



A. Permission Application Number and Name of Applicant

125891-WARS Fiordland Wapiti Foundation

B. Name of Proposed Activity and Location(s)

Wild Animal Recovery Operations and other activities in part of Fiordland National Park

C.1 Objector or Submitter Information-

Submitter's name (list organisational name if submitting on behalf of a business, community group, etc.)	Ben Crouchley
Contact person and role of organisation	
Email (Communication from DOC will be via email unless alternate contact requested)	
Alternate contact for all DOC communication	
Phone/Mobile	
Postal Address and Post Code	



I wish to **keep my contact details confidential**

Note: Your contact details will be not made public, but your name and organisation will be published. DOC will send you all submitter communications.

A. Permission Application Number and Name of Applicant

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B. Name of Proposed Activity and Location(s)

Wild Animal Recovery Operations and other activities in part of Fiordland National Park

C.2 Your name

In placing your name and organisation below, you acknowledge that you are the person or authorised person submitting this objection or submission. You are also acknowledging that your name and organisation will be published.

Printed name of submitter or person authorised on behalf of submitter	Ben Crouchley
Organisation	
Date	08 September 2026

D. Statement of Support, Neutrality or Opposition

- ☐ I **Support** this Application (I am making a submission)
- ☐ I am **Neutral** on this Application (I am making a submission).
- ☒ I **Oppose** this Application (I am making an objection).

E. Hearing Request

- ☐ I **Do Not** wish to be heard in support of this objection or submission at a hearing.
- ☒ I **Do** wish to be heard in support of this objection or submission at a hearing

F. Objection or submission

The specific parts of the application that this objection or submission relates to are:

I object to the proposed concession insofar as it seeks authority for the following activities:

- 1. Contracting experienced helicopter operators to locate, shoot and recover deer**, including the proposed use of aircraft within the Fiordland Wapiti Herd area, the Murchison Mountains/Takahē area and the proposed southern buffer area. My objection includes the proposed use of WARO as the mechanism for authorising activities associated with management of the Fiordland Wapiti Herd, and the proposed targeted or non-competitive WARO access to areas where competitive WARO is currently not permitted or is restricted.
- 2. Delivery and administration of the annual Fiordland Wapiti ballot and use of the associated fees**, including the proposed transfer to Fiordland Wapiti Foundation (FWF) of responsibility for administering the ballot, issuing or facilitating hunting opportunities, and collecting animal-management and administration fees. I support the continued use of ballot revenue to fund FWF's work, but object to the administration and governance of the ballot and associated fees being secured through a 10-year concession rather than being brought within the statutory Herd of Special Interest (HOSI) framework.
- 3. Filming and conservation advocacy/community engagement**, including the proposed ongoing authority for FWF to undertake filming and related promotional activities within Fiordland National Park, rather than seeking activity-specific approval where required.
- 4. Scientific research involving the capture, handling and release of deer**, including the proposed authority to capture deer from helicopters, fit tracking or identification devices, conduct biological and genetic research, and subsequently release the animals. I object to a broad, long-term authority for unspecified research activities where individual projects can be considered and authorised through the HOSI statutory framework and reviewed by the Minister on a case-by-case basis.
- 5. Use of drones in support of the above activities**, including deer management, research, filming and advocacy. I object to a broad, long-term authority for drone operations where the appropriate authorisation should depend on the purpose and nature of the activity being undertaken.

I also object to the proposed 10-year duration and breadth of the concession insofar as it would combine these substantially different activities into a single long-term authorisation, particularly now that the Fiordland Wapiti Herd has been designated as a HOSI and a statutory management framework has been established for the herd.

The proposed activities within the Fiordland Wapiti Herd area, Glaisnock Wilderness Area, Murchison Mountains/Takahē Specially Protected Area and proposed southern buffer area are also subject to my objection, including any proposal to provide FWF with preferential or effectively exclusive access for WARO or deer recovery in areas where other commercial operators may otherwise be able to operate.

My reasons for my objection or submission are:

My position

I support the management of the Fiordland Wapiti Herd with the primary objective of providing unique trophy hunting opportunities, first and foremost for New Zealand recreational hunters.

Wapiti management should be guided by the objectives of herd improvement and achieving the required conservation outcomes within the Wapiti Area. The costs of management also need to be balanced against the costs to hunters participating in the annual ballot, while ensuring that hunting opportunities remain accessible and affordable for all Kiwis.

I support the designation of the Fiordland Wapiti Herd as a HOSI and the development of a specific statutory framework for its management. I also support the FWF continuing to play a significant role in the on-the-ground management of the herd.

My concern is that the proposed 10-year WARO concession is being used as an umbrella authority for a range of different activities that are not all WARO. Now that the Fiordland Wapiti Herd has been designated as a HOSI and a Herd Management Plan (HMP) has been established, I consider that management of the Fiordland Wapiti Herd should be undertaken through that specific statutory framework. The HMP provides the framework for determining how the herd is managed, through annual operational planning, monitoring, reporting and review. Activities that are not part of herd management should be authorised through the mechanisms that properly apply to those activities, rather than being bundled into a single 10-year WARO concession.

Reasons for objection

1. Deer recovery and control

FWF states in its application that it will "...contract helicopter companies with current WARO concessions for deer management activities." This raises a fundamental question as to why FWF itself requires a separate WARO concession.

If the helicopter operators undertaking the work already hold WARO concessions, the authority to conduct WARO would ordinarily appear to sit with those operators. If additional geographic authority is required to allow an existing WARO operator to work in a particular area, I question why that could not be addressed through an appropriate variation or extension of that operator's existing concession, rather than granting FWF its own WARO concession.

If the proposed deer recovery from within the Fiordland Wapiti Herd is instead being undertaken as a management activity under the HMP, then the WARO concession status of the contracted helicopter operator is not what provides the authority to manage the herd. DOC should clearly identify what activity the proposed FWF WARO concession is intended to authorise, and why that authority cannot instead fall under either the HMP or, where applicable, the WARO concession held by the contracted helicopter company.

1a. Wapiti/HOSI area: The HMP expressly provides for authorised commercial recovery and professional herd management operations as management tools. An additional WARO concession for these activities is unnecessary and would duplicate the management framework established under the HMP.

Furthermore, the HMP expressly states that “wapiti...are now being managed as ‘game animals’ under the Game Animal Council Act, rather than as ‘wild animals’ under the Wild Animal Control Act 1977”. The Wild Animal Control Act is very clear that a “wild animal recovery operation” involves the use of an aircraft to search for, shoot, immobilise or recover ‘wild animals’. DOC should therefore clarify the legal basis on which a WARO concession can be used to authorise the recovery of wapiti from the HOSI when those animals are now ‘game animals’ under the Game Animal Council Act.

1b. Murchison Mountains/Takahē area: DOC already operates a long-standing deer-control programme in this area. The purpose of this programme is to protect takahē habitat by reducing deer numbers to the lowest practicable level. Recently FWF has contributed funding towards this programme, but the work on the ground has been carried out by DOC and has been distinct from FWF's own management of the Wapiti Area.

I question why FWF requires separate WARO authority to undertake deer recovery in the Murchison Mountains when an established DOC-led programme already exists. DOC's objective in the Murchison Mountains, of maintaining the lowest practicable deer numbers, is also quite different from FWF's management objective for the Fiordland Wapiti Herd, which seeks to maintain and improve a high-quality trophy hunting resource while also achieving ecological outcomes.

It is not clear from this application whether DOC considers that additional deer recovery by FWF is necessary in the Murchison Mountains, or if the proposed FWF operation in the Murchison Mountains is intended to manage deer differently from the existing DOC programme in order to protect or improve the Fiordland Wapiti Herd. Regardless, DOC should explain what additional conservation outcome FWF would achieve for the Murchison Mountains and Takahē habitat over and above the existing DOC deer-control programme.

1c. Southern Buffer: FWF should not be granted preferential or effectively exclusive WARO access to the proposed southern buffer area. If additional deer recovery in this area is considered necessary, FWF should be able to contribute under a standard South Island WARO concession on the same basis as other commercial WARO operators. Any arrangement should seek to increase, rather than restrict, the overall opportunity for deer recovery in the area. The FWF application indicates that other WARO concession holders operating in the area would be advised that FWF would manage the proposed buffer, effectively directing those operators elsewhere. I question the basis for giving FWF this preferential position where the area is otherwise subject to the established WARO framework. If DOC considers that additional or targeted recovery is necessary in the southern buffer, I believe that this should be achieved by allowing FWF to contribute alongside other commercial WARO operators, rather than by restricting recovery opportunities to FWF. This would allow the greatest possible level of deer recovery to occur while maintaining a consistent and transparent approach to commercial WARO access.

2. Annual ballot and use of fees

I believe the revenue generated through the annual wapiti ballot should continue to be used to fund FWF's work, as it has been historically. My concern is not with FWF continuing to

receive and apply these funds, but with the mechanism through which the ballot is administered and the associated fees are governed.

The Game Animal Council Act 2013 expressly provides for the Minister to determine who may receive hunting authorisations, including by ballot (section 18(1)(b)), and provides for these powers to be delegated to the Game Animal Council (GAC) under section 20. The HMP now establishes an annual operational planning process that includes determining the annual ballot process, and requires reporting on the ballot process, fees, herd management and conservation expenditure. I consider that these provisions provide a more appropriate framework for the ongoing administration and oversight of the ballot than securing those arrangements through a 10-year DOC concession.

Administration through the HOSI framework should also make it easier to review and update the ballot process as management requirements change, without being bound by the term or conditions of a long-term concession. Involvement of the GAC would provide greater oversight of the costs charged to hunters through application and success fees. The GAC being involved would also give hunters an organisation other than FWF to which they can raise concerns about the level or use of those fees.

Continuing to allow FWF to use ballot funds for management of the Fiordland Wapiti Herd, alongside appropriate GAC oversight of the ballot process and associated fees, would provide greater accountability and is the best way to protect the interests of New Zealand recreational hunters.

3. Filming and conservation advocacy

I support FWF undertaking filming and conservation advocacy to promote the Fiordland Wapiti Herd and its management. However, these activities are distinct from WARO and should be assessed on a case-by-case basis against the provisions of the National Park Management Plan and the applicable concession requirements, consistent with the usual process for applying for filming permission within Fiordland National Park. Where aircraft are proposed to be used for these activities, I also question whether they should be assessed under the provisions applicable to filming and other aircraft activities, rather than receiving the potentially different treatment that applies to WARO.

I therefore question the need to include a broad, ongoing authority for filming and related advocacy activities within a 10-year WARO concession. Different filming activities may have different effects on the National Park and should be assessed according to their location, nature, scale and potential impacts. A blanket authorisation through a WARO concession could avoid or reduce the case-by-case consideration that would otherwise apply to these activities and could result in filming or aircraft operations being authorised in circumstances that may not be consistent with the provisions of the National Park Management Plan.

4. Scientific research and capture/release of deer

I support research that contributes to better management of the Fiordland Wapiti Herd, but I object to a broad, long-term authority for unspecified research and capture/release activities.

The Game Animal Council Act 2013 provides the Minister, for the purpose of managing a HOSI, with powers to capture, convey or liberate animals and to carry out surveys and other assessments regarding the animals and the means of managing them (section 18(1)(e) and (f)). The Minister may delegate certain powers under section 18 to the Game Animal Council under section 20, although the power under section 18(1)(e) to capture, convey or liberate animals **cannot** be delegated. This indicates that Parliament intended these activities to remain subject to direct ministerial authorisation and oversight.

The HMP also expressly provides for monitoring and research to support management and decision-making for the herd. I therefore consider that the HOSI framework already provides an appropriate basis for research activities that are genuinely required to improve understanding and management of the Fiordland Wapiti Herd. Providing FWF with a broad authority for unspecified research within a 10-year concession is unnecessary. It would also be inconsistent with the structure of the Game Animal Council Act, which provides for direct Ministerial oversight of these activities and specifically reserves the power to capture, convey or liberate HOSI animals to the Minister.

5. Use of drones

I support the use of drones where they provide a genuine benefit to the management of the Fiordland Wapiti Herd, research or other appropriate activities. However, I question why a broad authority for drone operations should be included within a 10-year concession when the proposed uses are associated with several different activities, including management, research, filming and advocacy.

The Fiordland National Park Management Plan provides a framework for the management of aircraft access within the Park but does not specifically provide for drone operations. DOC now has a specific concession and permit framework for drone use on public conservation land, with the appropriate process depending on the purpose of the drone operation and the location in which it is proposed. Where drone use is required for management of the Fiordland Wapiti Herd, I consider that it should be provided for through the HMP and associated operational planning. Where drones are proposed for research, filming, advocacy or other activities, they should be assessed and authorised through the mechanisms applicable to those activities.

I therefore question the need for a broad, long-term authority for drone operations within a WARO concession when all of the proposed drone activities can already be authorised using either the herd management framework or the drone-specific concession and permit system.

Overall concern

My principal concern is that the application seeks to combine five substantially different activities into a single 10-year WARO concession at a time when the Fiordland Wapiti Herd has been designated as a HOSI and a specific statutory management framework has been established for the herd.

Each of these activities has its own purpose and an established mechanism for assessment and authorisation. It is quite normal for a commercial helicopter operator working in Fiordland to hold a general aircraft access concession, hold a WARO concession, apply for

filming or drone permissions when required, and be contracted to undertake herd management or other work authorised through a DOC-led programme or Community Agreement. The fact that an aircraft may be used to undertake several different activities does not mean that those activities are all WARO, or that there is a legal basis to allow them to be combined into a single WARO concession.

I am concerned that the proposed concession effectively uses WARO as an umbrella mechanism for activities that are not all WARO, and that this could result in activities being authorised under a concession when another statutory or concession mechanism is more appropriate. This could avoid or reduce the individual assessment that would otherwise apply to each activity, including consideration of its purpose, location, effects and consistency with the Fiordland National Park Management Plan.

The outcomes that need to be addressed by this application are:

Give precise details, including the parts of the application you wish to have amended and the general nature of any conditions sought if the application is approved.

I seek the following amendments to the proposed concession:

1. **Remove the proposed WARO authority for deer recovery within the Fiordland Wapiti Herd area.** Fiordland Wapiti Herd management should be undertaken through the HMP and its annual operational planning process.
2. **Remove the proposed FWF WARO authority within the Murchison Mountains/Takahē area.** Any deer control in this area should remain under the existing DOC-led programme.
3. **Do not grant FWF preferential or exclusive WARO access to the proposed southern buffer.** If additional recovery is required, FWF should be able to participate under the standard South Island WARO framework on the same basis as other WARO operators.
4. **Do not secure administration of the annual wapiti ballot through the 10-year concession.** The ballot should be administered under the HOSI framework, with appropriate Game Animal Council oversight. Revenue from the ballot should continue to support FWF's management and conservation work.
5. **Remove the blanket authority for filming and conservation advocacy from the WARO concession.** These activities should be authorised through the normal activity-specific processes and considered on a case-by-case basis.
6. **Remove the blanket authority for research involving capture, handling, marking and release of deer.** Individual research projects should be authorised through the appropriate HOSI statutory framework and be reviewed by the Minister on a case-by-case basis.
7. **Remove the blanket authority for drone operations from the WARO concession.** Drone use should be authorised through the mechanism applicable to the activity being undertaken, including the HMP where it forms part of herd management.

- 8. Do not grant the proposed 10-year concession in its current form.** The different activities should be authorised through the appropriate statutory or concession mechanisms rather than being combined into one long-term WARO concession.

If DOC considers that a concession should nevertheless be granted, I seek conditions that:

- clearly define the activities authorised under the concession and prevent the concession from being used as a general authority for activities that are not WARO;
- exclude management activities undertaken for the purpose of managing the Fiordland Wapiti HOSI where those activities are authorised under the HMP or associated operational planning;
- do not provide FWF with preferential or exclusive WARO access to areas otherwise available to commercial WARO operators;
- require filming, research, drone use and other activities outside the scope of WARO to obtain any separate approvals required under the relevant statutory or concession framework;
- ensure that the annual ballot remains subject to appropriate statutory oversight and that fees remain reasonable and transparent to participating hunters; and
- ensure that all activities remain consistent with the Fiordland National Park Management Plan and the objectives and outcomes established for the relevant areas.

G. Attachments

If you are using attachments to support your objection or submission clearly label each attachment, complete the table below and send in your attachments with this 'objection or submission form'.

Document title	Document format (e.g. Word, PDF, Excel, jpg etc.)	Description of attachment

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OBJECTION OR SUBMISSION



Department of
Conservation
Te Papa Atawhai
New Zealand Government

A. Permission Application Number and Name of Applicant

125891-WARS Fiordland Wapiti Foundation

B. Name of Proposed Activity and Location(s)

Wild Animal Recovery Operations and other activities in part of Fiordland National Park

C.1 Objector or Submitter Information-

Submitter's name (list organisational name if submitting on behalf of a business, community group, etc.)

Heritage Red Deer Foundation

Contact person and role of organisation

Willie Duley / Secretary

Email

(Communication from DOC will be via email unless alternate contact requested)

Alternate contact for all DOC communication

Phone/Mobile

Postal Address and Post Code



I wish to **keep my contact details confidential**

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C.2 Your name

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Printed name of submitter or person authorised on behalf of submitter	Willie Duley
Organisation	Heritage Red Deer Foundation (HRDF)
Date	09/09/26

D. Statement of Support, Neutrality or Opposition

- ☒ I **Support** this Application (I am making a submission)
- ☐ I am **Neutral** on this Application (I am making a submission).
- ☐ I **Oppose** this Application (I am making an objection).

E. Hearing Request

- ☒ I **Do Not** wish to be heard in support of this objection or submission at a hearing.
- ☐ I **Do** wish to be heard in support of this objection or submission at a hearing

F. Objection or submission

The specific parts of the application that this objection or submission relates to are:

- contracting of experienced helicopter operators to locate, shoot and recover deer for consumption;
- delivery of the annual wapiti ballot and use of fees;
- filming and advocacy to promote the Foundation's activities;
- scientific research through the capture and release of deer; and
- use of drones in support of the above

My reasons for my objection or submission are:

The HRDF fully supports the FWF's application for this WARO concession, and all five proposed concession activities for the following reasons:

- carrying out WARO and having exclusive control over such commercial operations within the Wapiti area will allow the FWF to continue delivering improved outcomes for conservation, the native landscape, and the hunting resource, consistently into the near future, while also utilising a valued wild protein, and supporting the local Southland economy.
- the annual wapiti ballot supports a better, safer, and more satisfied hunting experience. Fees from the ballot support the ongoing success of key deliverables - deer management, predator trapping etc.
- filming and advocacy is an essential part to raise awareness and continue the success of the FWF model – supports the ongoing deer management, predator trapping, hunter education etc. Likely to be extremely low impact on this landscape compared to many permitted commercial activities that exist in Fiordland and across our public conservation lands.
- scientific research through the capture and release of deer supports a better understanding of our wild deer herds and the best ways to manage them for both their impacts and values. Again, likely to have minimal impact on this landscape.
- drones are a modern tool that open up a range of potential benefits for the FWF from deer management/recovery, predator trapping delivery, low disturbance filming etc, all while having a very low impact compared to the likes of helicopter use that is permitted across much of our public land.

The outcomes that need to be addressed by this application are:

Give precise details, including the parts of the application you wish to have amended and the general nature of any conditions sought if the application is approved.

n/a

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Printed name of submitter or person authorised
on behalf of submitter

Organisation

Date

D. Statement of Support, Neutrality or Opposition



I **Support** this Application (I am making a submission)



I am **Neutral** on this Application (I am making a submission).



I **Oppose** this Application (I am making an objection).

E. Hearing Request



I **Do Not** wish to be heard in support of this objection or submission at a hearing.



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My reasons for my submission are:

I support this application because the Fiordland Wapiti Foundation's deer control programme is a proven, cost-effective, community-led conservation model that delivers outcomes DOC's own resourcing could not otherwise achieve in this area. In particular:

- Scale and cost-effectiveness: FWF manages 175,000 ha (13.9%) of Fiordland National Park's deer control at no ongoing cost to the taxpayer, funded by hunters, venison sales and sponsors rather than government.
- Proven results: from 2007-2022 the programme removed on average twice as many deer per sq. km inside the Wapiti Area as other operators achieved outside it; from 2018-2022 that rose to 3.5 times as many.
- Conservation-led targeting: culling is focused on breeding females, which reduces herd productivity and environmental impact — the opposite of conventional male-biased WARO, which tends to leave damaging, female-dominated herds.
- Biodiversity gains beyond deer control: roughly 500 stoat/rat traps across seven sites protect whio, kiwi, weka and kea; the Nitz Valley whio count rose from 5-6 pairs historically to 37 birds in DOC's 2023 survey.
- Adaptive, science-based management: FWF has engaged Manaaki Whenua - Landcare Research to investigate vegetation monitoring results, identifying chamois as a contributing factor and adding chamois removal to its control plans as a result.
- Strong and growing volunteer/hunter base: Wapiti ballot applications have grown from around 47 hunting parties in 2003/04 to around 550 parties (1,500+ hunters) in 2023/24, each contributing financially to conservation outcomes.
- Community benefit: FWF supplied 18,000 kg of Wapiti mince to foodbanks nationwide during COVID-19, alongside ongoing support to the local Fiordland/Te Anau economy.
- Low DOC priority ranking makes FWF essential: the Fiordland Wapiti Area is ranked only 86th on DOC's national deer control priority list, meaning without FWF's own-funded programme this level of control and species protection is unlikely to occur given DOC's funding constraints.
- A model worth protecting and replicating: this is a proven, community-led conservation model that could be scaled to other parts of Fiordland or other public conservation land with little or no cost to the taxpayer.

Removing or restricting FWF's ability to operate would very likely see effective, targeted deer control lost, replaced at best by sporadic, male-biased commercial WARO focused on high-value animals — which would undo the biodiversity gains made over decades and remove the funding base for FWF's wider conservation and predator-control work.

Section A

125891-WARS Fiordland Wapiti Foundation

Section B

Wild Animal Recovery Operations and other Activities in part of Fiordland National Park

Section C

Bruce A Newland

bjnewland14@hotmail.com

Credentials

Founding Member of Fiordland Wapiti Foundation via a remit passed via the National Party which saw the Crown Herd handed over to the FWF. Assisted by Ron Peacock, Jack McKenzie and a team of 8 including Frana Cardno, SDC chair and Roger McNaughton

Set up and financed DNA criteria for WARS to provide guidelines for culling, assisted by Dr Cooper Invermay

Many involvements in FNP including volunteer work on Whenua Ho, trapping pests, with an Environment Southland reserve in the Ye Anau Basin named for me.

Section F

1

There is a conflict of interests with FWF and Wild Animal Recovery operations

2

With the Game Animal Council being granted a HOSI over the Wapiti herd in Fiordland, and FWF becoming financially involved in WARS ops including running a chiller, to avoid a conflict of interests, parameters in the Wapiti herd should be set by a GAC/ DoC appointed overseer whose duties would be:

a) Stop the culling of the Wapiti cow herd until the numbers in each block have been assessed in order to maintain a quality base herd .

b) Ensure all juvenile cows and bulls are exempt from culling.

- c) All low grade Wapiti(25percent) and red hinds to be culled
- d) All red stags and low grade wapiti with poor antler growth/ confirmation to be culled
- e) GAC/ DoC inspector to check all animals in chiller or during cull
- f) No animals to be live captured.
- g)GAC/DoC inspector to attend any cull if needed in western areas.

This provision to extend through Murchison area to Nancy sound and Whitewater block to create mainland islands for Kakapo release sites cleared of predators

- h) Trapping programme to be continued in Eastern blocks, and Worsely moving traps as required.
- I) Wapiti ballot to be continued to be run by FWF

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on behalf of submitter

Bruce A. Newland

Organisation

private

Date

8/9/26

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Explanation re objection in attachment.

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See email

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Email	PDF	Photo's x 5

How do I submit my objection or submission?

Complete this form and email to DNsubmissions@doc.govt.nz. You may also mail your objection and submission to: Director-General, c/o Department of Conservation, Te Anau District Office, 1 Lakefront Drive, Te Anau 9600.



Gladys McKenzie 17/11/11
Wrote this on the back of
this card.

Please note his comment re
the direction of the WWF.



Dear Bruce & Jennifer
Thank you for your kind words
and sympathy at Jack's passing.
Yes Jack was passionate about
the wapiti; maybe just hasn't gone
the way he would have wanted
it.

Sincerely

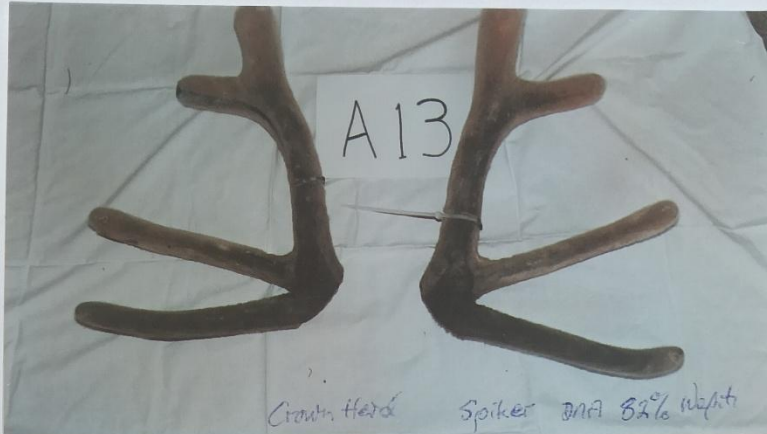
Gladys McKenzie

**Jack
John Harvey McKenzie
11.11.22
26.06.11**

1st meeting at Jack's to set up the Wapiti Foundation



Crown Herd. Velvet



DNA Blood test. 82% Wapiti Spiker



Inspected deer - Wap X from the Wapiti Area
less than 25% Wapiti
Photo P. Willemsse 1999
Recovered by S. Gamble part of 1800 Reds @ 25%
Waps; taken at first cull after handover of the herd
to the Wapiti Foundation, FWE.



New Zealand Deerstalkers Association Inc
3 Collina Terrace, Thorndon, Wellington 6011
www.deerstalkers.org.nz
info@deerstalkers.org.nz
+64 (04) 499 6163

Permissions and Concessions Team, Department of Conservation
DNsubmissions@doc.govt.nz

September 13th, 2026

Fiordland Wapiti Foundation Incorporated (FWF)

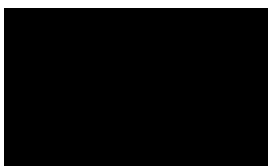
Application for a Wild Animal Recovery Operations (WARO) Concession (10-Year Term)

To whom it may concern,

Please find attached a submission on the proposed concession for Wild Animal Recovery Operations to be undertaken by Fiordland Wapiti Foundation Incorporated (125891-WARS) drafted by the New Zealand Deerstalkers Association Game Animal Management Committee.

We trust the content will assist in your decision making with regard to this concession application and thank you for the opportunity to submit.

Sincerely,



Craig Benbow
Chairperson,
NZDA Game Animal Management Committee



SUBMISSION ON CONCESSION APPLICATION

Section 17S, Conservation Act 1987 / Wild Animal Control Act 1977

To: Permissions and Concessions Team, Department of Conservation
(permissions@doc.govt.nz)

Application number: 125891-WARS

Applicant: Fiordland Wapiti Foundation Incorporated (FWF)

Subject: Application for a Wild Animal Recovery Operations (WARO) Concession (10-Year Term)

Submitter: Game Animal Management Committee, New Zealand Deerstalkers Association (NZDA)

Position: Support the application in full.

NZDA supports granting concession 125891-WARS in full for the requested 10-year term and recommends that DOC consider a longer 10+10+10 framework, with clear milestone reviews and adjustment mechanisms, as the preferred long-term delivery model for the Fiordland Wapiti Herd of Special Interest.

1. Introduction and Submitter Standing

The Game Animal Management Committee of the New Zealand Deerstalkers Association (NZDA) submits in strong support of concession application 125891-WARS by the Fiordland Wapiti Foundation Incorporated (FWF).

The NZDA Game Animal Management Committee oversees NZDA's national game animal management work and leads the Association's policy position on these matters.

As the national body representing recreational big-game hunters in Aotearoa New Zealand, NZDA advocates for evidence-based herd management that balances hunter opportunity with the protection and regeneration of indigenous ecosystems. The Fiordland Wapiti Area is a leading example of community-led conservation partnership, demonstrating over more than two decades that organised, scientifically informed hunter-led management can deliver sustained conservation gains beyond those achievable through uncoordinated commercial recovery, purely recreational effort, or intermittent state control.

The NZDA Game Animal Management Committee endorses granting this 10-year concession across all applied areas and associated activities.

2. Biological Outcomes vs Commercial Market Vulnerability

Standard commercial WARO operations on public conservation land are highly exposed to market economics: when venison or velvet prices soften, or when aviation fuel costs rise, commercial WARO harvest rates can fall markedly. Northern Fiordland monitoring data indicates that national WARO harvests have declined when economic margins narrow. Traditional WARO also tends to favour mature or near-mature male animals, leaving breeding females in the herd and allowing continued recruitment that can degrade forest health.

The FWF management model directly addresses this market vulnerability:

- **Outcome-Driven Rather Than Profit-Driven:** The Foundation operates on ecological thresholds, harvesting and culling deer irrespective of whether market venison prices justify commercial recovery.
- **Demographic Targeting:** Purely commercial WARO preferentially targets mature males and heavy animals for yield, which can leave breeding females behind and support rapid herd reproduction. In contrast, FWF systematically culls cows, calves, and red/hybrid deer, suppressing reproductive rates to under 25% per annum while maintaining family group sizes at 5–7 animals.
- **Buffer Zone Efficacy:** In the Murchison Mountains boundary and adjacent buffer areas, national WARO has historically left management deficits. FWF's commitment to remove a minimum of 120 deer per annum from the Murchison Mountains buffer directly safeguards critical takahē (*Porphyrio hochstetteri*) habitat.

3. Sound Scientific Backing and Environmental Assessment

The application is reinforced by exhaustive ecological analysis, notably the *Environmental Impact Assessment for the Fiordland Wapiti Foundation* (Wildland Consultants Contract Report No. 8021, August 2026) and long-term Alpine Deer Browse (ADB) monitoring:

- **Analysis of alternatives:** Wildlands (2026) assessed FWF operations against three realistic alternatives: Scenario A (no organised control), Scenario B (standard commercial WARO), and Scenario C (sole DOC direct management). The assessment concluded that FWF operations achieve net positive outcomes

across vegetation, avifauna, and freshwater quality, outperforming commercial WARO because of market inconsistency and DOC-only control because of funding and spatial scaling constraints.

- **Vegetation Browse Suppression:** Departmental monitoring indicates that maintaining annual harvests around 1,100 deer across the Wapiti Area keeps mean browse on sensitive alpine herbs (*Dolichoglottis scorzonoides*, *Celmisia verbascifolia*, *Ranunculus lyallii*) below or near the critical 10% threshold.
- **HOSI Alignment:** Wapiti-type deer in Fiordland are formally recognised as a Herd of Special Interest (HOSI) under the Game Animal Council Act. The granting of this concession provides the exact operational framework required to deliver the Ministerially approved HOSI Herd Management Plan.

4. Scope of Activities Supported

The NZDA Game Animal Management Committee submits that all elements of the applied activity profile are interrelated and essential:

Activity	Position and rationale
Aerial WARO and culling (approx. 20–25 recovery flights, 10 cull-and-leave flights p.a.)	Supported as essential to maintaining annual harvests above 1,100 deer across 190,000 ha of rugged terrain, particularly alpine tops and subalpine zones where ground access is impractical.
Buffer zone operations (Murchison Mountains Special Takahē Area buffer and WARO restricted buffer)	Supported because they protect fragile takahē habitat from deer ingress and close management gaps where commercial WARO has been sporadic.
Wapiti ballot administration	Supported because it distributes hunting pressure across 25 defined blocks, reinforces hunter safety, limits density to six hunters per block, and secures vital animal management levies.

Deer capture/release and drone use	Supported as modern management tools that provide demographic, spatial, and home-range data to refine harvest models over time.
Advocacy and filming	Supported because it builds public understanding, models of hunter ethics, and reinforces the social licence required for ongoing wildlife management.

5. Tangible Conservation Co-Benefits

The FWF WARO concession does not exist in isolation; it finances and coordinates extensive volunteer and professional conservation infrastructure across Fiordland National Park:

- **Predator Trapping:** FWF funds and maintains an extensive network of over 460 double-set DOC150/200 traps targeting stoats across major catchments, delivering measurable survival benefits for whio (*Hymenolaimus malachorhynchus*), kea (*Nestor notabilis*), and northern Fiordland tokoeka.
- **Backcountry Infrastructure:** FWF voluntarily maintains six standard backcountry huts (Worsley, Glaisnock, Lake Hankinson, Lake Thompson, George Sound, and Caswell Sound) to DOC service standards, preserving recreational assets at zero capital cost to the Crown.
- **Hunter Citizen Science:** Compulsory hunter briefings, the FWF digital reporting app, and mandatory kill/sighting returns deliver continuous observational datasets across remote terrain that the Department lacks internal resources to monitor.

6. Ten-Year Concession Term Justification

The NZDA Game Animal Management Committee strongly endorses the requested 10-year term and recommends that DOC consider a longer 10+10+10 arrangement, with defined milestones and adjustment flexibility, as a more appropriate framework for biological systems that change slowly over time.

Landscape-scale ungulate management requires long-term capital investment, stable contractual arrangements with helicopter operators, and continuous multi-year

demographic planning. A short or piecemeal concession term introduces commercial uncertainty, jeopardises donor and levy funding streams, and compromises the continuity of long-term botanical and animal monitoring plots. Given the comprehensive review, audit, and cancellation provisions embedded within both the concession conditions and the underpinning Community Agreement, an initial 10-year term provides appropriate security while fully preserving the Director-General's statutory oversight.

7. Recommendations

The NZDA Game Management Committee recommends that the Department of Conservation:

1. **Grant Concession 125891-WARS in full** to the Fiordland Wapiti Foundation for a term of ten (10) years.
2. **Approve all applied operational boundaries**, including the Glaisnock Wilderness Area, the Western Remote visitor zone, the designated Murchison Mountains takahē protection buffer, and the adjoining WARO restricted buffer.
3. **Incorporate existing mitigation protocols** directly into concession conditions, including the exclusion of WARO flights during the March/April Wapiti rut, avoidance of holiday weekends, compliance with Ngāi Tahu cultural values, avoidance of Tūtoko Tōpuni areas, and adherence to strict GPS tracking and reporting requirements.
4. **Formally recognise this concession** as the primary delivery mechanism for the Fiordland Wapiti Herd of Special Interest (HOSI).

For these reasons, the NZDA Game Animal Management Committee respectfully requests that DOC grant concession 125891-WARS in full, and confirms that it wishes to be heard should a hearing be convened.

Signed on behalf of the NZDA Game Animal Management Committee:

Craig Benbow

Chairperson, Game Animal Management Committee

New Zealand Deerstalkers Association (NZDA)



A. Permission Application Number and Name of Applicant

125891-WARS Fiordland Wapiti Foundation

B. Name of Proposed Activity and Location(s)

Wild Animal Recovery Operations and other activities in part of Fiordland National Park

C.1 Objector or Submitter Information-

Submitter's name (list organisational name if submitting on behalf of a business, community group, etc.)	South Island WARO Operators Association
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Contact person and role of organisation	Doug Maxwell
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Email	[REDACTED]
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(Communication from DOC will be via email unless alternate contact requested)

Alternate contact for all DOC communication	
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Phone/Mobile	[REDACTED]
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Postal Address and Post Code	
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I wish to **keep my contact details confidential**

Note: Your contact details will be not made public, but your name and organisation will be published. DOC will send you all submitter communications.

A. Permission Application Number and Name of Applicant

125891-WARS Fiordland Wapiti Foundation

B. Name of Proposed Activity and Location(s)

Wild Animal Recovery Operations and other activities in part of Fiordland National Park

C.2 Your name

In placing your name and organisation below, you acknowledge that you are the person or authorised person submitting this objection or submission. You are also acknowledging that your name and organisation will be published.

Printed name of submitter or person authorised on behalf of submitter	Doug Maxwell
Organisation	South Island WARO Operators Association
Date	14 September 2026

D. Statement of Support, Neutrality or Opposition

☐ I **Support** this Application (I am making a submission)

☐ I am **Neutral** on this Application (I am making a submission).

X **I Oppose this Application (I am making an objection).**

E. Hearing Request

☐ I **Do Not** wish to be heard in support of this objection or submission at a hearing.

X **I Do wish to be heard in support of this objection or submission at a hearing**

F. Objection or submission

The specific parts of the application that this objection or submission relates to are: See attached submission

My reasons for my objection or submission are: See attached submission

The outcomes that need to be addressed by this application are: See attached submission

Give precise details, including the parts of the application you wish to have amended and the general nature of any conditions sought if the application is approved.

G. Attachments

If you are using attachments to support your objection or submission clearly label each attachment, complete the table below and send in your attachments with this 'objection or submission form'.

Document title	Document format (e.g. Word, PDF, Excel, jpg etc.)	Description of attachment
South Island WARO Operators submission	Word	Detailed submission

How do I submit my objection or submission?

Complete this form and email to DNsubmissions@doc.govt.nz. You may also mail your objection and submission to: Director-General, c/o Department of Conservation, Te Anau District Office, 1 Lakefront Drive, Te Anau 9600.

SUBMISSION ON CONCESSION APPLICATION 125891-WARS

Applicant: Fiordland Wapiti Foundation Incorporated

Application: Wild animal recovery operations and associated activities, Fiordland National Park

Decision-maker: The Minister of Conservation, under s 22 of the Wild Animal Control Act 1977 and Part 3B of the Conservation Act 1987

Submitter: South Island WARO Operators Association

Contact: Doug Maxwell dougmaxwell@xtra.co.nz

Date: Monday 14 September 2026

1. The submitter

- 1.1 Members of South Island WARO Operators Association (the **submitter**) hold national wild animal recovery operations concessions and current supply contracts with a registered MPI primary processor(s).
- 1.2 The submitter supports increased deer control in Fiordland National Park and does not oppose the Fiordland Wapiti Foundation Incorporated (the **Foundation**) holding the appropriate authority to carry out activities in relation to Wapiti in the Wapiti Area. For the reasons set out below, it opposes *this* application, in *this* form.

2. Summary

- 2.1 The Foundation's application seeks a Wild Animal Recovery (WARO) concession in the Wapiti area, the Takahe Specially Protected Area (in the Murchison Mountains) and an area described as "WARO restricted Area" in Fiordland National Park.
- 2.2 There are additional activities specified in the application which are not a WARO. Collectively, the activities applied for are governed by three different statutory regimes — the Wild Animal Control Act 1977, the Game Animal Council Act 2013, and the Conservation Act 1987 — with the National Parks Act 1980 applying over all of them, since all of the land concerned is national park.
- 2.3 Fiordland Wapiti in the Wapiti Area have been designated as a herd of special interest (HOSI) under the Game Animal Council Act 2013 (GACA). The effect of the designation is the Department cannot grant a WARO for Wapiti in the HOSI, as they are not "wild animals" under the Wild Animal Control Act (they are governed by the Game Animal Council Act 2013). The application does not make this distinction.
- 2.4 Three of the activities sought are expressly excluded from the Department's terms for national WARO concessions (they are in areas labelled as "restricted" or "not permitted"). Further, the threshold requirements for a WARO concession — a current supply contract with an approved primary processor, or with a marketing entity holding one, and compliance with the Ministry for Primary Industries requirements for the activity — are not addressed.

- 2.5 Three activities applied for cannot be granted by concession at all, as they are non-delegable powers of the Minister under the GACA.
- 2.6 The submitter seeks the Department require the applicant provide further information to clarify the correct statutory provisions for each activity, with adequate information relating to each activity and the relevant effects, so that submitters are able to address these.
- 2.7 Alternatively, the submitter seeks:
- (a) that the application be declined so far as it seeks a wild animal recovery concession over Fiordland wapiti in the Wapiti Area, there being no power to grant this concession under the Wild Animal Control Act;
 - (b) that it be declined so far as it seeks the carriage of recreational hunters, the release of live-captured deer within the Park, and recovery for trophy purposes, those activities being excluded from the national WARO concession for which the Foundation has applied (they are not WARO activities);
 - (c) that it be declined so far as it seeks to confer administration of the hunting authorisation ballot, the collection of hunting fees, and the capture and liberation of herd animals, as these are statutory functions of the Minister under the Game Animal Council Act 2013;
 - (d) that the WARO activities be declined on the basis of unfairness – the areas applied for are either “not permitted” (the Wapiti Area, and the part of the Takahē Specially Protected Area in the Murchison Mountains) or “restricted” (the strip of WARO labelled “restricted” land along the Wapiti Area boundary that is applied for) and other operators have not had an opportunity to apply for these areas;
 - (e) that it be declined so far as it is inconsistent with the Fiordland National Park Management Plan 2007 and/or the Southland Murihiku Conservation Management Strategy 2016 (s 17W applies), and so far as it would authorise entry to the Takahē Specially Protected Area without a permit under s 13 of the National Parks Act;
 - (f) that the balance be declined for lack of information;
 - (g) that, if a concession is granted, it be granted subject to the conditions set out in Part 11 of this submission, so that the Foundation carries out the activity on the same terms as every other holder of a national WARO concession; and
 - (h) that the submitter be heard.

3. What applies where

- 3.1 Fiordland Wapiti in the Wapiti Area have been designated as a herd of special interest (HOSI) under the Game Animal Council Act 2013 (GACA). Therefore the Wapiti Area is governed by a different legal environment from the land around it, as it relates to Wapiti. The application does not make this distinction. The National Parks Act applies throughout.
- 3.2 There is a “carve-out” in s 22(3) of the Wild Animal Control Act, whereby the Minister can grant a WARO even if it is inconsistent with the purpose for which the land is held. This carve-out only reaches only part of what is sought (Part 7).

- 3.3 The table below sets out the various activities, either within or outside the Wapiti Area, what the governing regime is, the correct instrument and the associated issues. The categories used below — permitted, restricted and not permitted — are those shown in the Department's Land assessment as approved by decision maker — WARO 2023 map series (April 2024), sheets 14 and 16.

Inside the Wapiti Area

Proposed activity	Governing regime	Correct instrument	Issue
Aerial shooting and recovery of Fiordland wapiti ¹	Game Animal Council Act 2013 and the Herd Management Plan. The Wild Animal Control Act does not apply	Authorisation under s 18 GACA for the hunting; Part 3B concession under s 17ZF for aircraft landings	No WARO concession can lawfully be granted
Aerial shooting and recovery of chamois	Wild Animal Control Act 1977	WARO concession, s 22	Land classified "not permitted"
Carriage of recreational hunters to hunt wapiti	Not the Wild Animal Control Act — the animals are not wild animals. Conservation Act for the aircraft activity; GACA for the hunting	Part 3B concession under s 17ZF, plus s 18 GACA authorisation	Not a wild animal recovery operation at all
Filming and advocacy; drones; hut maintenance; trapping	Conservation Act 1987 only	Part 3B concession, assessed on its own merits	Not enough information supplies to assess effects
Ballot administration; collection and application of hunting fees	Game Animal Council Act, s 18	Not a concession. A statutory power, delegable only to the Council	Cannot be conferred by concession
Capture, conveyance or liberation of herd animals	Game Animal Council Act, s 18(1)(e)	Ministerial power, expressly non-delegable	Cannot be conferred on any person
Aircraft operations in the Glaisnock Wilderness Area	National Parks Act s 14(2), and the Fiordland National Park Management Plan	Concession (s17ZF), but s 17W bars grant if inconsistent with the Plan	s 17U(3) disapplied for WARO; s 17W is not

¹ **Fiordland wapiti:** the Herd Management Plan applies to all species of deer in the genus *Cervus* occurring in the Wapiti Area, and refers to those animals collectively as Fiordland wapiti. The Plan records that the herd largely comprises wapiti (*Cervus canadensis*) and red deer (*Cervus elaphus*) hybrids, with few if any pure-bred animals of either species remaining. That is a description of the herd's composition. The class itself is defined by genus and location.

Proposed activity	Governing regime	Correct instrument	Issue
Entry to the Takahē Specially Protected Area	National Parks Act, ss 12–13	Permit under s 13	A concession is not a s 13 permit; s 22(3) WAC Act exemption does not reach this

3.4 Outside the Wapiti Area — the Murchison Mountains and "restricted area" buffers

Proposed activity	Governing regime	Correct instrument	Issue
Aerial search, shooting and recovery of wild animals	Wild Animal Control Act	WARO concession, s 22	Land identified as "not permitted" and "restricted"
Live capture and release of deer	Wild Animal Control Act	Live capture under WARO is limited to conveyance to deer farming locations	Release into the Park is outside the concession type
Carriage of recreational hunters to hunt wild animals	Wild Animal Control Act — within limb (c) of the definition of "wild animal recovery operation"	Concession under s 22, in the aerially assisted trophy hunting form	Excluded from the national WARO concession product
Filming and advocacy; drones	Conservation Act 1987 only	Part 3B concession	Not applied for or assessed as such

- 3.5 The submitter asks that the applicant be required to address each category separately, state the statutory basis on which each activity could be granted or declined and the effects of each activity. Until that is done the submitter is not able to address the effects of those activities.

4. Ground 1 — No power to grant a WARO concession over Fiordland wapiti

- 4.1 Section 22 of the Wild Animal Control Act authorises concessions for **wild animal recovery operations**, defined by reference to the taking of **wild animals**. Paragraph (d) of the definition of "wild animal" excludes an animal forming part of a designated herd of special interest².
- 4.2 The Fiordland Wapiti Herd of Special Interest was designated on 13 July 2026. A Herd Management Plan was approved July 2026³ and applies to all deer of the genus *Cervus* in the Wapiti Area, approximately 190,700 hectares, and states that these animals will be

² Section 2 Wild Animal Control Act

³ The Fiordland Wapiti Herd of Special Interest Herd Management Plan.

managed as game animals under the Game Animal Council Act rather than as wild animals under the Wild Animal Control Act⁴.

- 4.3 The only wild animals in the Wapiti Area are chamois. The application identifies chamois as a target.
- 4.4 The distinction is one of genus and location, not appearance. The Herd Management Plan applies to all species of deer in the genus *Cervus* occurring in the Wapiti Area, which it refers to collectively as Fiordland wapiti. It records that the species cannot be physically separated within the area, that they interbreed, and that few if any pure-bred animals remain. A red deer inside the Wapiti Area is therefore part of the designated herd and is not a wild animal, while the same animal in the buffers is a wild animal. No operator could lawfully target red deer inside the Wapiti Area under a concession granted under s 22, and none could demonstrate compliance if it tried. The only activity within the Wapiti Area for which a concession under s 22 is the correct instrument is the recovery of chamois.
- 4.5 That activity raises the same difficulty as the Murchison Mountains. Chamois in the Wapiti Area are wild animals, and a wild animal recovery concession is the right instrument for recovering them, but the land is classified “not permitted” in the Department’s 2023 land assessment and no other operator has had the opportunity to apply for it. The submitter does not oppose the recovery of chamois in the Wapiti Area as such. It opposes that recovery being authorised for one operator, over land closed to every other operator, without the opportunity to apply having been made available generally.
- 4.6 The submitter has considered whether a concession is required for this activity at all. Section 17O(3)(b) of the Conservation Act exempts from the concession requirement any activity that is otherwise authorised by or under an Act specified in Schedule 1, and the Game Animal Council Act is so specified. The hunting of Fiordland wapiti under an authorisation made under s 18 may therefore not require a concession.
- 4.7 However, the landing of aircraft on public conservation land requires a concession under s 17ZF of the Conservation Act, and nothing in the Game Animal Council Act authorises it. A notice under s 18 specifies the conditions under which the animals may be hunted; it does not authorise an aircraft to land in a national park. The aerial component of the proposed activity therefore does require a concession — but a concession under Part 3B, not a concession under s 22 of the Wild Animal Control Act, which is what has been applied for.
- 4.8 The submitter further asks the Minister to determine whether the recovery of carcasses for supply to a registered primary processor is an activity carried on for gain or reward requiring a concession in its own right, separately from any authorisation to hunt. The application proceeds on the footing that a single wild animal recovery concession covers the entire operation. For the reasons above, it cannot.
- 4.9 The Herd Management Plan defines a “professional herd management operation” as searching for and shooting wild animals as a non-recreational and non-commercial activity, generally not involving recovery. The activity advertised — contracting helicopter operators to locate, shoot and recover deer for consumption — is commercial recovery. It is neither a professional herd management operation as the Plan defines it, nor recreational hunting.

⁴ The Department reached the same conclusion in advance. At section 7.2 of its WARO National Land Schedule Review 2018–2022 decision support document, it recorded that on designation the animals in a herd of special interest would cease to be wild animals and could not be hunted under a WARO permit.

The submitter asks the Minister to identify the category within the Plan into which the proposed activity falls.

5. Ground 2 — Three of the activities sought are excluded from the concession type

- 5.1 The Department's national WARO concession defines the concession activity and then expressly excludes certain activities from it⁵. The exclusions are definitional of that concession type. They are not conditions imposed case by case, and the instrument for which the Foundation has applied cannot authorise them.
- 5.2 The Department's published material confirms the position from the other direction: the national concessions are described as those on offer, covering, in the South Island, the carcass recovery of deer, pig, chamois and goat and the live capture of deer, and an applicant wishing to undertake any other type of wild animal recovery operation is directed to apply separately through the Christchurch office.
- 5.3 The submitter does not say that the Minister lacks power under s 22 of the WAC Act to grant a differently constituted concession. It says that no such concession has been applied for or notified in this case, and that granting one operator a concession on terms from which these activities have been removed for every other operator would require a justification that the application does not attempt.
- 5.4 The excluded activities include:
 - (a) **carriage of passengers** other than an employee or contractor of the concessionaire engaged in the concession activity, or a monitoring official of the Department, the Ministry for Primary Industries or the Civil Aviation Authority. The exclusion is stated to extend to recreational hunters, whether ground-based or not, and to any person providing a guided hunting service;
 - (b) **live capture or carriage of any wild animal other than deer**, with live deer conveyance permitted only to locations under the Deer Farming Notice No. 5, 2008; and
 - (c) **recovery of any wild animal for trophy-mounting purposes**.
- 5.5 The Department's published guidance is to the same effect: national WARO concessions exclude the carriage of recreational hunters and fare-paying passengers, and direct applicants seeking that activity to an aerially assisted trophy hunting or aircraft activities concession.
- 5.6 The submitter records, so that the point is not misunderstood, that the carriage of persons and equipment that may be used for searching for, shooting or immobilising wild animals, or for recovering them, falls within limb (c) of the definition of "wild animal recovery operation" in s 2 of the Wild Animal Control Act. Aerially assisted trophy hunting is therefore a wild animal recovery operation in the statutory sense and is authorised under s 22, as the national WARO concession is. The separation between them is one the Department has made in the design of its concession products, and it applies to every operator. The submitter does not say the Foundation may not seek to carry hunters. It says the

⁵ <https://www.doc.govt.nz/parks-and-recreation/things-to-do/hunting/permits-and-licences/national-wild-animal-recovery-operations/>

Foundation may not seek to do so through the one instrument from which that activity has been removed for everyone else.

- 5.7 Within the Wapiti Area the position is different again. Fiordland wapiti are not wild animals, so carrying hunters to hunt them does not fall within limb (c), or any other limb, of the definition. That activity is not a wild animal recovery operation at all. It requires a Part 3B concession for the aircraft activity together with an authorisation under s 18 of the Game Animal Council Act for the hunting.
- 5.8 The application seeks, in substance, all three of the excluded activities. It contemplates the carriage of recreational hunters. It seeks capture and release of deer within the Park, which is neither conveyance to a deer farming location nor recovery. And its stated purpose is to produce mature trophy bulls.
- 5.9 If the Foundation wishes to pursue these activities it must apply for the appropriate instrument, where they will be assessed against the criteria applying to it.

6. Ground 3 — The ballot, fees and live capture cannot be conferred by concession

- 6.1 The application seeks authorisation to deliver the annual wapiti ballot, to collect and apply fees, and to capture and release deer for research.
- 6.2 Under the Herd Management Plan an "authorisation" is an approval issued by the Minister for Hunting and Fishing or their delegate under s 18 of the Game Animal Council Act. Strategy 1.5 provides for a ballot and block system to allocate authorisations; Strategy 1.8 provides for fees to be charged to hunt Fiordland wapiti; Strategy 1.9 directs surplus revenue to conservation initiatives.
- 6.3 Section 20 of the Game Animal Council Act permits the Minister⁶ to delegate his or her s 18 powers **to the Game Animal Council** and to no one else. Delegation requires prior consultation with the Director-General, the New Zealand Conservation Authority and any conservation board with jurisdiction, and the Minister must be satisfied that management by the Council is consistent with the overriding considerations and will improve management of the herd.
- 6.4 **Section 20(1) expressly excludes from delegation the power under s 18(1)(e) to capture, convey or liberate animals that are part of a herd of special interest.** That power is not delegable even to the Council, still less conferrable on a private incorporated society, and it cannot be granted by concession. Within the Wapiti Area, the capture and release of deer proposed by the Foundation engages that power directly.
- 6.5 It follows that:
 - (a) allocating ballot authorisations is the exercise of a statutory power that a concession cannot confer;
 - (b) the fee is a statutory charge under the Plan, not concession revenue, and its application is directed by Strategy 1.9;
 - (c) capture and release of herd animals is reserved to the Minister and cannot be authorised at all through this process; and

⁶ The Minister of Conservation.

- (d) if the Foundation is to have an administrative role in the ballot, it can only be as a contractor to the Minister or the Council, which is a services arrangement outside this process.

6.6 The submitter asks the Minister to state the statutory basis on which the Foundation is said to be able to allocate hunting authorisations, to charge and retain fees for hunting on public conservation land, and to capture and liberate herd animals.

7. Ground 4 — The limits of the section 22(3) carve-out

- 7.1 All of the land is national park. Section 22(3) of the Wild Animal Control Act applies Part 3B of the Conservation Act to concessions under s 22(1), with references to a conservation area read as references to a national park, but expressly disapplies two provisions: s 17O(4) and s 17U(3).
- 7.2 The submitter accepts that the disapplication of s 17U(3) removes the bar on granting a concession where the activity would be contrary to the provisions of the Conservation Act or the purposes for which the land is held. That disapplication is necessary if aerial wild animal control is to be authorised in a national park at all but two things follow.

The carve-out is confined to wild animal recovery operations

- 7.3 Section 22(3) operates for the purposes of subsection (1) — that is, for concessions authorising wild animal recovery operations. It reaches nothing else. For every non-WARO activity in this application — filming and advocacy, drones, hut maintenance, trapping, ballot administration, and the carriage of hunters — s 17U(3) applies unmodified, and the Minister shall not grant the application if the activity is contrary to the provisions of the Conservation Act or the purposes for which the land is held.
- 7.4 The point hits hardest inside the Wapiti Area. For the reasons in Part 4, aerial operations targeting Fiordland wapiti are not wild animal recovery operations and cannot be granted under s 22. No grant under s 22 means no carve-out under s 22(3). The concession required for that activity is the concession required by s 17ZF for the landing of aircraft — an ordinary Part 3B concession, to which s 17U(3) applies in full. The submitter does not say that such a concession cannot be granted. It says that it falls to be assessed under s 17U(3), which is a different test from the one on which the application proceeds, and that the application does not contain the material required to carry out that assessment.

Section 17W is not disapplied

- 7.5 Section 22(3) of the WAC Act disapplies s 17O(4) and s 17U(3) of the Conservation Act, and nothing else. Section 17W, which governs the relationship between concessions and conservation management strategies and plans, continues to apply to a WARO concession in full.
- 7.6 Consistency with the Fiordland National Park Management Plan 2007 and the Southland Murihiku Conservation Management Strategy 2016 is therefore not a discretionary consideration. It is a bar on granting. The submitter asks that the decision address consistency expressly, and in particular:
 - (a) the policies of the Fiordland National Park Management Plan applying to the Glaisnock Wilderness Area, which is set apart under s 14 of the National Parks Act

and in which s 14(2) provides that no helicopter or other motorised aircraft shall land, take off, or hover for the purpose of embarking or disembarking passengers or goods;

- (b) the policies applying to the Western Remote visitor setting; and
- (c) the aircraft landing provisions of the Plan generally, against which the application cannot be assessed at all while the number and location of landings remain unstated.

Specially protected areas

- 7.7 Sections 12 and 13 of the National Parks Act provide for specially protected areas within a national park and make it an offence to enter or remain in such an area except under the authority of a permit issued under s 13, or to breach a condition of such a permit.
- 7.8 Nothing in s 22(3) of the WAC Act touches section 13. A concession granted under Part 3B is not a permit issued under s 13. The application accepts that the area is set apart as a specially protected area under s 12, and identifies part of it as one of the three areas applied for. Access to it therefore requires a separate instrument granted on its own criteria, and none is sought.
- 7.9 The way the area is presented compounds the difficulty. On the application's map the buffer is drawn as a single polygon, part of which lies over the Specially Protected Area and part of which lies over land outside it. The application attributes approximately four trips a year to the Murchison Mountains buffer zone without distinguishing between the two. Aircraft operations over the Specially Protected Area portion require a permit under s 13 whatever operational description is attached to them.

Section 4(2)(b)

- 7.10 Section 4(2)(b) of the National Parks Act requires that introduced animals be exterminated as far as possible. The Game Animal Council (Herds of Special Interest) Amendment Act 2026 disapplies that provision only for a designated herd within a designated area. It continues to apply to chamois anywhere in the Park, and to deer in the Murchison Mountains and "restricted area" buffers, both of which lie outside the designated area.
- 7.11 The submitter accepts that, with s 17U(3) disappplied, s 4(2)(b) is not a bar on granting a WARO concession. It remains relevant in two ways: to consistency under s 17W, and to the non-WARO activities to which s 17U(3) still applies. The submitter notes that the environmental impact assessment prepared for the Foundation records that its approach of leaving live bull wapiti to grow and reproduce, rather than implementing an elimination strategy, is contrary to the National Parks Act.
- 7.12 Policy 4.3(i) of the General Policy for National Parks 2005 provides that commercial hunting of wild animals and animal pests should be encouraged to maximise effective control — which supports commercial recovery generally, and tells against an arrangement that reduces it.

8. Ground 5 — The threshold requirement for a WARO concession is not addressed

- 8.1 The Department's published requirements are that an applicant must hold a current supply contract with an approved processor, or with a marketing entity holding such a contract, and must meet the MPI requirements for the activity.
 - 8.2 This is not merely an entry test. Under the standard concession the requirement continues throughout the term: the concessionaire must hold the supply contract whenever the activity is undertaken, must ensure any marketing entity contract makes the processor contract an essential condition, and must provide evidence to the Grantor annually on 1 July. The Grantor may verify with the processor at any time.
 - 8.3 The application contains no evidence that the Foundation holds, or that any person operating under the proposed concession would hold, a supply contract with a registered primary processor, or that MPI requirements would be met.
 - 8.4 The submitter and other holders have met and continue to meet these requirements at real cost. The submitter asks that the application be declined for want of that information, or that any concession granted be conditioned as at 11.2(h)–(i).
-

9. Ground 6 — Insufficient information to assess effects

- 9.1 The Minister may decline an application for a concession where the information available is insufficient to enable an assessment of the effects of the activity, including the effects of proposed mitigation.
- 9.2 Information received under s 17SD or s 17SE is, under s 17U(1), a matter to which the Minister must have regard. Any further information supplied by the Foundation will therefore form part of the material on which the decision is made. The submitter asks that any further information be disclosed to submitters, and that submitters be given an opportunity to comment on it, before the decision is made.
- 9.3 **Effects are described generically.** The assessment reproduces general descriptions of aircraft effects from the Southland Murihiku Conservation Management Strategy 2016 and the Fiordland National Park Management Plan 2007, with nothing specific to the Glaisnock Wilderness Area, the Takahē Specially Protected Area, or the Western Remote visitor setting.
- 9.4 **Mitigation is unclear.** Measures are expressed as things that "could include", qualified by "where possible" and "aim to". The standard WARO concession by contrast imposes dated closures — a Roar closure and an annual Christmas closure — together with area-specific Southland conditions including a prohibition within 500 metres of the Milford, Kepler, Hollyford and Hump Ridge Tracks during the Great Walks season, and a requirement to remove animals whole from Tōpuni areas.
- 9.5 **Landings are not quantified.** Approximate trip numbers are given; the number of landings, their locations and their distribution are not. The Fiordland National Park Management Plan regulates landings, and s 14(2) prohibits them outright in the wilderness area.
- 9.6 The application does, however, state that approximately half of the recovery trips and some 40 per cent of the culling trips would be in the Glaisnock Wilderness Area. The Wilderness Area comprises 123,800 of the 190,700 hectares of the Wapiti Area. On the applicant's own

figures, the greater part of the proposed aerial activity would be carried out over land on which s 14(2) of the National Parks Act prohibits a helicopter or other motorised aircraft from landing, taking off, or hovering to embark or disembark passengers or goods.

- 9.7 **Aircraft are not identified.** The standard concession requires the make, model, registration and colour of every aircraft to be provided in writing before the activity begins, and any change notified. The application identifies no aircraft and states only that one of several operators may be contracted.
- 9.8 **"Culling and leaving" is not recovery.** Approximately ten trips per year are described as culling and leaving. Aerial culling with carcasses left in situ has a different effects profile, involves no processing chain and no MPI accountability, and is not a wild animal recovery operation.
- 9.9 **The buffer purpose is not disclosed.** The buffers are justified by reference to preventing incursion of wild animals into the Wapiti Area. Strategy 1.2 of the Plan requires herd management activities to optimise genetic selection and minimise hybridisation. The submitter asks that the Foundation be required to state whether a purpose of shooting in the buffers is to prevent red deer entering the Wapiti Area and interbreeding with the herd. If so, that is a herd quality purpose, not wild animal control, and must be assessed as such — noting that s 4(2)(b) continues to apply outside the designated area.
- 9.10 **The applicant's own evidence does not establish the claimed benefit.** The environmental impact assessment prepared for the Foundation records that no significant relationship was found between increased harvest effort and pellet group counts in the Murchison Mountains and Wapiti Area, and that very large changes in control rates would be needed before significant change in pellet counts would be seen.

10. Ground 7 — Exclusivity, and performance of the activity by others

- 10.1 A concession is not exclusive unless granted as a lease or licence conferring exclusive rights. The standard concession expressly gives the concessionaire no priority over other users of the land and no priority use of any landing site.
- 10.2 This application states that it would be communicated to WARO concession holders that the Foundation would manage the buffer zones, and that this will push them to other areas. That describes the Foundation determining which operators work where.
- 10.3 The application puts the point beyond argument. It records that the areas classified "not permitted" prohibit fully competitive commercial WARO, that this includes the Wapiti Area and the Takahē Specially Protected Area, and that this does not preclude consideration of a more limited and targeted operation. That is an application to be admitted to land closed to competitive WARO on the footing that the applicant alone would operate there. No statutory basis is offered for the distinction, and the land assessment contains no such exception. If the Minister is satisfied that targeted recovery in these areas is acceptable, the relief sought at Part 11 is that the conclusion be given effect through the land schedule, so that every suitably qualified operator may apply.
- 10.4 A related difficulty arises from the Foundation holding neither aircraft nor a concession. The standard concession prohibits the concessionaire from entering into any contract or arrangement under which the concession activity would be carried out by a person other

than the concessionaire, without the Grantor's prior written consent, and treats such arrangements as assignments. The Foundation proposes precisely that arrangement as its operating model. The submitter asks the Minister to address how the proposed structure sits with that restriction, and why the operators who would carry out the activity are not the appropriate applicants.

- 10.5 The Foundation describes the Wapiti Area as an area it manages under a community agreement made under the Conservation Act 1987 between the Director-General and the Foundation. A community agreement is not a concession. It confers no right to carry out a wild animal recovery operation, no interest in land, and no authority over other concessionaires. The submitter asks the Minister confirm that it does not bear on who may hold or exercise a concession in the area.

11. Relief sought

- 11.1 That the application be declined so far as it seeks:

- (a) a wild animal recovery concession over Fiordland wapiti within the Wapiti Area;
- (b) the carriage of recreational hunters, ballot participants or fare-paying passengers;
- (c) the live capture and release of deer;
- (d) recovery for trophy purposes;
- (e) administration of the ballot, or the collection, retention or application of hunting fees;
- (f) any activity inconsistent with the Fiordland National Park Management Plan 2007 or the Southland Murihiku Conservation Management Strategy 2016;
- (g) entry to the Takahē Specially Protected Area otherwise than under a permit issued under s 13 of the National Parks Act; and
- (h) any open-ended authorisation of activities not described in the application.

- 11.2 That any concession granted be subject to conditions including:

Scope (a) authorising the recovery of wild animals only, expressly excluding any animal forming part of a designated herd of special interest; (b) confined to the areas applied for, any extension requiring a fresh application; (c) excluding the Glaisnock Wilderness Area and the Takahē Specially Protected Area; (d) filming, advocacy and drone use to be dealt with, if at all, as separate Part 3B activities assessed on their own merits;

Activity — the standard exclusions to apply unmodified (e) no carriage of passengers other than the concessionaire's crew and monitoring officials, the exclusion to extend to recreational hunters and guided hunting services; (f) no recovery for trophy-mounting purposes; live deer conveyance only to Deer Farming Notice locations; (g) recovery for supply to a registered primary processor only; no aerial culling with carcasses left in situ;

Threshold and supply chain (h) a current supply contract with a registered MPI primary processor, or with a marketing entity holding one, to be held throughout the term with evidence produced annually on 1 July; (i) compliance with MPI requirements for the activity; (j) the activity to be carried out only by a party holding a current national WARO concession

and the applicable aviation documents, with aircraft make, model, registration and colour provided in advance and changes notified;

Operating conditions — parity with the national concession (k) the Roar and Christmas closure periods, and the Southland special conditions, to apply unmodified; (l) GPS flight track logs and waypoints for all animals taken, recorded to MPI specifications, with returns to the Department within 10 working days on the standard terms; (m) a stated maximum number of landings by area and season; (n) no priority over other users of the land or over landing sites; (o) the Grantor's power to rezone any area as restricted or not permitted at any time; (p) a minimum annual take, with the Grantor's termination power on the standard terms, so that the concession is held for wild animal control and not for access;

Exclusivity (q) no exclusive rights; no fetter on authorising other operators; no role in directing or restricting other concessionaires.

- 11.3 That the decision report state which Minister is exercising which power in respect of each activity applied for, and how the designation of the Fiordland Wapiti Herd of Special Interest under the Game Animal Council Act 2013 is reconciled with the obligations under s 17W of the Conservation Act 1987 and s 4(2)(b) of the National Parks Act 1980, noting that the Game Animal Council (Herds of Special Interest) Amendment Act 2026 is administered by the Department of Conservation.
- 11.4 That any information obtained under s 17SD or s 17SE be disclosed to submitters, and that submitters be given an opportunity to comment on it before the application is determined.
- 11.5 That, if the Minister concludes that targeted commercial aerial recovery in the areas sought is acceptable in principle, that conclusion be reflected in the national WARO land schedule so that it is available to all suitably qualified operators, rather than by single-operator exception.
- 11.6 The submitter **wishes to be heard**, and asks to be provided with the draft decision report and an opportunity to provide written comment before the application is determined.

Doug Maxwell

On behalf of the South Island WARO Operators Association



A. Permission Application Number and Name of Applicant

125891-WARS Fiordland Wapiti Foundation

B. Name of Proposed Activity and Location(s)

Wild Animal Recovery Operations and other activities in part of Fiordland National Park

C.1 Objector or Submitter Information-

Submitter's name (list organisational name if submitting on behalf of a business, community group, etc.)	Royal Forest & Bird Protection Society of New Zealand Inc. (Forest & Bird)
Contact person and role of organisation	Nicky Snoyink Regional Conservation Manager
Email (Communication from DOC will be via email unless alternate contact requested)	[REDACTED]
Alternate contact for all DOC communication	office@forestandbird.org.nz
Phone/Mobile	[REDACTED]
Postal Address and Post Code	[REDACTED]



A. Permission Application Number and Name of Applicant

125891-WARS Fiordland Wapiti Foundation

B. Name of Proposed Activity and Location(s)

Wild Animal Recovery Operations and other activities in part of Fiordland National Park

C.2 Your name

In placing your name and organisation below, you acknowledge that you are the person or authorised person submitting this objection or submission. You are also acknowledging that your name and organisation will be published.

Printed name of submitter or person authorised
on behalf of submitter

Nicky Snoyink

Organisation

Forest & Bird

Date

14 September 2026

D. Statement of Support, Neutrality or Opposition

☐

I **Oppose** this Application (I am making an objection).

E. Hearing Request

☐

I **Do** wish to be heard in support of this objection or submission at a hearing

F. Objection or submission

The specific parts of the application that this objection or submission relates to are:

The whole application.

My reasons for my objection or submission are:

See attached submission dated 14 September 2026.

The outcomes that need to be addressed by this application are:

Give precise details, including the parts of the application you wish to have amended and the general nature of any conditions sought if the application is approved.

See attached submission dated 14 September 2026.

G. Attachments

If you are using attachments to support your objection or submission clearly label each attachment, complete the table below and send in your attachments with this 'objection or submission form'.

Document title	Document format (e.g. Word, PDF, Excel, jpg etc.)	Description of attachment
F&B submission FWF concession 125891-WARS 14092026.pdf	PDF	Written submission

How do I submit my objection or submission?

Complete this form and email to DNsubmissions@doc.govt.nz. You may also mail your objection and submission to: Director-General, c/o Department of Conservation, Te Anau District Office, 1 Lakefront Drive, Te Anau 9600.

14 September 2026

Senior Permissions Advisor, Olivia Graham
Director-General
Department of Conservation
Te Anau District Office
1 Lakefront Drive
Te Anau 9600

Royal Forest and Bird Protection
Society of New Zealand Inc.

P O Box 2516
Christchurch
New Zealand

P: 03 940 5522
www.forestandbird.org.nz

BY EMAIL: DNsubmissions@doc.govt.nz

Tēnā koe Olivia,

RE: An application for a concession to engage in wild animal recovery operations (WARO), and other activities, for a term of 10 years

Thank you for the opportunity to provide feedback on:

Applicant: Fiordland Wapiti Foundation

Application Number: 125891-WARS

Concession Applied for: Wild Animal Recovery Operations and four other activities

Location of Proposed Activity: Wapiti Blocks (including the Glaisnock Wilderness Area) and a buffer area within the Murchison Mountains Takahē Specially Protected Area, in Fiordland National Park, west of lake Te Anau.

Summary of proposal: *The Fiordland Wapiti Foundation manages the wapiti herd and undertakes conservation work in part of Fiordland National Park (known as the "Wapiti Area") in accordance with a community agreement with DOC under section 53 of the Conservation Act. The Foundation also controls deer numbers in an adjoining 'buffer' over part of the Murchison Mountains Takahē Specially Protected Area to prevent deer spread and incursion. Conservation work does not generally require a concession. However, the:*

- *contracting of experienced helicopter operators to locate, shoot and recover deer for consumption;*
- *delivery of the annual wapiti ballot and use of fees;*
- *filming and advocacy to promote the Foundation's activities;*
- *scientific research through the capture and release of deer; and*
- *use of drones in support of the above*

would be best formalised through a comprehensive concession, particularly where commercially competitive national WARO is not permitted. It is these five concession activities on which public feedback is sought.

Introduction

1. The Royal Forest & Bird Protection Society of New Zealand Inc. (Forest & Bird) is Aotearoa New Zealand's oldest and largest environmental non-government organisation. Established in 1923, the Society's purpose is to take all reasonable steps within the power of the Society for the preservation and protection of the indigenous flora and fauna and the natural features of New Zealand.
2. Forest & Bird has a strong interest in the protection and preservation of Fiordland National Park (FNP), the corner stone of Te Wāhipounamu Southwest UNESCO World Heritage Area (WHA). The Society has for decades advocated for maintaining the national park as far as possible in its natural state, and protecting and preserving indigenous species, consistent with the National Parks Act 1980 (NPA), the General Policy for National Parks 2005 (GPNP), the Fiordland National Park Management Plan (FNPMP), and the Southland Conservation Management Strategy (CMS).
3. The Society strongly supports control of introduced invasive species to protect and preserve FNP's natural values. We acknowledge Wild Animal Recovery Operations (WARO) as an essential tool for reducing the number of pest animals and achieving a concerted effort to managing their impacts on national park values and to preserve the WHA's Outstanding Universal Values.
4. The Department has recommended that the activities being applied for by the Fiordland Wapiti Foundation in this application, which include:
 - contracting of experienced helicopter operators to locate, shoot and recover deer for consumption;
 - delivery of the annual wapiti ballot and use of fees;
 - filming and advocacy to promote the Foundation's activities;
 - scientific research through the capture and release of deer; and
 - use of drones in support of the above.

... would be best formalised through a 'comprehensive concession'.
5. Forest & Bird considers that a 'comprehensive concession' is not appropriate. The application conflates multiple activities. Forest & Bird disagrees with the Department, that these varied activities can be combined into one concession.
6. Forest & Bird considers that to comply with the statutory framework, the proposed activities must be considered separately, and appropriate permissions sought, according to the nature of the proposed activity.
7. In any event, the information provided with the application is inadequate. It is not detailed enough to allow Forest & Bird to make informed comment. The information seems largely unchanged to that provided in its earlier concession application. Forest & Bird submitted that the information provided with the earlier application was

inadequate, and little has changed. The information in the current application is equally inadequate, with the added problem that the concession seeks additional activities.

8. Forest & Bird has reviewed a draft of the Southern WARO Group submission and supports the submission.
9. Forest & Bird considers the approach being promoted by the Department is flawed and as such, the application is deficient leaving it difficult to provide feedback, and should be **declined**.
10. The application should be returned, and the applicant should provide a fresh application, containing the relevant information for all the activities being sought, that complies with the statutory framework.

Submission

11. The application should be declined for the following reasons.

Wild Animal Recovery Operations

12. The application to carry out Wild Animal Recovery Operations (WARO) appears to rely on the Fiordland Wapiti Foundation community agreement with the Department of Conservation (DOC), established under the Conservation Act 1987 section 53. Under s53 the Director General has the power to enter into contracts agreements, and arrangements necessary for exercising the Director General's power. Forest & Bird challenged the legality of the community agreement regarding the activity of carrying out a commercial WARO activity and 'herd management' of an introduced invasive species in a part of Fiordland National Park. It is understood that, in part at least, the concession application is the result of that challenge.
13. The activity described in the application to contract experienced helicopter operators to locate, shoot and recover deer for consumption is proposed to be considered as a commercial WARO activity. WARO are authorised by the national WARO concession under the Wild Animal Control Act 1977 (WACA). WARO activities have specific requirements.¹
14. The application states that the national WARO concession process recognises the FWF community agreement. The application does not explain how the national WARO concession recognises the FWF community agreement. This is because the WARO concession does not recognise the community agreement.
15. The application does not set out how it complies with the specific requirements for a WARO concession, or with the WARO Land Schedule, or with the Fiordland National Park Management Plan (the FNPMP) objectives and implementations 18-21 for WARO

¹ <https://www.doc.govt.nz/get-involved/apply-for-permits/business-or-activity/national-wild-animal-recovery-operations/>

and Table 7 Aircraft Landings in the Wilderness Areas. This is because the application is contrary to the FNPMP.

16. The National WARO concession excludes the carriage of either recreational hunters or fare paying passengers. The FWF application states that:

The activity will involve the use of aircraft to carry out the following activities:

- (a) The searching for, shooting, or immobilising of deer;*
- (b) The recovery of dead deer or any part of such deer (including velvet) for supply to a MPI registered processing facility;*
- (c) The recovery of dead deer or any part of such deer (including velvet) for the personal consumption of the Concessionaire or its employees, only where undertaking the activity in paragraph (b);*
- (d) The carriage of persons, supplies, equipment, firearms, ammunition, or other things that may be used for the purposes of paragraph (a) or paragraph (b) or paragraph (c);*
- (e) The use of aircraft to facilitate the offloading of recovered deer to a refrigerated truck or similar vehicle transport.*

17. The application suggests that the WARO activity would be used for the carriage of persons, supplies, equipment, firearms, ammunition, or other things that may be used for the purposes of paragraphs a-c, including the recovery of deer for the personal consumption of the Concessionaire and its employees. This suggests that the applicant intends to use the WARO concession for activities other than commercial WARO. This is not the purpose of a WARO concession.
18. This application is inconsistent with the WARO Land Schedule.² According to the map provided as part of the application, the proposed WARO activities appear to mostly occur in a red zone in the WARO Land Schedule where WARO activities are not permitted. A small part of the proposed buffer zone appears to occur in an orange zone where WARO activities are restricted; and in the Takahē Specially Protected Area, where the FNPMP explicitly excludes WARO. The application does not explain why this applicant should have WARO access to areas where other WARO operators are expressly excluded.
19. The FNPMP restricts aircraft access and landings in the national park and into specially protected areas and wilderness areas. The application does not adequately quantify the helicopter activity it intends to carry out into these specific parts of the park. The application includes some numbers regarding frequency of recovery trips and culling trips with a percentage of each type of trip in the Glaisnock Wilderness Area. However, it does not specify the landing sites it intends to utilise or how often. The application does not explain why it should have access to the Takahē Specially Protected Area for commercial WARO, when the FNPMP plan expressly excludes WARO in this area.

² <https://www.doc.govt.nz/globalassets/documents/about-doc/concessions-and-permits/waro/waro-maps-2023/waro-2023-map-index.pdf>

20. WAR operators must have a current supply contract with an approved processor, or a marketing entity that has a contract for processing carcasses with a MPI approved processor, and meet the MPI requirements for these activities. The applicant says this will occur. However, the information has not been included in the application.
21. The application states that the FWF has been undertaking deer management in Fiordland for 20 years under the community agreement with DOC and that *"the FWF will contract helicopters companies with current WARO concessions for deer management activities."* The community agreement was legally flawed, and this concession application is required for the activity to be lawfully carried out.
22. The applicant proposes a duration of 10 years for the WARO concession. The reason provided for a 10-year concession, *is to allow the FWF to secure the necessary resources, and plan management activities and any associated infrastructure/facilities that might be needed in the medium/long term.* No description has been provided regarding what the associated infrastructure/facilities are or where. The Department encourages national WARO concessions for a duration of 5 years.³ The applicant does not provide information as to why it should be treated differently.
23. The FWF WARO application is deficient, ambiguous, and vague. The FWF community agreement is legally questionable and should not be used as the basis to justify a commercial concession, where other commercial operators are excluded.
24. For the reasons set out in paragraphs 12-23, the application should be **declined**.

Other proposed activities

25. In addition to WARO activities, the applicant proposes to undertake the following activities:
- delivery of the annual wapiti ballot and use of fees;
 - filming and advocacy to promote the Foundation's activities;
 - scientific research through the capture and release of deer; and
 - use of drones in support of the above.
26. The application is neither clear if the other proposed activities are for commercial gain nor why they consider a concession is the appropriate authorisation for the very different types of activities.
27. Commercial activities on public conservation land require a concession under Part 3B of the Conservation Act 1987 (CA). The application blurs the line between its proposed commercial activities and other activities.
28. The application is not clear why the applicant considers a concession is the appropriate authorisation for each activity. The activities are different and have different effects. It is

³ <https://www.doc.govt.nz/get-involved/apply-for-permits/business-or-activity/national-wild-animal-recovery-operations/national-waro-permit-renewal-process/>

unlikely that a concession is the appropriate authorisation for delivery of the annual wapiti ballot and use of fees. If filming to promote the Foundation's activities and the use of drones to support the activities is for commercial gain, a concession is likely required. It is unclear why the applicant thinks advocacy requires a concession.

29. It is unclear what the appropriate authorisation (if any) for scientific research that includes the capture and release of deer in Fiordland National Park is. The GPNP Policy 11 sets out the requirements for Research and Information Needs in national parks. At the very least, adequate information about the proposed scientific research that complies with GPNP Policy 11, is required.
30. Concession applications for commercial activities on public conservation land must comply with the CA section 17S Contents of Application.
31. Fundamental aspects of s17S including a clear description of the activities, a description identifying the specific places where the proposed activities will be carried out (including the status of those places), the description of the potential effects of the proposed activities and any actions that the applicant proposes to take to avoid, remedy, or mitigate any adverse effects of the proposed activities are missing from the application.
32. The details of the type(s) of concession the applicant is applying are restricted to the tick box on page 5 of 9 of the application, however the individual forms appear to be missing from the publicly notified version of the application. This fundamental information necessary for s17S, is missing from the application.
33. The proposed duration of the WARO aspect of the concession is 10 years. No reasons have been provided to justify a 10-year concession for the other activities.
34. There is scant and manifestly inadequate information relating to the applicant, including any information relevant to the applicant's ability to carry out the proposed activities. They provide no evidence of their ability to carry out the WARO activity or any of the other activities and appear to rely solely on their 20-year history of deer management in FNP.
35. The applicant explains that the proposed area for these activities is the area known as the 'Wapiti Area', in FNP. This is a large area covering about 190,700 hectares of the national park.⁴ This area includes the Glaisnock Wilderness Area. The proposed activities will also be undertaken within Murchison Mountains Takahē Specially Protected Area.
36. The applicant does not provide specific detail regarding which activities (nor the frequency of each activity) it intends to carry out in each area, including in the wilderness area or the specially protected area. Given the sensitivity of wilderness areas and the specially protected area, the application must include a detailed description of

⁴ <https://www.doc.govt.nz/nature/biodiversity/wild-animals-management/waipiti-deer-proposal-for-a-herd-of-special-interest/>

which activities are proposed for each area, including the frequency of the activity, the potential effects as a result of the activity, and how the applicant proposes to avoid, remedy and mitigate these activities, in a way that is consistent with the purpose for which that land is held.

37. Drones have impacts on people and on wildlife. The application does not identify where the drones are proposed to be used, how often, or for how long.
38. Astonishingly, there is no detail regarding the proposal to capture and release deer for scientific purposes, or why this is an appropriate activity in FNP. This is a fundamental flaw in the application.
39. The deficiencies in the application are such that it is not possible to comment. The fundamental deficiencies in the application should have caused the Department to return the application under s17SA.
40. For the reasons set out in paragraphs 25-39, the application should be **declined**.

Recommendation

The application should be **declined**, and a fresh application made that complies with the statutory framework and Conservation Act Part 3B section 17S and that allows for proper comment.

Thank you for the opportunity to submit.

If the application is to proceed to a hearing in its current form, Forest & Bird would like to be heard.

Nāku noa, nā

Nicky Snoyink

Royal Forest and Bird Protection Society of New Zealand Inc

Regional Conservation Manager

[Redacted signature]



A. Permission Application Number and Name of Applicant

125891-WARS Fiordland Wapiti Foundation

B. Name of Proposed Activity and Location(s)

Wild Animal Recovery Operations and other activities in part of Fiordland National Park

C.1 Objector or Submitter Information-

Submitter's name (list organisational name if submitting on behalf of a business, community group, etc.)	Rewild Aotearoa
Contact person and role of organisation	Paul Hughes Research Lead
Email (Communication from DOC will be via email unless alternate contact requested)	[REDACTED]
Alternate contact for all DOC communication	
Phone/Mobile	[REDACTED]
Postal Address and Post Code	

X I wish to **keep my contact details confidential**

Note: Your contact details will be not made public, but your name and organisation will be published. DOC will send you all submitter communications.

A. Permission Application Number and Name of Applicant

125891-WARS Fiordland Wapiti Foundation

B. Name of Proposed Activity and Location(s)

Wild Animal Recovery Operations and other activities in part of Fiordland National Park

C.2 Your name

In placing your name and organisation below, you acknowledge that you are the person or authorised person submitting this objection or submission. You are also acknowledging that your name and organisation will be published.

Printed name of submitter or person authorised on behalf of submitter	Paul Hughes
Organisation	Rewild Aotearoa
Date	14/09/2026

D. Statement of Support, Neutrality or Opposition

- ☐ I **Support** this Application (I am making a submission)
- ☐ I am **Neutral** on this Application (I am making a submission).
- ☒ I **Oppose** this Application (I am making an objection).

E. Hearing Request

- ☒ I **Do Not** wish to be heard in support of this objection or submission at a hearing.
- ☐ I **Do** wish to be heard in support of this objection or submission at a hearing

F. Objection or submission

The specific parts of the application that this objection or submission relates to are:

WARO application

My reasons for my objection or submission are:

The application lacks the full detail required to evaluate the effects of the proposal.
There is no indication as to whether the target “deer” is European Red Deer or North American Rocky Mountain Elk (Wapiti) and whether the management would be different for each species – no mention is made of what is proposed for chamois which is included in the “community agreement”
The government DOC should be resourcing needed invasive browser management in this area – not FWF
We see invasive browser control as a transitional arrangement towards freeing Aotearoa of invasive browsers – see <https://rewildaotearoa.org.nz/RO7.html>
Nothing is included to limit the continued spread of North American Rocky Mountain Elk (Wapiti) outside of the Wapiti Blocks – to invade Fiordland and the Southern Alps, or to reduce the range
DOC should be addressing the inadequate control of invasive browsers within the Takahe Special Area – not FWF.
FWF appear to be farming North American Rocky Mountain Elk (Wapiti) as they will be harvesting spillover from areas outside the Wapiti Blocks, and spillover from forested areas to the alpine areas as forested areas are more difficult to recover carcasses from.
By shutting out other WARO operators there is no check on farming numbers.
No provision is made for search and cull within forest where WARO effectiveness is limited.
We still have limited scientific knowledge about the impacts if invasive browsers – setting safe densities is playing god.

The outcomes that need to be addressed by this application are:

Give precise details, including the parts of the application you wish to have amended and the general nature of any conditions sought if the application is approved.

Reject the application as the information provided is inadequate.
FWF need to provide for containing the range of Wapiti to the Wapiti blocks only, and then reduce the range to the minimum required by indigenous ecological integrity.
Control in the Takahe Special Area should be by DOC.
FWF need an active search and cull program within forest within the full Wapiti range.
The Wapiti Blocks need to be open to all WARO operators and not have any exclusive WARO rights for any one entity.

G. Attachments

If you are using attachments to support your objection or submission clearly label each attachment, complete the table below and send in your attachments with this ‘objection or submission form’.

Document title	Document format (e.g. Word, PDF, Excel, jpg etc.)	Description of attachment

How do I submit my objection or submission?

Complete this form and email to DNsubmissions@doc.govt.nz. You may also mail your objection and submission to: Director-General, c/o Department of Conservation, Te Anau District Office, 1 Lakefront Drive, Te Anau 9600.



A. Permission Application Number and Name of Applicant

125891-WARS Fiordland Wapiti Foundation

B. Name of Proposed Activity and Location(s)

Wild Animal Recovery Operations and other activities in part of Fiordland National Park

C.1 Objector or Submitter Information-

Submitter's name (list organisational name if submitting on behalf of a business, community group, etc.)	Southern Wild Game Co LP
Contact person and role of organisation	Hugh Signal
Email (Communication from DOC will be via email unless alternate contact requested)	
Alternate contact for all DOC communication	
Phone/Mobile	
Postal Address and Post Code	

☐

I wish to **keep my contact details confidential**

Note: Your contact details will be not made public, but your name and organisation will be published. DOC will send you all submitter communications.

A. Permission Application Number and Name of Applicant

125891-WARS Fiordland Wapiti Foundation

B. Name of Proposed Activity and Location(s)

Wild Animal Recovery Operations and other activities in part of Fiordland National Park

C.2 Your name

In placing your name and organisation below, you acknowledge that you are the person or authorised person submitting this objection or submission. You are also acknowledging that your name and organisation will be published.

Printed name of submitter or person authorised on behalf of submitter	Hugh Signal
Organisation	Southern Wild Game Co LP
Date	14 September 2026

D. Statement of Support, Neutrality or Opposition

- ☐ I **Support** this Application (I am making a submission)
- ☐ I am **Neutral** on this Application (I am making a submission).

X **I Oppose this Application (I am making an objection).**

E. Hearing Request

- ☐ I **Do Not** wish to be heard in support of this objection or submission at a hearing.

X **I Do wish to be heard in support of this objection or submission at a hearing**

F. Objection or submission

The specific parts of the application that this objection or submission relates to are: **See attached submission**

My reasons for my objection or submission are: **See attached submission**

The outcomes that need to be addressed by this application are: **See attached submission**

Give precise details, including the parts of the application you wish to have amended and the general nature of any conditions sought if the application is approved.

G. Attachments

If you are using attachments to support your objection or submission clearly label each attachment, complete the table below and send in your attachments with this 'objection or submission form'.

Document title	Document format (e.g. Word, PDF, Excel, jpg etc.)	Description of attachment
Southern Wild Game Co LP	Word	Detailed submission

How do I submit my objection or submission?

Complete this form and email to DNsubmissions@doc.govt.nz. You may also mail your objection and submission to: Director-General, c/o Department of Conservation, Te Anau District Office, 1 Lakefront Drive, Te Anau 9600.

SUBMISSION ON CONCESSION APPLICATION 125891-WARS

Applicant: Fiordland Wapiti Foundation Incorporated

Application: Wild animal recovery operations and associated activities, Fiordland National Park

Decision-maker: The Minister of Conservation, under s 22 of the Wild Animal Control Act 1977 and Part 3B of the Conservation Act 1987

Submitter: Southern Wild Game Co LP

Contact: Hugh Signal - hugh@deer.co.nz

Date: Monday 14 September 2026

1. The submitter

- 1.1 The individuals involved with Southern Wild Game Co LP (the **submitter**) hold national wild animal recovery operations concessions and current supply contracts with a registered MPI primary processor. The submitter also operates a registered processing facility.
- 1.2 The submitter supports increased deer control in Fiordland National Park and does not oppose the Fiordland Wapiti Foundation Incorporated (the **Foundation**) holding the appropriate authority to carry out activities in relation to Wapiti in the Wapiti Area. For the reasons set out below, it opposes *this* application, in *this* form.

2. Summary

- 2.1 The Foundation's application seeks a Wild Animal Recovery (WARO) concession in the Wapiti area, the Takahe Specially Protected Area (in the Murchison Mountains) and an area described as "WARO restricted Area" in Fiordland National Park.
- 2.2 There are additional activities specified in the application which are not a WARO. Collectively, the activities applied for are governed by three different statutory regimes — the Wild Animal Control Act 1977, the Game Animal Council Act 2013, and the Conservation Act 1987 — with the National Parks Act 1980 applying over all of them, since all of the land concerned is national park.
- 2.3 Fiordland Wapiti in the Wapiti Area have been designated as a herd of special interest (HOSI) under the Game Animal Council Act 2013 (GACA). The effect of the designation is the Department cannot grant a WARO for Wapiti in the HOSI, as they are not "wild animals" under the Wild Animal Control Act (they are governed by the Game Animal Council Act 2013). The application does not make this distinction.
- 2.4 Three of the activities sought are expressly excluded from the Department's terms for national WARO concessions (they are in areas labelled as "restricted" or "not permitted"). Further, the threshold requirements for a WARO concession — a current supply contract with an approved primary processor, or with a marketing entity holding one, and compliance with the Ministry for Primary Industries requirements for the activity — are not addressed.

- 2.5 Three activities applied for cannot be granted by concession at all, as they are non-delegable powers of the Minister under the GACA.
- 2.6 The submitter seeks the Department require the applicant provide further information to clarify the correct statutory provisions for each activity, with adequate information relating to each activity and the relevant effects, so that submitters are able to address these.
- 2.7 Alternatively, the submitter seeks:
- (a) that the application be declined so far as it seeks a wild animal recovery concession over Fiordland wapiti in the Wapiti Area, there being no power to grant this concession under the Wild Animal Control Act;
 - (b) that it be declined so far as it seeks the carriage of recreational hunters, the release of live-captured deer within the Park, and recovery for trophy purposes, those activities being excluded from the national WARO concession for which the Foundation has applied (they are not WARO activities);
 - (c) that it be declined so far as it seeks to confer administration of the hunting authorisation ballot, the collection of hunting fees, and the capture and liberation of herd animals, as these are statutory functions of the Minister under the Game Animal Council Act 2013;
 - (d) that the WARO activities be declined on the basis of unfairness – the areas applied for are either “not permitted” (the Wapiti Area, and the part of the Takahē Specially Protected Area in the Murchison Mountains) or “restricted” (the strip of WARO labelled “restricted” land along the Wapiti Area boundary that is applied for) and other operators have not had an opportunity to apply for these areas;
 - (e) that it be declined so far as it is inconsistent with the Fiordland National Park Management Plan 2007 and/or the Southland Murihiku Conservation Management Strategy 2016 (s 17W applies), and so far as it would authorise entry to the Takahē Specially Protected Area without a permit under s 13 of the National Parks Act;
 - (f) that the balance be declined for lack of information;
 - (g) that, if a concession is granted, it be granted subject to the conditions set out in Part 11 of this submission, so that the Foundation carries out the activity on the same terms as every other holder of a national WARO concession; and
 - (h) that the submitter be heard.

3. What applies where

- 3.1 Fiordland Wapiti in the Wapiti Area have been designated as a herd of special interest (HOSI) under the Game Animal Council Act 2013 (GACA). Therefore the Wapiti Area is governed by a different legal environment from the land around it, as it relates to Wapiti. The application does not make this distinction. The National Parks Act applies throughout.
- 3.2 There is a “carve-out” in s 22(3) of the Wild Animal Control Act, whereby the Minister can grant a WARO even if it is inconsistent with the purpose for which the land is held. This carve-out only reaches only part of what is sought (Part 7).

- 3.3 The table below sets out the various activities, either within or outside the Wapiti Area, what the governing regime is, the correct instrument and the associated issues. The categories used below — permitted, restricted and not permitted — are those shown in the Department's Land assessment as approved by decision maker — WARO 2023 map series (April 2024), sheets 14 and 16.

Inside the Wapiti Area

Proposed activity	Governing regime	Correct instrument	Issue
Aerial shooting and recovery of Fiordland wapiti ¹	Game Animal Council Act 2013 and the Herd Management Plan. The Wild Animal Control Act does not apply	Authorisation under s 18 GACA for the hunting; Part 3B concession under s 17ZF for aircraft landings	No WARO concession can lawfully be granted
Aerial shooting and recovery of chamois	Wild Animal Control Act 1977	WARO concession, s 22	Land classified "not permitted"
Carriage of recreational hunters to hunt wapiti	Not the Wild Animal Control Act — the animals are not wild animals. Conservation Act for the aircraft activity; GACA for the hunting	Part 3B concession under s 17ZF, plus s 18 GACA authorisation	Not a wild animal recovery operation at all
Filming and advocacy; drones; hut maintenance; trapping	Conservation Act 1987 only	Part 3B concession, assessed on its own merits	Not enough information supplies to assess effects
Ballot administration; collection and application of hunting fees	Game Animal Council Act, s 18	Not a concession. A statutory power, delegable only to the Council	Cannot be conferred by concession
Capture, conveyance or liberation of herd animals	Game Animal Council Act, s 18(1)(e)	Ministerial power, expressly non-delegable	Cannot be conferred on any person
Aircraft operations in the Glaisnock Wilderness Area	National Parks Act s 14(2), and the Fiordland National Park Management Plan	Concession (s17ZF), but s 17W bars grant if inconsistent with the Plan	s 17U(3) disapplied for WARO; s 17W is not

¹ **Fiordland wapiti:** the Herd Management Plan applies to all species of deer in the genus *Cervus* occurring in the Wapiti Area, and refers to those animals collectively as Fiordland wapiti. The Plan records that the herd largely comprises wapiti (*Cervus canadensis*) and red deer (*Cervus elaphus*) hybrids, with few if any pure-bred animals of either species remaining. That is a description of the herd's composition. The class itself is defined by genus and location.

Proposed activity	Governing regime	Correct instrument	Issue
Entry to the Takahē Specially Protected Area	National Parks Act, ss 12–13	Permit under s 13	A concession is not a s 13 permit; s 22(3) WAC Act exemption does not reach this

3.4 Outside the Wapiti Area — the Murchison Mountains and "restricted area" buffers

Proposed activity	Governing regime	Correct instrument	Issue
Aerial search, shooting and recovery of wild animals	Wild Animal Control Act	WARO concession, s 22	Land identified as "not permitted" and "restricted"
Live capture and release of deer	Wild Animal Control Act	Live capture under WARO is limited to conveyance to deer farming locations	Release into the Park is outside the concession type
Carriage of recreational hunters to hunt wild animals	Wild Animal Control Act — within limb (c) of the definition of "wild animal recovery operation"	Concession under s 22, in the aerially assisted trophy hunting form	Excluded from the national WARO concession product
Filming and advocacy; drones	Conservation Act 1987 only	Part 3B concession	Not applied for or assessed as such

- 3.5 The submitter asks that the applicant be required to address each category separately, state the statutory basis on which each activity could be granted or declined and the effects of each activity. Until that is done the submitter is not able to address the effects of those activities.

4. Ground 1 — No power to grant a WARO concession over Fiordland wapiti

- 4.1 Section 22 of the Wild Animal Control Act authorises concessions for **wild animal recovery operations**, defined by reference to the taking of **wild animals**. Paragraph (d) of the definition of "wild animal" excludes an animal forming part of a designated herd of special interest².
- 4.2 The Fiordland Wapiti Herd of Special Interest was designated on 13 July 2026. A Herd Management Plan was approved July 2026³ and applies to all deer of the genus *Cervus* in the Wapiti Area, approximately 190,700 hectares, and states that these animals will be

² Section 2 Wild Animal Control Act

³ The Fiordland Wapiti Herd of Special Interest Herd Management Plan.

managed as game animals under the Game Animal Council Act rather than as wild animals under the Wild Animal Control Act⁴.

- 4.3 The only wild animals in the Wapiti Area are chamois. The application identifies chamois as a target.
- 4.4 The distinction is one of genus and location, not appearance. The Herd Management Plan applies to all species of deer in the genus *Cervus* occurring in the Wapiti Area, which it refers to collectively as Fiordland wapiti. It records that the species cannot be physically separated within the area, that they interbreed, and that few if any pure-bred animals remain. A red deer inside the Wapiti Area is therefore part of the designated herd and is not a wild animal, while the same animal in the buffers is a wild animal. No operator could lawfully target red deer inside the Wapiti Area under a concession granted under s 22, and none could demonstrate compliance if it tried. The only activity within the Wapiti Area for which a concession under s 22 is the correct instrument is the recovery of chamois.
- 4.5 That activity raises the same difficulty as the Murchison Mountains. Chamois in the Wapiti Area are wild animals, and a wild animal recovery concession is the right instrument for recovering them, but the land is classified “not permitted” in the Department’s 2023 land assessment and no other operator has had the opportunity to apply for it. The submitter does not oppose the recovery of chamois in the Wapiti Area as such. It opposes that recovery being authorised for one operator, over land closed to every other operator, without the opportunity to apply having been made available generally.
- 4.6 The submitter has considered whether a concession is required for this activity at all. Section 17O(3)(b) of the Conservation Act exempts from the concession requirement any activity that is otherwise authorised by or under an Act specified in Schedule 1, and the Game Animal Council Act is so specified. The hunting of Fiordland wapiti under an authorisation made under s 18 may therefore not require a concession.
- 4.7 However, the landing of aircraft on public conservation land requires a concession under s 17ZF of the Conservation Act, and nothing in the Game Animal Council Act authorises it. A notice under s 18 specifies the conditions under which the animals may be hunted; it does not authorise an aircraft to land in a national park. The aerial component of the proposed activity therefore does require a concession — but a concession under Part 3B, not a concession under s 22 of the Wild Animal Control Act, which is what has been applied for.
- 4.8 The submitter further asks the Minister to determine whether the recovery of carcasses for supply to a registered primary processor is an activity carried on for gain or reward requiring a concession in its own right, separately from any authorisation to hunt. The application proceeds on the footing that a single wild animal recovery concession covers the entire operation. For the reasons above, it cannot.
- 4.9 The Herd Management Plan defines a “professional herd management operation” as searching for and shooting wild animals as a non-recreational and non-commercial activity, generally not involving recovery. The activity advertised — contracting helicopter operators to locate, shoot and recover deer for consumption — is commercial recovery. It is neither a professional herd management operation as the Plan defines it, nor recreational hunting.

⁴ The Department reached the same conclusion in advance. At section 7.2 of its WARO National Land Schedule Review 2018–2022 decision support document, it recorded that on designation the animals in a herd of special interest would cease to be wild animals and could not be hunted under a WARO permit.

The submitter asks the Minister to identify the category within the Plan into which the proposed activity falls.

5. Ground 2 — Three of the activities sought are excluded from the concession type

- 5.1 The Department's national WARO concession defines the concession activity and then expressly excludes certain activities from it⁵. The exclusions are definitional of that concession type. They are not conditions imposed case by case, and the instrument for which the Foundation has applied cannot authorise them.
- 5.2 The Department's published material confirms the position from the other direction: the national concessions are described as those on offer, covering, in the South Island, the carcass recovery of deer, pig, chamois and goat and the live capture of deer, and an applicant wishing to undertake any other type of wild animal recovery operation is directed to apply separately through the Christchurch office.
- 5.3 The submitter does not say that the Minister lacks power under s 22 of the WAC Act to grant a differently constituted concession. It says that no such concession has been applied for or notified in this case, and that granting one operator a concession on terms from which these activities have been removed for every other operator would require a justification that the application does not attempt.
- 5.4 The excluded activities include:
 - (a) **carriage of passengers** other than an employee or contractor of the concessionaire engaged in the concession activity, or a monitoring official of the Department, the Ministry for Primary Industries or the Civil Aviation Authority. The exclusion is stated to extend to recreational hunters, whether ground-based or not, and to any person providing a guided hunting service;
 - (b) **live capture or carriage of any wild animal other than deer**, with live deer conveyance permitted only to locations under the Deer Farming Notice No. 5, 2008; and
 - (c) **recovery of any wild animal for trophy-mounting purposes.**
- 5.5 The Department's published guidance is to the same effect: national WARO concessions exclude the carriage of recreational hunters and fare-paying passengers, and direct applicants seeking that activity to an aerially assisted trophy hunting or aircraft activities concession.
- 5.6 The submitter records, so that the point is not misunderstood, that the carriage of persons and equipment that may be used for searching for, shooting or immobilising wild animals, or for recovering them, falls within limb (c) of the definition of "wild animal recovery operation" in s 2 of the Wild Animal Control Act. Aerially assisted trophy hunting is therefore a wild animal recovery operation in the statutory sense and is authorised under s 22, as the national WARO concession is. The separation between them is one the Department has made in the design of its concession products, and it applies to every operator. The submitter does not say the Foundation may not seek to carry hunters. It says the

⁵ <https://www.doc.govt.nz/parks-and-recreation/things-to-do/hunting/permits-and-licences/national-wild-animal-recovery-operations/>

Foundation may not seek to do so through the one instrument from which that activity has been removed for everyone else.

- 5.7 Within the Wapiti Area the position is different again. Fiordland wapiti are not wild animals, so carrying hunters to hunt them does not fall within limb (c), or any other limb, of the definition. That activity is not a wild animal recovery operation at all. It requires a Part 3B concession for the aircraft activity together with an authorisation under s 18 of the Game Animal Council Act for the hunting.
- 5.8 The application seeks, in substance, all three of the excluded activities. It contemplates the carriage of recreational hunters. It seeks capture and release of deer within the Park, which is neither conveyance to a deer farming location nor recovery. And its stated purpose is to produce mature trophy bulls.
- 5.9 If the Foundation wishes to pursue these activities it must apply for the appropriate instrument, where they will be assessed against the criteria applying to it.

6. Ground 3 — The ballot, fees and live capture cannot be conferred by concession

- 6.1 The application seeks authorisation to deliver the annual wapiti ballot, to collect and apply fees, and to capture and release deer for research.
- 6.2 Under the Herd Management Plan an "authorisation" is an approval issued by the Minister for Hunting and Fishing or their delegate under s 18 of the Game Animal Council Act. Strategy 1.5 provides for a ballot and block system to allocate authorisations; Strategy 1.8 provides for fees to be charged to hunt Fiordland wapiti; Strategy 1.9 directs surplus revenue to conservation initiatives.
- 6.3 Section 20 of the Game Animal Council Act permits the Minister⁶ to delegate his or her s 18 powers **to the Game Animal Council** and to no one else. Delegation requires prior consultation with the Director-General, the New Zealand Conservation Authority and any conservation board with jurisdiction, and the Minister must be satisfied that management by the Council is consistent with the overriding considerations and will improve management of the herd.
- 6.4 **Section 20(1) expressly excludes from delegation the power under s 18(1)(e) to capture, convey or liberate animals that are part of a herd of special interest.** That power is not delegable even to the Council, still less conferrable on a private incorporated society, and it cannot be granted by concession. Within the Wapiti Area, the capture and release of deer proposed by the Foundation engages that power directly.
- 6.5 It follows that:
 - (a) allocating ballot authorisations is the exercise of a statutory power that a concession cannot confer;
 - (b) the fee is a statutory charge under the Plan, not concession revenue, and its application is directed by Strategy 1.9;

⁶ The Minister of Conservation.

- (c) capture and release of herd animals is reserved to the Minister and cannot be authorised at all through this process; and
- (d) if the Foundation is to have an administrative role in the ballot, it can only be as a contractor to the Minister or the Council, which is a services arrangement outside this process.

6.6 The submitter asks the Minister to state the statutory basis on which the Foundation is said to be able to allocate hunting authorisations, to charge and retain fees for hunting on public conservation land, and to capture and liberate herd animals.

7. Ground 4 — The limits of the section 22(3) carve-out

- 7.1 All of the land is national park. Section 22(3) of the Wild Animal Control Act applies Part 3B of the Conservation Act to concessions under s 22(1), with references to a conservation area read as references to a national park, but expressly disapplies two provisions: s 17O(4) and s 17U(3).
- 7.2 The submitter accepts that the disapplication of s 17U(3) removes the bar on granting a concession where the activity would be contrary to the provisions of the Conservation Act or the purposes for which the land is held. That disapplication is necessary if aerial wild animal control is to be authorised in a national park at all but two things follow.

The carve-out is confined to wild animal recovery operations

- 7.3 Section 22(3) operates for the purposes of subsection (1) — that is, for concessions authorising wild animal recovery operations. It reaches nothing else. For every non-WARO activity in this application — filming and advocacy, drones, hut maintenance, trapping, ballot administration, and the carriage of hunters — s 17U(3) applies unmodified, and the Minister shall not grant the application if the activity is contrary to the provisions of the Conservation Act or the purposes for which the land is held.
- 7.4 The point hits hardest inside the Wapiti Area. For the reasons in Part 4, aerial operations targeting Fiordland wapiti are not wild animal recovery operations and cannot be granted under s 22. No grant under s 22 means no carve-out under s 22(3). The concession required for that activity is the concession required by s 17ZF for the landing of aircraft — an ordinary Part 3B concession, to which s 17U(3) applies in full. The submitter does not say that such a concession cannot be granted. It says that it falls to be assessed under s 17U(3), which is a different test from the one on which the application proceeds, and that the application does not contain the material required to carry out that assessment.

Section 17W is not disapplied

- 7.5 Section 22(3) of the WAC Act disapplies s 17O(4) and s 17U(3) of the Conservation Act, and nothing else. Section 17W, which governs the relationship between concessions and conservation management strategies and plans, continues to apply to a WARO concession in full.
- 7.6 Consistency with the Fiordland National Park Management Plan 2007 and the Southland Murihiku Conservation Management Strategy 2016 is therefore not a discretionary consideration. It is a bar on granting. The submitter asks that the decision address consistency expressly, and in particular:

- (a) the policies of the Fiordland National Park Management Plan applying to the Glaisnock Wilderness Area, which is set apart under s 14 of the National Parks Act and in which s 14(2) provides that no helicopter or other motorised aircraft shall land, take off, or hover for the purpose of embarking or disembarking passengers or goods;
- (b) the policies applying to the Western Remote visitor setting; and
- (c) the aircraft landing provisions of the Plan generally, against which the application cannot be assessed at all while the number and location of landings remain unstated.

Specially protected areas

- 7.7 Sections 12 and 13 of the National Parks Act provide for specially protected areas within a national park and make it an offence to enter or remain in such an area except under the authority of a permit issued under s 13, or to breach a condition of such a permit.
- 7.8 Nothing in s 22(3) of the WAC Act touches section 13. A concession granted under Part 3B is not a permit issued under s 13. The application accepts that the area is set apart as a specially protected area under s 12, and identifies part of it as one of the three areas applied for. Access to it therefore requires a separate instrument granted on its own criteria, and none is sought.
- 7.9 The way the area is presented compounds the difficulty. On the application's map the buffer is drawn as a single polygon, part of which lies over the Specially Protected Area and part of which lies over land outside it. The application attributes approximately four trips a year to the Murchison Mountains buffer zone without distinguishing between the two. Aircraft operations over the Specially Protected Area portion require a permit under s 13 whatever operational description is attached to them.

Section 4(2)(b)

- 7.10 Section 4(2)(b) of the National Parks Act requires that introduced animals be exterminated as far as possible. The Game Animal Council (Herds of Special Interest) Amendment Act 2026 disapplies that provision only for a designated herd within a designated area. It continues to apply to chamois anywhere in the Park, and to deer in the Murchison Mountains and "restricted area" buffers, both of which lie outside the designated area.
- 7.11 The submitter accepts that, with s 17U(3) disapplied, s 4(2)(b) is not a bar on granting a WARO concession. It remains relevant in two ways: to consistency under s 17W, and to the non-WARO activities to which s 17U(3) still applies. The submitter notes that the environmental impact assessment prepared for the Foundation records that its approach of leaving live bull wapiti to grow and reproduce, rather than implementing an elimination strategy, is contrary to the National Parks Act.
- 7.12 Policy 4.3(i) of the General Policy for National Parks 2005 provides that commercial hunting of wild animals and animal pests should be encouraged to maximise effective control — which supports commercial recovery generally, and tells against an arrangement that reduces it.

8. Ground 5 — The threshold requirement for a WARO concession is not addressed

- 8.1 The Department's published requirements are that an applicant must hold a current supply contract with an approved processor, or with a marketing entity holding such a contract, and must meet the MPI requirements for the activity.
- 8.2 This is not merely an entry test. Under the standard concession the requirement continues throughout the term: the concessionaire must hold the supply contract whenever the activity is undertaken, must ensure any marketing entity contract makes the processor contract an essential condition, and must provide evidence to the Grantor annually on 1 July. The Grantor may verify with the processor at any time.
- 8.3 The application contains no evidence that the Foundation holds, or that any person operating under the proposed concession would hold, a supply contract with a registered primary processor, or that MPI requirements would be met.
- 8.4 The submitter members and other holders have met and continue to meet these requirements at real cost. The submitter asks that the application be declined for want of that information, or that any concession granted be conditioned as at 11.2(h)–(i).

9. Ground 6 — Insufficient information to assess effects

- 9.1 The Minister may decline an application for a concession where the information available is insufficient to enable an assessment of the effects of the activity, including the effects of proposed mitigation.
- 9.2 Information received under s 17SD or s 17SE is, under s 17U(1), a matter to which the Minister must have regard. Any further information supplied by the Foundation will therefore form part of the material on which the decision is made. The submitter asks that any further information be disclosed to submitters, and that submitters be given an opportunity to comment on it, before the decision is made.
- 9.3 **Effects are described generically.** The assessment reproduces general descriptions of aircraft effects from the Southland Murihiku Conservation Management Strategy 2016 and the Fiordland National Park Management Plan 2007, with nothing specific to the Glaisnock Wilderness Area, the Takahē Specially Protected Area, or the Western Remote visitor setting.
- 9.4 **Mitigation is unclear.** Measures are expressed as things that "could include", qualified by "where possible" and "aim to". The standard WARO concession by contrast imposes dated closures — a Roar closure and an annual Christmas closure — together with area-specific Southland conditions including a prohibition within 500 metres of the Milford, Kepler, Hollyford and Hump Ridge Tracks during the Great Walks season, and a requirement to remove animals whole from Tōpuni areas.
- 9.5 **Landings are not quantified.** Approximate trip numbers are given; the number of landings, their locations and their distribution are not. The Fiordland National Park Management Plan regulates landings, and s 14(2) prohibits them outright in the wilderness area.
- 9.6 The application does, however, state that approximately half of the recovery trips and some 40 per cent of the culling trips would be in the Glaisnock Wilderness Area. The Wilderness Area comprises 123,800 of the 190,700 hectares of the Wapiti Area. On the applicant's own

figures, the greater part of the proposed aerial activity would be carried out over land on which s 14(2) of the National Parks Act prohibits a helicopter or other motorised aircraft from landing, taking off, or hovering to embark or disembark passengers or goods.

- 9.7 **Aircraft are not identified.** The standard concession requires the make, model, registration and colour of every aircraft to be provided in writing before the activity begins, and any change notified. The application identifies no aircraft and states only that one of several operators may be contracted.
- 9.8 **"Culling and leaving" is not recovery.** Approximately ten trips per year are described as culling and leaving. Aerial culling with carcasses left in situ has a different effects profile, involves no processing chain and no MPI accountability, and is not a wild animal recovery operation.
- 9.9 **The buffer purpose is not disclosed.** The buffers are justified by reference to preventing incursion of wild animals into the Wapiti Area. Strategy 1.2 of the Plan requires herd management activities to optimise genetic selection and minimise hybridisation. The submitter asks that the Foundation be required to state whether a purpose of shooting in the buffers is to prevent red deer entering the Wapiti Area and interbreeding with the herd. If so, that is a herd quality purpose, not wild animal control, and must be assessed as such — noting that s 4(2)(b) continues to apply outside the designated area.
- 9.10 **The applicant's own evidence does not establish the claimed benefit.** The environmental impact assessment prepared for the Foundation records that no significant relationship was found between increased harvest effort and pellet group counts in the Murchison Mountains and Wapiti Area, and that very large changes in control rates would be needed before significant change in pellet counts would be seen.

10. Ground 7 — Exclusivity, and performance of the activity by others

- 10.1 A concession is not exclusive unless granted as a lease or licence conferring exclusive rights. The standard concession expressly gives the concessionaire no priority over other users of the land and no priority use of any landing site.
- 10.2 This application states that it would be communicated to WARO concession holders that the Foundation would manage the buffer zones, and that this will push them to other areas. That describes the Foundation determining which operators work where.
- 10.3 The application puts the point beyond argument. It records that the areas classified "not permitted" prohibit fully competitive commercial WARO, that this includes the Wapiti Area and the Takahē Specially Protected Area, and that this does not preclude consideration of a more limited and targeted operation. That is an application to be admitted to land closed to competitive WARO on the footing that the applicant alone would operate there. No statutory basis is offered for the distinction, and the land assessment contains no such exception. If the Minister is satisfied that targeted recovery in these areas is acceptable, the relief sought at Part 11 is that the conclusion be given effect through the land schedule, so that every suitably qualified operator may apply.
- 10.4 A related difficulty arises from the Foundation holding neither aircraft nor a concession. The standard concession prohibits the concessionaire from entering into any contract or arrangement under which the concession activity would be carried out by a person other

than the concessionaire, without the Grantor's prior written consent, and treats such arrangements as assignments. The Foundation proposes precisely that arrangement as its operating model. The submitter asks the Minister to address how the proposed structure sits with that restriction, and why the operators who would carry out the activity are not the appropriate applicants.

- 10.5 The Foundation describes the Wapiti Area as an area it manages under a community agreement made under the Conservation Act 1987 between the Director-General and the Foundation. A community agreement is not a concession. It confers no right to carry out a wild animal recovery operation, no interest in land, and no authority over other concessionaires. The submitter asks the Minister confirm that it does not bear on who may hold or exercise a concession in the area.

11. Relief sought

- 11.1 That the application be declined so far as it seeks:

- (a) a wild animal recovery concession over Fiordland wapiti within the Wapiti Area;
- (b) the carriage of recreational hunters, ballot participants or fare-paying passengers;
- (c) the live capture and release of deer;
- (d) recovery for trophy purposes;
- (e) administration of the ballot, or the collection, retention or application of hunting fees;
- (f) any activity inconsistent with the Fiordland National Park Management Plan 2007 or the Southland Murihiku Conservation Management Strategy 2016;
- (g) entry to the Takahē Specially Protected Area otherwise than under a permit issued under s 13 of the National Parks Act; and
- (h) any open-ended authorisation of activities not described in the application.

- 11.2 That any concession granted be subject to conditions including:

Scope (a) authorising the recovery of wild animals only, expressly excluding any animal forming part of a designated herd of special interest; (b) confined to the areas applied for, any extension requiring a fresh application; (c) excluding the Glaisnock Wilderness Area and the Takahē Specially Protected Area; (d) filming, advocacy and drone use to be dealt with, if at all, as separate Part 3B activities assessed on their own merits;

Activity — the standard exclusions to apply unmodified (e) no carriage of passengers other than the concessionaire's crew and monitoring officials, the exclusion to extend to recreational hunters and guided hunting services; (f) no recovery for trophy-mounting purposes; live deer conveyance only to Deer Farming Notice locations; (g) recovery for supply to a registered primary processor only; no aerial culling with carcasses left in situ;

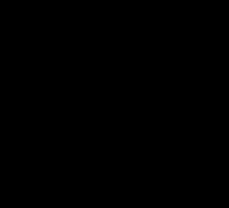
Threshold and supply chain (h) a current supply contract with a registered MPI primary processor, or with a marketing entity holding one, to be held throughout the term with evidence produced annually on 1 July; (i) compliance with MPI requirements for the activity; (j) the activity to be carried out only by a party holding a current national WARO concession

and the applicable aviation documents, with aircraft make, model, registration and colour provided in advance and changes notified;

Operating conditions — parity with the national concession (k) the Roar and Christmas closure periods, and the Southland special conditions, to apply unmodified; (l) GPS flight track logs and waypoints for all animals taken, recorded to MPI specifications, with returns to the Department within 10 working days on the standard terms; (m) a stated maximum number of landings by area and season; (n) no priority over other users of the land or over landing sites; (o) the Grantor's power to rezone any area as restricted or not permitted at any time; (p) a minimum annual take, with the Grantor's termination power on the standard terms, so that the concession is held for wild animal control and not for access;

Exclusivity (q) no exclusive rights; no fetter on authorising other operators; no role in directing or restricting other concessionaires.

- 11.3 That the decision report state which Minister is exercising which power in respect of each activity applied for, and how the designation of the Fiordland Wapiti Herd of Special Interest under the Game Animal Council Act 2013 is reconciled with the obligations under s 17W of the Conservation Act 1987 and s 4(2)(b) of the National Parks Act 1980, noting that the Game Animal Council (Herds of Special Interest) Amendment Act 2026 is administered by the Department of Conservation.
- 11.4 That any information obtained under s 17SD or s 17SE be disclosed to submitters, and that submitters be given an opportunity to comment on it before the application is determined.
- 11.5 That, if the Minister concludes that targeted commercial aerial recovery in the areas sought is acceptable in principle, that conclusion be reflected in the national WARO land schedule so that it is available to all suitably qualified operators, rather than by single-operator exception.
- 11.6 The submitter **wishes to be heard**, and asks to be provided with the draft decision report and an opportunity to provide written comment before the application is determined.



For and on behalf of Southern Wild Game Co LP

16 September 2026

Director-General
Department of Conservation
Te Anau District Office
1 Lakefront Drive
Te Anau 9600
DNsubmissions@doc.govt.nz



Attention: Olivia Graham, Senior Permissions Advisor

Dear Director-General

Apologies for the late reply to the invitation to provide comments on the Fiordland Wapiti Foundation's application for a concession for the Wapiti Blocks and Murchison Mountains in Fiordland National Park, to engage in wild animal recovery operations (WARO) and other activities, for a term of 10 years. I acknowledge that submissions closed at 5pm on Monday.

The Game Animal Council supports the Fiordland Wapiti Foundation's application, including the proposed 10-year term.

The Foundation has a long-established role in the management of deer within the Wapiti Area and has demonstrated a sustained commitment to achieving both conservation and game animal management outcomes in Fiordland National Park. The activities proposed under the concession form part of a wider programme of deer management to support implementation of the Wapiti HOSI Herd Management Plan and wider deer management across Fiordland National Park (Murchison Mountains).

The Council considers that targeted WARO can be an important management tool within this programme. In particular, it provides an opportunity to remove deer efficiently while recovering value from animals that would otherwise be left in the field, and where generated revenue supports ongoing deer management. Used alongside recreational hunting and other targeted control, WARO can contribute to achieving deer management objectives and reducing browsing pressure while supporting the management of the wapiti herd, at less cost to the rate payer.

We also support the Foundation's request for a 10-year concession term. Effective game animal management requires continuity, investment and the ability to plan over a timeframe considerably longer than a single year or hunting season. A longer-term concession provides greater certainty for the Foundation to secure resources, develop operational capability and plan its management activities strategically. We note that this does not remove DOC's ability to impose appropriate conditions or to review, amend or terminate the concession should circumstances materially change.

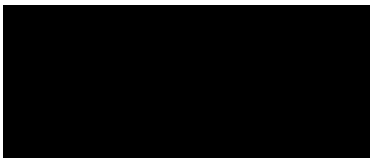
The Council is also conscious of the importance of managing potential impacts on recreational hunters, other park users and the values of Fiordland National Park. The measures outlined by the Foundation, including avoiding the wapiti bugle period, minimising operations during weekends and holiday periods where practicable, avoiding landings near tracks and huts, and recording and reporting WARO activity, provide appropriate mechanisms for mitigating these effects.

Overall, the Council considers the application represents a pragmatic, long-term approach to integrating targeted aerial recovery with recreational hunting and other deer management activities. We support enabling the Fiordland Wapiti Foundation to continue using the range of management tools necessary to deliver effective deer management and conservation outcomes within the Wapiti Blocks and Murchison Mountains, in Fiordland National Park.

The GAC would like to be heard in support of this submission, if there is the opportunity.

Please feel free to contact me if you have any questions or require any further information.

Kind regards



Corina Jordan
Chief Executive Officer
[New Zealand Game Animal Council](#)

