

Briefing to the incoming Minister for Hunting and Fishing

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Department of
Conservation
Te Papa Atawhai



**Te Kāwanatanga
o Aotearoa**
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CONTENTS

Purpose	4
Your priorities	4
Scope of the portfolio	5
Wild animal management (deer, tahr, chamois, feral goats and feral pigs)	6
Sports fish and game bird management	13
Native freshwater fisheries and whitebait management	18
The legislative and decision-making frameworks for hunting and fishing	19
Vote Conservation funding for wild and game animal management	22
Government priorities	23
Immediate priorities and key upcoming decisions	25
Key people at DOC	26
Appendix 1: Legislation related to the portfolio	28
Appendix 2: Access Charter for Recreational Hunting and Fishing on Public Conservation Land and Waters	30

Purpose

1. The purpose of this briefing is to support you in your portfolio responsibilities as Minister for Hunting and Fishing. It provides you with a summary of hunting and fishing issues, key roles and responsibilities, and current priorities.

Your priorities

2. The Government priorities established for this portfolio under the previous Minister are:
 - Supporting Fish & Game New Zealand and the Game Animal Council.
 - Introducing Herds of Special Interest (HOSI) to balance hunting and conservation objectives.
 - Increasing hunting and fishing access to public conservation land.
 - Managing game animals as valued introduced species to ensure numbers are best managed for each region's individual interests.
3. This briefing covers these areas in more detail. Further advice can be provided to you on request. In the coming weeks, DOC will work with you to determine how to progress your priorities for this portfolio.

Scope of the portfolio

The Hunting and Fishing portfolio covers game animals, game birds, and sports fish.

4. The Hunting and Fishing portfolio is led by DOC and covers legislation and policy relating to:
 - ‘game animals’ (deer, tahr, chamois, and feral pigs)
 - ‘sports fish’ (trout, salmon and three other introduced fish)
 - ‘game birds’ (e.g. pheasants and several ducks).
5. In January 2024, the Prime Minister confirmed this means that the Minister for Hunting and Fishing is responsible, and has legislative authority, for:
 - All matters pertaining to recreational and commercial hunting of deer, tahr, chamois, and feral pigs on public conservation land.
 - All matters relating to the New Zealand Fish and Game Council, fish and game councils, freshwater sports fishing, game bird hunting, the Game Bird Habitat Trust Board, and sports fish and game management, including Taupō trout fishery, game bird hunting preserves, Wildlife (Chatham Islands) Notice 2015, and sports fishing and game bird hunting guides.
 - All matters relating to the Game Animal Council Act 2013 (GAC Act), including the Game Animal Council and herds of special interest.
 - Matters relating to recreational and commercial hunting under the Wild Animal Control Act 1977, including aurally-assisted trophy hunting and wild animal recovery operations.
 - Matters relating to recreational and commercial firearm safety and use on public conservation land, where these are covered by conservation legislation.
 - Decisions on access to public conservation land that primarily impact recreation hunters and fishers (other access decisions will remain with the Minister of Conservation).
6. The Hunting and Fishing portfolio does not cover management of hunting and fishing of other species such as eels, marine fish, rabbits and hares, possums and wallabies. Marine fishing is the responsibility of the Minister for Oceans and Fisheries, and the Minister of Conservation is responsible for management of all animals on public conservation land that are not sports fish or game animals.

DOC has two broad functions relevant to this portfolio – species management and land management

7. DOC’s functions that relate to hunting and fishing can be categorised in two ways:
 - Species management – functions relating to the species that are hunted or fished regardless of the location of the animals.
 - Land management and visitor services – functions related to the management of public conservation land and recreation on that land, including controls on the use of firearms, the control of introduced species and the provision of recreation opportunities.
8. Both introduced and indigenous species are hunted and fished. Some of these species pose a significant threat to conservation and primary production values, which means that hunting and fishing are valuable forms of control. Other species are threatened or form critical parts of natural ecosystems, which means that hunting and fishing need to be managed to maintain species’ populations.

Wild animal management (deer, tahr, chamois, feral goats and feral pigs)

DOC leads the wild animal management system and works closely with a diverse range of interests

9. DOC collaborates extensively with groups across the wild animal management system, including hunters, environmental groups, landowners and councils. For example, DOC plays a key leadership role in partnership with hapū and iwi, and the Game Animal Council to implement Te Ara Kia Mua, a framework for the adaptive management of wild goats, deer, wild pigs, tahr, and chamois.³
10. This collaborative approach has established a clear understanding of stakeholder and Māori perspectives and is also important given the tensions between the recreational value of wild animals and the impacts they can have on environmental and economic values. More information on DOC's work with these groups is described below (paragraphs 31–35).
11. You may wish to meet with a range of groups (including recreational and commercial hunting groups, iwi organisations, farming and forestry organisations, recreation and conservation groups, and the New Zealand Conservation Authority Chair) to hear their views. DOC officials can support you with these engagements.

Wild animal hunters have a range of perspectives and representative organisations

12. Hunting is a valued activity in New Zealand. People hunt deer, goats and pigs for food, business and recreation. Over 30,000 hunters obtain permits each year to hunt on public conservation land, but the total number of hunters is significantly higher.
13. While hunting occurs nationwide, the target species vary between locations. For example, red deer are widespread through the country while other species have a more limited range. White-tailed deer are only found around Whakatipu Waimāori / Lake Wakatipu and on Rakiura / Stewart Island, wapiti deer are only found in Fiordland, and tahr are found in the central South Island (see Figure 1).
14. Hunters have different interests and perspectives depending on their objectives:
 - Subsistence hunters focus on the animals available close to where they live. Their primary interest is to efficiently access good quality meat without needing to travel long distances. For example, a number of hapū have a strong interest in harvesting wild animals (e.g. pigs in Northland, deer on the East Coast), and any restrictions on hunting (e.g. the introduction of licensing systems or ballots) are likely to be of concern to subsistence hunters.
 - Recreational hunters hunt as a pastime. They may be interested in trophy heads or meat, or both. They may be willing to travel significant distances to access attractive hunting experiences (either to a different landscape or to hunt a different species such as tahr).
 - Tourism operations that support trophy hunting (including aerially-assisted trophy hunting (AATH)) are seeking trophy heads. AATH is a small volume but high-value tourism industry, targeting overseas trophy hunters, primarily to hunt tahr and chamois. New Zealand has a market advantage in being able to offer access to species not available in other countries (e.g. tahr) and with fewer restrictions on hunting than in some other countries (e.g. there is no need to win a ballot or shoot only one animal).

³ Deer, tahr, chamois, feral goats, and feral pigs are 'wild animals', managed under the Wild Animal Control Act 1977.

- Commercial meat hunters (generally referred to as wild animal recovery operations or WARO operators) often use helicopters to target animals that can be efficiently harvested and sold for a good price. In the past, commercial meat hunting has been extremely effective in regulating wild animal numbers in large areas of New Zealand's remote backcountry. More recently, the industry has been affected by food safety rules and international markets for wild game meat. WARO are becoming an increasingly important tool for private landowners (farming and forestry sectors) wanting to undertake wild animal control for the least direct cost to them. DOC has been working to ensure that regulatory controls under conservation legislation on WARO operators are appropriate and efficiently administered. DOC has undertaken system analysis of both the WARO and AATH processes, a briefing is currently being prepared for you on the recommendations and next steps.
15. Hunters are represented by a range of organisations, including the New Zealand Game Animal Council (a statutory body), New Zealand Deerstalkers' Association, New Zealand Professional Hunting Guides Association, New Zealand Association of Game Estates, Fiordland Wapiti Foundation, New Zealand Tahr Foundation, Central North Island Sika Foundation, Safari Club International (New Zealand Chapter), and New Zealand Pig Hunting Association. There are also many place-based groups throughout New Zealand.

Wild animals have significant impacts on biodiversity, and DOC's statutory role includes efforts to avoid their damaging effects

16. Wild animals are a significant threat to biodiversity and potentially to forest stability. The cumulative impacts of wild animals on New Zealand's forests, landscapes and biodiversity are increasingly being recognised, with wild animals emerging as one of the major threats to biodiversity and to the resilience of forests to climate change. Deer, tahr, chamois, wild goats and feral pigs can cause changes to ecosystems and can eliminate some plant species (see Figure 2), which can have flow-on effects on threatened animal species and recreational values.



Figure 1: Location of key Wild Animal herds



Figure 2: An enclosure plot showing the difference in vegetation where browsers are excluded

17. DOC's role (as set out in the Wild Animal Control Act 1977) is to achieve a concerted effort to avoid the damaging effects of these animals on vegetation, soils, waters and wildlife; coordinate hunting efforts; and to regulate recreational and commercial hunting. In practice, this means that DOC:
 - controls populations of wild goats, deer, pigs and tahr at priority DOC-managed conservation sites
 - takes a leadership role across all land to ensure concerted action against the damaging effects of wild animals on vegetation, soils, waters and wildlife.
18. The impacts wild animals can have on the environment mean that environmental groups (Forest & Bird, in particular) are significantly invested in the effectiveness of the wild animal management system.
19. Public conservation land is a major store of carbon. DOC is working with others to understand the pressure wild animals are creating on the carbon stored in forests and opportunities to adjust wild animal management to maximise the carbon stored.
20. Maximising the health of forests can also help deliver greater resilience to mitigate impacts of climate change-driven extreme weather, floods and fires. In some areas, restoring the health of forests on public conservation land has the potential to help protect communities and rural businesses from erosion and flooding.

Wild animals can also have negative impacts on private land interests and Māori cultural values

21. Wild animals can be a significant threat to primary production if not appropriately controlled. Much hunting occurs on private land with the encouragement of landowners, who want to reduce the impacts of wild animals. Wild animals can damage plantation forestry, compete with domestic animals for pasture and spread disease (e.g. bovine tuberculosis (TB)).
22. Private landowners often need to spend significant sums on control and fencing – a professional hunter can cost from \$60 to \$100 per hour; effective wild animal control in shrubland and forest can cost up to \$35 per hectare; and replacing a sheep fence with a deer fence to prevent deer and goats can cost up to \$35,000 per kilometre. Farmers and forestry owners are key stakeholders because of these impacts.

23. Recently, Federated Farmers, the New Zealand Institute of Forestry, and Forest & Bird jointly wrote to the major political parties asking for targeted funding to bring about a reset in wild browsing pest numbers. Wild animals often move onto private land from DOC land and increased efforts to reduce this are being sought.
24. Wild animals are also a threat to important cultural values and Māori land in some locations. For example, the health of forests on Māori land, and iwi farming and forestry interests, can be negatively impacted by introduced species.
25. Regional councils and other biosecurity agencies (e.g. Operational Solutions for Primary Industries (OSPRI) who manage TB in New Zealand) have responsibilities to manage biosecurity risks in their regions. Those risks may be created or exacerbated by wild animals (e.g. feral pigs can spread TB and the pathogen causing kauri disease; feral goats are a threat to farming; wild animals may contribute to soil compaction and erosion). Hunted and fished species may also be threatened (e.g. a possible new disease is affecting the lamprey fishery; introduced predators affect game birds).
26. There continue to be illegal movements of wild animals, which not only threaten biodiversity outside the current range of the animals but can also transfer TB and other animal diseases. Early detection and immediate eradication is the most effective response to illegal releases.

Wild animals have become more widespread and abundant in recent years

27. Monitoring shows that ungulates (e.g. deer, goats) now occupy 82% of sites on public conservation land, an increase from 64% in 2013 (Figure 3). Increases have been more pronounced in the North Island than the South Island. A key reason is a reduction in commercial helicopter recovery of wild animals (particularly pronounced in the North Island) due to a reduction in demand for venison from international markets.
28. There is general agreement within both biodiversity and hunting organisations that wild animal numbers have been increasing and are far too high in some locations, and reducing numbers is a high priority biodiversity action. There is also general agreement that introduced species should not be allowed to spread into new areas.
29. The increase in impacts from wild animals is largely because of inconsistent investment in control over the past 20 years across all land managers. Budget 2022 increased investment into deer management and goat control by \$30 million over 4 years. The new funding has made it possible for DOC to take a stronger leadership role and improve coordination, clarify priority areas for investment, undertake more control operations, and gather knowledge to ensure that management is making the desired difference.

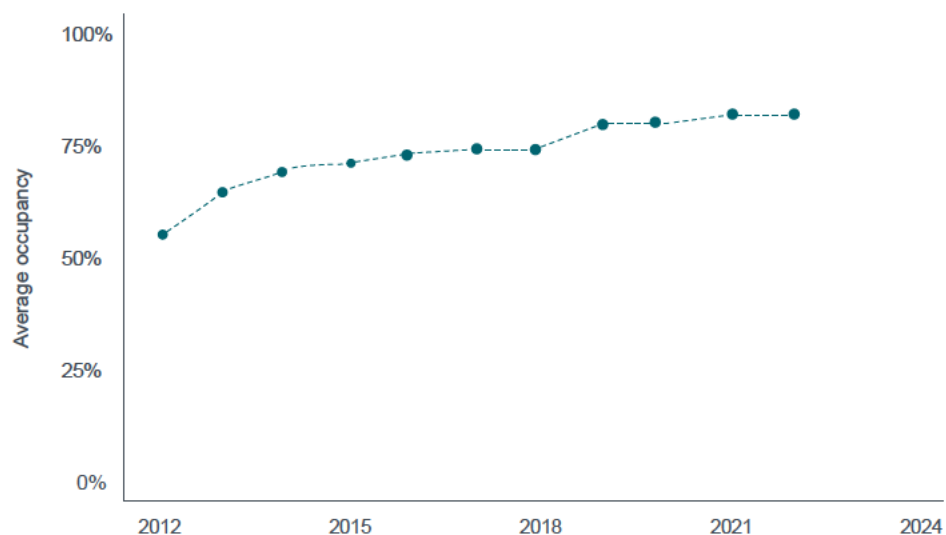


Figure 3: Increase in the proportion of public conservation land sites with deer, goats, sheep, tahr and chamois present, 2012–2022

The concerns of hunters include poor animal condition, access and the impacts of predator control

30. The concerns within the recreational hunting sector vary between hunter type and over time. Some key recent concerns include:
- *the feeling that animal numbers are too high*, which is resulting in noticeable damage to vegetation and animals that are in poor condition; in some locations, deer numbers are so high that subsistence hunters do not consider them worth targeting because their condition is so poor – for example, in Ruahine Forest Park, WARO operators are reporting red deer in poor condition and are therefore not motivated to work there as carcasses are not considered big enough to be commercially viable
 - *the ability to access hunting opportunities on private land*, cross private land to access public conservation land, and access hunting on public conservation land itself (e.g. where an area is temporarily restricted to hunting due to predator control operations), as well as having infrastructure that makes access easier, such as backcountry tracks and huts
 - *actions by DOC and others to manage impacts on biodiversity* that are perceived to threaten future hunting – this includes the effects of 1080 control (for rat, possum and stoat control) on deer numbers and/or the ability to take meat from those areas, and wild animal control operations (e.g. the tahr control programme)
 - *issues relating to the way hunting is undertaken or perceived* – some hunters are concerned that their activity is not valued or is actively opposed by some parts of society
 - *the perception by some that tourist hunters are engaged in ‘unsporting’ activities* (e.g. using helicopters to chase animals), as well as frequent concerns between different types of hunters about competition for animals
 - *frustration with DOC systems and processes*, including variation in how hunting is managed between regions.

DOC leads collaborative work with hunters, Māori and landowners to manage wild animals

31. Collective action is critical to address the concerns of hunters, landowners and Māori, as well as to achieve better outcomes for the environment. DOC is already working with hunting groups, Māori, environmental groups, landowners and councils on these issues. These groups can all contribute to improving wild animal management and make a difference for nature and primary production. DOC is preparing to deliver an updated snapshot report on DOC's wild animals management programme to your office shortly.
32. Examples of where DOC is working with others to manage wild animals include the following.
- *The Wild Animals Management National Coordination Group* – a forum set up by DOC to prioritise and coordinate actions for effective wild animal management. It includes a diverse range of organisations, including the conservation sector, hunting sector, Māori organisations, primary industry groups and research institutions.
 - *Leading work on tahr management through the Tahr Plan Implementation Liaison Group*. The Liaison Group includes representatives of hunting groups, the Game Animal Council, Forest & Bird, the New Zealand Conservation Authority, and conservation boards, Federated Mountain Clubs, and other groups with interests in tahr management.
 - *Identifying priority areas for wild animal management in partnership with the sector*. DOC currently undertakes deer management and goat control on about 1.4 million hectares of public conservation land, but does not have enough funding to cover all 8.7 million hectares of public conservation land. To guide future investment, DOC

has developed a system that identifies further priority sites for management. For each site, information has been collected on several variables, from biodiversity to investment to stakeholder values. For many areas where wild animal management needs to occur, collaboration with stakeholders, including adjoining landowners, is important to enable desired outcomes to be achieved and maintained.

- *Partnering with the New Zealand Deerstalkers' Association and Sika Foundation for wild animal control.* DOC works closely with the hunting sector to put a spotlight on wild animals that are getting less attention from the hunting community. For instance, to promote the need for greater goat control, DOC has partnered with the New Zealand Deerstalkers' Association to run a national wild goat hunting competition; and the Sika Foundation, a hunter-led, conservation-focused non-profit, received nearly \$700,000 of Jobs for Nature funding to develop a site-specific management programme for sika deer.
- *Partnering with landowners and communities.* DOC also works closely with landowners and communities to manage wild animals in their areas. For example, DOC provided logistical support to a Marlborough Sounds Restoration Trust project to reset feral ungulates from high and damaging levels to manageable levels – and the project was funded largely by landowners.
- *Managing aerially-assisted trophy hunting (AATH).* DOC has been seeking to use AATH permit conditions to address 'time and place' conflicts between AATH operators, recreational hunters and conservation groups. AATH provides a direct and tangible conservation benefit: for each wild animal trophy taken on public conservation land, the operator must undertake an 'environmental offset' by controlling female/juvenile tahr.

There are more opportunities to improve biodiversity outcomes through hunting

33. In the right circumstances, enabling the hunting sector can avoid public expenditure, save landowners money and deliver benefits to the sector itself. For example, DOC is working with the New Zealand Deerstalkers' Association Nelson to organise a hunt that aims to reduce the effects of deer browsing (by reducing the deer population) on indigenous plants and animals in Nelson Lakes National Park. Work like this could be expanded, improving access to public conservation land and providing conservation benefits.
34. To further enable the hunting sector the Department set up the National Wild Goat Hunting Competition in partnership with the New Zealand Deerstalkers' Association. The competition ran for its second year in 2024 and is supported by the retailer Hunting & Fishing NZ, Federated Farmers of NZ, and Te Tari Pūreke/Firearms Safety Authority. There were over 80 entry locations nationwide. The aim of the competition was to raise awareness of the damage wild goat cause to farmlands and the environment, build relationships across sectors, and encourage recreational hunters to target wild goats. Over 12,000 wild goats were shot, up by around 2,800 from 2023. Around 800 people entered, with 64% more likely to hunt wild goats because of the competition. Digital adverts were seen over 2.5 million times, with 93,000+ clicks. Regions where the most tails were entered were Whanganui, Waikato, and Otago. People's primary motivations for entering were because they enjoyed hunting, wanted to win prizes, and enjoyed being outdoors and contributing to conservation.
35. There are also opportunities to use the data obtained by hunting communities to inform DOC's wider biodiversity work. Collecting and sharing data on animals taken, vegetation recovery and the success of different control techniques can help make wild animal control more effective.

You are responsible for the Game Animal Council, which represents the interests of the hunting sector

36. The Game Animal Council Act 2013 established an independent statutory body (the Game Animal Council (GAC)) to carry out a range of functions relating to 'game animals' (chamois, deer, tahr, and wild pigs).
37. GAC's functions include providing advice and recommendations to you, informing and educating the hunting sector, promoting hunter safety, conducting game animal research, and liaising with the sector and the Department. The GAC can receive delegated powers to manage herds of special interest (HOSI) from you, if a HOSI is established.
38. As responsible Minister, you participate in the process of setting the GAC's strategic direction and performance expectations and monitoring performance.
 - In November 2024, Minister McClay sent a Letter of Expectations (LOE) to the Council's Chair outlining the Government's expectations for the 2025-26 year. You may write to the Council GAC to clarify your expectations at any stage.
 - We recommend you meet with the GAC Chair at least twice a year to discuss their strategy, governance, performance and risks.
 - The GAC will provide you with a draft of its 2025-26 Statement of Performance Expectations (SPE) for your comments by 1 May, prior to finalising the SPE by 1 July 2025.
 - The GAC also reports its quarterly and annual performance to you.
39. All members of the GAC are Ministerial appointments. As members' terms expire, DOC will provide you with advice on the process for appointing new members.
40. Sustainable funding has been a concern since the GAC's establishment in 2013. It was initially envisaged that the GAC would be predominantly funded through a Game Trophy Export Levy. However, the development of a levy was not progressed. Consequently, the GAC has been funded almost solely through Vote Conservation.
41. In 2024-25 baseline funding for the GAC is \$1,000,000; this funding will increase to \$1.2 million from 2025-26. In addition, it received Jobs for Nature funding of \$212,000 over 3 years (this ended in June 2024) for the development of an online hunter education programme. This increased funding is accompanied by a greater need to demonstrate accountability and stewardship.

Sports fish and game bird management

About 178,000 freshwater sports fishing and game bird hunting licences are sold each year

42. About 140,000 freshwater sports fishing licences and 38,000 game bird hunting licences are sold each year. Figure 5 shows key sports fishing lakes and rivers across the country.
43. **'Sports fish'** include trout, salmon, other salmonids and three other species (perch, tench and rudd, collectively called 'coarse' fish) of introduced freshwater fish of interest to anglers. **'Game birds'** are those listed in Schedule 1 of the Wildlife Act 1953 and include several types of ducks, black swan, pheasants, partridge, pūkeko and quail.
44. The number of sports fishing licence holders is gradually declining. While most anglers still have access to good fishing opportunities, in some cases the decline may be due to reduced habitat quality and recreational access. Changing recreational preferences could be a key factor.
45. The number of game bird licence holders is also declining, likely due to changing hunting demographics and recreational preferences, and reduced recreational access rather than reduced gamebird populations.

Sports fish and game birds are managed by Fish & Game New Zealand

46. Sports fish and game birds are managed under the Conservation Act by 12 regional Fish and Game Councils (Figure 4) and the New Zealand Fish and Game Council (known collectively as Fish & Game New Zealand). The exceptions to this are the Taupō trout fishery, where DOC carries out those functions for sports fish (discussed further below), and the Chatham Islands, where DOC manages the recreational hunting of birds.



Figure 4: Fish and Game Council Regions and Offices

47. The Fish & Game system is self-funded via sports fishing and game bird hunting licence fees. Fish & Game licence fee revenue totals around \$13 million annually. Regional Fish and Game Councils are elected by sports fishing and game bird hunting licence holders, and the New Zealand Fish and Game Council (NZ Council) comprises one appointee from each regional council. Fish and Game Councils have a statutory function to act in the interests of licence holders.
48. The NZ Council has a statutory function to advise the Minister on matters relating to sports fish and game birds.
49. DOC has a good understanding of the work Fish & Game does on sports fish and game bird hunting. We work closely with the NZ Council on annual sports fish and game bird hunting licence and season notices and have worked together on other issues, such as improving governance practices and advice to the Minister for Hunting and Fishing on game preserves, sports fish and game management plans, and potential licensing of guides. DOC is also a source of independent advice on Fish & Game matters.
50. The NZ Council is likely to seek to meet with you. This would allow you an opportunity to outline your expectations in relation to the NZ Council's work and how you are kept briefed on issues and risks that arise.

DOC manages sports fish in the Taupō trout fishery

Unlike other regions where these functions are managed by Fish & Game, DOC manages sports fish in the Taupō trout fishery (Taupō District) as if it was a Fish and Game Council. These arrangements were put in place as part of an agreement with local iwi, partly as recognition of the historic loss of their native fishery. Fishing licence sales for Taupō total around \$1.4 million annually.

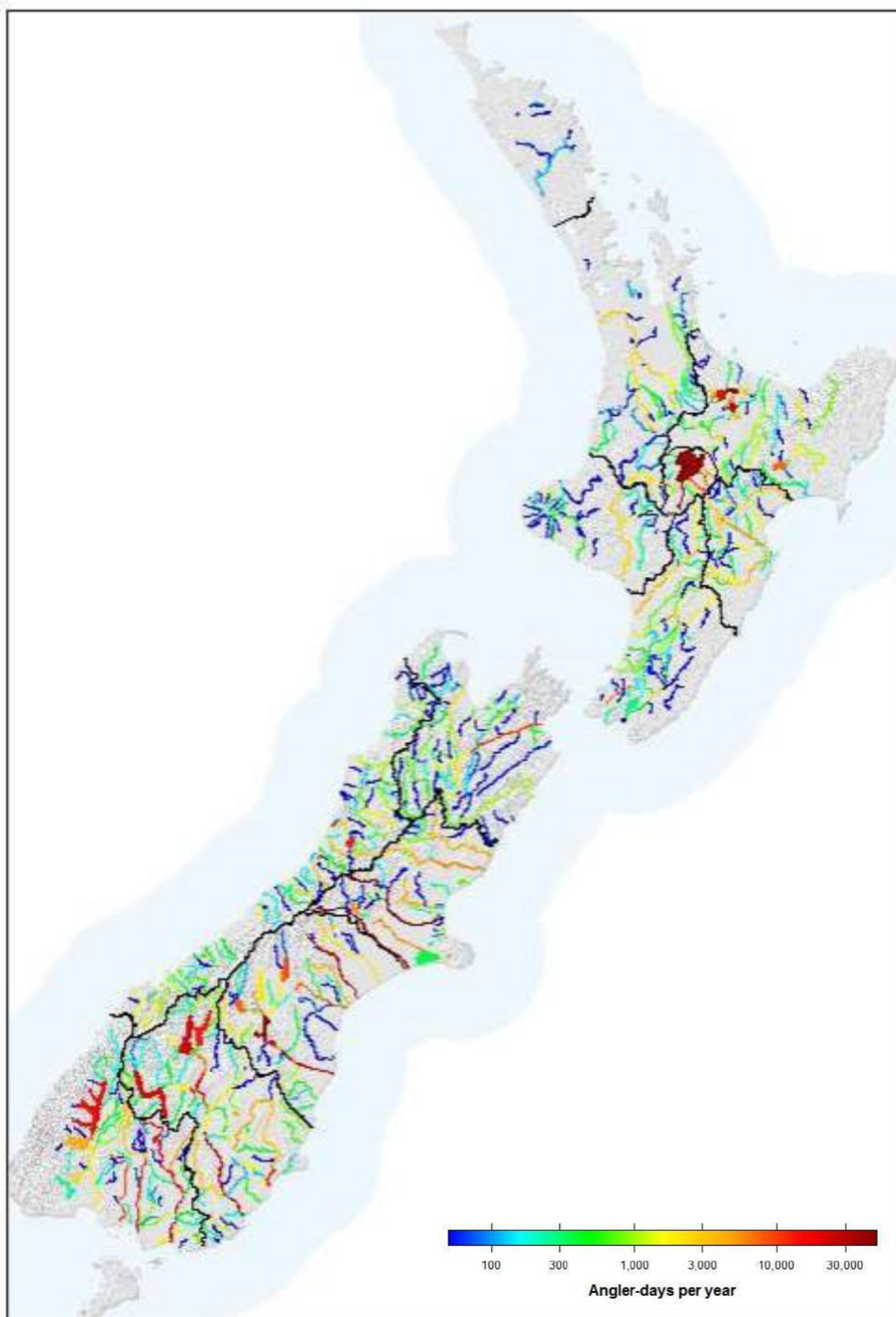


Figure 5: Key sports fishing lakes and rivers and angler days per year. *Source: Fish & Game data*

DOC and Fish & Game agree that there should be no further expansion of sports fish into areas not yet occupied

51. Sports fish can impact native fisheries through predation and competition, although the relative importance of sports fish as a factor in the decline of native fish species is disputed.
52. DOC and Fish & Game agree that there should be no further expansion of sports fish; however, illegal releases of fish are still occurring. In some cases, structures are used to ensure that introduced fish cannot migrate into important native fish habitats (particularly habitats of rare species in Otago).
53. There is no consensus on when, whether or how the eradication of populations would be appropriate to allow the recovery of native species and ecosystems, particularly within wildlife sanctuaries and in habitats of rare species that are vulnerable to predation by salmonids or other sports fish.

Pest fish and habitat quality are key concerns for Fish & Game

54. A number of introduced pest fish (e.g. koi carp, gambusia) and aquatic weeds (e.g. oxygen weed) pose a risk to both native and sports fish populations.
55. DOC is a lead agency for pest fish management (alongside the Ministry for Primary Industries (MPI)] and regional councils as biosecurity agencies). Key objectives of the overall programme are to prevent further introductions of potential pest species into New Zealand (and the release of aquarium species into the wild), eradicate species where that is feasible, prevent range expansion and reduce impacts at site.
56. At times, there have been tensions between DOC and/or regional councils and fish and game councils where pest fish eradication, surveillance or fish monitoring would have some temporary impact on sports fish. In other cases, Fish & Game have been supportive of pest fish eradication.
57. Fish & Game is concerned about the state of several sports fisheries due to changes in habitat (water extraction, water pollution and disturbance of spawning). Fish & Game has been active in seeking improved water management, including by applying for Water Conservation Orders (issued pursuant to the Resource Management Act 1991 (RMA) to protect specific outstanding waterbodies). This has led to conflicts with other parties that need access to water, notably farmers.
58. The RMA provides for protection of the habitat of trout and salmon. Fish & Game made submissions to retain this provision as part of the RMA review in the previous term of government.
59. Fish & Game is concerned that DOC does not actively advocate for sports fish interests in RMA processes. Given Fish & Game has a funding stream for sports fishery advocacy, DOC has focused its limited resources to prioritise advocacy for other freshwater biodiversity and protected area values (for which no separate funding stream exists).

Landowners have interests in game bird hunting and freshwater fishing

60. Recreational game bird hunting can provide a service to landowners by keeping populations of birds, especially waterfowl and pūkeko, at levels that avoid adverse impacts on farming and other activities. Conflict can arise where landowners want to see bird populations reduced but hunters want to retain a higher population.
61. Some landowners create their own game bird hunting resource for the sport of pheasant shooting. The farming areas involved are called 'upland game preserves' and require approval from the Minister for Hunting and Fishing.

62. While trout do not affect farming directly, there have been significant disagreements between Fish and Game Councils and farming groups regarding the effects of farming on water quantity and quality and trout spawning. In some instances, landowners have restricted access to fishing guides and their clients.
63. Access is of major importance to Fish & Game. The organisation has been concerned about private landowners preventing or charging for access across their land. Some proposals for addressing that concern (e.g. closing an affected fishery if a landowner wishes to allow only specific licence holders on their land) have been declined by the Minister of Conservation. DOC has been encouraging Fish & Game to work with the Outdoor Access Commission to address specific access issues, without seeking to negatively affect private property rights.
64. Landowner groups such as Federated Farmers have concerns about game bird impacts (pasture use and fouling, crop damage) and sometimes disagree with Fish & Game advocacy in relation to fresh water.

Fish & Game governance was reviewed in 2021

65. An independent governance review commissioned by the then Minister of Conservation was completed in 2021 and made a range of recommendations for reform. It highlighted governance issues within some Fish and Game Councils. Many of the recommendations would require legislative amendment.
66. The Fish & Game's NZ Council Chair and Chief Executive are implementing changes to improve its governance practices, which do not require legislative amendment, to address some past issues including building an integrity framework and empowering staff. DOC is supportive of Fish & Game in progressing these changes, which may go some way in strengthening governance. DOC also considers that working closely with Fish & Game is beneficial for biodiversity and hunting and fishing outcomes, including improving recreational opportunities.
67. There are further opportunities to drive improvements and efficiencies through legislative amendment. For instance, governance is too complex, and there is some duplication of functions such as administration processes, including licence revenue collection and management of budgets. Efficiencies and cost savings would be possible with changes to the governance model and by rationalising some common functions.

You are responsible for decisions on the management of sports fish and game birds with support from Fish & Game and DOC

68. The angling and hunting of sports fish and game are controlled through seasons, bag limits and other mechanisms. As the responsible Minister, you make some of the decisions on these matters in response to recommendations from Fish & Game, and with advice from DOC. The Ministerial functions are set out in the Conservation and Wildlife Acts.
69. The Fish and Game Councils are also each required to provide annual reports on their work to Parliament. The responsible Minister approves their statutory 10-year sports fish and game management plans. In relation to other matters, including their advocacy work, the councils are largely autonomous, and the Minister has very limited ability to direct them.
70. Notices setting out sports fishing and game bird hunting conditions and the setting of licence fees to pay for management are issued annually, and the Minister is responsible for approving these.

Native freshwater fisheries and whitebait management

The Hunting and Fishing portfolio does not cover native freshwater fisheries or whitebait

71. The Hunting and Fishing portfolio covers sports fishing, but does not include native freshwater fisheries. Most recreational and commercial fishing of native species in New Zealand is focused on marine fish, but a number of freshwater fish are also important. These include whitebait, eels, kōura and lamprey. Many of these species have been identified as being at risk or threatened with extinction.
72. Although statutory powers in relation to whitebait remains with the Minister of Conservation, the previous Minister for Hunting and Fishing anticipated that any new policy work on whitebait would be led jointly by both Ministers.
73. Whitebait are the juveniles of six native fish species. Adults of whitebait species live and spawn in fresh water, and the newly hatched fish swim out to sea before returning in late winter/early spring in 'whitebait runs'. They are fished as they enter fresh waters.
74. Whitebait fishing regulations were reviewed in 2021 (for the first time since 1994) to make them more nationally consistent, with fewer provisions specific to the West Coast, a shorter fishing season, more opportunities for closed fishing areas and some additional restrictions on fishing. These new provisions were fully implemented by the 2023 fishing season.
75. The eel fishery has two species – shortfin eel and longfin eel. Both live in fresh water until they are ready to breed, when they swim out to sea and spawn (probably near Tonga), and then die. The larval fish swim back to New Zealand and then up rivers to their adult habitats. Eels are the top predators in our natural freshwater ecosystems, so fishing can have significant effects and is generally not allowed in protected areas such as national parks.
76. Commercial eeling, the loss of lowland wetlands, and the loss of access to waterbodies due to dams are considered major influences on endemic longfin eel populations.
77. The lamprey fishery is of significance to iwi. These fish live mostly at sea but spawn in fresh water, and the juveniles spend their early life (3 to 4 years) as sedentary filter feeders in streams.
78. The kōura fishery is largely a cultural and recreational fishery but there is some commercial farming of this species.

The legislative frameworks for native freshwater fisheries are complex and cross agencies

79. In relation to native fish, DOC's responsibilities sit in the Conservation Act but overlap strongly with the Fisheries Act 1996 powers of MPI. Between them, the two Acts and associated regulations manage fishing, fish passage, the disturbance of spawning sites and a number of other matters relating to fishing.
80. Whitebaiting is managed under conservation regulations and remains the responsibility of the Minister of Conservation. MPI manages commercial eel fishing under the quota management system, and also manages the recreational catch under the Amateur Fishing Regulations 2013.

The legislative and decision-making frameworks for hunting and fishing

Decision-making on hunting and fishing is subject to a range of intersecting legislative requirements

81. Hunting and fishing matters that sit within the conservation system are:
 - all matters relating to the Wild Animal Control Act 1977, which covers deer, tahr, chamois, wild goats and feral pigs. This Act manages control of those animals, recreational hunting, wild animal recovery operations, aerially-assisted trophy hunting, safari parks and
 - deer farming
 - specific functions under the Game Animal Council Act 2013
 - administration of the Wildlife Act 1953, which contains the provisions relating to catching or killing other wildlife, and the control of wildlife species causing damage
 - oversight of the sports fishing and game bird hunting system managed by fish and game councils under the Conservation Act 1987 and management of the Taupō trout fishery by DOC
 - the management of some aspects of freshwater fisheries, including whitebaiting – other management functions sit within the Fisheries Act 1996
 - recreational activities in protected areas DOC administers, including ensuring that firearms are used safely and appropriately, and access is available.
82. A summary of key legislation relevant to the portfolio is provided in Appendix 1.
83. Management decisions must comply with the Conservation and National Parks General Policies, conservation management strategies, and conservation management plans (including sports fish and game management plans). These regulatory instruments are set by different decision-makers and under strict statutory processes, which include consultation and public notification.
84. Ministers determine any Conservation General Policies, the New Zealand Conservation Authority (NZCA) sets the General Policy for National Parks, and conservation management strategies and plans are approved by the NZCA after having regard to any recommendations from the Minister. This complex regulatory framework provides a number of checks and balances designed to ensure that expertise and stakeholder engagement is brought to bear in implementing the law and managing conservation areas and natural and historic resources. It also provides a hierarchy and cascade of controls that limit policy options, means that change can be slow and places a high administrative burden on the regulatory system. There is sometimes a lack of consistency between the overlapping documents which stymies decision-making.
85. The Minister of Conservation has recently been consulting on a range of proposals to fix concessions (permissions to use public conservation land), including streamlining the conservation planning system and changing General Policies. There is likely to be interest from the hunting and fishing communities as they sometimes require concessions (e.g. aircraft landings).

DOC has initiated a review of the Wildlife Act 1953

86. DOC is reviewing the Wildlife Act 1953 (the Wildlife Act). Key issues with the current Act include a lack of appropriate tools to adequately protect indigenous species; barriers to meeting some of the Crown's obligations under the Treaty of Waitangi; and

a lack of coherency that has caused legal difficulties.

87. This Act primarily deals with the protection of indigenous birds, reptiles, bats, and frogs, and a few land invertebrates and marine species.
88. In July 2023, the previous Government agreed to repeal and replace the Wildlife Act with new species legislation. The work to date has been informed by targeted engagement DOC undertook in 2022 with statutory bodies, Māori, and stakeholders, and advice from an independent Strategic Oversight Group. There was general agreement that the current Act is no longer fit-for-purpose and support for the review.
89. The current Minister of Conservation has confirmed his support to continue work to repeal and replace the Wildlife Act. He has decided that during this term of Government, the focus will be on developing a public discussion document.
90. The review focuses primarily on the framework for indigenous species but will also need to consider the future of the game bird hunting provisions. We will keep you updated on any implications for game bird hunting as this work progresses.

Your portfolio is closely linked to the Conservation portfolio

91. Key areas of the Conservation portfolio you may have an interest in include:
 - the management of visitor assets (e.g. backcountry huts) and tracks
 - pest control supporting biodiversity or land status
 - kauri disease management (feral pigs are a potential vector), and
 - the current review of the Wildlife Act (discussed above).
92. You will also be interested in other Ministers' portfolios, including matters relating to biosecurity, fisheries and firearms legislation and policy.
93. In addition, the new Fast-track Approvals Act includes the ability for an expert panel to make decisions on a range of approvals under the Department's legislation, including authorisations under the Wildlife Act 1953 and the Freshwater Fisheries Regulations 1983.
94. It will be important for you to work closely with the Minister of Conservation on key decisions to ensure effective alignment. Hunting and fishing legislation is heavily integrated with the Conservation Act. The Minister of Conservation also holds responsibility for a series of related matters, such as predator control and the use of firearms on protected land, which have important links to hunting and fishing.
95. Close working between the portfolios will support (where possible) 'win-win' outcomes that benefit hunting and fishing, biosecurity, biodiversity, and recreation.
96. Many of the statutory functions for hunting and fishing sit with non-government entities, notably Fish and Game Councils and to a lesser extent the Game Animal Council. The 2021 independent governance review recognised the need for improved governance of Fish and Game Councils and the previous Minister had been considering the next steps as discussed above. These bodies are set up under conservation legislation, so the responsible Minister is accountable for their performance and the effects their decisions have on other parties.

Some Ministerial decision-making responsibilities are delegated

97. Several statutory Ministerial responsibilities are routinely delegated to the Director-General of DOC, with further delegations from the Director-General to DOC staff (e.g. decisions on some 'concessions' and permits that regulate activities and business on public conservation land). This ensures that decisions are made at the lowest level needed for efficiency and effectiveness and to support timely decision making.
98. If the Director-General considers that a delegated matter is of sufficient national

interest or importance, the Director-General will ask the Minister whether it should be referred to the Minister for decision, regardless of any standing delegation. The Minister may also call in any such decision at any time.

99. The previous Minister for Hunting and Fishing delegated the following powers and authorisations to DOC officials (most of these were previously delegated from the Minister of Conservation to DOC officials):
- **Conservation Act 1987 powers:** These include granting and administering concessions relating to hunting and fishing in a conservation area. Additionally, these powers include disposing of property to the relevant fish and game council where that property has been forfeited to you following prosecution.
 - **Freshwater Fisheries Regulations 1983 powers:** This relates to the power to declare any water or waters a faunistic reserve. Once declared, there are restrictions on the transfer and release of fish and other aquatic life into these reserves. A declaration also prohibits the acts specified in regulation 68(2) in the reserve.
 - **National Parks Act 1980 powers:** These powers include granting concessions relating to hunting and fishing in respect of any national park, authorising take of indigenous animals from a national park (subject to any Wildlife Act 1953 permit requirements), and imposing charges for the use of facilities in any national park.
 - **Reserves Act 1977 powers:** These powers include authorising the taking or killing of game animals, game birds, and game fish from a scenic, historic, nature, or scientific reserve, and imposing conditions for any such authorisation.
 - **Wild Animal Control Act 1977 powers:** These powers include conducting surveys and research on wild animals, making provision for licensing persons dealing in wild animals, giving notice for decisions made under this Act, and preparing and issuing wild animal control plans.
 - **Wildlife Act 1953 powers:** These powers include granting a concession relating to hunting and fishing in respect of any wildlife sanctuary, wildlife refuge, or wildlife management reserve held or managed by the Minister of Conservation. These powers also include consenting to people hunting waterfowl in a designated area, selling any game or their eggs, and generic section 41 ministerial powers to enter into contracts and agreements and execute documents.
 - **Game Animal Council Act 2013 powers:** These powers include issuing authorisations for hunting game animals that are part of a Herd of Special Interest. Powers to create Herds of Special Interest and Herd Management Plans are not proposed to be delegated. Other powers delegated include those that derive from the Director-General, such as powers relating to warranted officers and enforcement officers.

Vote Conservation funding for wild and game animal management

100. The Hunting and Fishing portfolio is funded via Vote Conservation, and DOC is the department responsible for administering the Vote. The Minister of Conservation is the responsible Minister for the Vote.
101. Game Animal Council funding is covered above in paragraph 40. Fish and game councils are self-funding, as described in paragraph 47.

Current funding for wild animal management

102. Budget 2022 increased investment in deer management and goat control by \$30 million over 4 years. This comprises \$5.27 million for 2022/23, \$9.33 million for 2023/24, \$7.47 million for 2024/25 and \$7.93 million in 2025/26.
103. Prior to Budget 2022, historically DOC has invested approximately \$3.7 million in goat control and approximately \$600,000 in deer management per annum. \$1.24 million is to be invested 25/26 in tahr management (including control and monitoring) and \$520,000 in pig management associated with kauri disease (approximately \$120,000 is from Vote Biosecurity but will be delivered by DOC).

Financial sustainability challenges

104. DOC has a number of significant initiatives in train to deliver on Government's financial expectations and to improve its long-term financial sustainability, including:
 - managing wage and inflationary cost pressures within baseline over the next four years (a requirement of its recently submitted Performance Plan);
 - modernising conservation legislation, raising third party revenue and improving cost recovery for user-pays processes, and implementing a commercial strategy;
 - implementing a sophisticated biodiversity planning approach to prioritise resources; and
 - right-sizing the visitor network.
105. Ultimately, achieving financial sustainability in the current fiscal climate is likely to require more explicit choices about the relative priorities and activities of DOC across its Biodiversity, Heritage, Land Management, Regulator and Recreation roles as part of future investment and budget decisions.

Government priorities to date

106. The previous Minister for Hunting and Fishing identified four priorities for the Hunting and Fishing portfolio. This briefing provides initial context on these areas, and DOC will provide more detailed advice as required so that you can confirm your priorities as Minister and agree next steps to progress them.

Supporting Fish & Game and the Game Animal Council

107. Fish & Game New Zealand and the Game Animal Council are statutory organisations charged with managing recreational fishing and game bird hunting (Fish & Game) and representing the interests of the hunting sector (GAC).
108. The previous Minister for Hunting and Fishing signalled the Government's commitment to work with and help strengthen these organisations.
109. In particular, the Minister had been considering options to address the long-standing challenges and enhance the effectiveness and efficiency of Fish & Game New Zealand, building on the recommendations in the independent governance review.
110. The Minister recently wrote to Fish and Game Councils seeking their views on governance and other issues related to improving performance. The Minister also met with the newly elected New Zealand Fish and Game Council at its quarterly meeting in December 2024, where he referred to potential future changes to Fish & Game.
111. The role and function of the Game Animal Council would be strengthened via the introduction of Herds of Special Interest under the Game Animal Council Act 2013.

Introducing Herds of Special Interest (HOSI) to balance hunting and conservation objectives,

112. Populations of wild animals on public conservation land (but not private land) can potentially be managed as a Herd of Special Interest (HOSI). Section 16 of the Game Animal Council Act sets out the statutory process for designating HOSI. The first step is to make a HOSI management plan to provide clarity on how a herd would be managed.
113. On public conservation land, HOSI is a management tool that can have hunting outcomes – i.e., the composition of the herd and quality of the animals for hunting purposes – as a primary purpose of management (alongside conservation considerations).
114. Once designated, HOSI animals will then cease to be subject to the Wild Animal Control Act, and instead be managed under the Game Animal Council Act by the Minister, who may delegate some functions to the GAC and DOC. Management must be in accordance with the HOSI management plan.
115. There are currently no HOSI designated. The hunting sector has signalled interest in three potential HOSI candidates: sika deer in central North Island, tahr, and wapiti in Fiordland National Park.
116. DOC officials have been working to support the GAC, the Central North Island Sika Foundation and the Fiordland Wapiti Foundation as they develop initial HOSI proposals (including how they could be funded) for the Minister's consideration.
117. On behalf of the Minister, DOC would lead the statutory process (set out in the Game Animal Council Act) to designate a herd as being of special interest, develop the HOSI herd management plan, and the subsequent notification once the Minister has made a decision to progress a proposal.

118. s9(2)(f)(iv)

Increasing hunting and fishing access to public conservation land;

119. A key issue for recreational hunters and fishers is being able to access public conservation land and fisheries through private or other public land (e.g. unformed legal roads).
120. In November 2024, the previous Minister for Hunting and Fishing announced the creation of a new *Access Charter for Recreational Hunting and Fishing on Public Conservation Land and Waters*. This charter was developed collaboratively with DOC, stakeholders and other agencies. See appendix 2 for the full text of the charter.
121. The access charter outlines 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. It balances the rights and responsibilities of recreational users with the imperative to conserve New Zealand's natural heritage.
122. DOC seeks to ensure public access to public conservation land, including across private land, and collaborates with all parties to enable this where possible. However, there can be practical barriers to access in particular areas (such as the requirement to move through private property for which no permission has been given). DOC can provide advice on some of these localised matters, including context and any options to rectify where they might exist, but ultimately is not responsible for access over private land.
123. The Outdoor Access Commission has responsibility for seeking to resolve issues relating to public access, and you may wish to meet with the Commission to identify how the GAC and Fish & Game can best work with them to resolve issues affecting hunters and fishers where this does not involve public conservation land.

Managing game animals as valued introduced species to ensure numbers are best managed for each region's individual interests

124. The previous Minister for Hunting and Fishing emphasised the importance of recognising game animals (deer, tahr, chamois and wild pigs) and sports fish as valued introduced species. The priorities listed above will help drive this shift in perception.
125. DOC does not use the term 'pest' to describe game animals or sports fish, and the term 'valued introduced species' has been used in the Aotearoa New Zealand Biodiversity Strategy 2020 (ANZBS). It is defined as 'introduced species, including sports fish, game animals and species introduced for biocontrol, which provide recreational, economic, environmental or cultural benefits to society'.
126. The previous Minister for Hunting and Fishing, with DOC support, had been considering what further action could be taken to support recognition of valued introduced species. This includes considering the views of key stakeholders. Next steps and the timing of further work in relation to other priorities are to be determined, if this remains a focus for you.

Immediate priorities and key upcoming decisions

127. This section provides a snapshot of key dates and immediate priorities for the portfolio based on current information. Officials will brief you on all these topics when you require further information.
128. The following items are currently on the work programme or are decisions you may have to make within the first few weeks.

Potential key decisions and priorities

TOPIC	DESCRIPTION	DRIVER	TIMING
Legislative bids	A briefing that seeks your approval to submit Hunting and Fishing portfolio legislative bids for the 2025 Legislative Programme.	Your portfolio priorities	January 2025
s9(2)(f)(iv)			
Fish & Game	Update on manifesto commitment to support Fish & Game New Zealand.	Your portfolio priorities	February 2025
Upland game preserves	Cabinet LEG Committee paper for the making of an OIC to create three new commercial upland game preserves.	Statutory responsibilities	February 2025
Game Licences, Fees, and Forms Notice 2025	A statutory notice that enables the sale of game bird hunting licences for the 2025–2026 game bird hunting season. Licences need to go on sale on 13 March 2025.	Statutory responsibilities	February 2025
Open Season for Game Notice 2025	A statutory notice that sets hunting conditions (including bag limits and seasons) for the 2025–2026 game bird hunting season which begins on 3 May 2025. Copies are distributed to hunters when hunting licences are sold.	Statutory responsibilities	February 2025

Key people at DOC

129. Led by Director-General Penny Nelson, the Senior Leadership Team, along with the support team in your office and relevant managers and subject matter experts, will be the main DOC officials you interact with on a week-to-week basis.

130. The Senior Leadership Team's details are as follows:



Penny Nelson
Director-General
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131. Key officials for this portfolio will also include:



Ben Reddiex

Director, National Programmes

*Wild animal management / National Predator Control Programme
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Sam Thomas

Director, Policy

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Catherine Wilson

Director, Heritage and Visitors

Visitors / Recreation / Access / Huts

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Damian Coutts

Director, Regional Operations - Central North Island

Taupō Trout Fishery

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Appendix 1: Legislation related to the portfolio

Conservation Act 1987, National Parks Act 1980, Reserves Act 1977, Wildlife Act 1953

These statutes manage almost all of New Zealand's protected areas, including conservation parks, ecological areas, marginal strips, stewardship land, national parks, many types of reserves and wildlife sanctuaries. Many reserves are managed by local authorities, reserve boards, iwi or other organisations, and they include recreation reserves, reserves for specific government purposes (e.g. many public halls, council buildings, lighthouses and other public facilities are on reserve land) and historic reserves. Each protected area is managed for a specific purpose, which will affect how introduced and native animals, and hunting and fishing activities are managed on that land.

Conservation Act 1987

This Act sets out DOC's functions, and (in the First Schedule) sets out all the enactments DOC administers. Section 4 of the Act requires DOC to interpret and administer those enactments to give effect to the principles of the Treaty of Waitangi. The Act contains the concession provisions that apply to commercial activities on any land administered by DOC, including commercial hunting and hunting and fishing guiding businesses, and management planning processes that apply to all DOC's work. The NZCA and conservation boards are set up under the Act, and have a role in management planning and are the decision-maker for some matters relating to hunting and fishing (e.g. whether introduced species in national parks need to be eradicated).

Fish and Game councils are set up under the Act, and the controls relating to sports fisheries are set out in the Act or regulations under the Act. The Act and regulations also control whitebaiting and include many of the other controls relating to indigenous freshwater fisheries and pest fish (alongside the Fisheries Act).

Wildlife Act 1953

This Act manages 'wildlife'. All birds, all terrestrial mammals (other than wild animals managed under the Wild Animal Control Act), and all reptiles and amphibians are automatically considered wildlife if they enter New Zealand (e.g. sea snakes) or naturalise here. Specific marine species and invertebrates can also be declared to be wildlife by Order in Council, but freshwater fish and plants cannot.

Wildlife is automatically fully protected, unless it is placed in a schedule to the Act that makes it partially protected or unprotected. One of those schedules establishes a class of wildlife referred to as 'game birds', which can be hunted in accordance with rules set by the fish and game councils under the Act.

Most introduced mammals have been declared to be unprotected, so can be hunted at any time unless other legislation restricts hunting. There are also partially protected species subject to customary harvest (e.g. tītī). Where management under the Fisheries Act is considered to be inappropriate, the Wildlife Act has been used to provide full protection, and that has been done for corals, two groper species and some sharks.

Wild Animal Control Act 1977

The Wild Animal Control Act was established to coordinate the control of a number of introduced mammals – deer, feral goats, tahr, chamois, feral pigs, wallabies and possums. The latter two species were removed from the Act in 2012. All wild animals are declared to be the property of the Crown, and can only be hunted, moved and held in accordance with the Act. DOC can enter private land to carry out control. The Minister has a wide range of powers under the Act, including to make plans and policies and regulate deer farming and safari parks.

Game Animal Council Act 2013

This Act established the Game Animal Council and sets out its functions, which include a range of advisory, research and promotion functions. 'Game animals' are wild animals other than feral goats. The Act also provides the Minister with powers to establish and manage herds of special interest (HOSI) but does not directly alter the management of game animals unless those powers are used.

Appendix 2: Access Charter for Recreational Hunting and Fishing on Public Conservation Land and Waters

November 2024

Purpose:

This 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. It balances the rights and responsibilities of recreational users with the imperative to conserve New Zealand's natural heritage.

1. Guiding Principles:

Public right of access:

The public has a right to access public conservation land, including for recreational hunting and fishing. We will guarantee this access, and where there needs to be restrictions that limit access, we will clearly explain why. Recreational hunting and fishing access will be underpinned by a fair system that ensures equitable opportunities for all New Zealanders.

Uniform standards and procedures:

A common and consistent approach to access for hunting and fishing should occur across all regions. This will ensure fairness, transparency, and predictability, facilitating compliance and fostering trust among users.

Safety and responsibility:

Safety must always come first. You must understand and follow all rules and regulations, including firearm and fishing rules, and general safety guidelines.

Cultural respect:

Public conservation land often holds cultural and historical significance for all New Zealanders. The charter respects and encourages you to honour the values and customs of local iwi and hapū.

Balancing recreation with conservation:

We will allow hunting and fishing activities in areas that support or do not adversely affect conservation efforts.

2. Our Commitments:

Clear access information:

DOC & Fish and Game NZ will provide clear, up-to-date information on where recreational hunting and fishing is allowed, including maps, seasonal restrictions, and closures through relevant websites and DOC visitor centres, and mark access routes and maintain signage at access sites.

Permitting and Balloting system:

Hunting and fishing require appropriate permits and licences. We will ensure the permit system is user-friendly and consistent across New Zealand. The system will include clear and accessible conditions for access, including provisions for 4x4 vehicles, horses, and the use of dogs. This approach aims to streamline the process, making it easier for users to comply.

Safety support:

We will offer resources and real-time alerts about conditions affecting safety, such as asset closures and weather. When informed that recreational hunting and fishing activities are not occurring safely, we will investigate.

User-focused approach:

You will receive effective, uniform, and supportive assistance in accessing recreational hunting and fishing opportunities.

Maintaining access:

DOC and Fish & Game NZ will work with the Herenga ā Nuku Aotearoa/Outdoor Access Commission to maintain access routes to public conservation land for recreational hunting and fishing activities while respecting private property rights.

3. Your Responsibilities:

Permits and licensing:

If you wish to hunt or fish on public conservation land you must hold the appropriate permits and licences. This ensures the activities are regulated and supports conservation efforts.

- **Hunting permits:** Required for all hunting activities, available through the Department of Conservation website.
- **Fishing licences:** Fishing for trout, salmon, and other species requires a licence from Fish & Game New Zealand.

Compliance with regulations:

You must follow all rules, including seasonal closures, size and bag limits, species protection, and firearm use. Only drive in areas where it is explicitly allowed. Always keep your dog under control as you are legally responsible if your dog causes harm or disturbance to wildlife.

Environmental protection:

You must minimise environmental impact by:

- | | |
|--|--|
| ○ Respecting catch limits and size restrictions. | ○ Avoiding disturbance to wildlife and protected areas. |
| ○ Disposing of waste properly. | ○ Prohibiting lead shot in designated areas to protect bird species. |

Reporting concerns:

You are encouraged to tell us about sightings of endangered species, illegal activities, or environmental hazards to help us with conservation efforts.

Respect for others:

Respect the safety and rights of other users, such as trampers and campers, while you are undertaking hunting and fishing activities.

Outdoor access code:

You must follow the Outdoor Access Code, which promotes responsible and respectful access while considering the environment and others' safety.

Contact Information:

For permits, maps, regulations, and further details on hunting and fishing on public conservation land:

Department of Conservation:

Website: www.doc.govt.nz

Phone: 0800 362 468

Fish & Game New Zealand:

Website:

www.fishandgame.org.nz

Phone: 0800 434 732

