

Report on the Department of Conservation's Tahr Programme 2023/2024

Submitted to the New Zealand Conservation Authority in November 2024



Challenging terrain encountered during ground-based tahr control operations in the Adams Wilderness Area in 2023. Photo: DOC

Summary

2023/24 was the largest official control effort delivered by the Department of Conservation (DOC) since the current reporting approach started in 2020. Official control prioritised preventing tahr expansion from the feral range, and reducing densities in National Parks. Aerial Assisted Trophy Hunting (AATH) 'environmental offsets' were directed into areas of higher tahr densities. This complementary application of control tools meant that despite DOC's key work outside the feral range, where operations typically control few tahr, more tahr were controlled overall than the previous two years. In addition to DOC official control and AATH offsets, recreational hunters made substantial contributions to tahr control.

'Catch per unit effort' control data, paired with DOC and stakeholder observations, suggest that in Westland Tai Poutini National Park and the Northern Exclusion Zone, tahr densities have reduced substantially in recent years. This is congruent with the tahr population survey undertaken in 2023, which suggests that it's likely that the overall tahr population reduced slightly between 2019 and 2023. In addition to overall numbers reducing, the reproductive capacity of the remaining herd has likely reduced, as most control inside the feral range (outside the National Parks), targets female and juvenile animals. Further control work has been undertaken post the last population survey.

In 2024/25, reports analysing a number of years' vegetation monitoring data will provide information regarding tahr impacts to complement recent tahr population data.

Context

The management of Himalayan tahr (tahr) on Public Conservation Land (PCL) is guided by the Himalayan Tahr Management Policy (the Policy) 1991 and Himalayan Tahr Control Plan (HTCP) 1993. The Policy outlines an approach to manage and maintain hunting and other control pressure at a level to protect natural values from tahr impacts. It sets a maximum population of 10,000 tahr across lands of all tenure throughout their defined feral range. The HTCP provides an operational vehicle for the Policy's objectives and limits; the primary construct for this is defining seven Management Units (MU), each with tahr population density limits, based on factors including location, vegetation, and recreational use. It also outlines expectations for monitoring tahr populations and vegetation condition to inform future tahr management, as well as the keeping of tahr for commercial and other purposes.

The HTCP 1993 is implemented through annual operational plans that identify management actions for each MU. As the Department's (DOC) Himalayan tahr management work is led as a national programme, one annual operational plan is prepared for the entirety of the programme, and a single annual report provided to the New Zealand Conservation Authority. Reports follow a standard format and present data in a consistent way, to help track and compare key information through time. However, as the tahr programme has grown, reports have become longer and more detailed, so this report has added a 'summary' section at the start to convey key messages.

2023/2024 Operational Delivery

Delivery of the Tahr Control Operational Plan (TCOP) 2023/24

The TCOP 2023/24 was developed by the tahr programme in partnership with Te Rūnanga o Ngāi Tahu and through engagement with the Tahr Plan Implementation Liaison Group (TPILG) and DOC's Regional Operations Group. Table 1 below outlines the number of tahr controlled over the full 2023/24 year within the management units and across each control type. This excludes most recreational hunting activity, for which robust data are not available; while unquantified, this contribution is considered to be substantial.

Table 1: Number of tahr controlled (on PCL) within Management Units from known sources

Year 1 July – 30 June	DOC	AATH trophies	AATH 'environmental offsets'	Ballot hunters	Tahr Carcass Recovery	Organised recreational hunters	Other	Total
2018/19	168	264	0	619	400	63	244 ¹	1758
2019/20	7238 ¹	8	2936 ²	726	421	0	60 ³	11389
2020/21	7481 ¹	17	0	889	0	0	60 ³	8447
2021/22	5750 ¹	43	0	843	0	182	144 ³	6962
2022/23	5256 ¹	342	415 ⁴	913	0	412	158 ³	7496
2023/24	3629	309	2757 ⁴	850	0	330	163 ³	7847

¹ Includes contracted control; ² Includes control not undertaken in 2018/19; ³ Zero Invasive Predators programme; ⁴ includes offsets conducted inside the feral range but outside management units, but reported here for consistency to show the total number of AATH offsets undertaken (in previous years all were within the MUs).

Under the 2023/24 TCOP, the equivalent of 335 hours of official aerial tahr control were delivered. Control was delivered through a variety of methods, including DOC staff and contracted aerial control and DOC staff and contracted ground-based control. The undertaking of Aerial Assisted Trophy Hunting (AATH) offset control was also directed (led) by the Department; under the conditions of their permits, AATH operators are required to control 5 female/juvenile tahr for each wild animal trophy they take on public conservation land. The resulting number of tahr removed in each Management Unit, inside the feral range but outside the management units, and outside the feral range are detailed in the 2023/24 row of Table 2 below. Maps outlining the locations of DOC's official control operations in 2023/24 are available on DOC's "[Himalayan tahr sightings and control maps](#)"¹ page.

¹ <http://www.doc.govt.nz/parks-and-recreation/things-to-do/hunting/what-to-hunt/tahr/tahr-control-operations/tahr-sightings-maps/>
DOC-7754561

Table 2 - Tahr removed by Department-led Control

Year 1 July – 30 June	MU 1	MU 2	MU 3	MU 4	MU 5	MU 6	MU 7	INSIDE FERAL RANGE, OUTSIDE UNITS	OUTSIDE FERAL RANGE	TOTAL
2018/19	168	0	0	0	0	0	0	NA	387	555
2019/20	2113	246	1603	3675	1278	1332	58	NA	517	10822
2020/21	555	1038	641	3299	241	1697	10	NA	265	7746
2021/22	0	873	187	3007	111	1572	0	196	449	6395
2022/23	406	832	334	2706	116	1277	0	322	390	6383
2023/24	285	866	617	3330	459	568	34	395 ¹	527	7081

List of Management Units: MU 1 Rakaia / Rangitata; MU 2 South Whitcombe / Whataroa; MU 3 Gammack / Two Thumb; MU 4 Westland Tai Poutini NP/ Aoraki Mt Cook NP; MU 5 Ben Ohau; MU 6 Landsborough; MU 7 Hunter / Wills. Outside Feral Range is inclusive of tahr removed in the Northern and Southern Exclusion Zones.

Note: The numbers of tahr removed across all management units for these five years are sourced through DOC-led control made up of a mixture of contract control, AATH environmental contributions and DOC control. Not recorded on this table are tahr across all management units that have been removed by AATH trophy concessions, ballots, tahr carcass recovery, Zero Invasive Predators programmes and organised hunts (see Table 1).

¹Includes DOC official control and AATH offsets that were undertaken within the feral range but outside the management units (including 40 tahr controlled during AATH offset control that did not have sufficient data to assign their location, so they are captured within the feral range generally).

Comparison with prior years

The operational effort delivered in 2023/24 (335 hours) was greater than planned under the TCOP (240 hours); this was largely due to the redeployment of funds budgeted for monitoring initiatives that were delayed. The 335 hours was the largest control effort delivered since the current recording approach (using hours of aerial effort) commenced (See Table 3).

Table 3 – DOC official control operational effort (2020 to 2024)

Year 1 July – 30 June	Operational Effort Inside the Feral Range (hours*)	Operational Effort Outside the Feral Range (hours*)	Overall Operational Effort (hours*)
2020/21	239	71	310
2021/22	188	95	283
2022/23	173	139	312
2023/24	139	196	335

* Since 2020, DOC's official control effort has consistently been measured in hours of aerial control, or equivalent control delivered by other methods.

The total number of tahr removed by DOC-led control in 2023/24 was higher than 2021/22 and 2022/23, and slightly lower than 2020/21 and 2019/20 (Tables 1 and 2). The number of tahr removed from within the MUs from all sources followed the same pattern. DOC's official control numbers were lower than previous years; however, additional effort in directing a large number of AATH offsets and facilitating coordinated recreational hunting opportunities led to the overall increase in the control total from known sources.

The reduction in DOC official control numbers compared to earlier seasons can primarily be attributed to:

- Changes in operational focus between years:
 - In 2023/24, the highest recorded proportion of official control effort (58%, compared with 45% in 2022/23, 33% in 2021/22 and 23% in 2020/21) was dedicated to control outside the feral range, where tahr densities (and therefore control numbers) are low (See table 3).
 - Correspondingly, as the level of control investment within National Parks was similar in 2023/24 to previous years, fewer hours of DOC official control were conducted in Management Units that had previously yielded higher numbers of tahr per hour of control (e.g. MU1, MU3 and MU5 – AATH offsets did contribute control in these Units).

- A reduction in the number of tahr encountered and controlled in some areas:
 - 2023/24 maintained the substantial decline in catch per unit effort during DOC official control within Management Unit 4a (Westland Tai Poutini National Park), first observed in 2022/23 (table 4 below). These data, alongside data from a brief ground-based control operation in the Cook and Balfour River catchments in 2023/24, and observations from DOC staff and TPILG members, suggest a decrease in the density of tahr MU4a.

Table 4: Summary of aerial control effort and number of tahr controlled in Management Unit 4a (Westland Tai Poutini National Park).

Tahr Control Operational Plan	Hours of aerial control in MU4a	Number of tahr controlled	Catch per unit effort (tahr per hour)
2020/21	70.7	2192	31.0
2021/22	69.2	2209	31.9
2022/23	66.1	1601	24.2
2023/24	56.3	1305	23.2

Implementation of ground-based control

In response to observations of tahr utilising forest and sub-alpine scrub habitats on the West Coast, which reduced the effectiveness of traditional aerial control, the Department conducted a ground-based control trial in MU6 (Landsborough) in March 2022. That trial removed 284 female and juvenile tahr at a comparable cost per animal to traditional aerial control, with the additional benefits of:

- Targeting many animals that may not have been sighted during aerial control;
- Targeting animals in a different way, reducing the potential for learned evasion behaviours (e.g. moving into cover to avoid helicopters) to be effective.

Based on that operation, the level of ground-based effort on the West Coast was increased within the 2022/23 TCOP and operations were run in in the Hooker-Landsborough wilderness area (MU6 – Landsborough, 436 female and juvenile tahr removed) and the Adams Wilderness Area (MU2 – South Whitcombe/Whataroa, 486 female and juvenile tahr removed). Similar observations were recorded regarding ground-based hunting being an efficient control method in West-Coast terrain with high tahr densities.

The 2023/24 TCOP continued the substantial investment in ground-based control in Adams Wilderness Area (502 female and juvenile tahr removed). Plans for continued ground-based control in the Hooker/Landsborough Wilderness Area were paused due to aerial 1080 predator control operations within the control area.

In an operational environment where helicopter costs have substantially increased in recent years, and may continue to do so, the implementation of ground-based control in West Coast environments is an effective supplement to aerial hunting. In some areas it may be a more effective and efficient primary control method; data from operations will continue to be evaluated to inform how future operational investment is best directed between methods.

Tahr control outside the feral range and inside the feral range, outside management units

Control of tahr numbers outside the defined feral range is key to preventing range expansion and the establishment of new populations. Based on an external review of outside feral range operations in 2021, the programme increased control effort outside the feral range. A particular focus is reducing the risk of expansion to the north or south of the feral range along the Southern Alps, where mountainous terrain would suit tahr and a number of National Parks are located (Arthur’s Pass, Mt Aspiring, Fiordland).

During 196 hours of aerial control effort, a total of 527 tahr were controlled outside the feral range during 2023/24. This contrasts with 390 tahr controlled outside the feral range in 2022/23 (139 hours), 449 in 2021/22 (86 hours²). The substantial increase in effort required to control tahr in these areas is considered a positive development; changes in ‘catch per unit effort’ (i.e. the amount of effort required

² Hours of control flown, cf. 95 hours of investment shown in table 3, which includes operational investment in satellite collars and tracking for outside feral range control.

to control each tahr) are widely used as a measure of changes in wildlife abundance. A change from approximately 5.2 tahr per hour in 2021/22 to 2.8 tahr per hour in 2022/23 and 2.7 in 2023/24 suggests a decrease in tahr abundance in the areas targeted outside the feral range.

The change in catch per unit effort was most pronounced the Northern Exclusion Zone (NEZ), one of the areas where a decision was made in 2021/22 to substantially increase investment. The results in Table 3 suggest that with concerted effort in the NEZ, based on available data, tahr densities have reduced.

Table 5: Summary of aerial control effort and number of tahr controlled in the Northern Exclusion Zone from 2020/21 to 2023/24.

Tahr Control Operational Plan	Hours of aerial control in the NEZ	Number of tahr controlled	Catch per unit effort (tahr per hour)
2020/21	6.3	49	7.8
2021/22	24.9	210	8.4
2022/23	39.4	143	3.6
2023/24	63.1	174	2.8

Appendix 1 provides a map with details on the number of tahr controlled in specific areas outside the feral range over this time period.

In 2021/22 the TCOP included the tahr programme’s first allocation of aerial control to specifically target tahr inside the feral range but outside the management units. These operations were aimed at reducing the potential for movement of tahr to outside the feral range. 196 tahr were removed from inside the feral range, outside the management units, over 15.1 hours hunting with a focus on the southern and north-western areas inside the feral range. In 2022/23 similar areas were targeted but with an emphasis on the south-eastern portion of the feral range in response to reports of increased tahr presence toward the Lindis Pass. 322 tahr were controlled in 20 hours of aerial hunting within the feral range, outside the management units.

In 2023/24 13.1 hours of control inside the feral range, outside the management units, resulted in the control of 168 tahr. Two operations were undertaken targeting populations outside the management units that represent a specific risk of tahr moving outside the feral range (the Lindis Pass area, and north of MU2). On the West Coast, inside feral range control was used to provide operational flexibility for control operations working within the National Park, to target tahr close to but outside the Management Unit, improving efficiency operating at a landscape scale. AATH offsets conducted inside the feral range but outside the management units removed a further 187 tahr, primarily in the lower reaches of MU6 (Landsborough) rivers, and the Barrier Range between MUs 5 and 7.

Appendix 2 provides a map with details on the number of tahr controlled during DOC official control operations in specific areas inside the feral range but outside the management units during 2023/24 operations.

Relationships and Engagement

Relationship with Te Rūnanga o Ngāi Tahu

During 2023/24, DOC and Ngāi Tahu continued their commitment to developing the Treaty partnership in relation to tahr management. This included continued work together to facilitate the further development of a proposal for hunter-led management of Management Unit 1 (South Rakaia/Upper Rangitata, see below) between the Game Animal Council, The New Zealand Tahr Foundation and the local papatipu Rūnanga (Te Rūnanga o Arowhenua).

Tahr Plan Implementation Liaison Group (TPILG)

The TPILG liaises with DOC, presenting the views of various stakeholders and entities with interests in tahr management. Membership includes representatives from Te Rūnanga o Ngāi Tahu, statutory boards and authorities (including the Authority), the recreational and commercial hunting sector, farming bodies, outdoor recreation groups and Forest & Bird.

A total of three TPILG meetings were held during 2023/24. The first was an update on progress under TCOP 2023/24 on the 8th of September. This meeting was followed by a workshop regarding tahr management policy options, following up on longer-term planning workshops held in 2022/23.

The December 2023 (15th) and March 2024 (8th) TPILG meetings were centred around the development and review of the 2024/25 TCOP; that engagement also included two rounds of written submissions in late January and early April of 2024. At the December 2023 meeting, members were provided with contextual material to consider to inform written submissions to the Department prior to drafting of the TCOP; this included a presentation on, and discussion of, the tahr population report developed from surveys in early 2023. A timeline for TCOP development and feedback was also outlined; those submissions were due by 28 January 2024 (5 submissions were received). The draft plan was then circulated to the TPILG on 22 February to facilitate feedback on the draft at the March 2024 meeting. Members had until 2 April to provide additional written feedback on the draft after the meeting (2 submissions were received). Feedback from these meetings and written submissions helped to refine the 2024/25 plan, with the final TCOP 2024/25 being released on 14 June 2024.

Game Animal Council control mid-point meeting

Continuing the operating and consultation rhythm established in 2020, the Department met with representatives of the Game Animal Council on 30 August 2023 to discuss operational details of the first half of official tahr control effort for 2023/24. DOC considered the Council's advice in determining the operational detail of work for the remaining control effort.

Hunter-led Management of Management Unit 1 (South Rakaia/Upper Rangitata)

The 2021/22 TCOP included a commitment to exploring the option of hunter-led management of Management Unit 1 (MU1). Management of tahr populations by hunters is specifically contemplated in section 5 of the HTCP 1993. MU1 is mentioned specifically as one of the most popular with recreational hunters; it is also the closest to the South Island's major population Centre (Christchurch).

A project team comprised of members from the Game Animal Council (GAC) Te Rūnanga o Ngāi Tahu and the local papatipu Rūnanga (Te Rūnanga o Arowhenua), assisted by DOC staff, developed a Te Whakatakanga (mission statement) for this work in 2021/22. Development continued during 2023/24 with more detailed engagement of relevant hunting-sector groups and local landholders. The project team has progressed to having a draft Community Agreement, with a subsidiary annual work plan, for discussion with the DOC. Any proposal approved for implementation must contribute to working towards the goals of the HTCP 1993.

Progress toward developing a full proposal for hunter-led management has been gradual, as all parties work through the complex requirements of the HTCP, the relevant plans and policies relating to MU1 (e.g. Canterbury Conservation Management Strategy) and how to structure an agreement around hunter-led management. In the meantime, DOC has maintained official control and directed AATH offsets in MU1 at levels determined by the priorities of the HTCP and available resources; that control has been informed by detailed consultation with the parties involved in scoping hunter-led Management.

Recreational Hunters

DOC encourages hunters to shoot tahr. In 2023/24 DOC continued to work with the recreational hunting sector to provide information on both control activity and observations of tahr. This included:

- continued [posting maps of control effort and the locations of observed identifiable males to DOC's website](#)³, and
- an update of the format and accessibility of the operational mapping website, and
- an email update to current hunting permit holders on 25 July 2023 regarding the newly release TCOP; and
- tahr content within DOC's wild animals newsletter 8 March 2024 regarding the TCOP, ground-based control and the tahr ballots.

The West Coast tahr ballots are a valuable recreational contribution to tahr control, focused in the Hooker/Landsborough and Adams wilderness areas. Since 2021, over 800 tahr per year have been controlled annually during the ballots (See table 1); in terms of female and juvenile tahr removed.

In 2023/24 the Department again worked with the New Zealand Tahr Foundation to facilitate the Foundation's delivery of organised recreational hunts in MU6 (Landsborough). The Foundation again conducted hunts in the Jacobs/Makaawhio River and Mahitahi River valleys. The operations removed 225 and 105 mainly mature females from those areas respectively; control focused on forest and scrub habitat where aerial control is less effective than in the alpine environment. In total 924 tahr have been controlled through this initiative since March 2022 (see Table 1, 'Organised recreational hunters').

Aerial Assisted Trophy Hunting

2023 was the first fully operational AATH season since 2019, due to COVID-19 impacts on tourism. Demand was very high due to a back-log of clients from 2020 onwards and that 'legacy' demand overflowed into 2024. Final 2023 returns (reported in Table 1 as 2022/23) were for 342 tahr trophies, out of a total of 593 wild animals, from PCL. This generated 2,965 offsets. Ultimately 2,757 of those offsets were undertaken, with 208 'carried forward' to 2024/25 as operational and reporting factors meant they were unable to be undertaken in 2023/24.

The 2023/24 TCOP included AATH offsets into its operational model, based on forecast trophy/offset numbers provided by the New Zealand Professional Hunting Guides Association after a survey of their members. This approach was beneficial in distributing control effort across the landscape, targeting AATH offsets to areas with higher tahr numbers, meaning DOC official control could focus on lower-output work where control to zero, or low, density is required. Based on that positive experience, AATH offsets were again integrated in the 2024/25 TCOP.

During 2023/24 the tahr programme led DOC's contracting of, and contribution to, a 'system analysis' of Aerial Assisted Trophy Hunting (which involved many TPILG members). Between August and November in 2023, 17 formal interviews were conducted with individuals, organisations and groups across a wide range of involved and impacted stakeholders. Two facilitated workshop sessions were run, one with the New Zealand Professional Hunting Guides Association and another open to all participants. The findings from the process are captured in a report, due for release in 2024/25.

³ <http://www.doc.govt.nz/parks-and-recreation/things-to-do/hunting/what-to-hunt/tahr/tahr-control-operations/tahr-sightings-maps/>
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Research Updates

Research and Monitoring Strategy

In the 2020/21 year, a research and monitoring strategy for tahr was completed to support the implementation of the HTCP 1993 and based around six research themes:

- Tahr population dynamics and ecology
- Environmental impacts of tahr
- Hunting and control
- Socio/economic considerations of values and costs
- Site based management, i.e. tahr and other introduced mammals in alpine ecosystems
- Research with no direct implication for tahr management

Under the research and monitoring strategy, the following lines of research and monitoring have been implemented:

Estate condition trend

Ongoing monitoring of estate condition in the tahr feral range occurs through the national monitoring system (Tier 1), along with additional longer-term monitoring of tussock grassland plots. A range of reports examining the impacts of tahr were provided in the 2019/20 report to the Authority.

In the 2023/24 year, analysis of data from historic grassland plots, remeasured across the preceding three years, commenced. That analysis is due for completion in 2024/25.

In 2021/22, drawing on a number of the themes identified in the research and monitoring strategy (outlined above), work began to develop and trial a rapid impact assessment method for tahr browse. A substantial field pilot was run in early 2023. The resulting data were compiled and submitted for analysis by Manaaki Whenua Landcare Research in 2023/24 and recommendations regarding the method are expected in late 2024.

Understanding tahr populations

The total population of tahr on PCL was estimated through aerial surveys undertaken during 2016 – 2019: [Estimates of Himalayan Tahr \(*Hemitragus jemlahicus*\) Abundance in New Zealand: Results from Aerial Surveys](#)⁴. These estimates were summarised in DOC's 2019/2020 report to the Authority on the Himalayan Tahr Control Programme.

As reported in the Department's 2021/21 report to the Authority, further aerial surveys were conducted in the South Rakaia/Upper Rangitata (MU1) and Gammack/Two Thumb (MU3) management units during February – May 2021. The results of these surveys were analysed and published during the 2021/22 year: [Abundance of Himalayan Tahr in the South Rakaia/Upper Rangitata and Gammack/Two Thumb Management Units](#)⁵.

In early 2023, flights were conducted within the Management Units to provide survey data with which to update the estimate of the overall tahr population within the Management Units. The technical report outlining those findings was published in early 2024: [Abundance of Himalayan Tahr on Public Conservation Land in New Zealand](#)⁶. To assist with communication of the results to a broad range of stakeholders, and putting the results in the context of management decisions, an accompanying plain language fact sheet was also released: [Monitoring Himalayan Tahr populations in New Zealand](#)⁷.

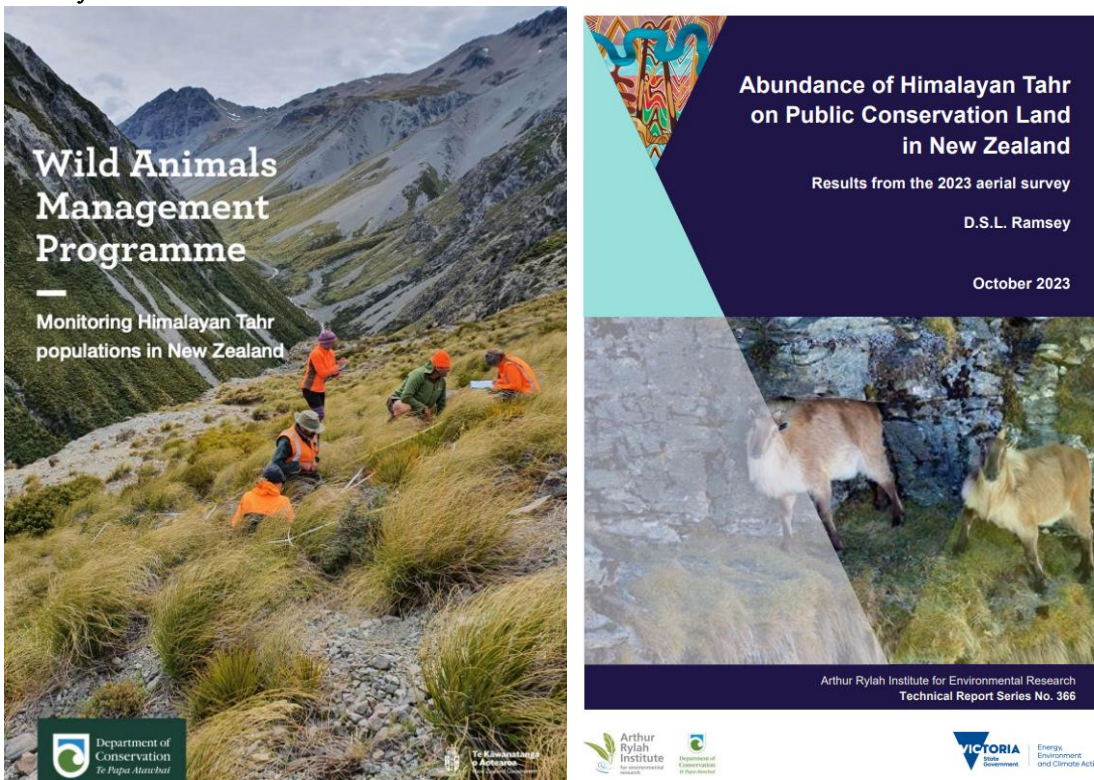
⁴ <https://www.doc.govt.nz/globalassets/documents/parks-and-recreation/hunting/west-coast/himalayan-tahr-abundance-september-2019.pdf>

⁵ <https://www.doc.govt.nz/globalassets/documents/parks-and-recreation/hunting/west-coast/tahr-estimates-2021.pdf>

⁶ <https://www.doc.govt.nz/globalassets/documents/parks-and-recreation/hunting/tahr/tahr-abundance-public-conservation-land-2023-aerial-survey.pdf>

⁷ <https://www.doc.govt.nz/globalassets/documents/parks-and-recreation/hunting/tahr/himalayan-tahr-population-monitoring-2024-factsheet.pdf>

Figure 1: the published fact sheet and report, outlining results from the 2023 tahr population surveys



The latest report estimates total abundance of tahr within the MUs in 2023 to be between 22,100 and 40,150 (a mean of 29,800). Both the 2019 and 2023 surveys aimed essentially to estimate the total abundance of tahr on Public Conservation Land (PCL). Substantial tahr control was carried out between the surveys, and indeed, since the 2023 survey. Comparing these estimates suggests the overall tahr population on PCL likely decreased slightly between 2019 and 2023.

These estimates incorporate necessarily large uncertainty due to the challenges of monitoring animal populations across large, remote and rugged landscapes. However, the scientific indication that overall population is likely slightly decreasing corresponds with observations from DOC and stakeholders. This is considered a positive situation, particularly considering: a) the substantial control effort that has gone into National Parks and Outside Feral Range (focused on outcomes focused at place, rather than focused on overall population reduction), and b) that control within the feral range (outside the National Parks) has focused on female and juvenile tahr, which should reduce the reproductive capacity of the remaining tahr herd. It is anticipated that during the 2024/25 operational year, the number of tahr removed from PCL through known sources will pass 50,000 since 2019.

DOC is considering options to further improve understanding tahr populations, including exploring the potential to incorporate demographic population modelling as a resource-efficient means of augmenting current information generated by periodic population surveys.

Outlook and Plans for Next Year (2024/25)

TPILG discussions

In 2023/24 a workshop was held with the TPILG, focusing on policy-level thinking for future tahr management/control. It is anticipated that the outputs from that workshop will feed into further consideration regarding tahr management policies in 2024/25.

In December 2024 engagement on the 2025/26 TCOP will commence and is expected to again span 4-5 months, including 2 meetings (December 2024 and March 2025) and two opportunities for written submissions.

Population estimates and vegetation monitoring

The analysis of two lines of vegetation monitoring data (variable area tussock plots, and the tahr browse impact method pilot) are expected in late 2024, and will provide important context regarding vegetation condition and tahr management. The scoping of an approach to demographic population modelling, building on past surveys and population estimates, is expected to commence in late 2024.

AATH offsets and permitting

The 2023/24 AATH reporting season has recently concluded at the time of writing (the season spans February to August); subject to final confirmation of concessions returns, 309 bull tahr trophies were reported taken from PCL, out of a total of 525 wild animals. This equates to 2,625 offsets to be directed via the 2024/25 TCOP. At the time of writing, operators have undertaken over 2,500 of those offsets.

The findings from the 'system analysis' conducted in 2023/24 will be used to inform further consideration of AATH permits in 2024/25; the AATH system is closely linked to tahr management, as tahr are the primary target for AATH.

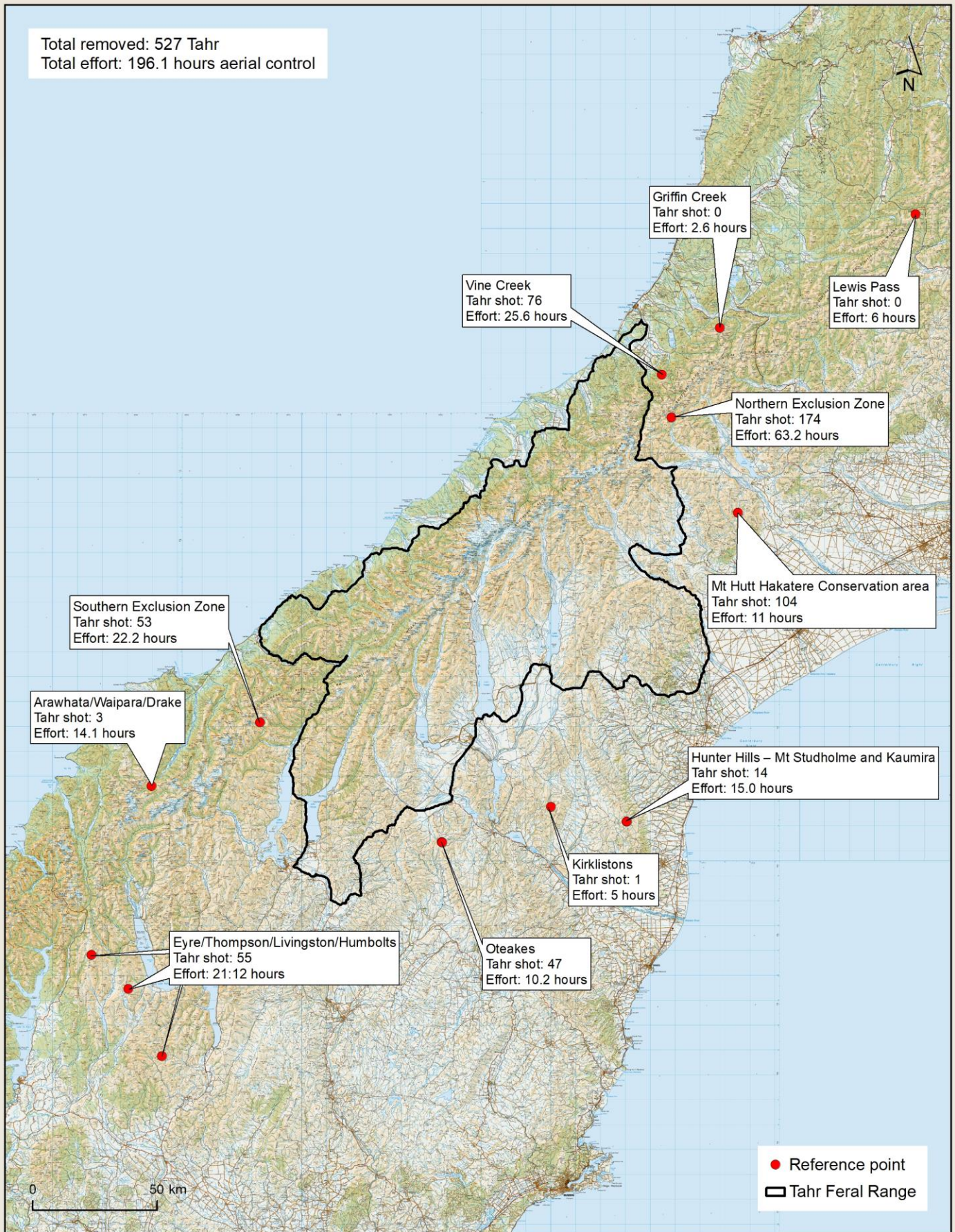
Recreational Hunters

From 2021 to 2023 the West Coast tahr ballots were extended to 11-12 weeks (cf. 8-10 weeks prior to 2021), to provide hunters the opportunity to fulfil ballot opportunities missed due to COVID-19 in 2020 and 2021. This also included roll-over of ballots affected by COVID-19 in the 2020/21 year. These longer ballot periods resulted in ballots running until mid-July. In 2022 and 2023 the uptake of the late periods was low, potentially due to winter weather conditions.

Two changes were made to the 2024 ballot, in an effort to increase hunting effort earlier in the season when it is generally more effective (less limited by winter weather conditions). The ballot period was shortened to 9 weeks (late April to late June), while three new landing sites were added at locations where recent observations suggest tahr numbers require control. While many factors, most importantly weather, influence hunting participation, it was pleasing that the 2024 ballot participation figures were arguably the strongest recorded in the last 5 years.

Financial Summary (1 July 2023 to 30 June 2024)

Control operational delivery costs for the 2023/24 financial year were approximately \$850,000.



Department of Conservation
 Te Papa Atawhai

Department of Conservation Tahr Control
 Outside Tahr Feral Range
 (1st July 2023 to 30th June 2024)



Te Kāwanatanga o Aotearoa
 New Zealand Government

