSI in a national park. There is no intention to amend the National Parks Act itself, or dilute conservation outcomes.

- This amendment would support National's Hunting and Fishing manifesto commitment to introduce HOSI for sika, wapiti and tahr (the latter two being largely in national parks). An amendment would enable development and consultation of HOSI in a national park to progress without uncertainty around whether the process could be legally challenged.
- **Implications for UNESCO World Heritage Status:** The wapiti deer herd sits within Fiordland National Park, which is within the *Te Wahipounamu - South West New Zealand* World Heritage Area. As per our international agreements, we must assess likely impacts of a HOSI against the area's Statement of Universal Value (SOUV) prior to establishing a HOSI. This assessment will take place during the statutory design process to establish a HOSI for the wapiti herd, which will include public notification and statutory consultation.
- We do not believe this assessment will raise any issues of concern as the role of hunters in supporting conservation outcomes is already noted in the SOUV.

Out of scope

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ENDS

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Annex A: Letter from the Minister of Conservation to the Minister for Hunting and Fishing

Attached as a separate document

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