



Minister/Maker Statement of Reasons: Game Animal Council Act (Fiordland Wapiti Herd of Special Interest Designation) Notice 2026

This document fulfils the requirements of section 14 of the Regulatory Standards Act 2025 to briefly explain the Government’s reasons for any inconsistency with the principles of responsible regulation identified in The Department of Conservation’s Consistency Accountability Statement.

Minister/maker name and title	Hon James Meager, Minister for Hunting and Fishing
Portfolio	Hunting and Fishing
Date finalised	2 July 2026
Identification Number	NA

Statement of Reasons

The Department’s assessment does not definitively demonstrate that expected benefits outweigh expected costs. This reflects the difficulty of quantifying and evaluating both tangible and intangible benefits, rather than an indication that costs are likely to exceed benefits.

Nevertheless, the designation of a wapiti herd of special interest is expected to deliver benefits for recreational hunters who will be able to enjoy high-quality hunting experiences, as well as conservation benefits associated with continued and enhanced adaptive management of the herd.

The Fiordland wapiti herd is considered iconic by many New Zealand hunters. It is the only wild hunting opportunity for wapiti-type deer in the Southern Hemisphere, and hunters value wapiti for producing the largest round-antler trophies of any deer species in New Zealand. The work done by the Fiordland Wapiti Foundation to help manage the herd over the years is viewed by many in the hunting community as exemplary, providing contributors with a sense of belonging, purpose, and achievement. The shared challenge of contributing to Fiordland wapiti herd management creates an engaged and connected hunting community, showcasing how hunting and conservation benefits can be mutually reinforcing.

Management of the wapiti herd of special interest would be undertaken primarily by the hunting community, which contributes directly through its time, resources, and coordinated management

arrangements. As a result, the associated costs to the Crown are expected to be minimal, and focused on ecological monitoring. This approach materially reduces the need for public expenditure in a remote and operationally challenging area where deer control is not currently a priority for DOC-led intervention, noting other areas of Fiordland National Park are currently prioritised for DOC-led deer management. The area would otherwise likely be managed through authorised wild animal recovery operations. In this context, hunter-led management is expected to maintain recreational hunting values while also contributing to conservation outcomes that may not otherwise be realised in the absence of dedicated government resourcing.

Designation of a wapiti herd of special interest is a top priority for the Government's Hunting and Fishing portfolio, which I am glad to be able to deliver.

A handwritten signature in blue ink, consisting of a large, stylized 'J' followed by a series of loops and a long horizontal stroke.

James Rawiri Meager

Minister for Hunting and Fishing