



Sika Herd of Special Interest, Draft Herd Management Plan

Summary of Submissions



Department of
Conservation
Te Papa Atawhai

**Te Kāwanatanga
o Aotearoa**
New Zealand Government

Cover: Kaimanawa Forest Park. *Photo: Department of Conservation*

Sika Herd of Special Interest Draft Herd Management Plan Crown

copyright © March 2026

This document is available at [Sika deer proposal for a Herd of Special Interest](#)

ISBN: 978-1-0671400-1-4

Published by:

Department of Conservation Te Papa Atawhai PB Box
10420, Wellington 6140
New Zealand



This work is licensed under the Creative Commons Attribution 4.0 International licence. In essence, you are free to copy, distribute and adapt the work, as long as you attribute the work to the Crown and abide by the other licence terms. To view a copy of this licence, visit creativecommons.org/licenses/by/4.0.

Please note that no departmental or governmental emblem, logo or Coat of Arms may be used in any way that infringes any provision of the Flags, Emblems, and Names Protection Act 1981. Use the wording 'Department of Conservation' in your attribution, not the Department of Conservation logo.

Disclaimer

While every effort has been made to ensure the information in this report is accurate, Department of Conservation does not accept any responsibility or liability for error of fact, omission, interpretation or opinion that may be present, nor for the consequences of any decisions based on this information. This report incorporates summaries generated using Microsoft Copilot, a generative AI tool. All AI-generated content was manually reviewed and verified by the Departmental staff to ensure accuracy and relevance.

Contents

Executive Summary	3
Background and key context.....	4
The public consultation and submissions process	5
What we heard	7

Executive Summary

The purpose of this document is to provide a high-level summary of the submissions received during the public consultation on the Sika Herd of Special Interest Draft Herd Management Plan.

It includes submissions made online, and those emailed or posted to the Department of Conservation and Minister for Hunting and Fishing.

The submissions period ran from Monday 10 November 2025 until Monday 8 December 2025.

A total of 245 submissions were received.

This is a summary of submissions only and does not provide an analysis or recommendations. Recommendations in response to submissions will be made to the Minister for Hunting and Fishing.

A full record of submissions can be accessed through the Department of Conservation [Sika Herd of Special Interest process webpage](#). Personal and private contact information has been redacted from submissions, in line with Department of Conservation policy.

Background and key context

In March 2025, the Minister for Hunting and Fishing (the Minister) received a proposal from the Central North Island Sika Foundation (the Sika Foundation) to formally designate sika as a Herd of Special Interest in parts of Kaimanawa Forest Park, Kaweka Forest Park and Kaweka Conservation Area.

The proposal was endorsed by the New Zealand Game Animal Council (the Game Animal Council), a statutory body established by the Game Animal Council Act 2013 with a range of functions in relation to game animals (deer, tahr, chamois and wild pigs).

The Minister agreed to initiate the statutory process to consider designating a Herd of Special Interest for sika and tasked the Department to undertake the process and develop a draft herd management plan. This has involved targeted consultation and engagement with Treaty partners and statutory stakeholders - including the Ministry for Primary Industries, Game Animal Council, Department of Conservation, New Zealand Conservation Authority and relevant regional councils and conservation boards.

Development of the draft Herd Management Plan, and the associated public process, is only part of the wider process undertaken by the Minister to consider designating sika in the Kaweka and Kaimanawa forest parks and Kaweka Conservation Area as a Herd of Special Interest.

Further information on the Sika Herd of Special Interest process is available on the Department webpage [Sika deer proposal for a Herd of Special Interest](#)

A similar process is also underway to consider designating wapiti deer in part of Fiordland National Park as a Herd of Special Interest. As part of that process, a Fiordland wapiti Herd of Special Interest Draft Herd Management Plan was also released and open for public submissions between 10 November and 8 December 2025. More information on the process is available at [Wapiti deer proposal for a Herd of Special Interest](#).

Following publication of this report, the draft Plan will be revised to reflect the submission process, ongoing conversations with Treaty partners and any follow-up engagement undertaken with statutory stakeholders as appropriate.

The revised Plan and a range of supporting materials will be provided to the Minister, who will decide whether to finalise the Plan and designate a sika Herd of Special Interest.

The timing of final decision-making is at the Minister's discretion.

The public consultation and submissions process

The consultation period commenced on Monday 10 November 2025 and continued until Monday 8 December 2025. Key information was available on the website from the 8 November 2025, and included the:

- draft Sika Herd Management Plan;
- consultation support document, providing information on:
 - how to make a submission;
 - the summary of submissions process and privacy matters;
 - key context relevant to the draft Herd Management Plan; and
 - questions and answers to support submitters and submissions.
- a standard privacy statement and information on the potential public release of submissions.

How submissions were made

There were three ways to make a submission (detailed on the webpage):

- online submissions portal:
 - provided submitters an opportunity to select from preset drop-down options of support, support in part, neutral, oppose in part, or oppose the Plan as whole;
 - submitters could choose to make specific comments in free-text comment boxes;
 - gave submitters the option to include or attach additional documents as part of their submission.
- email, through the sikahosihmp@doc.govt.nz e-mail address:
 - email submissions, and any associated attachments, were imported to the online submission portal by Department staff.
- postage:
 - to the Department's office in Cashel Street, Christchurch.

Email submissions

As well as being emailed to the sikahosihmp@doc.govt.nz e-mail address, a small number of submissions were lodged by email directly to the Minister for Hunting and Fishing.

Multiple or duplicate submissions

Some submitters provided their feedback via multiple channels – for example, via email and the online submission portal.

During submissions processing and categorisation, these submissions were identified and managed to ensure submission points and feedback was captured, while also removing duplication.

Individuals making submissions on behalf of multiple organisations

Where submitters lodged submissions personally and on behalf of an organisation (e.g. a local branch of a national association or a catchment protection group), their name appears at multiple points in the submissions record.

Submissions addressing both the sika and Fiordland Wapiti herd management plans

A small number of submitters addressed both the sika and Fiordland wapiti draft herd management plans in the same single submission document. Occasionally, these submissions were lodged only in relation to one of the processes. Where a single submission addressed both draft plans, the submission was accepted and included in the submission record for both processes, regardless of whether it was submitted in relation to one or both processes.

Late submissions

Two late submissions received after 8 December, and before 14 December 2025, were accepted and have been included in the record of submissions.

Template submissions

Some stakeholder groups or individuals released guidance or templates for others to use or follow in their individual submissions.

Where this occurred, every submission using the guidance or template material was recognised in its own right, and the individual submission points processed in a uniform way to ensure consistency.

Process methodology

In preparation for this summary:

- all submissions were collated into a single dataset and key themes and feedback extracted;
- the dataset was analysed using two analysis agents - Microsoft Co-pilot 365 and the Microsoft Co-pilot Researcher agent (both using the GPT-5.2 GEN AI model), and
- the analysis was checked by Department staff to ensure all themes were captured and verified alongside the relevant section of the draft Plan.

Further analysis will be undertaken as the draft Plan is revised.

What we heard

Overall, on the Plan as a whole

A total of **245** submissions were received.

Table 1. sets out the position of the 212 submitters who provided a comment on the Plan as a whole.

Some submitters chose to only submit on parts of the Plan. For example, a submitter may have only commented on objectives and strategies relating to the management of recreational hunting. Submissions of this nature are not addressed in the percentages set out in Table 1.

Position	Percentage of submissions
Support	54.2%
Support in part	9.9%
Neutral	1.4%
Oppose in part	3.3%
Oppose	25%
No stated position	6.1%

Table 1: position of submitters who provided comments on the Plan as whole.

Reasons for support

Submitters provided the following reasons for supporting the draft Plan or supporting it in part:

1. the positive value of the sika herd for hunters and local communities;
2. the Plan recognises the importance of hunting as an important part of outdoor recreation, family tradition and backcountry culture and heritage;
3. sika are seen as providing a sustainable source of wild venison;
4. a planned, long-term framework for management of the herd is preferable to *ad hoc* approaches based on eradication;
5. a hunter-led management approach can be effective – as shown by the track record of the Central North Island Sika Foundation and Game Animal Council;
6. a plan implemented with hunters' involvement will improve co-ordination of deer control efforts, enhance monitoring and ensure the herd is managed sustainably to balance hunting opportunities and conservation goals;
7. support clearer management rules and enforcement; and
8. direct funding streams to the entity or entities undertaking on-the-ground herd management activity.

Reasons for opposition

Submitters provided the following general reasons for opposing the draft Plan or opposing it in part:

1. risks to conservation and biodiversity;
2. sika are harmful, invasive pests that severely damage native forests and giving them any form of special status or 'protection' on public conservation land would be a major step back for environmental stewardship;

3. moving priorities away from ecosystem restoration toward accommodating a non-native game animal, which is seen as elevating hunting interests of a minority over the protection of indigenous flora and fauna;
4. the Plan and designation of sika as a Herd of Special Interest would set a precedent for other 'pest' species;
5. vague and lacking in specific targets to improve forest health – seek measurable ecological objectives and benchmarks for success;
6. concerns about governance, transparency, decision-making and public accountability, if herd management is delegated to a 'hunting' organisation; and
7. mana whenua have not been adequately involved in the Herd of Special Interest proposal or draft Plan development, and any initiative affecting taonga species and public conservation land must uphold Treaty of Waitangi obligations, kaitiakitanga (guardianship) and rangatiratanga (authority) of local Iwi.

Mixed or neutral views

Submitters provided the following general reasons for mixed or neutral views on the draft Plan:

1. support involving hunters in deer management for pragmatic reasons and recognise the need to improve the management of sika deer within the Kaimanawa and Kaweka Forest Parks but urge caution and the incorporation of tighter controls;
2. clearer ecological bottom lines, independent scientific monitoring and regular transparent review to ensure the approach is benefitting the environment; and
3. a collaborative management plan could work but it must not sacrifice core conservation goals.

Common suggestions for improvement

Submitters provide the following suggestions for general improvement of the draft Plan:

1. set measurable conservation/ecological outcomes in the Plan itself (rather than these being in detailed annual, operational or monitoring plans);
2. strengthen monitoring and reporting requirements;
3. clarify roles and responsibilities across DOC, the Game Animal Council, Sika Foundation, Iwi/hapū, and neighboring landowners, including who makes decisions and who delivers;
4. embed Treaty partnership within the Plan framework;
5. include review and exit provisions for the Plan and designation;
6. address cross-boundary impacts of sika deer, and how it relates to adjacent land or landowners; and
7. keep the Plan practical.

Many of the themes expressed on the draft Plan as a whole are discussed in more detail alongside specific provisions of the draft Plan. These are set out below.

Plan section 1 – Introduction, key parties and relationships

The following key themes and feedback were received from submitters:

1. provide clearer explanations of governance roles for the Game Animal Council, Central North Island Sika Foundation, Iwi and the Department of Conservation and implementation to avoid future confusion or disputes;
2. clearly outline Treaty partner responsibilities and mana whenua roles;
3. provide fewer general statements and more clarity on how it will work in practice;
4. clearly state what being a Herd of Special Interest means and how it will be 'protected' without weakening conservation outcomes;
5. include an explanation and analysis of how the Plan and any Herd of Special Interest designation more broadly are consistent with the overriding considerations requirements in the Game Animal Council Act 2013; and
6. explain how it relates to existing gazetted recreational hunting areas in the Kaimanawa and Kaweka Forest Parks.

Plan section 2 – Values and key context

The following key themes and feedback were received from submitters:

1. it is important to set a clear framework for what the Plan is setting out to achieve and how competing values will be balanced;
2. provide a clearer separation between 'values' and 'context' so it reads as a management plan rather than a background narrative;
3. context material should be tightened and shortened, to keep the focus on values, decisions, responsibilities and measurable outcomes;
4. update the section to reflect that sika are significant for recreation, food gathering, connection to place and community identity, and that hunting supports wellbeing and intergenerational participation in the outdoors;
5. sika are an introduced species, and the Plan must not minimise the impacting of sika browsing on native forest systems;
6. risks normalising long-term maintenance of deer densities, which is incompatible with forest regeneration;
7. should better recognise deer impacts can occur even at low densities and recovery can take decades;
8. kaitiakitanga, mauri and prioritising indigenous biodiversity are core values for conservation land;
9. the values and key context section should lead with hunting and herd values, and then identify ecological limits, rather than hunting values being contingent on ecological outcomes; and
10. it is important to address conservation and natural or indigenous ecological values before addressing hunting and recreation values.

Plan section 3 – Objectives and strategies

Objective 1 - regarding the maintenance of forest ecosystems, including canopy regeneration and protecting threaten species

The following key themes and feedback were received from submitters:

1. there is a need for clear, measurable ecological outcomes;
2. include ecological thresholds for forest generation and protection of threatened species;
3. recognise and provide for the variability of annual monitoring outcomes, and note the importance of longer-term trends;
4. healthy ecosystems link to healthy herds - the Plan should have an adaptive management focus and not fixed sika density targets;
5. 'maintenance' is insufficient where regeneration is already suppressed and the impacts of sika are well known and documented;
6. include a social carrying capacity for sika (such as a minimum harvestable number per year) that is considered necessary to maintain a sustainable recreational hunting opportunity;
7. clarify how objectives will be balanced against one another;
8. explicitly recognise sika effects interact with other pressures such as climate change, weeds or disease, while still requiring the Plan to directly and effectively address sika impacts;
9. focus on effects sika directly influence, rather than committing to protect entire ecosystems;
10. align the objective with monitoring methods and management levers;
11. avoid risk in committing to ecological outcomes that might not be deliverable;
12. clearly state if ecological indicators decline, strong interventions must occur;
13. coordinate with wider pest control and biosecurity programmes;
14. reflect independent scientific input;
15. recognise the value of forests as carbon sinks, and the downstream effects of browse and erosion on catchments and waterways; and
16. link to ongoing regeneration work on adjacent whenua and align with local restoration efforts.

Objective 2 – relating to an enhanced hunting experience, while contributing to overall management of the area

The following key themes and feedback were received from submitters:

1. recognise and manage the hunting experience as a legitimate value;
2. use clearer language e.g. 'provide high-quality hunting experiences' and include a definition of what high quality means in practice;
3. use herd health indicators and hunter surveys to measure hunting outcomes;
4. use age structure, presence of mature animals and hunter success as practical indicators of whether the herd remains 'special';
5. hunting value should not be limited to the rut, and the Plan should avoid a narrow seasonal focus;
6. the need for fair access and to avoid limiting hunting opportunities to a small group of selected hunters or through the introduction of ballot and block systems;
7. do not repeat ecological content already captured elsewhere;
8. provide a cleaner separation of objectives, as tightly linking hunting values to conservation outcomes risks framing hunting as a 'service', rather than as a value;
9. managing for hunting purposes is incompatible with biodiversity recovery on conservation land;
10. recreational hunting alone may not be enough to enable regeneration, and the Herd of Special Interest designation and associated plan will inappropriately legitimise ongoing browse pressure;
11. requests for an independent review of whether ecological recovery and enhanced hunting experience can be simultaneously achieved;
12. include explicit statements allowing conservation and biosecurity operations (e.g. predator control or bovine tuberculosis) to proceed where needed, regardless of hunting value;
13. objective 2 enables stronger stewardship by hunters, including funding and volunteer labour to support conservation outcomes; and
14. provide more detailed definitions and clearer indicators so the objective can be assessed consistently over time.

Objective 3 – regarding in kind support and revenue through partnerships, to contribute to costs of the Plan

The following key themes and feedback were received from submitters:

1. clarify where funding and financial contributions may come from, who would make decisions, and how any shortfall would be met;
2. if the Herd of Special Interest model relies on hunter contributions, funding should go directly to organisations delivering on-the-ground management, rather than be routed through DOC;
3. support direct funding to the Sika Foundation, with mandatory performance reporting against agreed outcomes;
4. provide clear separation between one-off establishment funding and long-term operational funding;
5. risk of costs shifting to the Crown if in-kind support and revenue targets are not met, or extra funding becomes necessary for additional control to protect ecological values;
6. Herd of Special Interest management should not displace essential DOC work programmes or impact DOC budget;
7. have a fee and funding model and focused on governance and accountability; and
8. concern about public subsidy of a system primarily benefiting hunters and private interests.

Objective 4 – regarding engaging the hunting community

The following key themes and feedback were received from submitters:

1. refinement required so the objective is more outcome focused, rather than aspirational;
2. explicitly link the objective to ecological outcomes and the quality of hunting and recreational experiences;

3. provide a clearer commitment to on the ground work on pest trapping and maintenance or enhancement of recreation infrastructure;
4. hunter involvement should be seen in terms of partnership and stewardship rather than using hunters as 'tools' for control;
5. reword to emphasise shared leadership, practical stewardship and transparent decision-making; and
6. the objective could detract from Treaty of Waitangi partnership obligations and affect iwi involvement.

Objective 5 - regarding the enhancement of relationships with Treaty partners and increasing opportunities for involvement

The following key themes and feedback were received from submitters:

1. support with refinements to recognise the Crown's Treaty responsibilities and avoid replacement (or displacement) of the Crown-iwi relationship by third parties managing the sika herd;
2. Iwi partnership be embedded in HOSI decision-making, including in operational planning, monitoring and review;
3. Iwi and hapū should be involved in design or governance, rather than iwi and hapū being invited to participate in a pre-set framework that was developed without them;
4. clarify practical implementation details – who meets, how often, how disagreements are resolved, how iwi and hapū input is used, and reporting back on progress;
5. provide Iwi and Māori land trusts regular updates, clarity on operational impacts near iwi land, and practical mechanisms for engagement; and
6. prioritise the health of te taiao and recognise and provide for kaitiakitanga (duty of care for the environment), tino rangatiratanga (self-determination) and mātauranga Māori (traditional knowledge), where appropriate.

Objective 6 - regarding knowledge and understanding of dynamics between sika and indigenous species

The following key themes and feedback were received from submitters:

1. research is important, but it may not be appropriate to include 'improving knowledge' as a stand-alone objective;
2. research is needed to address what deer densities are compatible with regeneration in key forest types;
3. prioritise research that supports ecological and herd/hunting outcomes, and for findings to be reported;
4. social research should be undertaken on hunter participation and motivation to support realistic management settings;
5. focus research on areas that would reduce uncertainty when making management choices;
6. integrate research into an 'adaptive management loop' so it directly informs management decisions;
7. merge Objectives 6-8 into a single adaptive management objective to reduce duplication and strengthen accountability; and
8. questions regarding who will commission and fund research, and how the independence of research will be ensured.

Objective 7 – regarding monitoring enabling adaptive management

The following key themes and feedback were received from submitters:

1. monitoring must be meaningful, efficient and directly linked to objectives and management actions;
2. monitoring should be about informing adaptive management decisions, rather than being about plan compliance;
3. avoid high-cost, low value monitoring measures; and
4. prioritising monitoring of deer impacts on vegetation.

Objective 8 – regarding research supports management

The following key themes and feedback were received from submitters:

1. merge Objectives 6-8 into a single adaptive management objective;
2. be outcome focused with clear measures of success and accountability; and
3. include more active wording to assign and clarify responsibilities and specify what should be delivered.

Objective 9 - regarding public reporting on objectives

The following key themes and feedback were received from submitters:

1. reporting is an administrative procedure rather than an outcome – a stand-alone objective may not be appropriate;
2. move reporting requirements into the reporting section, so objectives remain outcome based;
3. clarify who would prepare reports, what data would be made public and how reports would link to triggers for management decisions; and
4. provide assurances that progress reporting on the Plan will be publicly available.

Strategy 1: Use a range of tools to manage the Sika Herd of Special Interest and improve the hunting experience.

General

The following key themes and feedback were received from submitters:

1. replace the paradigm and terminology of 'control' with 'management'. This includes changing the focus from 'body count' language to long-term herd management and habitat outcomes;
2. broaden expression of the hunting experience to beyond the rut to ensure strategies reflect year-round use;
3. potential ballot and booking systems should be framed as management tools that could protect fairness and access, and make a positive contribution to overall herd management outcomes; and
4. the hunting community can assist in the development of permit systems, education and promotional material. This would encourage hunter-buy in, reflect hunting values and avoid misunderstanding

Recreational Hunting – sections 1.4 – 1.9

The following key themes and feedback were received from submitters:

1. support for status quo hunter access arrangements;
2. concerns about fair access and transparency, with risks of favouritism or commercialisation leading to exclusive or privileged access;
3. everyday New Zealand hunters should have the opportunity for access;
4. ballot and booking systems should only be used where required, and with transparent rules and criteria to protect equity of access and public confidence in the process;
5. both female and male sika should be removed to manage the population and environmental impacts; and
6. opposition to the concept of managing for hunting purposes because recreational hunting is insufficient to protect forest health and professional measures will be required.

Herd Management Hunts – section 1.10 – 1.12

The following key themes and feedback were received from submitters:

1. support for herd management hunts as a practical tool;
2. use language that reflects 'herd management' rather than 'control' narratives; and
3. support for recovering venison from animals managed during in Herd Management Hunts, provided it does not impact efficiency of that work.

Professional Control Operations – section 1.13

The following key themes and feedback were received from submitters:

1. concern about over-reliance on aerial or thermal operations in core hunting areas, and advocacy for ground-based hunting methods to be used where practical;
2. professional aerial operations be prioritised early on when sika densities are high or access is limited
3. set clear triggers to identify when professional operations will be used;
4. if recreational hunting is not enough to achieve the Plan's objectives, then professional operations should be used as a complementary tool;
5. support for recovering venison from animals controlled during professional operations, provided that does not impact the efficiency of control or management work; and
6. rename this section to use 'professional herd management' rather than 'control' language.

Strategy 2: Undertake monitoring and research to support management and decisions making

Monitoring - sections 2.1 – 2.3

The following key themes and feedback were received from submitters:

1. robust monitoring is critical to the Plan's success;
2. a clear statement is required on the purpose for the monitoring programme so the Plan avoids collecting data that does not inform decisions;
3. monitoring should be tied to objectives and used to drive adaptive management decisions;
4. independent ecological monitoring by neutral experts and mana whenua is required;
 - a. monitoring should be by a contracted independent third party (not DOC); or
 - b. DOC should undertake monitoring, independent of the Sika Foundation or Game Animal Council (if those entities are undertaking day-do-day management and implement the Plan).
5. remove of faecal pellet counts as a monitoring tool because they do not reflect impacts and could be misleading;
6. use monitoring methods that reflect browse impacts, vegetation regeneration and habitat response;
7. monitor herd attributes reflecting hunting values, including age, condition and antler size;
8. provide flexibility to use new monitoring methods (such as thermal drones, camera traps or eDNA), provided they allow identification of long-term trends; and
9. monitoring data should be made publicly available and released with annual reporting to support transparency.

Research - sections 2.4 – 2.7

The following key themes and feedback were received from submitters:

1. research is supported but needs to be targeted and used to inform decision-making;
2. expand research to include resilience factors and longer-term drivers that influence herd and habitat outcomes;
3. provide for research on the relationship between hunter experience, active management of sika and social licence, alongside research focused on the effects of sika on indigenous flora;
4. embed research into adaptive management, so it can be used to trigger timely management decisions; and
5. include clear priorities that address the key challenges in the Plan, and accountability in terms of who will undertake research and how it will be resourced.

Strategy 3: Work Closely with iwi and hapu to manage sika

The following key themes and feedback were received from submitters:

1. support for working closely with iwi and hapū;

2. concern about giving too much control to one group, or complicating herd management with additional obligations;
3. requests for clearer commitments than involvement or participation;
4. use language that enables tangata whenua to exercise tino rangatiratanga and kaitiakitanga, where appropriate, rather than positioning iwi Māori as stakeholders within a set framework;
5. provide for mana whenua autonomy over how they engage and their roles, instead of assuming a single model of involvement;
6. direct Crown-Iwi relationships need to be protected, and the Crown's involvement and relationships with iwi should not be replaced by third party organisations;
7. provide for regular updates and engagement with iwi and Māori land-owning trust on operational matters, especially where they could affect adjacent Māori land; and
8. the Plan does not reflect co-design, and risks entrenching non-native species in culturally significant landscapes.

Strategy 4 Foster Partnerships and Community Stewardship

Foster partnerships - sections 4.1 - 4.2

The following key themes and feedback were received from submitters:

1. support partnerships but request greater clarity and more practical detail in the strategies;
2. strategies should not be limited to opportunities associated with sika, to avoid inadvertently restricting future options;
3. better recognise neighbouring landowners (e.g. Māori land trusts, private forestry companies or the Defence Force) and the importance of relationships across land tenures to the successful management of sika;
4. a specific strategy is needed for working with adjoining landowners;
5. stewardship should not only include deer hunting but community conservation work, including predator control and infrastructure maintenance under the partnership umbrella;
6. concerns over whether partnership might mean privatisation or initiatives that limit public use of conservation land; and
7. use more active language.

Community Stewardship - sections 4.3 - 4.8

The following key themes and feedback were received from submitters:

1. hunters are conservation partners;
2. recognise hunters as partners and not a funding or labour source;
3. provide clearer commitments to predator trapping and biodiversity initiatives as part of stewardship;
4. bureaucracy should not get in the way of doing work on the ground; and
5. involvement in stewardship activities could lead to exclusive perks, such as privileged access to hunting opportunities on public conservation land.

Strategy 5: Undertake annual planning and reporting on management activities.

Annual operational plan – section 5.1

The following key themes and feedback were received from submitters:

1. needs to provide for transparency and clear accountability in annual reporting;
2. defers too much to future annual plans which are not publicly consulted upon or reviewed;
3. too prescriptive it could stifle innovation;
4. the operational plan should be separate and flexible, but with clear links to objectives and monitoring results;
5. object to key targets being set in annual plans without public visibility, as this reduces certainty and credibility;

6. set environmental limits in the statutory plan, while the annual plan can be used to adjust methods to achieve them; and
7. annual plans and monitoring should data be made publicly available.

Annual Report – sections 5.2 – 5.5

The following key themes and feedback were received from submitters:

1. support annual reporting – it is essential for accountability and transparency;
2. annual reports should include full/substantive monitoring data, not just high-level summaries, and clearly state whether or not objectives are being met;
3. failures or shortfalls should be explicitly addressed in reporting, and give an outline of what will be done in response;
4. detailed financial requirements could create an unnecessary overhead or administrative burden for the organisation managing the HOSI;
5. focus on ecological and recreational outcomes and keeping financial reporting simple;
6. who would produce the annual report? Should it be the Game Animal Council or Central North Island Sika Foundation? and
7. DOC or an independent body should review the annual report.

Section 4 – Compliance, review and enforcement

The following key themes and feedback were received from submitters:

1. stronger compliance detail and clear consequences if objectives are not achieved;
2. support regular review cycles, and link reviews to measurable outcomes rather than process;
3. provide for five-year reviews and formal expiry of the HOSI unless it was extended and the reasons made public;
4. review process should include public consultation, especially for major changes;
5. provide for transparency around Ministerial decisions to amend, extend or revoke HOSI settings;
6. include firm triggers for additional control measures, or for ending HOSI if biodiversity suffers; and
7. provide assurance the HOSI won't be pulled abruptly without fair assessment, while recognising measurable outcomes need to be met to warrant continuing.

Appendices – Maps and glossary

Appendix 1 – Map 1 Sika Herd of Special Interest Area

The following key themes and feedback were received from submitters:

1. support the mapped area;
2. important to have clear boundaries, but also acknowledge the reality deer move across them;
3. explicitly address cross-boundary management of deer; and
4. an explanation should be provided with the map of how management settings will differ across zones.

Appendix 2 – Glossary

The following key themes and feedback were received from submitters:

1. support the Glossary;
2. update Glossary to be consistent with any changes made in the Plan text, so it clearly reflects HOSI settings and delegated authority;
3. terminology around control should be replaced by language consistent with herd management; and
4. expand definitions such as community to include recreational and social interests, not only conservation interests.