

2026

Sika Herd of Special Interest

Herd Management Plan



**New Zealand
Government**
Te Kāwanatanga
o Aotearoa

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Sika Herd of Special Interest Herd Management Plan

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Foreword

Welcome to the Sika Herd of Special Interest Herd Management Plan.

This is the second herd management plan prepared in accordance with the Game Animal Council Act 2013. It relates only to the management of sika and the designation of sika as a herd of special interest within the Sika Area in the Kaimanawa Forest Park, Kaweka Forest Park and Kaweka Forest Conservation Area.

The Plan seeks to recognise the unique values of these areas and the special place sika have come to have within them. In doing so, the Plan attempts to protect the natural and historic resources of these areas, while facilitating public recreation and enjoyment subject to that protection. It recognises that sika and the Sika Area are highly valued by hunters, while also acknowledging the day-to-day realities of conservation and managing wild deer.

The Plan acknowledges the connection that Treaty partners and iwi Māori have to these areas and seeks to recognise the significance of the Kaimanawa Mountains and Kaweka Range to many New Zealanders.

This plan represents the culmination of years of effort by a number of individuals and organisations, particularly the Central North Island Sika Foundation and, more recently, the New Zealand Game Animal Council. The Department of Conservation Te Papa Atawhai has also played a role in sika management over many years, including undertaking on my behalf the process to develop this plan.

A draft of the Plan was publicly notified, with the submissions period running from 10 November 2025 until 8 December 2025. I wish to thank the 245 individuals and organisations that took the time to consider the draft and lodge submissions. Those submissions were carefully considered and have been reflected in this plan, as appropriate. It is significantly improved and strengthened as a result of that engagement.

I expect there to be a range of benefits gained from managing sika for hunting purposes. These are set out fully in Appendix 2, and in my notice designating the herd. However, I wish to note that of particular importance are the benefits of improved ecological outcomes for indigenous species and ecosystems through targeted population management, regular monitoring and responsible harvest decision-making by the hunting community.

Similarly, I expect there to be a range of benefits for hunters. These include a higher quality and more sustainable hunting experience and venison yield, due to there being fewer but healthier animals, and an improvement in sika trophy quality over time. By encouraging and enabling greater participation of the sika hunting community and other interested parties in herd management processes, we hope to promote a sense of herd and environmental stewardship and increase voluntary contributions to conservation activity more broadly.

It is my hope there will also be a range of benefits for iwi, hapū and local communities. These include enabling the active involvement of iwi and hapū in sika management activities, increasing understanding of the impact sika can have on taonga (treasured) species and mahinga kai (food-gathering) practices, and taking steps towards protecting and restoring culturally significant resources.

Finally, I anticipate that this new approach to sika management will have meaningful economic, social and wellbeing benefits for communities by increasing hunter tourism, supporting community and social initiatives, and creating partnerships between iwi, community groups, businesses and conservation organisations.

Sika management will evolve and strengthen over time as this plan informs management and enables increasingly evidence-led decision-making.

I now approve this plan as providing direction for the management of the Sika Herd of Special Interest over the next five years.

A handwritten signature in blue ink, consisting of a large loop followed by a horizontal line and a small flourish.

Hon James Meager
Minister for Hunting and Fishing
15 July 2026

1 Introduction

On 15 July 2026, the Minister for Hunting and Fishing announced designation of the Sika Herd of Special Interest in accordance with section 16 of the Game Animal Council Act 2013. The designation provides statutory recognition that sika (*Cervus nippon*) in parts of the Kaimanawa Forest Park, Kaweka Forest Park and Kaweka Forest Conservation Area are of special interest to hunters and provides for these animals to be managed for hunting purposes while ensuring conservation values continue to be protected.

The Sika Herd of Special Interest Management Plan (the Plan) has been prepared in accordance with section 19 of the Game Animal Council Act, as part of the process to designate the Sika Herd of Special Interest.

The designation of a Sika Herd of Special Interest, and the development of this plan, are not about protecting sika or managing them in the same way as indigenous species. The designation means sika within the Sika Herd of Special Interest Area (the Sika Area) will be managed as 'game animals' under the Game Animal Council Act, rather than as 'wild animals' under the Wild Animal Control Act 1977. This change recognises the value of the herd and emphasises proactive, sustainable herd management to achieve high quality hunting outcomes alongside conservation, community and economic benefits.

Purpose of this plan

The Plan establishes objectives and strategies for the management of sika in the Sika Area. It aims to achieve the benefits expected to be gained by managing this herd for hunting purposes, as provided for under section 16(3)(e) of the Game Animal Council Act and as required by section 19(3) of that Act.

It reflects and sets out the values associated with the sika herd, as recognised by the designation of sika as a herd of special interest.

The Sika Herd of Special Interest designation and this plan apply only to management of sika within the Sika Area, which covers parts of Kaimanawa Forest Park, Kaweka Forest Park and Kaweka Forest Conservation Area, as shown in Appendix 1.

The Plan provides a high-level framework of objectives and strategies. Detailed operational matters will be set out in supporting operational plans developed as part of the implementation and delivery of the Sika Herd of Special Interest. These operational plans are intended to be adaptive and updated over time in response to monitoring results and management needs.

Application of the Plan and statutory context

This plan takes effect from 16 July 2026, being the date stated in the *New Zealand Gazette* notice designating the Sika Herd of Special Interest. It continues to apply unless the designation is revoked.

In accordance with section 19(8) of the Game Animal Council Act, this plan 'does not restrict or affect the exercise of a legal right or power by any person unless that person agrees to be bound'.

The Game Animal Council Act is listed in Schedule 1 of the Conservation Act. This means the Game Animal Council Act must be so interpreted and administered as to give effect to the principles of the Treaty of Waitangi.¹ The designation and Plan do not override provisions in relevant Treaty settlement legislation.

The Sika Herd of Special Interest overlaps with the Kaimanawa and Kaweka Recreational Hunting Areas (RHAs) established under the Wild Animal Control Act 1977. The purpose of an RHA is to provide an area where hunting as a means of recreation is to be used to control (though not exclusively) the numbers of wild animals, generally through restricting or excluding commercial wild animal recovery operations (WARO).

The designation of the Sika Herd of Special Interest within the Kaimanawa and Kaweka forest parks does not alter the legal status of these RHAs. However, sika cannot simultaneously be managed as part of both a designated herd of special interest and an RHA.

Accordingly, sika that are part of the designated Herd of Special Interest and subject to this plan will cease to be classified as wild animals (and subject to the RHA) while they remain in the Sika Herd of Special Interest Area.²

However, management of the sika herd under this plan will occur alongside the existing RHA area provisions applying to other wild animals. RHA management will continue to focus on recreational hunting opportunities within the framework of the Wild Animal Control Act.

See the Glossary for explanations of terms used.

Overriding considerations

This plan has been prepared to be consistent with the overriding considerations identified in the Game Animal Council Act. The relevant overriding considerations are the:

- welfare and management of public conservation land and resources generally
- *Conservation General Policy 2005*³
- *Hawke's Bay Conservation Management Strategy 1994*⁴
- *Tongariro/Taupo Conservation Management Strategy 2002*⁵
- *Kaimanawa Forest Park Management Plan 2007*⁶
- *Kaweka Forest Park Conservation Management Plan 1991*⁷
- pest management strategies and plans made under the Biosecurity Act 1993.

¹ Conservation Act 1987, section 4.

² Wild Animal Control Act 1977, section 2.

³ Department of Conservation. 2005. *Conservation General Policy 2005*. Wellington: Department of Conservation (doc.govt.nz/general-policy).

⁴ Department of Conservation. 1994. *Conservation Management Strategy for Hawke's Bay Conservancy 1994–2004*. Napier: Department of Conservation (doc.govt.nz/hawkes-bay-cms).

⁵ Department of Conservation. 2002. *Tongariro/Taupo Conservation Management Strategy 2002–2012*. Turangi: Department of Conservation (doc.govt.nz/tongariro-taupo-cms).

⁶ Department of Conservation. 2007. *Kaimanawa Forest Park Management Plan*. Wellington: Department of Conservation (doc.govt.nz/kaimanawa-management-plan).

⁷ Department of Conservation. 1991. *Kaweka Forest Park Conservation Management Plan*. Napier: Department of Conservation (doc.govt.nz/kaweka-management-plan).

Key parties and relationships relevant to this plan

Minister for Hunting and Fishing

The Minister for Hunting and Fishing is the responsible Minister for the Game Animal Council Act. The Act provides the Minister with powers to designate herds of special interest, to develop a related herd management plan, and to manage those herds in accordance with the Act.

The Minister for Hunting and Fishing has exercised these powers in the making of this plan and designation of the Sika Herd of Special Interest.

The Minister for Hunting and Fishing may delegate their herd of special interest management powers under the Game Animal Council Act to the New Zealand Game Animal Council (the Game Animal Council) in accordance with section 20 of the Act. The Department of Conservation Te Papa Atawhai (the Department) may also carry out functions on behalf of the Minister.

Treaty partners

Ngāti Tūwharetoa, Ngāti Whitikaupeka, Ngāti Tamakōpiri, Ahuriri Hapū, Ngāti Hineuru and Heretaunga Tamatea are the tangata whenua with rangatiratanga or mana whenua (tribal authority) over parts of the area covered by this plan. They are the Crown's Treaty partners under the Treaty of Waitangi, and this plan acknowledges the obligation on the Crown to give effect to the principles of the Treaty, as set out in section 4 of the Conservation Act. The Department often engages with Treaty partners through the post-settlement governance entities identified below, because these entities are mandated to represent hapū within their takiwā (region). The relationship between Treaty partners and the Minister of Conservation is the primary relationship with respect to the management of Kaimanawa Forest Park, Kaweka Forest Park and Kaweka Forest Conservation Area.

Treaty partner areas of interest relevant to this plan

Ngāti Tūwharetoa

The Ngāti Tūwharetoa area of interest, as attached to the Ngāti Tūwharetoa Deed of Settlement, includes the entirety of the Kaimanawa Forest Park and the northwestern parts of Kaweka Forest Park. The Ngāti Tūwharetoa Claims Settlement Act 2018 establishes Te Piringa agreement between the Crown, through the Minister of Conservation and the Director-General of the Department, and Te Kotahitanga o Ngāti Tūwharetoa (being the post-settlement governance entity established through the Ngāti Tūwharetoa Deed of Settlement).

Ngāti Whitikaupeka and Ngāti Tamakōpiri

Ngāti Whitikaupeka and Ngāti Tamakōpiri have interests in the southern reaches of Kaimanawa Forest Park and southwestern aspects of Kaweka Forest Park. At the time of writing, Ngāti Whitikaupeka and Ngāti Tamakōpiri are working through a Treaty settlement process with the Crown as part of the collective represented by Mōkai Pātea Waitangi Claims Trust.

Ahuriri Hapū

The Ahuriri Hapū area of interest, as attached to the Ahuriri Hapū Deed of Settlement, includes the part of Kaimanawa Forest Park near the Ngaruroro River headwaters, particularly around the Ōamaru River and Te Matia Stream, and large areas of the Kaweka Forest Park and Kaweka Forest Conservation Area, including around Don Juan peak, Whittle Road and the length of the main Kaweka Range. The Ahuriri Hapū Claims Settlement Act 2021 establishes Te Kawa o Papa between the Crown, through the Minister of Conservation and the Director-General of the Department, and the Trustees of the Mana Ahuriri Trust (being the Ahuriri Hapū post-settlement governance entity established through the Ahuriri Hapū Deed of Settlement).

Ngāti Hineuru

The Ngāti Hineuru area of interest, as attached to Ngāti Hineuru Deed of Settlement, includes part of Kaimanawa Forest Park from the Kaipō River and Ōamaru River in the eastern Kaimanawa Mountains, and the northern and eastern parts of the Kaweka Range around Te Pukeohikarua, Te Puia and Mangatutu. The Hineuru Claims Settlement Act 2016 establishes Te Kawenata between the Trustees of Te Kōpere o te iwi o Hineuru Trust (being the post-settlement governance entity established through the Hineuru Deed of Settlement), the Minister of Conservation and the Director-General of the Department.

Heretaunga Tamatea

The Heretaunga Tamatea area of interest extends to around Kuripapango. Other areas of Kaweka Forest Park within the Heretaunga Tamatea area of interest (such as the Kaikomata and Glenross ranges) are outside the Sika Area and are not directly relevant to this plan. The Heretaunga Tamatea Claims Settlement Act 2018 between the Trustees of the Heretaunga Tamatea Settlement Trust (being the post-settlement governance entity established through the Heretaunga Tamatea Deed of Settlement) and the Crown is relevant to the management of this area.

Other Treaty partner interests and relationships

In many places, the public conservation land subject to this plan shares a boundary with land owned or managed by entities affiliated with Treaty partners, including land parcels protected by Ngā Whenua Rāhui kawenata. Although this adjacent land is not subject to the Sika Herd of Special Interest designation, many of the entities that own or manage that land are keenly interested in this plan and improving sika management.

New Zealand Game Animal Council

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

This council has various functions in relation to game animals, which include deer, tahr, chamois and wild pigs. These functions include:

- advising and making recommendations to the Minister for Hunting and Fishing
- raising awareness of the views of the hunting sector
- providing information and education
- promoting codes of conduct and operating certification schemes
- liaising with hunters, representatives of tangata whenua and organisations to improve hunting opportunities.

Where powers are delegated by the Minister for the Game Animal Council to manage a herd of special interest, the Game Animal Council must exercise those powers in accordance with the Act and the terms of delegation.

The Game Animal Council is expected to work collaboratively with the Department and Central North Island Sika Foundation to support the implementation of this plan, consistent with their respective roles.

The Game Animal Council also has a statutory function to assess the costs of managing herds of special interest and to make recommendations to the Minister of Hunting and Fishing on cost recovery.

Central North Island Sika Foundation

The Sika Foundation, an incorporated society, was formed in 2015 to engage with the sika hunting community, the Department, the Game Animal Council, tangata whenua and other stakeholders to explore designating a Sika Herd of Special Interest.

Since its inception, the Sika Foundation has sought to better understand the sika herd and educate hunters and the wider community about management regimes that protect the special nature of both the Central North Island and the sika herd.

The objectives of the Sika Foundation are to:⁸

- actively manage the Central North Island sika herd to provide enhanced levels of protection for the forests and grasslands in which these animals live, and improve benefits to hunters
- advance a management regime that involves a collaborative partnership between recreational sika hunters, the Game Animal Council, the Department, local iwi, interested landowners and other stakeholders
- achieve and maintain consistent, appropriate harvest levels of healthy sika through improved coordination of recreational sika hunting and other management actions, as required
- increase the understanding of recreational sika hunters and the wider community of the sika herd, its value and management through better information and education.

In early 2025, the Sika Foundation proposed that the Minister for Hunting and Fishing initiate a process to consider designating sika as a herd of special interest under the Game Animal Council Act. The Sika Foundation will play an important role in many aspects of the day-to-day implementation and delivery of this plan. It will work collaboratively with the Game Animal Council and the Department, consistent with statutory roles and any delegation arrangements.

Department of Conservation Te Papa Atawhai

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

The Department administers the Game Animal Council Act in relation to the Sika Herd of Special Interest. On behalf of the Minister for Hunting and Fishing, the Department leads the statutory process to develop herd management plans and ensure that legislative requirements are met. The Department will support the implementation of this plan in accordance with delegations and directions of the Minister for Hunting and Fishing.

⁸ The constitution of the Sika Foundation is available at sikafoundation.co.nz/our-objectives.

2 Values and context

This plan requires management of the Sika Herd of Special Interest for hunting purposes, while maintaining and supporting conservation, cultural and community values. The associated values and related context are set out below.

Values

Values of the sika herd

The Central North Island sika herd is unique, with its value to hunters derived from a combination of the animals' biology and integration into the history, economy and community fabric of the region. As part of the only wild herd of sika deer in the Southern Hemisphere, the population of sika in the Sika Herd of Special Interest Area represents a recreational hunting resource of national and international significance.

This is reflected in existing statutory planning documents, with the *Kaimanawa Forest Park Management Plan 2007* noting the herd's significance, while the *Kaweka Forest Park Conservation Management Plan 1991* identifies hunters as the park's largest single user group.

Biologically, the herd offers a unique experience. Sika are vocal and inquisitive, yet elusive. These traits, combined with distinct markings and the potential for high-quality antlers, make hunting them a rare challenge. This hunting experience and trophy element are important drivers for recreational hunters, offering a pursuit that cannot be replicated elsewhere.

The values of the herd extend beyond the act of harvesting an animal. Sika hunting is important for the physical and mental health of the hunting community. Pursuing sika requires immersion in the rugged Central North Island backcountry. This fosters an appreciation for New Zealand's wilderness and builds a connection between people and the natural environment.

Sika hunting is frequently a shared activity, strengthening bonds between friends and whānau. It serves as a means of intergenerational connection, where skills, ethics, and respect for the environment are passed down through generations.

For sika hunters, the herd provides a source of free-range, organic meat. For many, filling the freezer is the primary motivation, providing food security for their families. Beyond personal consumption, the herd supports wider community welfare because hunters provide venison to local foodbanks and families in need.

The herd also generates substantial domestic and international tourism. This is best shown by the Sika Show, the Southern Hemisphere's largest annual hunting tradeshow, which underscores the economic ecosystem built around this specific herd.

Management of the herd must ensure that conservation values continue to be maintained and protected, having regard to overriding considerations set out in the Game Animal Council Act.

Conservation values

As noted, the Sika Area is part of the Kaimanawa and Kaweka forest parks and Kaweka Conservation Area, which contain a variety of ecosystems and significant biodiversity. Conservation values associated with the Sika Area are covered in detail in the *Kaimanawa Forest Park Management Plan 2007* and *Kaweka Forest Park Conservation Management Plan 1991*, as well as in the Department's other relevant statutory plans.

The parks are dominated by beech forest and alpine plant communities, along with smaller areas of podocarp–broadleaf forest and ecologically significant habitats.

The forest fauna is diverse, supporting several rare and threatened species, including the pekapeka / long-tailed bat and short-tailed bat, kiwi-nui / North Island brown kiwi, whio / blue duck, kārearea / New Zealand falcon, North Island kākā, koekoeā / long-tailed cuckoo, mātātā / North Island fernbird, toutouwai / North Island robin and kākārīki / parakeets.

Conservation values are supported through active stewardship by local iwi and hapū, the Department, hunting groups and the wider community.

Management will seek to maintain deer impacts within ecological limits through an adaptive management framework, informed by monitoring and consistent with the overriding considerations set out in the Game Animal Council Act.

Cultural, heritage and community values

Tangata whenua have a long-standing and profound connection with the area of land that comprises the Kaimanawa and Kaweka forest parks, through concepts including tūrangawaewae (a place to stand or place of belonging) and whakapapa (genealogical lineage). These connections can transcend both the physical and spiritual worlds.

The Kaimanawa and Kaweka forests influence the health of Taupō moana (Lake Taupō), waterways and the cultural landscape of iwi and hapū. They are places of deep whakapapa, historical presence and enduring responsibility. Iwi and hapū values of rangatiratanga and kaitiakitanga are obligations to protect the whenua, ngahere (forest) and taonga species within their rohe.

Many tangata whenua are deeply concerned about the degraded state of the ngahere. They are concerned about the threats introduced species pose to taonga species, traditional practices and indigenous biodiversity. They want to meaningfully exercise kaitiakitanga (guardianship) and contribute to improving outcomes.

This area also has a long history of European influence and activity. Several significant heritage features from the early European period remain. These include the Iron Whare musterer's hut made from vertical-slab tōtara, dating back to the 1870s, and the Armed Constabulary Stockade near Tarawera.

More recently, parts of the Kaweka and Kaimanawa forest parks within the Sika Area have become a focal point for hunters and trampers. Many travel from around the North Island to enjoy the rugged terrain, unique flora and fauna, and extensive network of backcountry huts and tracks. The relatively accessible nature of the forest parks, particularly from Littles Clearing and Kuripapango, as well as the Lotkow, Makahu, Clements Mill and Kaimanawa road ends, contributes to their popularity. The area is also popular with outdoor recreation, school and other community groups.

In comparison, the 15,000-hectare Kaimanawa Remote Experience Zone in the southeast of Kaimanawa Forest Park is more difficult to access and prized by users for its relatively untouched nature and provision of one of only a few wilderness-like experiences in the North Island.

Many of the rivers within the Sika Area are popular with anglers and paddlers.

Throughout the Sika Area, a range of community conservation and stewardship initiatives are undertaken by several groups, including the Sika Foundation. These efforts focus on predator trapping to support native bird species, particularly the whio, North Island brown kiwi (kiwi-nui) and pekapeka. Groups are also increasingly interested in and contributing to the maintenance of recreation infrastructure, particularly the network of huts and bivies located throughout the Sika Area.

Many different views are held on sika and how they should be managed. Some see sika as an introduced species and consider that the animals should be removed. Others seek to realise the value of the herd as a part of the contemporary cultural and community context of the Central North Island. Although perspectives differ, a shared desire exists to see improved management of the sika herd. This plan adopts a balanced and adaptive approach that recognises these perspectives while improving management outcomes.

The Plan also recognises the importance of enabling meaningful participation of tangata whenua in management and decision-making processes.

Context

Sika herd

The Central North Island sika herd represents a direct historical link between the Crown and the New Zealand hunting community. Sika within the Sika Area can be linked back to those gifted by the Duke of Bedford in England to the New Zealand Government (the Crown). The gifted animals were received by the Tourist and Publicity Department in 1904 and released on Poronui Station on the northern boundary of what is now Kaimanawa Forest Park in January 1905. The range of sika now covers nearly 9,000 square kilometres of the Central North Island, across various land tenures. The Sika Herd of Special Interest Area is 17 percent of the gazetted sika deer feral range.

Sika have generally been hunted year-round in the Sika Area. However, the best time to hunt them is widely considered to be between late February and August, particularly during the autumn roar (mid-March to the end of April), when emboldened stags (male sika) are vocal to attract hinds (female sika), and during spring, when sika feed on new plant growth. Stags are often hunters' preferred target during these periods because of their impressive antlers, which can reach between 11 and 30 inches long and can have 6 to 8 points.

During the sika rut, accessible locations see significant hunting pressure. However, more remote parts of the Sika Area are exposed to comparatively little hunter activity. This is particularly so outside the rut, with the Kaimanawa Remote Experience Zone and harder-to-reach parts of the Kaweka Range often having little recreational hunting pressure. In these areas, limited access opportunities affect the contributions recreational hunter activity can make to sika population management. Some hunters emphasise the importance of retaining walk-in access to these areas, while others are increasingly interested in opportunities to enhance aerial access.

Sika hunting community and herd management

Sika hunters are not solely consumers of this resource but are also active custodians of the environment. Many understand that a high-quality herd requires a high-quality ecosystem, meaning the value of the hunting experience is inextricably linked to the health of the habitat.

This stewardship is demonstrated through significant voluntary action, with members of the Sika Foundation contributing many hours of volunteer work to wider conservation initiatives, including servicing traplines to protect indigenous species such as whio and pekapeka.

Adoption of the Sika Herd of Special Interest management approach is intended to encourage this collective action for sika management and the conservation of indigenous flora and fauna generally.

Critical role of access

Hunter access is a significant herd management issue. Because recreational hunters have an important role in managing the sika herd, ensuring they can reliably access the Sika Area is not merely about recreational privilege, it is about enabling a contributor to herd management.

Access allows the transfer of the herd's value to the community through the retrieval of meat, the physical and mental health benefits of time in nature, the economic flow-on effects to local townships, and conservation gains through population management.

In many places, access to the Sika Area is via roads and tracks passing through extensive areas of private land, including areas protected by Ngā Whenua Rāhui kawenata. Respecting private land adjacent to the Sika Area, and working with the owners or managers, is crucial to management of the Sika Area.

Effective management of the herd will also require consideration of deer movement across boundaries, including adjacent private land and whenua Māori, recognising that management outcomes are influenced at a landscape scale.

Hunting and managing for hunting purposes

Deer management in the forest parks has evolved over time. Following their introduction to the area, the sika population adapted well to local conditions and spread widely. From the 1960s, sika became the subject of studies focused on their dispersal, habitat use and potential for hybridisation with other deer species. Throughout the 1970s to 1990s, sika came to increasingly dominate red deer within the Sika Area as a result of their superior physiology and ability to outcompete other species.

At the same time, the popularity of the sika hunting experience continued to grow. In recognition of the sport-hunting potential of the sika herd, the northern part of Kaimanawa Forest Park and eastern part of Kaweka Forest Park were gazetted as RHAs under the Wild Animal Control Act in 1982 and 1986, respectively. These RHAs were intended as places where recreational hunting is the main means of managing deer, with management actions to be guided by wild animal control plans issued by the Director-General of the Department.

Between 1998 and 2015, the Department-led Kaweka Mountain Beech Project sought to restore tawhairauriki / mountain beech in Kaweka Forest Park.⁹ It involved monitoring seedling recruitment, growth and mortality across various plots, and assessing the effectiveness of deer management methods, such as fencing, aerial hunting and recreational hunting. As part of the programme, analysis and modelling of vegetation monitoring data predicted that aerial deer management during the vulnerable seedling and sapling phases would lead to canopy and gap closures in mountain beech forest at most open sites within 40 years. The use of other, less-intensive methods in isolation was shown to be significantly less effective, with far longer recovery times.

In 2022, with funding from the Department and support from the Game Animal Council, the Sika Foundation began a new programme of adaptive deer management and research in the forest parks.¹⁰ This involved professional ground and aerial deer culling operations by specialist operators using thermal imaging equipment to target hinds, and facilitating access for recreational hunters into

⁹ For further information, see Duncan R, Ruscoe W, Richardson S, Allen R. 2006. Consequence of deer control for Kaweka mountain beech forest dynamics. Napier: Department of Conservation. Landcare Research Contract Report LC0607/021 (doc.govt.nz/documents/conservation/threats-and-impacts/animal-pests/kaweka-deer-control.pdf).

¹⁰ See Adaptive Deer Management & Research Plan Kaimanawa & Kaweka 2022–2025, on the Sika Foundation website (sikafoundation.co.nz/adaptive-deer-management-plan-2022-2025).

the Kaimanawa Remote Experience Zone.¹¹ The programme recognised that hind-focused management reduces the reproductive output of the herd and the associated stress on the environment. Between 2022 and 2025, the programme removed over 1,500 deer, and the results informed future habitat management strategies.

Managing the Sika Herd of Special Interest for hunting purposes involves focusing herd management efforts on sika hinds, which will have both environmental and hunting benefits. Hinds have smaller home ranges than stags, which means that overabundant female groups can cause intense localised impacts. By contrast, stags spend more of their time in alpine areas, tussock grasslands, farm edges and forestry mosaics outside the Kaimanawa and Kaweka beech forests. A male-biased population benefits hunters by ensuring sufficient males are available for harvest despite a smaller population overall. It also enhances rut hunting experiences.

In a male-biased population, multiple males compete for mating rights with the lower proportion of healthy cycling females. This increased mating competition encourages sexual dimorphism, where traits, such as a larger body and antler size, become more prominent over time. These larger, more dominant stags are more likely to win the right to breed with cycling hinds, allowing them to pass their genes to the next generation, which leads to intergenerational changes in the sika herd that are desirable to hunters.

Maintaining the sika population at low levels reduces the environmental impacts on flora, leading to an increased availability and diversity of preferential browse plants. This, in turn, improves the health of sika, which increases fawn survival, body size, body fat content and antler growth, leading to an improved quality and quantity of venison and antlers. Improved habitat health also contributes to an enhanced sika hunting experience. Being immersed in a thriving environment with a diversity of palatable species in the browse tier, hearing kiwi and ruru / moreporks calling at night, observing whio in the rivers, and seeing flocks of kākā and kererū in the canopy all enhance the hunting experience.

Monitoring, research and reporting to support management

An adaptive management framework will guide the implementation of this plan. This framework may include indicators, thresholds, monitoring methods and response pathways to inform annual operational planning and management review.

Monitoring will support adaptive management by informing whether management objectives are being achieved. The methods and implementation of monitoring will be detailed in supporting implementation documents. A variety of methods and tools are available to support monitoring, and these may be adjusted or improved over time to enable more robust and timely data collection. Any changes should consider integration with, or comparability to, previously applied monitoring protocols to support long-term reporting and trend analysis.

Research will support improved understanding of the effectiveness of management and contribute to achieving the objectives and strategies for managing sika for hunting purposes.

Reporting on herd management activities will show progress in meeting the objectives and strategies of this plan. This will provide transparency and accountability to Treaty partners, stakeholders and members of the public who are interested in the management of the Sika Herd of Special Interest. Regular reporting will also inform ongoing management and support an efficient and effective plan review process.

¹¹ The Kaimanawa Forest Park Remote Experience Zone is shown on Map 1 of the *Kaimanawa Forest Park Management Plan 2007* (doc.govt.nz/kaimanawa-management-plan).

Geographical context

Kaimanawa Forest Park (77,348 hectares) was established as a land management unit in 1969, most of which is centred on the Kaimanawa Mountains.

The topography of Kaimanawa Forest Park is characterised by:

- four main mountain ranges running northeast to southwest in the south and southwest
- a complex multi-directional ridge system in the northeast
- gently sloping terrace land in the north.

Elevations range from 560 metres above sea level in the north to 1,727 metres above sea level at the summit of Makorako. In summer, the park can be hot and dry, while in winter, inhospitable snow and blizzards are common at higher elevations.

The adjoining Kaweka Forest Park (59,000 hectares), which covers most of the Kaweka Range, was gazetted in 1974. Kaweka Forest Conservation Area (1,146 hectares) adjoins Kaweka Forest Park around Don Juan peak and is integrated with Kaweka Forest Park for management purposes. Therefore, the information below on Kaweka Forest Park applies equally to the Kaweka Forest Conservation Area.

The topography of Kaweka Forest Park is similar to that of Kaimanawa Forest Park, with the main Kaweka Range a dominant feature, running roughly north to south along the park's eastern flank. Several other ranges and high points are also prominent, particularly Te Pukeohikarua and the Black Birch range. The park is also characterised by numerous stream and river valleys, most notably the Ngaruroro River, Tutaekuri River, Ngaawapurua/Harkness Stream, Donald River and Makino River.

Like Kaimanawa Forest Park, Kaweka Forest Park covers different elevations. These range from 213 metres above sea level, where the major rivers leave the park, up to the high point of the Kaweka Range at 1,724 metres above sea level. The park also experiences dramatic weather conditions, from hot and dry periods in summer through to freezing snowstorms during winter.

Ecological context

Biodiversity in Kaimanawa Forest Park typically comprises montane and alpine species. It is dominated by beech forest and alpine plant communities and the animals commonly associated with these. It contains a large area of alpine habitat, while smaller areas of podocarp–broadleaf forest occur on the western flanks.

Most of the vegetation in Kaimanawa Forest Park, except in the extreme south, was destroyed by the last eruption of the Taupō Volcano in 186 AD. The forest then fully returned but was later reduced in extent, particularly in the south and most of the larger river valleys, by Māori and European fires. Where fires occurred, there is now a mosaic of red tussock grassland, scrub and smaller pockets of beech forest.

The area was widely used by Māori as a hunting ground for kiore and birds in the pre- and early European period. In the 1860s, European farmers introduced sheep to the area, using fire to burn off native grasses, native forest and scrub for pasture. In the early 20th century, the spread of rabbits, erosion and the challenging climate led to grazing on the main range being abandoned.

The Kaweka Range is the driest section of the North Island mountain axis, and plant compositions reflect this. Vegetation varies from indigenous forest to alpine grasslands and scrublands. On the eastern flanks, infestations of wilding pines (particularly *Pinus contorta*) are a significant issue.

In both forest parks, vegetation destruction through volcanic activity, man-made fires and erosion was further exacerbated by the introduction of pigs, goats, possums and deer. However, despite the effects of burning, grazing and wild animals, the forest parks still contain a variety of ecosystems, some of which are ecologically significant. The forest fauna is typical of alpine and beech forest communities, with a diverse range of bird species reflecting the different habitats present.

Deer have caused palatable understorey species like puahou / five finger and patē / seven finger to be replaced by unpalatable species such as horopito and crown fern within forest habitats in the parks. Deer are also compromising canopy replacement at some sites. Research indicates that regeneration is possible where most of a deer population at a site is removed through intensive management, but this is generally slow, location specific and costly to sustain. Plant growth also depends on light and nutrient availability, so competition from deer-avoided species may slow down the recovery process, leading to long-term changes in forest composition. Biodiversity declines and changes in community composition can reduce ecological resilience, including resilience to the impacts of climate change.

The ongoing management of deer populations will reduce deer-induced impacts on some non-canopy palatable species within the forest parks. Even a low-density sika population is likely to affect the regeneration of highly preferred palatable species in deer-accessible sites, but less-preferred palatable species will benefit from the sika population being maintained well below the maximum sustainable yield. Highly preferred palatable species can be found throughout the forest parks in locations that are inaccessible to deer, such as on stream banks, bluff systems, and stumps and beech buttresses in windfall areas, as well as on other plants, such as epiphytes.

3 Objectives and strategies

This section sets out the objectives and strategies for managing the Sika Herd of Special Interest, to achieve the expected benefits.

Objectives

Objective	Description
1	Sika are managed in a manner that allows for canopy regeneration and supports the maintenance of forest ecosystem processes and the protection of threatened species and their habitats. This includes the following sub-objectives and targets: a) increased seedling occupancy within 5 years of active deer management, leading to positive seedling ratio indices for dominant canopy species,¹² within 10 to 20 years; b) sustainable forest canopy regeneration, indicated at 100-plus hectare canopy collapse sites by achieving 20-plus saplings at more than 1.35 metre height per 10 x 10 m plot; and c) within the Kaimanawa Mountains–Umukarikari and Harkness–Makino Natural Heritage Management System ecological management units, achieve an overall average positive seedling ratio index for sub-canopy trees, tall shrubs and tree ferns.
2	Provide for high quality recreational hunting by maintaining and improving hunter values associated with the sika herd.
3	Maintain and strengthen relationships between Ngāti Tūwharetoa, Ngāti Whitikaupēka, Ngāti Tamakōpiri, Mana Ahuriri Trust, Hineuru Iwi Trust, Tamatea Pōkai Whenua, the Department, the Game Animal Council and the Sika Foundation.
4	Increase opportunities for tangata whenua to be involved and participate in the management of sika in the Sika Area.
5	Maintain and enhance hunter involvement in the management of sika and the Sika Area.
6	Build or maintain sources of income, partnerships, and in-kind support that assist with and advance the other objectives of this plan.
7	Undertake monitoring and research to support adaptive management and assess whether the objectives of this plan are being achieved.
8	Provide public reports and information on whether the Plan is achieving these objectives.

¹² Generally being tawhairaunui / red beech, tawhairauriki / mountain beech, tawai / silver beech, kāmahī and podocarps.

Strategies

Strategy	Description
1	Use a range of herd management activities to manage the Sika Herd of Special Interest and improve the hunting experience.
General	
1.1	Set and review annual sika management goals to support achieving the objectives and strategies of this plan.
1.2	Coordinate and manage herd management activities to selectively remove sika in a way that: a) prioritises areas for population management; b) protects and enhances the hunting experience; and c) supports a male-biased population, with a higher proportion of older males.
General recreational hunting	
1.3	Operate an authorisation system for hunting sika within the Sika Area that enables management of all hunter activity, and require hunters to obtain an authorisation and adhere to its conditions.
1.4	Specify hunting conditions by notice in the <i>New Zealand Gazette</i> , including conditions relating to the periods and times when sika may be hunted. ¹³
1.5	Provide for open hunting access to Sika Herd of Special Interest hunting opportunities.
1.6	Explore whether a hunter ballot or booking system is appropriate in the Kaimanawa Remote Experience Zone during high-use periods, having regard to access, hunting opportunity, wilderness values and management needs.
1.7	Work with relevant groups and organisations to manage recreational hunting access for short periods outside the sika rut, including through the use of terms and conditions, where necessary, to support herd management activities.
1.8	Encourage hunters to: a) target the removal of hinds to reduce the population of breeding females; and b) selectively remove sika to increase the proportion of older males in the herd.
1.9	Apply additional management measures where recreational hunting is insufficient to maintain a sika population that achieves the ecological objectives of this plan.
1.10	Work with the hunting community when developing hunter authorisation, education and promotional materials to ensure these recognise and provide for their values and interests.
Herd management hunts	
1.11	Provide opportunities for the hunting community and other interested parties to contribute to and participate in herd management hunts.
1.12	Focus herd management hunts on opportunities to: a) facilitate access to parts of the Sika Area where access is difficult, recreational hunter activity is limited or sika abundance is particularly high;

¹³ Game Animal Council Act 2013, section 18(1)(d), 18(2).

Strategy	Description
	b) increase awareness in the hunting community of the impacts of sika on these parts of the Sika Area; and c) contribute to coordinated herd management activities.
1.13	Seek opportunities to recover venison from sika removed as part of herd management hunts, where efficiency and effectiveness are not compromised.
Professional herd management operations	
1.14	Undertake professional herd management operations where recreational hunting and herd management hunts are insufficient to maintain a sika herd that achieves the objectives of this plan.
1.15	Seek opportunities to recover venison from sika removed as part of professional herd management operations, where efficiency and effectiveness are not compromised.
2	Undertake monitoring and research to support management and decision-making.
Monitoring	
2.1	Develop and implement a monitoring programme to measure sika impacts, herd health and quality, and progress towards achieving other objectives of this plan. Detailed methods, indicators, thresholds and response pathways will be set out in operational planning documents. The monitoring programme shall include the following: a) ecological monitoring: i. which may include, but is not limited to, the following methods and tools: – seedling ratio index; – permanent 20 x 20 m plots; – alpine deer browse; and – faecal pellet counts. b) exploring use of new monitoring methods, tools and technologies, having regard to the views of tangata whenua, the Tongariro Taupō Conservation Board, the East Coast Hawke's Bay Conservation Board, Sika Foundation, Game Animal Council and the Department, where relevant. c) monitoring herd health, including the size and condition of animals, growth rates, antler quality and herd structures. This may include hunter harvest, such as the hunter contribution to management goals, and the age and length of jaws from animals harvested. d) monitoring voluntary and partnership contributions to management objectives. e) monitoring hunter satisfaction with the management of the Sika Herd of Special Interest: i. which may include, but is not limited to, the: – quality of sika available; – hunting experience; – hunter harvest (age, gender, health of the sika harvested, and general location); and – authorisation processes, including the information available to hunters before and after their hunting trips.
2.2	Undertake ecological monitoring in accordance with relevant standards used or set by the Department.
2.3	Include the results from all monitoring in an annual report (see strategy 5).

Strategy	Description
Research	
2.4	Seek opportunities to undertake or support research relevant to the management of sika and/or their effects within the Sika Area. Relevant research may relate, but is not limited to: a) spread, behaviour and effects of sika on indigenous flora and fauna, and how this compares with that of other deer species; b) movement patterns and habitat use of sika within the Sika Area; c) changes in the health and composition of the sika herd over time; and d) hunter harvest and satisfaction.
2.5	Explore opportunities with tangata whenua to incorporate mātauranga Māori (Māori knowledge) in management and research activities and increase understanding of the impact of sika on taonga species.
2.6	Provide relevant research findings in an annual report.
3	Work closely with iwi and hapū to manage sika.
3.1	Seek to establish a forum or rūpū (group) with relevant iwi and hapū to enable sharing of perspectives and enhance opportunities for iwi and hapū to be involved in the management of the Sika Herd of Special Interest.
3.2	Seek to create opportunities for iwi and hapū to be actively involved in delivering herd management activities.
3.3	Engage with Treaty partners when developing partnerships with others to ensure that the interests and values of tangata whenua in relation to such partnerships are considered.
3.4	Work with Treaty partners when developing hunter authorisation, education and promotional materials to ensure these recognise and provide for their values and cultural information.
4	Foster partnerships and community stewardship.
Partnerships	
4.1	Develop partnerships, commercial opportunities and other support to help meet the costs of implementing this plan.
4.2	Actively promote the Sika Herd of Special Interest hunting experience to domestic and international markets.
4.3	Develop and maintain collaborative relationships with the owners and managers of land neighbouring the Sika Herd of Special Interest Area, so that herd management considers the needs of neighbours.
Stewardship	
4.4	Provide educational opportunities for communities, hunters and interested parties about the: a) contribution that managing sika for hunting purposes makes to improving forest and herd health; b) impacts of sika on the environment and conservation values, and what the objectives of this plan are working to achieve; c) selection of sika when hunting, to improve conservation values, herd health and recreational outcomes;

Strategy	Description
	d) Sika Herd of Special Interest hunting experience; e) visitor requirements and behaviour on public conservation land; and f) requirements for hunting safely.
4.5	Provide a range of opportunities for the hunting community and other interested parties to actively contribute to: a) sika herd management activities; b) initiatives that enhance the use, recreation and enjoyment of the Sika Area; and c) associated conservation initiatives that promote the health and wellbeing of indigenous plants and animals in the Sika Area.
4.6	Work with the local communities in the Central North Island to develop opportunities to participate in activities such as open days, hunter training and education days.
4.7	Work with professional and recreational hunting communities to facilitate and support social initiatives, such as local foodbanks and charities.
4.8	Seek opportunities to work with the owners and managers of private land adjoining Kaweka Forest Park, Kaimanawa Forest Park and Kaweka Forest Conservation Area to improve the management of sika beyond the Sika Area.

5 Undertake planning and reporting on management activities.

Operational planning

- 5.1 Develop annual and other operational plans to help achieve the objectives of this plan. Annual operational plans should include, but are not limited to:
- a) setting operational areas and annual herd management goals and focus areas, including desirable herd composition and specific locations within the Sika Area for herd management;
 - b) outlining methods to achieve herd and habitat management goals;
 - c) providing opportunities for the carcass recovery of venison associated with herd management operations;
 - d) setting the annual sika hunting process, including the issuing of authorisations and any important dates;
 - e) identifying any other planned work or initiatives; and
 - f) identifying parties or entities responsible for management activities and related timeframes.

Annual report

- 5.2 Prepare and publish an annual report detailing the activities undertaken in the previous year, including, but not limited to:
- a) overall herd management activities, including the number of sika harvested and controlled, the herd management method(s) used, the areas where herd management occurred and the herd management effort;
 - b) results and outcomes of monitoring activities, such as ecological and habitat monitoring, and hunter participation and satisfaction evaluations;
 - c) significant metrics of hunters' contributions to herd management, the number of authorisations issued and available information on the ages, locations, condition and quality of the sika taken;
 - d) sponsorships and commercial partnerships;

Strategy	Description
	e) hunter training, education and community initiatives; f) wider conservation activities supported; and g) opportunities to further improve management.
5.3	Include financial reporting in the annual report relating to: a) sika herd management and other conservation activities; b) overall expenditure and contributions by the Department and/or central government to manage the Sika Herd of Special Interest; and c) monitoring.
5.4	Work with the Department when preparing the annual report before its finalisation and public release.
5.5	Present the annual report to Te Kotahitanga o Ngāti Tūwharetoa, Ngāti Whitikaupeka, Ngāti Tamakōpiri, Mana Ahuriri Trust, Hineuru Iwi Trust, Tamatea Pōkai Whenua, the Tongariro Taupō Conservation Board and the East Coast Hawke's Bay Conservation Board, if requested.

3 Plan review, compliance and enforcement

Plan review

This plan binds the Game Animal Council and must be reviewed at intervals of not more than 5 years, in accordance with section 19 of the Game Animal Council Act.

Plan reviews are to be initiated early in the fourth year of a 5-year plan cycle. However, the Minister for Hunting and Fishing has the discretion to initiate an earlier review. Monitoring results and reporting may inform whether an earlier plan review is required.

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

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

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

The designation of the Sika Herd of Special Interest continues until such time it is revoked. The Minister may revoke the designation, following consultation and engagement with relevant interested parties.

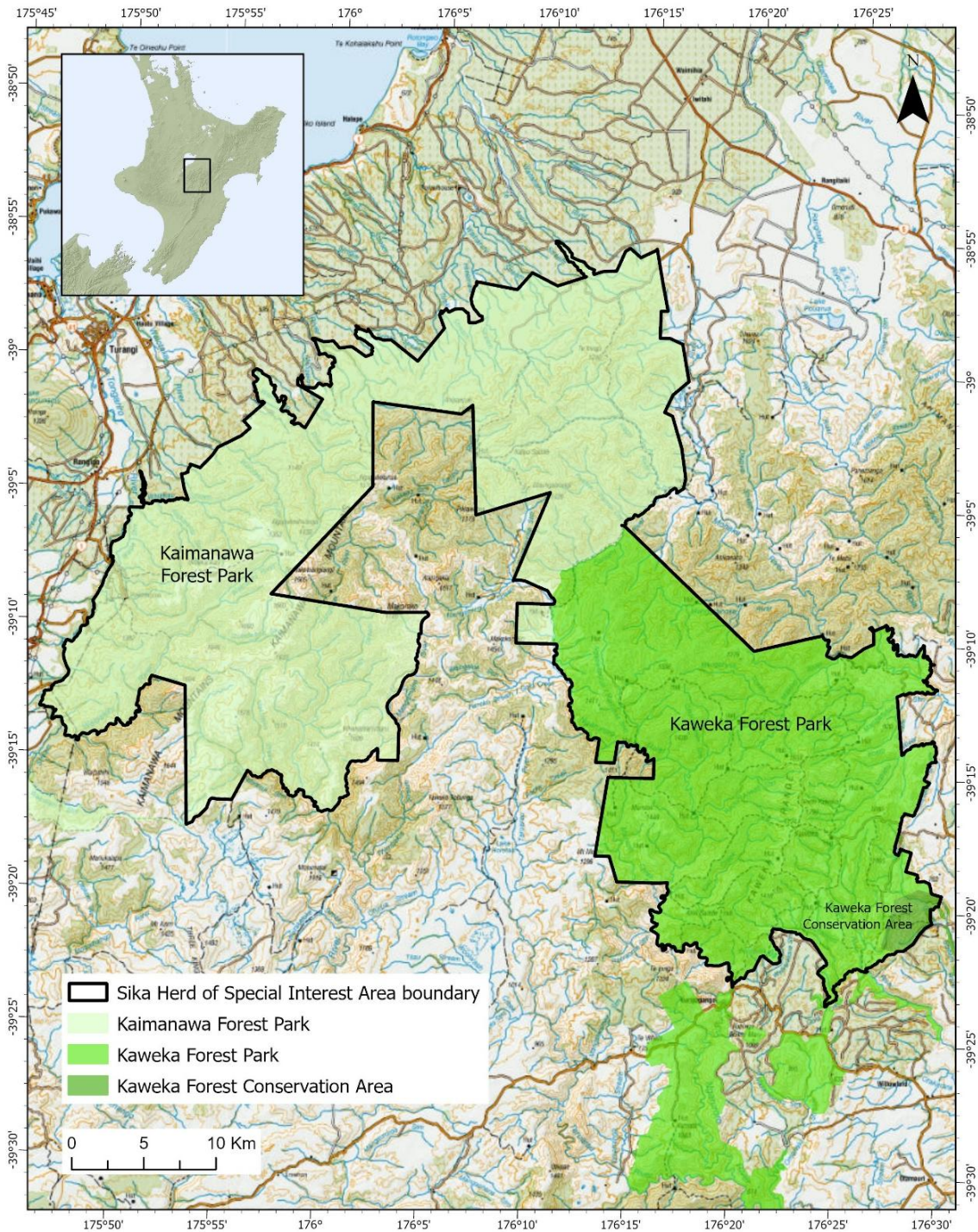
Hunter compliance and enforcement

Schedule 1 of the Game Animal Council Act sets out the compliance and enforcement framework that applies to the Sika Herd of Special Interest.

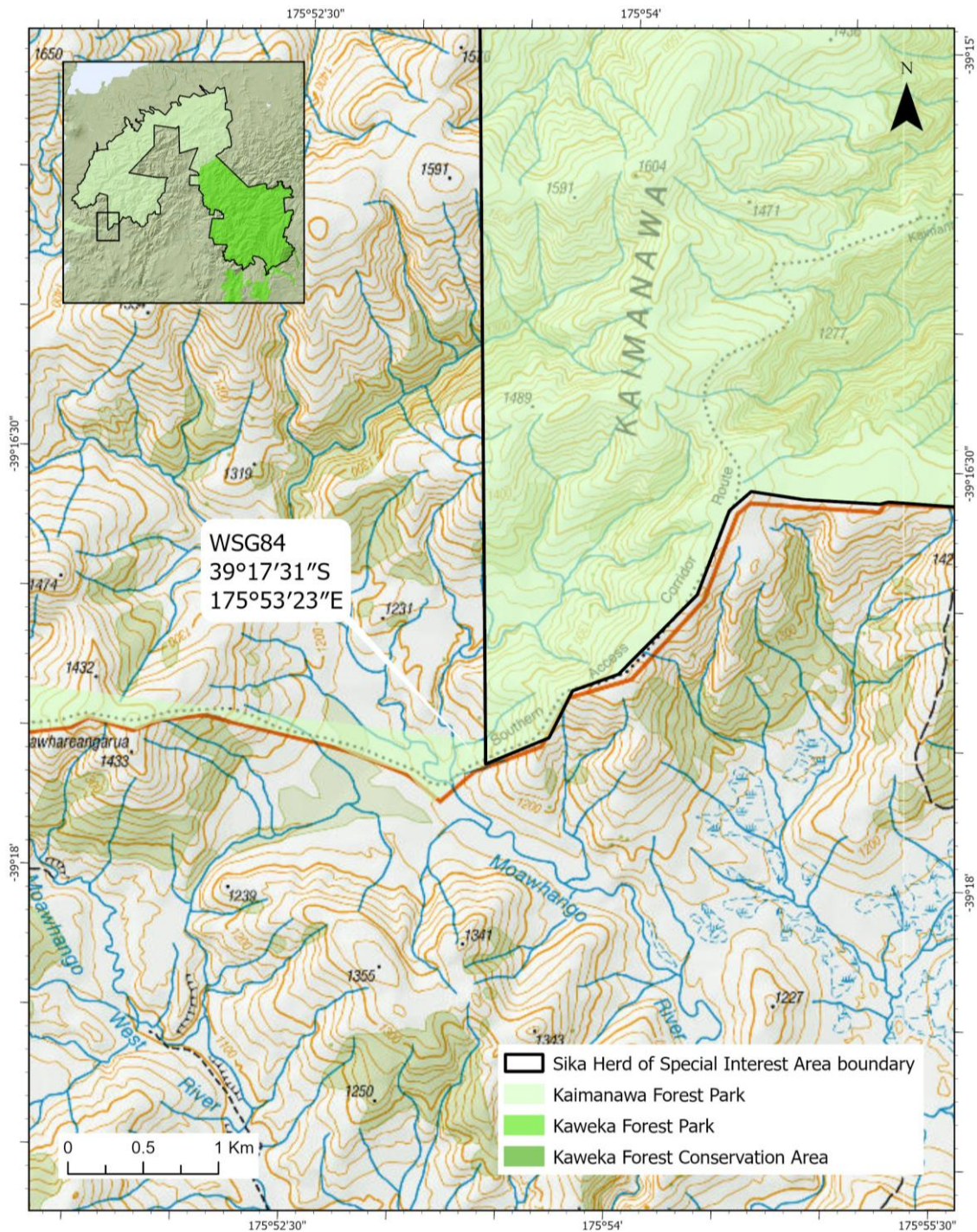
The Director-General of the Department may appoint and remove enforcement officers and honorary enforcement officers. Officers have the power to prevent or stop offending, require personal details, search, stop any activity, and seize any animal, animal product or thing that provides evidence that an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

A person who hunts or kills any animal in a designated area for a herd of special interest without the appropriate authorisation, licence or permit is liable on conviction, in accordance with the Game Animal Council Act.

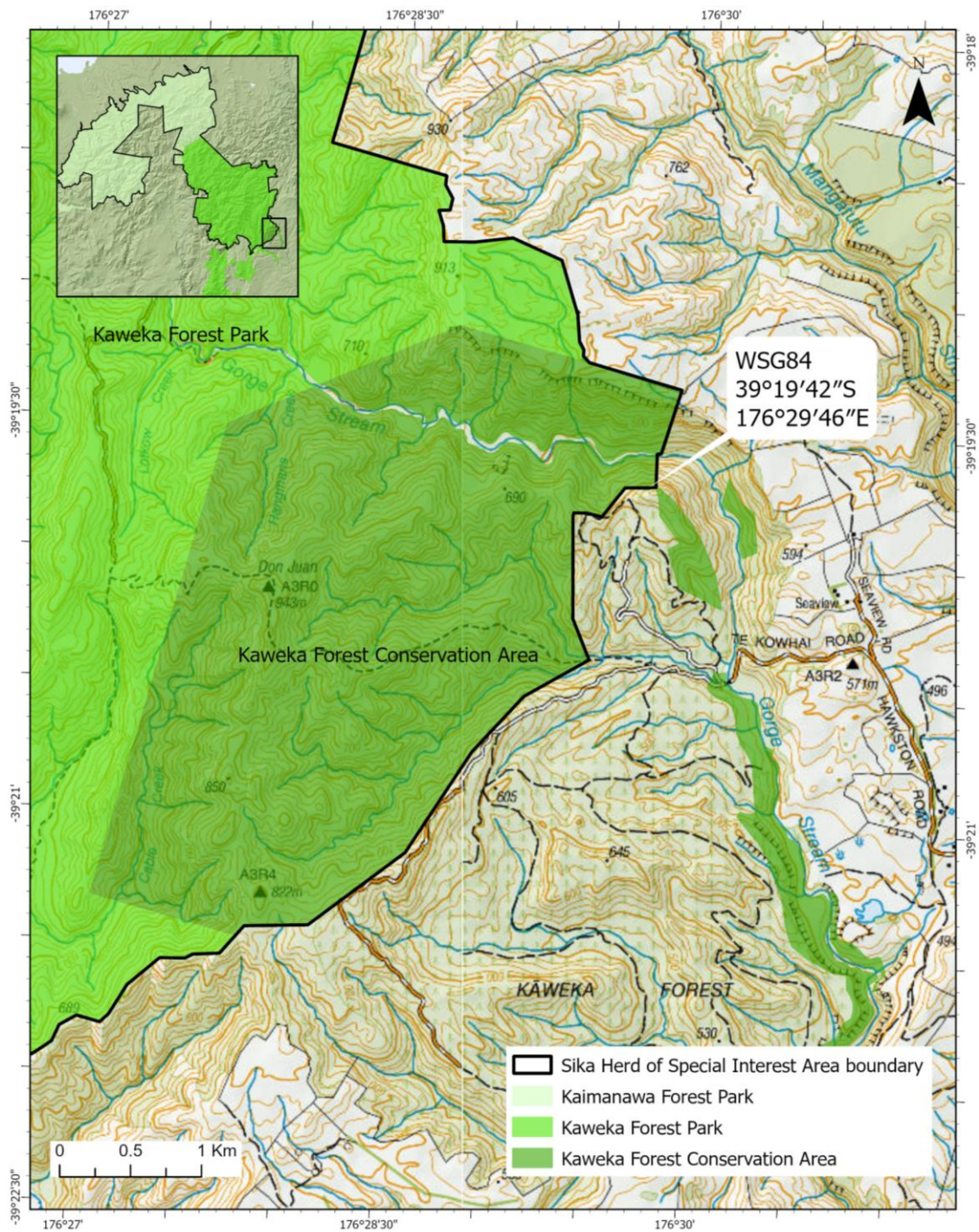
Appendix 1: Maps



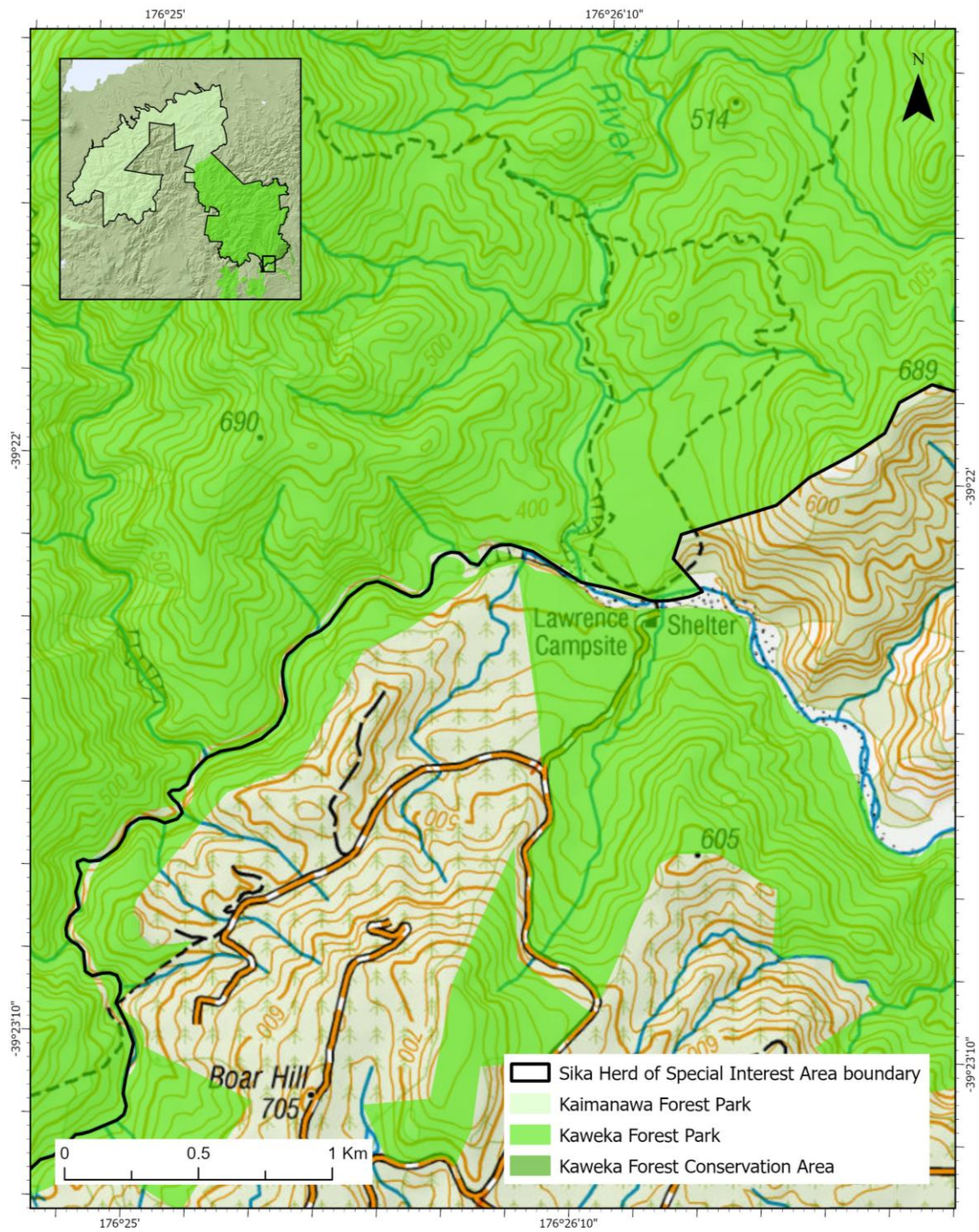
Map 1: Sika Herd of Special Interest Area



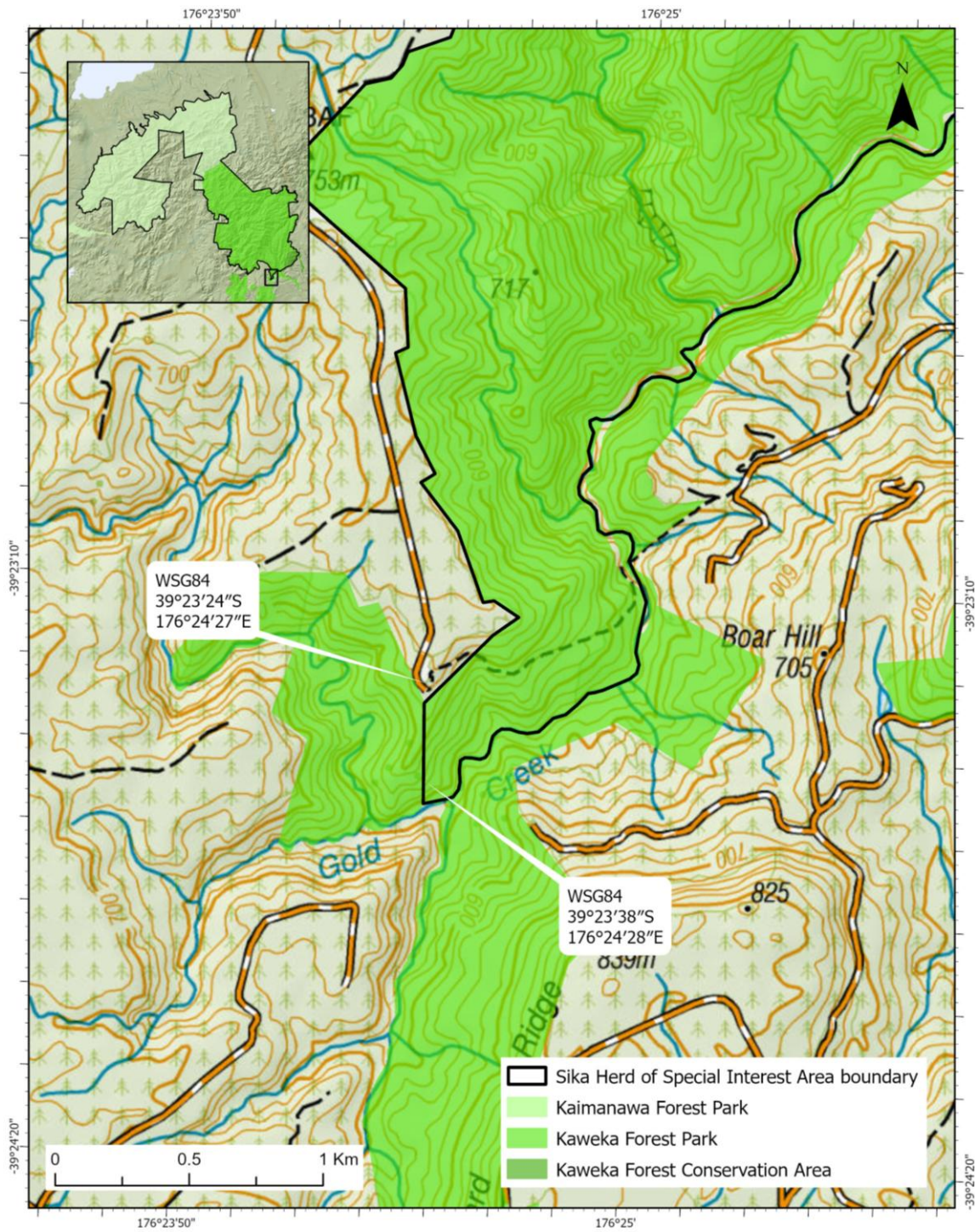
Map 2: Sika Herd of Special Interest Area, near Moawhango River, Kaimanawa Forest Park



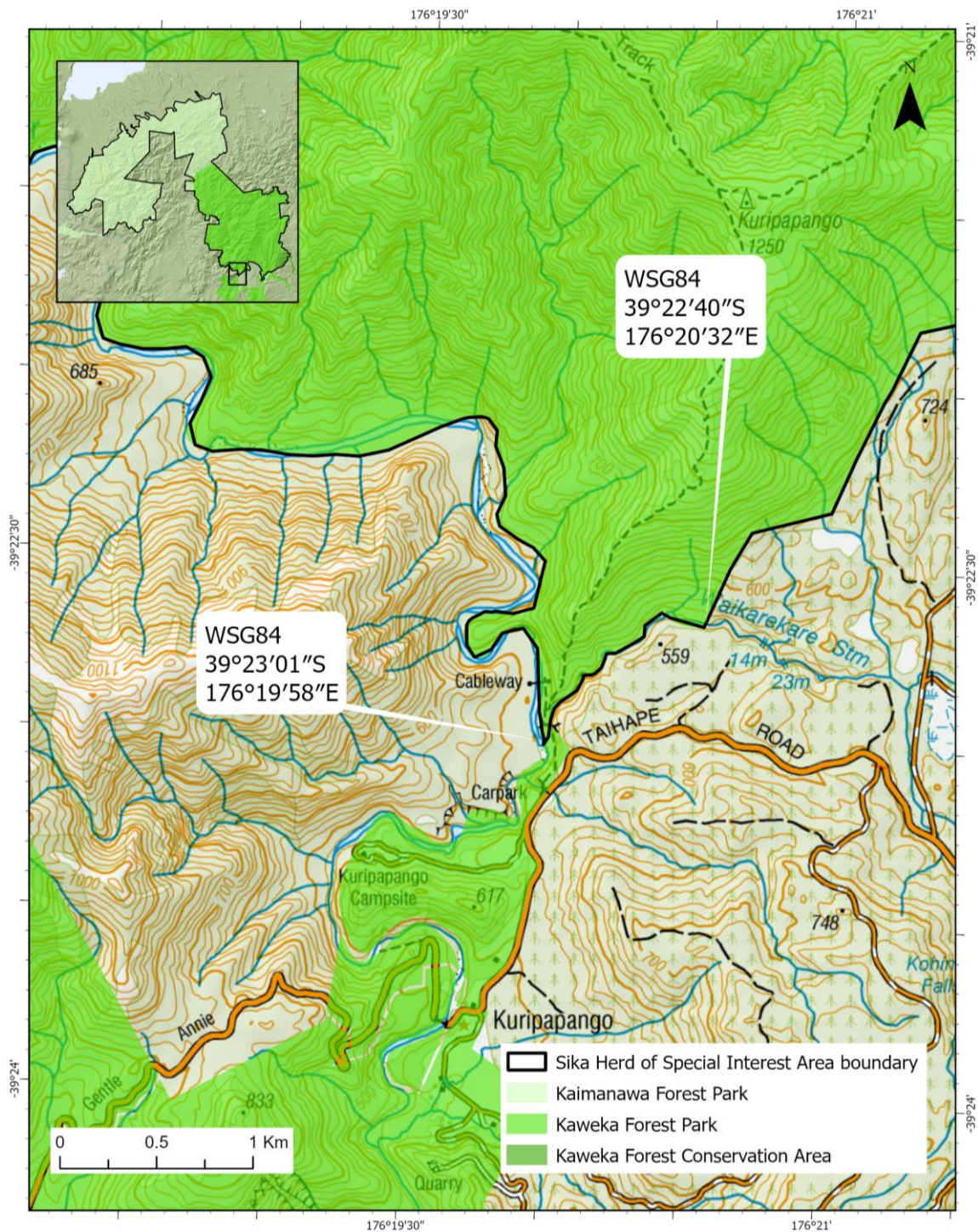
Map 3: Sika Herd of Special Interest Area, near Te Kowhai Road, Kaweka Forest Conservation Area



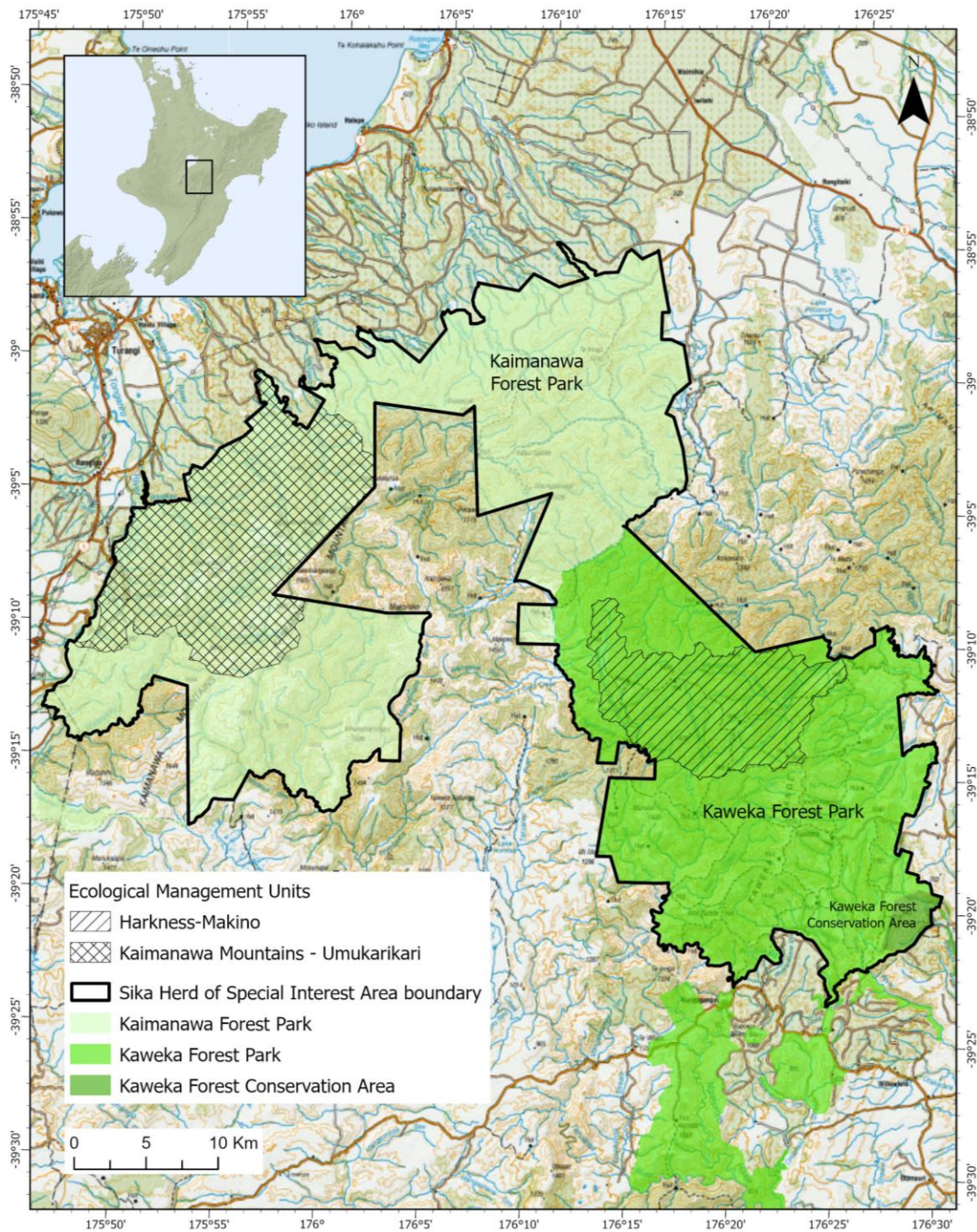
Map 4: Sika Herd of Special Interest Area, near Lawrence Campsite, Kaweka Forest Park



Map 5: Sika Herd of Special Interest Area, near Gold Creek, Kaweka Forest Park



Map 6: Sika Herd of Special Interest Area, near Kuripapango, Kaweka Forest Park



Map 7: Sika Herd of Special Interest Area, including Ecological Management Units

Appendix 2: Expected benefits

In accordance with the requirements in section 16(3)(e) of the Game Animal Council Act 2013, the expected benefits to be gained by managing sika within the Sika Herd of Special Interest Area for hunting purposes are:

- a) improved ecological outcomes for indigenous flora species and ecosystems through targeted herd management, regular monitoring and responsible harvest decision-making by the hunting community;
- b) for hunters, a higher quality and more sustainable hunting experience and venison yield, due to there being fewer but healthier animals, and an improvement of sika trophy quality over time;
- c) encouraging and enabling greater participation of the sika hunting community and other interested parties in herd management, thereby promoting a sense of herd and environmental stewardship and an increase in voluntary contributions to conservation activity more broadly;
- d) enabling the active involvement of iwi and hapū in sika management activities, increased understanding of the impacts sika can have on taonga (treasured) species and mahinga kai (food-gathering) practices, and steps being taken towards protecting and restoring culturally significant resources; and
- e) economic, social and wellbeing benefits for a range of communities from increased hunter tourism, support for community and social initiatives, and partnerships between iwi, community groups, businesses and conservation organisations.

Glossary

Adaptive management

Adaptive management is a term used in environmental and resource management to describe a learning-based approach where management responds to changing conditions and new information. An adaptive management approach acknowledges that uncertainty exists about how ecological systems function and respond to management actions. It is designed to improve understanding of how a system works and to use this knowledge to move towards the desired outcomes. As a result, an adaptive management approach is often used to make decisions in an environment with multiple management objectives, constrained management authorities, dynamic ecological systems and uncertainty about the responses to management actions. Adaptive management often requires the participation of multiple stakeholders to help assess the problem, design activities to solve it, implement and monitor the activities, and evaluate the results.

Authorisation

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

Community

Any individual or group (whether statutory or non-statutory, formal or informal, commercial or non-commercial) with an interest in a particular issue of relevance to the Sika Herd of Special Interest.

Conservation board

An independent body established under section 6L of the Conservation Act 1987. The main functions and powers of conservation boards are set out in sections 6M and 6N of the Conservation Act and section 30 of the National Parks Act 1980. These functions include advising the New Zealand Conservation Authority or Director-General of the Department of Conservation Te Papa Atawhai on conservation matters of importance in their area. They also have an important conservation advocacy role. The relevant conservation boards for this plan are the Tongariro Taupō and East Coast Hawke's Bay conservation boards.

Herd management activities

Herd management activities include any activity that manipulates the demographics of the herd, including number and structure. It can include recreational hunting, commercial hunting and the professional herd management operations that are provided for in this plan.

Herd management hunt

Coordinated hunting activity facilitated by an entity empowered to undertake management activities for the Sika Herd of Special Interest, with hunting effort generally being undertaken on a voluntary (non-commercial and non-professional) basis. The main benefits are data collection and hunter education. Herd management hunts can also contribute to managing animal populations in some circumstances. A herd management hunt may involve recovery of animals or any parts of the animals.

Herd of special interest

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

Hunting and hunter values

Hunting and hunter values of, or associated with, the sika hunting experience include its wilderness challenge, remoteness, culture and heritage and maintaining the conditions that underpin that experience. This includes access, animal condition and quality, and opportunities for hunters to contribute to management. These values are set out in Section 2, Values and context.

Indigenous flora

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

Minister for Hunting and Fishing

The Minister responsible for the Game Animal Council Act 2013.

Professional herd management operation

Activities to search for and shoot game animals as a non-recreational and non-commercial activity specifically to help achieve herd management objectives. Professional herd management operations generally do not, but may, involve recovery of the animals or any parts of the animals. Professional herd management operations may selectively target sika based on the sex and condition of individual animals.

Recreational hunting

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

Sika Herd of Special Interest

Sika (*Cervus nippon*) occurring within the Sika Herd of Special Interest Area.

Sika Herd of Special Interest Area (Sika Area)

The area and parts of Kaimanawa Forest Park, Kaweka Forest Park and Kaweka Forest Conservation Area that are subject to the *New Zealand Gazette* notice designating the Sika Herd of Special Interest, as shown on the maps in Appendix 1.

Sustainable forest canopy

Replacement of the forest canopy within 40 years of natural canopy collapse. Natural canopy collapse refers to the end of the natural life cycle of canopy species (trees) or occasions where environmental factors, such as wind, snowstorm damage, or fungal or insect attack, cause large areas of canopy species to die.