

# Information that DOC intends to use to inform its decision on the Tahr Control Operational Plan 2020/21<sup>1</sup>

## PURPOSE

This document contains the information that DOC intends to use to inform its decision on the Operational Plan. DOC is providing this information to you as part of the consultation process so that you can make a submission to DOC about the Operational Plan. The information that DOC has provided includes several documents and hyperlinks to information that is contained on DOC's website or other websites. A table is included at the end of this document to help you find the information that is most relevant to you.

## GENERAL STATUTORY CONTEXT

### Conservation Act 1987

1. The Department's functions include to manage all land and resources held under the Conservation Act 1987; and to administer the Acts listed in Schedule 1 of that Act, including the Wild Animal Control Act 1977.
2. About one quarter of the tahr breeding range occurs on land managed under the Conservation Act 1987. The purpose of this Act is to promote the conservation of New Zealand's natural and historic resources. In terms of land subject to the Act, the Department is required to preserve and protect the natural and historic resources on it; and has power to control introduced species causing damage to any indigenous species or habitat.

### *Management planning documents*

3. The Department must manage the land it administers under the Conservation Act in accordance with the Conservation General Policy 2005 (CGP). The CGP was approved by the Minister of Conservation and covers not only the Conservation Act, but other legislation administered by the Department, including the Wild Animal Control Act 1977. The CGP is binding on the Department and Minister.
4. Policy 4 of the CGP deals with the conservation of natural resources and Policy 4.2 concerns management of threats to indigenous species, habitats and ecosystems.<sup>2</sup> In particular, it provides for:
  - 4.1 Pest management programmes to give priority to eradicating containing or reducing the range of pests that are established but not widespread, where practicable; and controlling widespread pests where required to protect indigenous species, habitats and ecosystems where eradication is not practicable;
  - 4.2 encouraging commercial hunting of wild animals to maximise the effective control of them; and

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<sup>1</sup> Most of the following information was included in recent affidavits to the High Court

<sup>2</sup> The Conservation General Policy 2005 is available at <https://www.doc.govt.nz/globalassets/documents/about-doc/role/policies-and-plans/conservation-general-policy.pdf>

- 4.3 encouraging recreational hunting of wild animals where this does not diminish the effectiveness of operations to control them.

### **National Parks Act 1980**

5. National parks are managed for the purpose of preserving them in their natural state in perpetuity. Introduced animals must be exterminated as far as possible. The Department must manage national parks in accordance with general policies, conservation management strategies and national park management plans. These instruments are also binding on the Minister of Conservation.

### ***Management planning documents***

6. The General Policy for National Parks 2005 sets out the New Zealand Conservation Authority's (the Authority) policy and position on introduced animals in national parks as follows:
  - 6.1 National park pest management should give priority to eradicating introduced animals where possible and containing them and reducing the range of established introduced animals;
  - 6.2 the commercial hunting of wild animals and animal pests should be encouraged to maximise their effective control;
  - 6.3 recreational hunting of wild animals and animal pests should be encouraged where this does not diminish the effectiveness of operations to control them.<sup>3</sup>

### ***Aoraki/Mount Cook National Park Management Plan***

7. This plan contains a policy requiring the extermination of tahr within and the active control of tahr adjoining the park. The method of achieving this goal is by using all available means, including recreational and commercial hunting and Department hunting operations.<sup>4</sup>

### ***Westland/Tai Poutini National Park Management Plan 2014***

8. This plan contains the same policy as for the above plan with recreational hunting being encouraged in certain parts of the park.<sup>5</sup>

### **The Wild Animal Control Act 1977**

9. The Wild Animal Control Act 1977 (WAC Act) has two primary purposes: the first is to make better provision for the control of harmful species of introduced wild animals; the second is to make better provision for the means of regulating the operations of recreational and commercial hunters including

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<sup>3</sup> The General Policy for National Parks 2005 is available at:  
<https://www.doc.govt.nz/globalassets/documents/about-doc/role/policies-and-plans/general-policy-for-national-parks.pdf>

<sup>4</sup> The Aoraki/Mount Cook National Park Management Plan is available at:  
<https://www.doc.govt.nz/globalassets/documents/about-doc/role/policies-and-plans/aoraki-mount-cook-np-management-plan-1.pdf>

<sup>5</sup> The Westland/Tai Poutini National Park Management Plan is available at:  
<https://www.doc.govt.nz/globalassets/documents/about-doc/role/policies-and-plans/national-park-management-plans/westland/wnpmpamendedjune2008.pdf>

wild animal recovery operators hunting using aircraft. The aim is to achieve concerted action and effective wild animal control.

10. The WAC Act applies to all land, having regard to the provisions of any Act applying to the land, for the purposes of controlling wild animals generally, and of eradicating wild animals locally where necessary and practicable.
11. The Minister must also administer and manage wild animals in accordance with statements of general policy, wild animal control plans and conservation management strategies.

## **HISTORY OF AND INFORMATION ON TAHR**

12. Himalayan tahr (tahr) were introduced into New Zealand in the early 1900s to provide recreational hunting and to generate tourism by attracting overseas hunters.
13. Tahr are similar in appearance to large goats. Adult males (bulls) measure approximately one metre at shoulder height and weigh on average 73 kg. Mature adult females (nannies) weigh on average 35 kg.
14. In winter, bull tahr have a much prized, thick reddish to dark brown pelt, with an impressive mane of a lighter colour around the neck and shoulders. Nannies are usually lighter in colour. In the spring, tahr lose much of their coat, and it becomes lighter in colour for the summer months.
15. The breeding range of tahr (defined by the presence of females) covers most of the central Southern Alps between the Rakaia and Whitcombe Rivers (in the north) and the Hunter and Haast Rivers (in the south).
16. Tahr graze at high altitudes in alpine grasslands and sub-alpine shrublands.
17. Tahr generally form three social groupings:
  - 17.1 Mature bulls over 3 to 4 years old (bachelor groups);
  - 17.2 2 to 3-year-old younger immature bulls; and
  - 17.3 Nannies, kids and young males up to 2 years old. These will usually split into groups when numbers exceed 10 in one group.
18. The three groups come together around April-May in preparation for the rut, which then occurs May to mid-July.
19. A single fully mature male bull tahr can hold a herd of up to 50 females during the breeding season. Females give birth to a single kid, between November and January (the gestation period being 165 days).
20. Tahr have an exponential rate of increase of the population up to 0.28 per year meaning that the population could double over a three-year period (where resources are not limited).
21. Although males mix in with the females in their range over the winter breeding season (to about October), during the summer months they are known to travel long distances away from the female groups.

## HIMALAYAN THAR CONTROL PLAN 1993

22. The Himalayan Tahr Control Plan 1993 (the Control Plan) is a wild animal control plan prepared under s 5(1)(d) of the WAC Act. The Control Plan can be found at <https://www.doc.govt.nz/Documents/conservation/threats-and-impacts/animal-pests/tahr/thar-plan-1993.pdf>. It was made in accordance with the management policy of Himalayan Tahr 1991 which records (among other things) that:
- 22.1 target population levels of tahr will be set in terms of numbers of animals per km<sup>2</sup> with the target tahr density to be set according to the protection needs of each area;
  - 22.2 hunting will be accorded priority in bringing about control so as to maintain densities at or below target levels. “Hunting” covers commercial hunting, recreational hunting, safari hunting guides and hunting by the Department where tahr numbers in the breeding range are not kept within set levels by the other listed forms of hunting.
23. The Control Plan defines the tahr feral range, (being the area that is time to time occupied by a free ranging population of tahr) and seven management units within the feral range. Two exclusion zones on the boundaries of the feral range to limit further spread of tahr. These are shown in maps 3 and 4 of the Control Plan. There is approximately 706,000 hectares of land across the seven management units, and approximately 573,000 hectares of this is public conservation land.
24. Approximately 133,000 hectares of land (within the management units) is on private or crown pastoral lease land. The Department’s control action is focused on public conservation land as control options are currently only employed on pastoral lease or freehold land at the instigation of the lessee or landowner. The Department had planned to undertake tahr population surveys across crown pastoral lease land but that was disrupted by the COVID-19 response. That work will be done later in the year.
25. Maximum tahr densities are set for each management unit according to management goals and conservation objectives. These maximum tahr densities are ‘intervention densities’ at which additional control action by the Department will be introduced to reduce tahr populations.
26. The policy envisages hunting to be accorded priority in bringing about control of tahr to: commercial hunting, recreational hunting groups, safari hunting guides. However, as noted, official control by the Department is required where tahr are not being kept within set levels (the intervention densities).
27. There are three main hunting concessions issued by the Department on public conservation land; Aerially Assisted Trophy Hunting (AATH) that involves flying hunters and their guides into high country areas by helicopter in search of trophy animals; ground based hunting with guides; and Wild Animal Recovery Operations (WARO) for the aerial recovery and capture of a number of wild animals (including tahr). A condition of an AATH concession is that an environmental contribution of 5 females are controlled per trophy taken. The Control Plan acknowledges that the Department needs to provide opportunities for all the potential control agents in managing the tahr

population, but it is also clear that the Department will also need to take action where required.

28. The Control Plan noted that a population of 10,000 tahr across the seven management units was an acceptable maximum, at which impacts on vegetation may be tolerable and which will provide sufficient hunter satisfaction and commercial opportunities to maintain hunting pressure.
29. There are also several guidelines that apply to the management units, including for tahr densities not to exceed 5/km<sup>2</sup> for any localised area and for the female-kid groups to be restricted to less than 10 per group.
30. Importantly, the Control Plan recorded that it was expected that the Department would have to control tahr in management units 4 (national parks), 6 (due to its remoteness), and 7 (very low numbers). As above, where tahr are not being controlled to the acceptable maximum levels in management units by commercial, recreational and other forms of hunting, there is an obligation on the Department to undertake additional control operations.

## **OPERATIONS UNDER THE CONTROL PLAN**

31. The implementation of the Control Plan is through operational plans identifying planned actions for each management unit. The Control Plan mentions preparation of operational plans by the relevant field centres and that they were subject to annual reporting by 31 July each year. The Department now leads the Himalayan tahr programme as a national programme, developing one operational plan to cover the full programme. Annual reports are provided to the Authority. A copy of the latest report to the Authority is annexed as Annex 1.
32. Operational plans identify the planned actions for each management unit for the coming year. In preparing these plans the Department has added contextual information to explain its planned actions as a basis for engagement with those parties that are affected and/or interested.
  - 32.1 The operational plans prepared for the 2019/20 and 2020/21 years adopted a more structured and simpler format to improve their usability and precision in describing the Department's proposed actions.
  - 32.2 The operational plans are not designed to provide full context of all aspects of the tahr programme. The purpose is to describe the programme of work over the annual period to implement the Control Plan. The control aspects are provided in most detail, while other aspects of the wider tahr programme are covered at a high level or not at all in the plan (e.g. monitoring of tahr populations or the environment, research programme, engagement with stakeholders, developments such as the verification system for aerial control, detail around tahr control outside of the feral range, and a reset of the Tahr Plan Implementation Liaison Group).
33. After the tragic helicopter accident in October 2018, the Department had previously planned to control 6,000 tahr between October and mid-November 2018. The Department also planned to meet with the TPILG following this in early December 2018 and potentially reset to remove a total of 10,000 tahr by

20 August 2019. However, following the accident in October 2018 the Department suspended all tahr control.

## **ESTIMATES OF THE POPULATION ABUNDANCE OF HIMALAYAN TAHR**

34. In summer/autumn 2019 (February – June), 51 (2 x 2 km<sup>2</sup>) plots were sampled using aerial surveys to count tahr and other ungulates on public conservation land. The aim of this was to add further information estimating the density and abundance of Himalayan tahr on each of the seven management units and two exclusion zones in the Southern Alps of New Zealand, following estimates taken during 2016, 2017 and 2018. This did not include tahr populations on other land tenures (where we understand there are large numbers of tahr present on some properties). As noted above, the Department has planned to start surveys on these other land tenures but that work has been delayed by the COVID-19 pandemic and response.
35. A copy of this report *Estimates of Himalayan Tahr* (*Hemitragus jemlahicus*) *Abundance in New Zealand: Results from Aerial Surveys* (September 2019) is here: <https://www.doc.govt.nz/globalassets/documents/parks-and-recreation/hunting/west-coast/himalayan-tahr-abundance-september-2019.pdf>. The results of this most recent population estimate report included:
  - 35.1 The total abundance of tahr on public conservation land in the seven management units for the period 2016-2019 was estimated to be 34,478 individuals with a 95% confidence interval of 26,522 – 44,821 (meaning the Department is 95% certain the population falls between 26,522 and 44,821 tahr). This was very similar to earlier estimations, described further below. Public conservation land is approximately 81% of the land within the management units.
  - 35.2 Tahr abundances were highest in management units 3 and 4 (the estimates being 8663 and 6973 respectively), noting that management unit 4 comprises Aoraki/Mt Cook and Westland Tai Poutini National Parks.
  - 35.3 Tahr densities were highly variable across the management units, but the estimates exceeded intervention densities in each management unit except for management unit 7. In management unit 4, the mean density was 4.7/km<sup>2</sup> (95% confidence interval 3.0/km<sup>2</sup> to 7.3/km<sup>2</sup>).
36. As noted above, the population size targets in the Control Plan for all management units total approximately 10,000 tahr. This includes all land tenure within the management units (i.e. 573,000 ha public conservation land and 133,000 ha of private and crown pastoral lease land).
37. After this tahr population estimate was taken, tahr control was undertaken over July-November 2019. Approximately 10,650 tahr were controlled across the management units from a variety of sources (including WARO; AATH environmental contributions; and Department led control action).
38. While there has not been an assessment of tahr on private or crown pastoral lease land, the Department has anecdotal reports of high densities on some properties. This is further supported by the fact that a significant majority of tahr trophies exported per annum are obtained from private land or crown pastoral lease land as they are not coming from public conservation land.

39. The population estimate from the September 2019 report was extremely close to the population estimates from the previous report that was in the public domain. The previous report, *Estimates of Himalayan tahr (Hemitragus jemlabicus) abundance in New Zealand: Results from Aerial Surveys* (21 December 2018), estimated 34,292 individuals as the total abundance of tahr on public conservation land for the period 2016-2018. This had a 95% confidence interval of 24,777 – 47,461. The report also noted tahr abundances were highest in management units 3 and 4 (approximately 8,000 in each). Tahr densities exceeded the intervention densities specified in the Control Plan in all management units except management unit 7, although there was substantial uncertainty around the estimated density of tahr for some management units. A copy of this report is here: <https://www.doc.govt.nz/globalassets/documents/parks-and-recreation/hunting/west-coast/estimates-of-himalayan-tahr-abundance-nz-2015-2018-results.pdf>
40. It should be noted that:
- 40.1 the 2019 population estimate was prior to control being undertaken in May-November 2019;
  - 40.2 that there has been a further breeding season in Spring 2019; and
  - 40.3 that the Crown pastoral lease land and private land population is unknown.
41. It is acknowledged that the Department does not have certainty about the exact number of tahr actually present in New Zealand. However, there will always be a degree of uncertainty when estimating numbers of wild animals given a range of issues such as detectability.
42. The Department has been obtaining further information through monitoring and sampling each year and in any case, has an estimated tahr population that is significantly higher than the maximum level set out in the Control Plan.
43. The 2020/21 Operational Plan, like previous plans, is aimed towards achieving compliance with the Control Plan target densities in each management unit.

## REVIEW OF PREVIOUS CONTROL EFFORTS

44. The Department provides annual reports to the Authority under the Control Plan on conservation and tahr monitoring details, a financial summary and progress on ongoing research. The latest report is annexed as Annex 1.
45. Based on the information provided to the Authority in the Department's annual reports (1 July to 30 June) under the Control Plan, approximately 2,800 tahr were controlled from all forms of control on average per annum over the period 1996 to 2009. This excludes some aspects of recreational hunting where no data is available. Approximately 65% of the total tahr controlled (as verified) was by the Department.
46. Based on more recent annual reports for the period 2009/10 to 2018/19, an average of approximately 4,100 tahr were controlled from all forms of control per annum (noting this excludes some aspects of recreational hunting where no data is available). **Table 1:** shows the data from the annual reports.

Year 1 July – 30 June	DOC	AATH trophies	AATH 'environmental contribution'	Ballot hunters	WARO	Organised recreational hunters	Other	Total
2009/10	2546			443		137		3126
2010/11	2115		256	411		263		3045
2011/12	2280	160	288	451		938		4117
2012/13	3254	176	803	466		512		5211
2013/14	1148	225 <sup>1</sup>	1466	420	10	125		3394
2014/15	1923	262 <sup>1</sup>	1243	402	205	860		4895
2015/16	1835	302	1206	589	5	438		4375
2016/17	2809	331 <sup>1</sup>	910	537	0	35		4622
2017/18	4947	216 <sup>1</sup>	463	723	304	76		6729
2018/19	168	264	0	619	400	63	244 <sup>2</sup>	1758
2019/20	7238 <sup>3</sup>	10	2936 <sup>4</sup>	730	421	0	60 <sup>2</sup>	11395

<sup>1</sup> Amended – error in NZCA report (included chamois numbers); <sup>2</sup>Zero Invasive Predators control;  
<sup>3</sup>Includes contracted control; <sup>4</sup>Includes control not undertaken in 2018/19

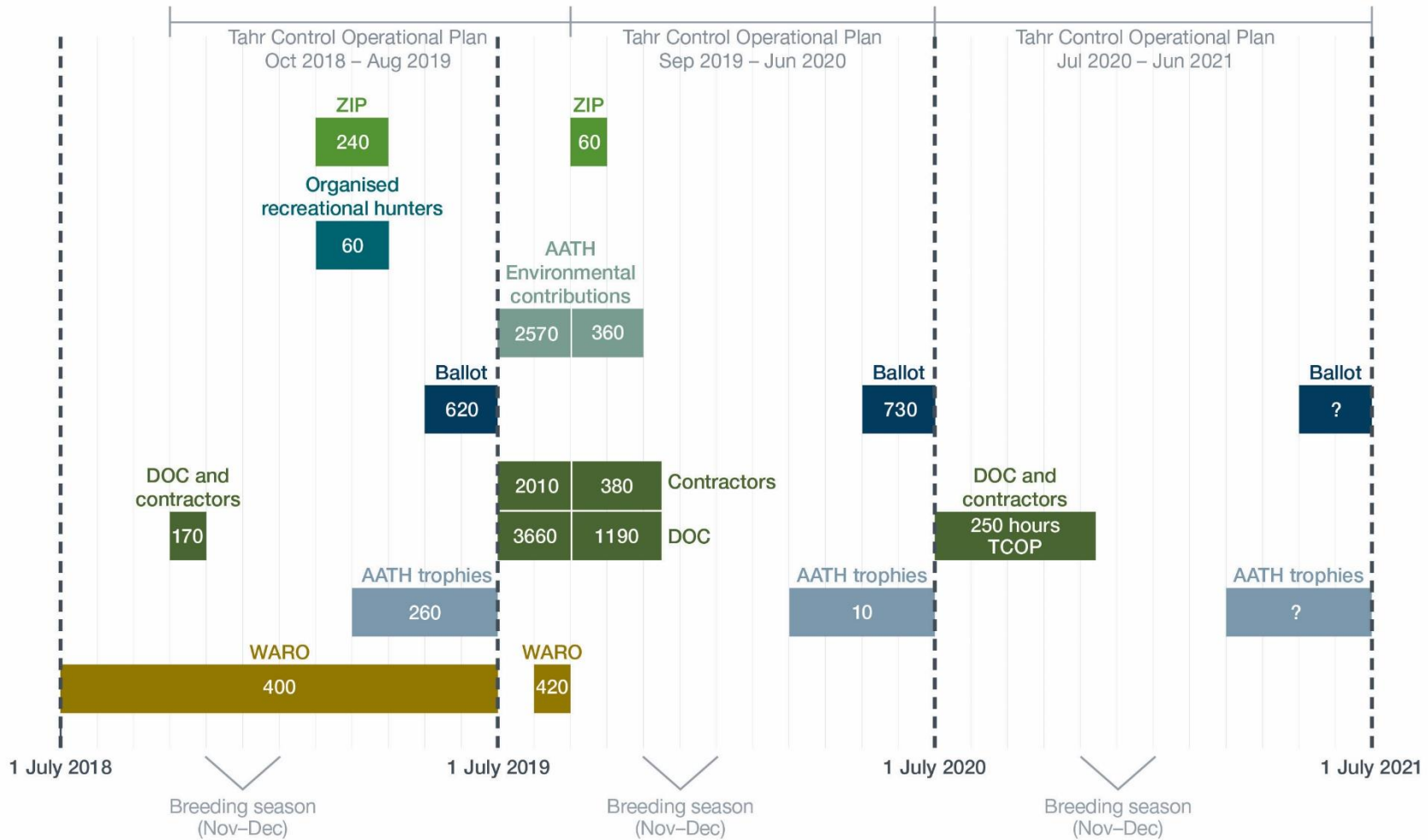
47. Tahr control data for 2018/19, 2019/20 and 2020/21 financial years (1 July to 30 June), by the various forms of control, is shown in the figure on the following page.
48. Despite a significant proportion of tahr control having been undertaken by the Department from 2009/10 to 2018/19, the tahr population is still estimated to exceed the levels prescribed in the Control Plan across the management units (and therefore is likely to be even higher when including other land tenures). The information above indicates that further action is required to achieve compliance with the Control Plan.
49. Following the tragic helicopter accident in October 2018, the Department suspended its operations. A relatively low number of tahr were controlled in the 2018/19 financial year, being less than 1,800 tahr across all forms of control (see Table 1 above). As noted above, there were increased efforts to meet the targets of tahr to be controlled in the Operational Plan 15 October 2018 to 31 August 2019. Approximately 8,300 tahr were controlled between July and August 2019 primarily by AATH concessionaires via their environmental contributions (2573), Department contractors (2015) and the Department (3,659).
50. The year ended 30 June 2020 was the first year where substantive numbers of tahr have been controlled (see Table 1 above).



# Number of Tahr Controlled on Public Conservation Land (within the tahr feral range)

(Excludes recreational hunting where no data is available)

DOC – Department of Conservation  
 AATH – Aerially-assisted trophy hunting  
 WARO – Wild animal recovery operations  
 ZIP – Zero Invasive Predators  
 TCOP – Tahr Control Operational Plan



51. The total number of hours of aerial control from all sources for the period July-November 2019 is unknown. However, as in the table above, a total of approximately 10,650 were controlled (noting that the Department has not commenced control action since November 2019). This was achieved through:
- 51.1 an estimate of approximately 5,250 tahr (through approximately 178 hours of helicopter time) by the Department - noting that approximately 113 hours by the Department was undertaken in July and August 2019 and a further approximately 65 hours undertaken in September to November 2019;
  - 51.2 a further 2,015 tahr were controlled by Department contractors (however the hours were not recorded);
  - 51.3 a further 2,936 tahr were controlled by AATH concessionaires via their environmental contributions (hours unknown).
52. Even following that control effort, the estimated tahr population on public conservation land is significant (i.e. 34,500 population estimate in Autumn 2019, less approximately 11,000 tahr and an unknown amount from recreational hunters and natural mortality, plus recruitment into the population through births).
53. As detailed further below, we estimate the total control effort planned for July-November 2020 will be less than that undertaken between July-November 2019.
54. The available data shows that recreational and commercial hunters have not been able to meet the targets of the Control Plan. This is particularly evident in the National Park management unit (management unit 4) where densities are clearly greater than the management goal of “Control of thar population to lowest practicable level” and an intervention density of  $<1/\text{km}^2$  (ca.  $<500$ ).

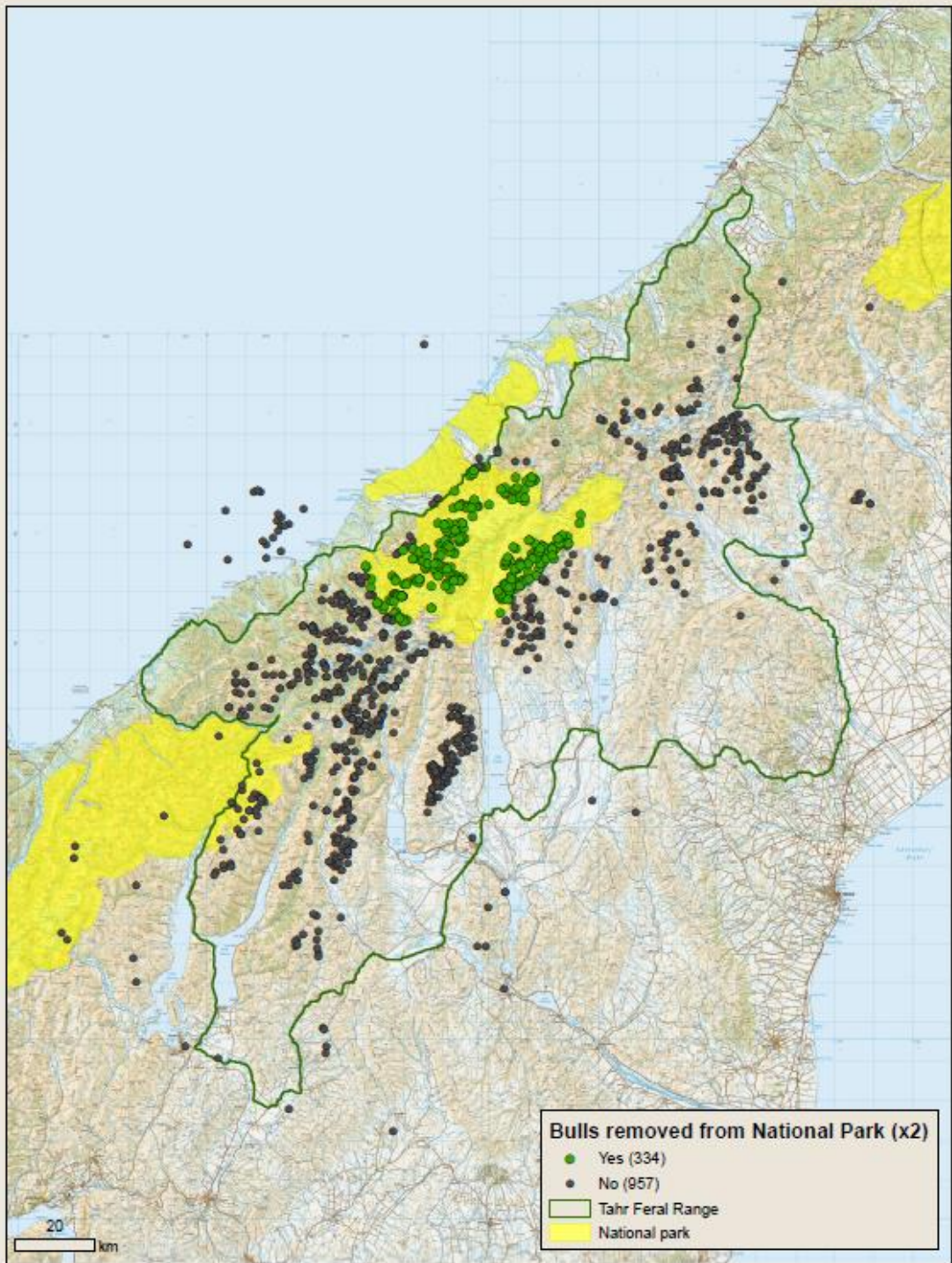
## **DECISION TO ADOPT THE 2020/21 OPERATIONAL PLAN**

55. On 30 June 2020 Michael Slater, Deputy Director-General approved the adoption of the 2020/21 Operational Plan. A copy of the decision document and the annexures is annexed as Annex 2 and the Operational Plan is here: <https://www.doc.govt.nz/globalassets/documents/parks-and-recreation/hunting/tahr-control-operational-plan-2020-2021.pdf>.
56. Relevant to the review decision, the Operational Plan for 1 July 2020 to 30 June 2021 provides for:
- 56.1 approximately 110 hours of search and control targeting all tahr within management unit 4 (being the Aoraki/Mt Cook and Westland Tai Poutini National Parks); and
  - 56.2 approximately 140 hours of search and control with a focus on high density and female-kid groups across the remaining six management units.
57. The Operational Plan acknowledges that tourism-based hunting and associated offsets are likely to be severely reduced due to the COVID-19 pandemic. However, domestic recreational and guided hunting and WARO will continue

to be encouraged as a means of reducing tahr population levels along with official control action.

## **IMPACT OF THE 2020/21 OPERATIONAL PLAN ON COMMERCIAL TAHR HUNTERS**

58. Our understanding, through discussions with commercial operators, is that the majority of commercial hunting occurs on crown pastoral leases or private land.
59. The Department's planned control action will have no impact on the number of tahr on private and crown pastoral lease land as the control action will only be in respect of public conservation land. These are the areas shown in yellow or green on the 2020/21 Operational Plan.
60. On the information available, we estimate approximately 30% of tahr trophies exported are shot on public conservation land:
  - 60.1 Data obtained by the Department and Game Animal Council (in partnership) in 2016 shows approximately 1,000-1,100 tahr trophies were exported per year. A copy of the data obtained is annexed to this as Annex 3.
  - 60.2 All commercial hunting on public conservation land requires a concession, and each concession requires a return to be made to the Department on the number of animals shot. The data the Department has indicates the average number of trophies shot on public conservation land is approximately 316 per year (of the 1000-1,100 trophy tahr exported per year):
    - 60.2.1 The number of Aerially Assisted Trophy Hunting (AATH) tahr trophies shot on public conservation per year is shown in Table 1 above. Over the last five years (excluding this year due to COVID-19 where the returns are extremely low to date) the number of trophies ranged from 216-331 per year (average of 275). Note that while there are 18 AATH concessionaires, 5 concessionaires totalled 96% of the 2018 trophies, and 5 again totalled 92% of the 2019 trophies.
    - 60.2.2 The other major tahr trophy concession is the New Zealand Professional Hunting Guides Association. Their tahr returns over the last five years (2015-2019) range from 24-54 per year (average of 41). This concession does not require the exact location of tahr trophies to be provided.
61. Further, of the tahr trophies shot on public conservation land, the trophy location data provided by AATH concessionaires over the last five years indicates less than 26% of all trophies were shot within the Aoraki/Mt Cook and Westland Tai Poutini National Parks. The maps for the individual years, 2015 through to 2019 calendar years are annexed as Annex 4.
62. The map indicating where bull tahr have been shot by AATH between 2015 and 2019 is reproduced below. Although there are some errors in data supplied by concessionaires, the picture is compelling.



### AATH Tahr Trophy Concession Returns (2015-2019)

NZGD 2000 New Zealand Transverse Mercator  
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 1:1,250,000  
 20/05/2020  
 DOC, Geospatial Services

New Zealand Government



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63. As already noted, the Operational Plan for 2020/21 will not target bull tahr outside of the National Parks (where it appears 74% of the AATH trophies are shot).
64. The Department seeks to encourage hunters to shoot tahr and intends to continue to encourage this. When carrying out aerial tahr control, bulls observed are logged and mapped. This information is then published on the DOC website to assist hunters to plan, locate and shoot bull tahr. Copies of the latest maps produced during the implementation of the 2018/19 and 2019/20 Operational Plans are available on the DOC website at <https://www.doc.govt.nz/parks-and-recreation/things-to-do/hunting/what-to-hunt/tahr/tahr-control-operations/tahr-sightings-maps/>.
65. Based on information collected last year there are considerable numbers of bull tahr outside the National Parks management unit available for commercial and recreational hunters. This is in addition to the large volume of trophies that are available on crown pastoral leases or private land.
66. Only 148,000 hectares of the 573,000 hectares of public conservation land inside the management units is in the National Parks management unit.
67. This data also confirms there is a high number of male bull tahr present in the National Parks management unit. This has reinforced the need for official action to reduce tahr populations to the zero densities required under the Control Plan and the national park management plans, particularly given the exceptionally low numbers of tahr that have been and will be controlled through hunting this year.

#### **HOW MANY TAHR MAY BE CONTROLLED?**

68. The 2020/21 Operational Plan proposes 250 hours of aerial control for the management units, 110 hours of those for management unit 4 (the National Parks management unit).
69. In April to June 2019 the Department shot 387 tahr over approximately 81 hours of flying outside the feral range. In January to June 2020 the Department shot 511 tahr over approximately 168 hours of flying outside the feral range.
70. The number of tahr that may be shot from 110 hours in the National Parks management unit, and 140 hours across the other management units can only be estimated. In July to November 2019, across the range of areas where the department operated, approximately 30 tahr per hour were controlled. In September to November last year, the Department controlled 21 tahr per hour in Aoraki/Mt Cook and 37 per hour in Westland Tai Poutini National Parks. The average number of tahr that will be controlled in the National Parks will likely decline per hour of effort as the population density declines and tahr become harder to locate. Based on an average control rate of 30 tahr per hour, and 250 hours of aerial control time across the seven management units, we would estimate that no more than 7,500 tahr would be aerially controlled.

71. It is important to note that in 2020/21 there will be very low AATH trophies taken given the majority of the season has passed and that there is no certainty when international hunters may visit New Zealand. It is therefore very likely that there will be no control by AATH 'environmental contributions' (that is where concessionaires control 5 females per trophy bull taken).
72. Based on an average year of 275 trophies and 1,375 tahr as environmental contributions, this means approximately 1,650 tahr will not be controlled across the management units. The Department will therefore be the only major form of formal tahr control in 2020/21.
73. The Department has outlined in the 2020/21 Operational Plan that official control will give priority to outside the feral range, preventing spread, reducing towards zero density in national parks (management unit 4), and targeting localised high density areas and large group sizes.
74. This is consistent with the control parameters in the Control Plan. As noted earlier, several guidelines apply to all management units, including ensuring tahr densities do not to exceed 5/km<sup>2</sup> for any localised area and female-kid groups will be restricted, especially in close proximity to unit boundaries, to 10 or less per group.
75. The Department's control actions will follow the guidelines applying to the management units noted above. That is, control action will initially focus on herds that are larger than 10 per group, or where tahr are observed to be in high localised densities of >5/km<sup>2</sup>.
76. In July 2019, the Department developed a verification tool that captures images of tahr being controlled. This is essentially a digital camera with geo-referencing fitted to helicopters used for aerial control, which takes a series of photos at high speed when firearms are discharged. This tool enables the Department to obtain accurate records of the control activity undertaken.

## **IMPLEMENTATION OF CONTROL ACTION**

77. Tahr control operations are best conducted from July to September but can continue into spring. This timing is important for a number of reasons, including that it enables effective and efficient control due to the presence of snow which both facilitates locating tahr (through their tracks and visibility against the white background) and limits their range.
78. Operating in the winter period also minimises encounters with hunters and others recreating on public conservation lands including National Parks. We heard clear and strong feedback that control should preferably take place in winter from most of those we engaged with in 2019. Control operations stop by mid-November when kids are born to mitigate the possibility of shooting females with kids at foot.
79. Operations are also weather-dependent, so there is no guarantee that it will be possible to undertake all the proposed control action within a short time. For example, while operations on 4 to 6 July last year went ahead successfully, that was followed by 13 days where the weather conditions prevented any control operations.

80. If the Department is not able to begin operations in the winter period there is an increased potential for encounters with hunters when operations commence as hunters are active in both in spring (October-November), and should the delays continue to next year, during the hunting season (March-June for deer hunting and then tahr hunting). The Department considers that conflict with the hunters during the tahr rut is not in anyone's interests.
81. If control action is not completed before kid-drop in November then there are more tahr to control in late-summer and early autumn when operations can restart. The recruitment to tahr populations in spring will also result in further impact on the alpine environment.
82. The control in the other management units (outside of the national parks) will not target identifiable males and will focus on areas of high density. Bull and female tahr will still be present across the public conservation land outside the two national parks, comprising approximately 425,000 hectares.

### **HIGH COURT DECISION**

83. The New Zealand Tahr Foundation Incorporated v The Minister of Conservation [2020] NZHC 1669 10 July 2020 decision can be viewed at: <http://www.courtsofnz.govt.nz/judgments/high-court>

### **TAHR PLAN IMPLEMENTATION LIAISON GROUP MEETING MINUTES – 19 JUNE 2020 MEETING NOTES**

84. The meeting notes of the 19 June 2020 meeting of the TPILG are in Annex 5.

### **DEPARTMENT OF CONSERVATION WEBSITE**

85. The following webpages (and links within) contain relevant information on Himalayan tahr.  
<https://www.doc.govt.nz/nature/pests-and-threats/animal-pests/tahr/>  
<https://www.doc.govt.nz/parks-and-recreation/things-to-do/hunting/what-to-hunt/tahr/tahr-control-operations/>

## EASY ACCESS TABLE FOR SUPPORTING MATERIAL

Para	Document	Where to find it
4	Conservation General Policy 2005	<a href="https://www.doc.govt.nz/globalassets/documents/about-doc/role/policies-and-plans/conservation-general-policy.pdf">https://www.doc.govt.nz/globalassets/documents/about-doc/role/policies-and-plans/conservation-general-policy.pdf</a>
6.3	General Policy for National Parks 2005	<a href="https://www.doc.govt.nz/globalassets/documents/about-doc/role/policies-and-plans/general-policy-for-national-parks.pdf">https://www.doc.govt.nz/globalassets/documents/about-doc/role/policies-and-plans/general-policy-for-national-parks.pdf</a>
7	Aoraki/Mount Cook National Park Management Plan	<a href="https://www.doc.govt.nz/globalassets/documents/about-doc/role/policies-and-plans/aoraki-mount-cook-np-management-plan-1.pdf">https://www.doc.govt.nz/globalassets/documents/about-doc/role/policies-and-plans/aoraki-mount-cook-np-management-plan-1.pdf</a>
8	Westland/Tai Poutini National Park Management Plan	<a href="https://www.doc.govt.nz/globalassets/documents/about-doc/role/policies-and-plans/national-park-management-plans/westland/wnpmamendedjune2008.pdf">https://www.doc.govt.nz/globalassets/documents/about-doc/role/policies-and-plans/national-park-management-plans/westland/wnpmamendedjune2008.pdf</a>
22	Himalayan Tahr Control Plan 1993	<a href="https://www.doc.govt.nz/Documents/conservation/threats-and-impacts/animal-pests/tahr/tahr-plan-1993.pdf">https://www.doc.govt.nz/Documents/conservation/threats-and-impacts/animal-pests/tahr/tahr-plan-1993.pdf</a>
31 & 44	Report on the Himalayan Tahr Control Programme (July 2018 to November 2019) – to NZ Conservation Authority	Annex 1 – see attachment
35	<i>Estimates of Himalayan Tahr (Hemitragus jemlahicus) Abundance in New Zealand: Results from Aerial Surveys</i> (September 2019)	<a href="https://www.doc.govt.nz/globalassets/documents/parks-and-recreation/hunting/west-coast/himalayan-tahr-abundance-september-2019.pdf">https://www.doc.govt.nz/globalassets/documents/parks-and-recreation/hunting/west-coast/himalayan-tahr-abundance-september-2019.pdf</a>
39	<i>Estimates of Himalayan tahr (Hemitragus jemlahicus) abundance in New Zealand: Results from Aerial Surveys</i> (21 December 2018)	<a href="https://www.doc.govt.nz/globalassets/documents/parks-and-recreation/hunting/west-coast/estimates-of-himalayan-tahr-abundance-nz-2015-2018-results.pdf">https://www.doc.govt.nz/globalassets/documents/parks-and-recreation/hunting/west-coast/estimates-of-himalayan-tahr-abundance-nz-2015-2018-results.pdf</a>
56	Decision document for the 30 June 2020 Deputy Director-General approval of the Tahr Control Operational Plan 2020/21	Annex 2 – see attachment
56	Tahr control operational plan 2020/2021	<a href="https://www.doc.govt.nz/globalassets/documents/parks-and-recreation/hunting/tahr-control-operational-plan-2020-2021.pdf">https://www.doc.govt.nz/globalassets/documents/parks-and-recreation/hunting/tahr-control-operational-plan-2020-2021.pdf</a>
61.1	Game Animal Trophies Dashboard 2014, 2015, 2016	Annex 3 – see attachment
62	AATH Tahr Trophy Concession Return maps (2015 Calendar), 2016 (Calendar), 2017 (Calendar), 2018 (Calendar), 2019 (Calendar), 2015-2019 (Calendar)	Annex 4 – see attachment
65	Department of Conservation Bulls seen (maps)	<a href="https://www.doc.govt.nz/parks-and-recreation/things-to-do/hunting/what-to-hunt/tahr/tahr-control-operations/tahr-sightings-maps/">https://www.doc.govt.nz/parks-and-recreation/things-to-do/hunting/what-to-hunt/tahr/tahr-control-operations/tahr-sightings-maps/</a>



84	Decision of Dobson J CIV-2020-485-324[2020] NZHC 1669	<a href="https://www.courtsofnz.govt.nz/assets/cases/The-NZ-Tahr-Foundation-Inc-v-Minister-of-Conservation.pdf">https://www.courtsofnz.govt.nz/assets/cases/The-NZ-Tahr-Foundation-Inc-v-Minister-of-Conservation.pdf</a>
85	Meeting notes of the 19 June 2020 meeting of the TPILG	Annex 5 – see attachment
86	Other DOC tahr information	<a href="https://www.doc.govt.nz/parks-and-recreation/things-to-do/hunting/what-to-hunt/tahr/tahr-control-operations/">https://www.doc.govt.nz/parks-and-recreation/things-to-do/hunting/what-to-hunt/tahr/tahr-control-operations/</a>  <a href="https://www.doc.govt.nz/nature/pests-and-threats/animal-pests/tahr/">https://www.doc.govt.nz/nature/pests-and-threats/animal-pests/tahr/</a>

# **Annex 1**

# Report on the Himalayan Tahr Control Programme

## July 2018 to November 2019

### Context

The management of tahr on Public Conservation Land (PCL) is guided by the Himalayan Tahr Control Plan (HTCP; Department of Conservation 1993). The HTCP sets a maximum population of 10,000 tahr for lands of all tenure throughout the feral range. It also sets a maximum density of tahr for each Management Unit, based on factors including location, vegetation, and recreational use, and outlines expectations for the monitoring of tahr populations and of vegetation condition, to provide a better information base for future management decisions.

## 1. Key achievements

### 1.1 Tahr control

#### *Tahr Control Operational Plan (15 October 2018 to 31 August 2019)*

The Department of Conservation (DOC) led control operations were planned across multiple tahr management units during the Tahr Control Operational Plan (TCOP; 2018/19). However, on 18 October 2018, a fatal helicopter accident occurred involving the pilot and two DOC tahr operations staff. Following this, all tahr control for 2018/19 was suspended. The only control which had already occurred was in the Rakaia/Rangitata Management Unit on the morning of the accident.

DOC amended the TCOP 2018/19 with the aim of completing the expected work within the originally declared timeframe. By 31 August 2019, and following a substantive focus on safety and working with others, the TCOP 2018/19 targets were achieved, reducing tahr numbers in the feral range by 10,077. A suite of participants contributed to these control operations, including DOC, contractors, WARO, AATH operators (trophies and offsets), and recreational hunters.

#### *Tahr control outside the feral range*

Control of tahr numbers outside the identified feral range is key to reducing range expansion and minimising the creation of new populations. Considerable effort was made in the 2018/19 year to control tahr outside the feral range; including in the northern and southern exclusion zones. This focused on areas known to have high numbers of tahr, for example, Mt Hutt, where 298 tahr were killed (see Appendix 2). A total of 387 tahr were controlled outside the feral range in the 2018/19 year.

#### *Tahr control operational plan 2019/20 (1 September 2019 to 30 June 2020)*

The TCOP 2019/20 was developed in partnership with our Treaty Partner Ngāi Tahu, involving a consultative process with the Tahr Plan Implementation Liaison Group (TPILG) and other stakeholders, including the NZCA. The plan was designed to continue the TCOP 2018/19 control efforts in high priority areas, including Aoraki/Mt Cook and Westland/Tai Poutini National Parks and buffer zones in the north and south of the feral range.

Control continued from 1 September 2019 under the TCOP 2019/20. By mid-November 2019, a further 1950 tahr had been controlled on PCL by DOC staff, contractors, and AATH concessionaires completing offsets. More than half of that total (c. 1100) were controlled in Management Units 4a and 4b, Aoraki/Mt Cook and Westland/Tai Poutini National Parks. The remainder were from the northern and southern buffer regions, within the feral range adjacent to the boundaries.

### 1.2 Electronic verification tool

From early July 2019 onwards, digital cameras taking still photographs with geo-referencing were fitted to the rear step of helicopters used for aerial control of tahr. Each time a firearm is discharged during the operation, a wireless signal simultaneously triggers the camera to take a series of photographs at high speed. This provides a visual record and verification of animals shot.



This tool was developed to enable remote monitoring of the number of tahr dispatched in contractor-based control operations and AATH offsets (it has also been used on DOC control operations). It automates monitoring of the target kills set for these external shooters, a role previously undertaken by the small pool of DOC hunters.

### 1.3 A new app for recreational hunters

Throughout development of the 2018/19 TCOP, recreational hunters indicated a desire for tahr they shoot to be included in reported totals from control operations carried out in the management units and broader feral range. In late 2018, DOC agreed to work on a way for tahr shot by hunters to be verified.

A smartphone app designed by DOC with the Game Animal Council (GAC) was launched in late November 2019. This replaces the web-based reporting tool previously used to log recreational kills. The app is simple to use and anonymous, providing monthly reports of the number of tahr shot in each management unit to both DOC and the GAC.

✕
Tahr Hunting NZ
📍
☰

Please select the location where you killed the tahr (tap for full screen)

📍 43°34'S 172°34'E ± 7 m

**What did you kill? \***

Please identify what type of tahr you killed

Male

Female

Unknown

**Photo**

Please upload a photo of your kill if possible. If not possible, a photo of the general area will suffice.

📷
📁

✓

#### **1.4 Relationship with our Treaty partner – Te Rūnanga o Ngāi Tahu**

During 2019 DOC ensured that its Treaty Partnership with Ngāi Tahu was strengthened through the tahr programme. Joe Taurima was the interim lead for Ngāi Tahu throughout the reinstatement of the programme and development of the 2019/20 TCOP. Stakeholders were positive about the value of having Ngāi Tahu as an active participant in the programme.

Te Rūnanga o Ngāi Tahu agreed in early November to appoint Kara Edwards as the Te Rūnanga o Ngāi Tahu representative for tahr management. Kara is from Makaawhio in South Westland and has connections with tahr management and WARO.

#### **1.5 Progress towards lead-free ammunition**

DOC has sourced non-lead ammunition for tahr control operations for the next three years. Currently being tested for effective range and frangibility, this non-lead buckshot should be fully deployed in control operations beginning in the 2020 calendar year.

#### **1.6 Administration of DOC's tahr programme**

A programme lead role for tahr management has been established this year, providing focussed and dedicated leadership and support to this high-profile component of DOC's pest animal management work.

## **2. Relationships and liaison with interested parties**

DOC and Ngāi Tahu liaised with stakeholders in the TPILG during the 2018/19 period, including meetings in Christchurch in August and October 2018, chaired by Andy Roberts, (Director, Eastern South Island), and March and August of 2019, chaired by Ben Reddiex (Director, National Operations). These meetings were focussed on development of the TCOPs for 2018/19 and 2019/20, and revision of control activity timing following the temporary cessation of operations after the accident in October. The GAC and DOC also co-hosted a workshop on tahr research and monitoring in May 2019.

There was considerable interaction with AATH concessionaires to plan the delivery of offsets, and engagement with WARO over partitioning control and recovery activity in the tahr range.

DOC worked with the recreational hunting sector to improve availability of information on both control activity and observations of tahr through the website and via social media. For example, maps of control effort were posted to DOC's website throughout the period, see Appendix 3.

DOC also worked with the GAC (supported by the New Zealand Tahr Foundation and New Zealand Deerstalkers) to develop the app for recreational hunters to record verified tahr kills.

### 3. Status of Management Units (MUs)

#### 3.1 Population estimate

Continuing effort from surveys in 2016-17, tahr abundance estimates were updated following aerial sampling in early 2018. Sampling has now been carried out, via repeated aerial counts, over 66 plots (each 2km x 2km) which overlay DOC's 20m x 20m vegetation monitoring plots.

*The total abundance of tahr on PCL for the period 2016 - 2018 was estimated to be 34,292 individuals (95% confidence interval; 24,777 - 47,461).*

Tahr abundances were highest in management units 3 and 4 (approximately 8,000 tahr in each) and lowest in management unit 7 and the two exclusions zones (approximately 100 - 150 tahr in each). The 95% confidence interval lowest possible estimate for tahr abundance on PCL is now 24,777. This still exceeds the maximum total abundance of <10,000 animals on lands of all tenure specified in the HTCP 1993. Average tahr density over the three years of sampling was highest in management unit 3 (9.2 tahr/km<sup>2</sup>) and lowest in exclusion zone 2 (0.06 tahr/km<sup>2</sup>).

This population estimate is prior to substantive tahr control undertaken from 1 July to mid-November 2019. Further survey work (undertaken in February-May 2019) is now refining the estimate (Ramsey and Forsyth), and will be available in early 2020.

DOC is also working with Land Information New Zealand (LINZ) to develop a monitoring approach for non-PCL land within the tahr feral range.

#### 3.2 Vegetation condition trend

A Landcare Research report published in early 2019 evaluated the suitability of existing survey plot networks to report the effects of tahr in alpine and subalpine ecosystems. It concluded that a basis exists upon which to build a robust and comprehensive, fit-for-purpose monitoring programme.

Some improvements to current methods should be made. Most importantly, however, the current monitoring plot network needs to be complemented with finer-scale monitoring and research. This enhanced network could enable DOC to assess the ecological integrity of alpine and subalpine ecosystems, evaluate the impact of tahr and other herbivores, and meet its obligations under the HTCP.

Development of a monitoring and research strategy which will include vegetation is a key focus for 2019/20.

#### 3.3 Tahr outside the feral range

In 2019/20 DOC will develop a strategy for the eradication of tahr outside the feral range. Control off PCL is likely to be complicated due to some landowners' resistance to DOC's tahr control activities. DOC and LINZ are continuing to work on this issue.

#### **4. What's ahead for the tahr programme?**

In the 2020 calendar year, progress on initiatives covered in this report will continue. Emphasis will be on development of a long-term operational plan for tahr control and advancing the Treaty Partner relationship. Key aspects will include developing a monitoring and research programme and developing an approach for the management of tahr outside the feral range, within non-PCL portions of the feral range, on Crown Pastoral lease land and on private land. Engagement with interested and affected parties is also a priority.

Ben Reddiex  
Director National Operations - Issues & Programmes

**Appendix 1: Financial performance (1 July 2018 to 30 June 2019)**

The principal operational expenditure for the tahr programme in 2018/19 financial year was \$145,000 on tahr control beyond the feral range, as described above.

The focus for the remaining resourcing was on preparation of a programme to deliver the objectives of the TCOP 2018/19, including the bulk of the control starting 1 July 2019. The main items (outside of staff costs) were:

1. Purchase of non-lead ammunition – \$210,000
2. Monitoring of tahr populations on PCL – \$165,000
3. Development and production of electronic verification tool – \$40,000
4. System design for capture of data from recreational tahr hunters – \$12,000

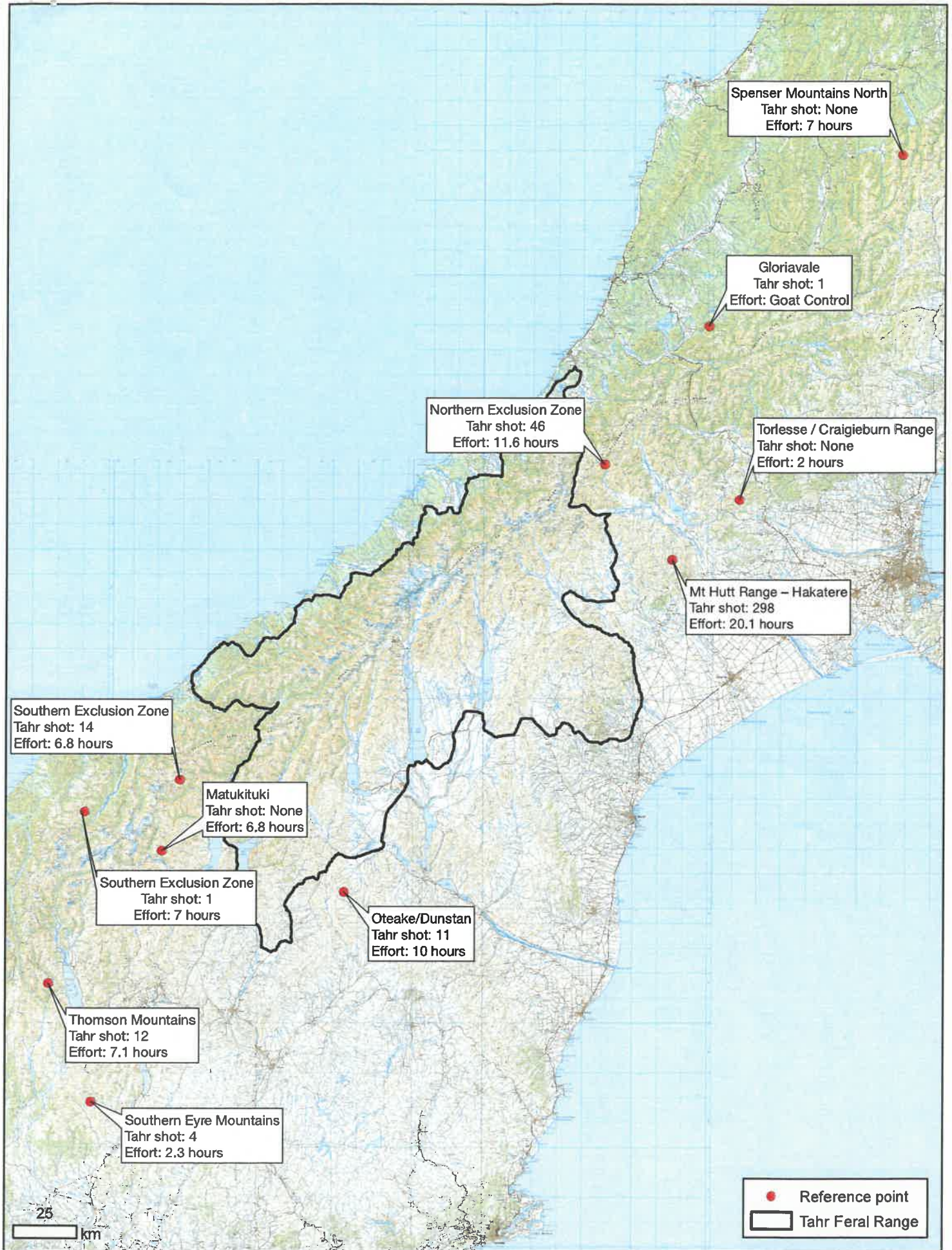
**Appendix 2: Map of tahr control outside the feral range – April to June 2019**

Follows

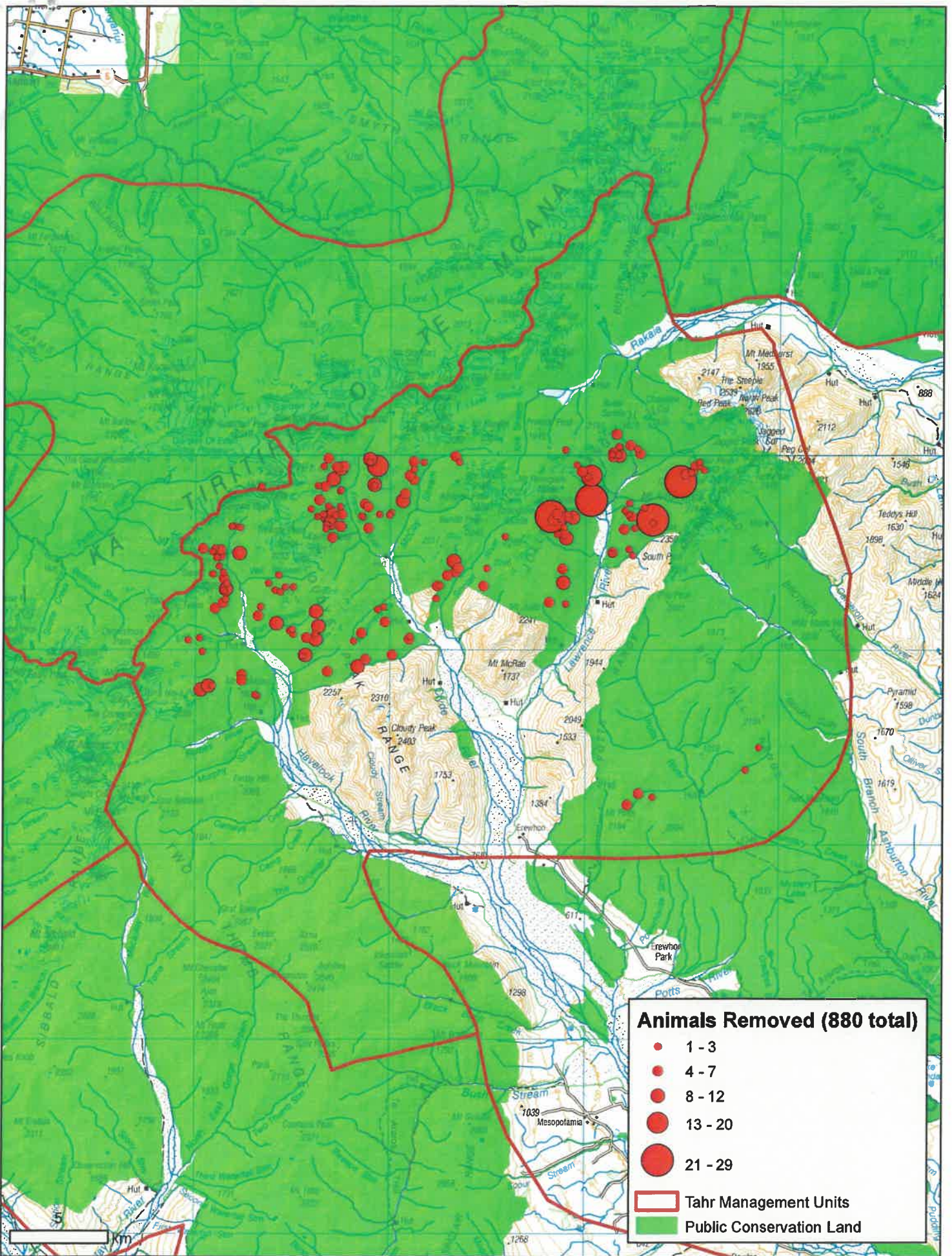
**Appendix 3: Tahr Controlled by DOC in the Northern Rangitata - MU1 July 2019**

Follows









## **Annex 2**



To: Mike Slater, Deputy Director General Operations

CC: Aaron Fleming (Director Operations SSI), Mark Davies (Director Operations, WSI), Nicola Toki (Director Operations ESI)

From: Ben Reddiex, Director Operations – Issues & Programmes

Date: 30 June 2020 (draft memo provided on 26 June 2020)

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**Internal Memo: Decision on the Tahr Control Operational Plan 1 July 2020 to 30 June 2021**

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Action sought: Approve the attached proposed Tahr Control Operational Plan (the proposed TCOP) for 1 July 2020 to 30 June 2021.

Time Frame: By end of 30 June 2020

### Purpose

1. This memorandum provides a recommended Tahr Control Operational Plan for 1 July 2020 to 30 June 2021 for your approval.

### Context

2. The Department is required by the Himalayan Thar Control Plan 1993 (HTCP) to produce an annual Tahr Control Operational Plan (TCOP) specifying *planned actions for each management unit*.
3. The proposed TCOP was developed following a review of all available information including previous engagement and stakeholder comment gathered in May and June 2020. The stakeholder engagement process for the 2020/21 TCOP commenced as soon as it was clear (due to COVID-19 settings) that the Department would be able to commence operations in July 2020.
4. A record of formal engagement completed in 2019 and 2020 is attached as Annex 1. The engagement summary for the development of the 2019/20 TCOP is attached as Annex 2 (for further context).
5. The Department discussed a draft TCOP for 2020/2021 with the Tahr Plan Implementation Liaison Group (TPILG) on 19 June 2020. This meeting replaced the TPILG meeting scheduled for 24 March 2020 that was deferred due to the global COVID-19 pandemic.
6. The proposed Tahr Control Operational Plan was then developed following consideration of comment received at the TPILG and in associated communications from some parties (see Annex 1 & 3).
7. Previously, I have advised the TPILG that I would be the decision-maker on the plan. However, based on the significant stakeholder interest in the TCOP for 1 July 2020 to 30 June 2021 I have elevated the decision-maker to you as DDG Operations.

## Key points from engagement

8. The COVID-19 pandemic has significantly affected stakeholders involved with tahr.
9. Recreational and guided hunters could not undertake their usual activities during Alert Levels 3 and 4.
10. All hunting guides and safari operations that relied on overseas visitors lost most of their 2020 season, with flow-on effects to outfitters and other parts of the tourism sector associated with tahr.
11. Commercial operators say that up to \$100M in annual overseas earnings are at risk if there are not adequate numbers of bull tahr to support their industry.
12. Some commercial operators argue that access to bull tahr in national parks are essential to their operation.
13. Opinion amongst stakeholders is diametrically split between those that want the Department's operations to vigorously reduce tahr numbers to the targets and intervention densities required by the 1993 Control Plan, and those that want the Department to pause, gather more information, and give hunters and trophy guides further opportunities to undertake the hunting they missed this season.
14. Those on both sides of this divide have commenced legal action to challenge the Department's operational plans and its decision-making processes.
15. All of those involved in the TPILG support the Department actively controlling tahr outside the designated feral range.
16. Many hunting interests oppose any tahr control this year in the management units, including within the national parks.
17. Forest and Bird has filed proceedings arguing *inter alia* that it was unlawful for the Department to avoid shooting bull tahr in National Parks (management unit 4) in 2019/20.
18. All hunting interests represented in the TPILG adamantly oppose any official tahr control in National Parks that includes shooting recognisable bull tahr.
19. Forest and Bird also claimed that it is invalid to use effort measures in a TCOP. They say that such plans must specify a target number of animals to be controlled. Some other parties accept or support effort measures in TCOPs.
20. Wild animal recovery operations currently have limited capacity to contribute to tahr control for a range of reasons. Investment in processing capability depends in part on the availability of tahr.
21. All hunting representatives said that the control efforts proposed by the Department for 2020/2021 would adversely affect their interests.
22. The New Zealand Tahr Foundation has written to the Minister of Conservation asking that she ensure the draft TCOP not be approved. In a lengthy letter from their solicitors they allege that the current draft does not conform to the requirements of the 1993 Control Plan or legal requirements for their clients to be consulted. They also oppose effort measures and advocate the use of residual populations remaining after official control as the measure to be applied. The New Zealand Tahr Foundation has since commenced legal proceedings on a similar basis.
23. The Department and our Treaty Partner, Ngāi Tahu, have led engagement with stakeholders over the last two TCOP's (see Annex 1). Following the TPILG meeting on 19 June I have engaged with Kara Edwards (the Ngāi Tahu lead for tahr) on several occasions. Kara has

advised “In considering the Ngāi Tahu view in relation to the proposed annual Tahr management plan for 20/21, we are not in a position to make a collective judgement on the provisions of the plan. The exception is that we would like to see the inclusion of a treaty section that acknowledges the treaty partnership and commitment moving forward”. The proposed TCOP has several clear statements around our intent to further implement the Treaty Partnership in relation to tahr management.

24. Ngāi Tahu also noted that they are looking towards the future and have a desire to “increase our engagement with the Department regarding this kaupapa to include matters such as;
- Full engagement of Ngāi Tahu in the development of a longer term plan
  - Increasing the number of Ngāi Tahu whanau members connecting with whenua through mahinga kai practice
  - Identifying employment and commercial opportunities for Ngāi Tahu whanau
  - Including matauranga Ngāi Tahu (knowledge) in research and monitoring framework design”.

## Analysis

### Overview

23. In the opening statement of the HTCP the then Minister of Conservation states *“If there were no tahr in New Zealand I would not support their introduction into the wild. Therefore, if it was possible eradication would be the preferred option for the Department. However, it is not currently possible with present resources and technology and consequently we have to decide what is tolerable, prioritise conservation values over the estate and set densities which do not unduly compromise these values, and organise the control and hunting agents to help protect these values. This plan sets a framework for achieving these actions.”*
24. The HTCP must be interpreted within the framework of the law including the governing statutes, general and specific policies and plans for tahr and for the places they inhabit. In making decisions (including the annual TCOP), managers apply, to the extent practicable, relevant parts of the framework to the circumstances existing at each place.
25. Until a Minister decides to review and change the HTCP, the Department is bound to implement it to the degree that resources and circumstances allow.

### Numbers of tahr

26. Ramsey and Forsyth September 2019 estimated the total number of tahr on public conservation land to be in the range (95% confidence) of 26,522 to 44,821 with a best estimate being 34,478. The number of tahr on land of other tenure is not known but is unlikely to be small given the yield of trophies and of numbers taken in culls and WARO operations.
27. After this estimate was made the Department recorded around 11,000 tahr being removed from the population on public conservation land (period May-November 2019). Tahr naturally increase under optimal conditions at around 28% per year – noting that recruitment would have occurred in spring 2019, as well as natural mortality and unquantified recreational hunter control. The current herds, which are reported by hunters to be biased in favour of males, are likely to have a lower rate of increase. However one looks at those figures, the total number of tahr cannot plausibly be as low on public conservation land alone as the **maximum** of 10,000 stated as permissible in the HTCP (across all land tenures).

28. If the upper bound of the estimates were correct, then the numbers of tahr on public conservation land alone would be c. three times the **maximum** number proposed in the HTCP.
29. The numbers actually present in each management unit cannot be estimated with absolute certainty from current data. Although reports from stakeholders vary, group sizes exceeding the intervention levels (specified in the HTCP) of 10 nannies/kids, or densities  $<5 \text{ km}^{-2}$  in a localised area are reported by helicopter operators in some places in the management units.

#### Control requirements

30. Given the numbers of tahr and the resources available, the Department should therefore ensure that control leads to a further substantial decrease in the tahr population on public conservation land. The question is then, where that effort should be focused, how much effort should be applied, and how much of that effort needs to be “official control”.

#### Outside the feral range

31. First, all parties support the Department continuing efforts to prevent the spread of tahr beyond the feral range. No party has stated that the hours of effort proposed by the Department are unreasonable. No significant contribution can be expected from other parties in this regard. **Therefore, it is recommended that the proposed 145 hours of aerial effort supplemented by ground control where appropriate should stand.**

#### National Parks

32. All relevant statute and binding policy and plans applying to national parks gives primacy to controlling tahr numbers to protect natural values. The value of recreation or economic opportunities is taken into account to the extent that these are compatible with the primary purposes of the park.
33. As noted above, commercial operators say that up to \$100M in annual overseas earnings are at risk if there are not adequate numbers of bull tahr to support their industry. However, commercial hunting returns from the national parks is relatively low when compared with the estimated number of trophies that are exported from New Zealand per year.
34. Both national parks have tahr present and therefore do not have zero density of tahr (as demonstrated by population assessments in early 2019 and via hunting returns from DOC and contractors over 2019). All hunting stakeholders the Department heard from asserted that there are tahr in the parks and that they highly value them.
35. Control from recreational and commercial hunting has not led to zero density of tahr in the national parks since the HTCP came into force in 1993.
36. Recreational hunting occurred in May and June 2020 but there was no significant aerially assisted trophy hunting (AATH) activity or wild animal recovery (WARO) in national parks.
37. Commercial activities will be unable to contribute significantly (because of COVID-19 and border controls) to tahr control in the national parks during the next operational period commencing July 2020.
38. From the information we now have, if close to zero density is to be achieved in the two national parks it will require official control. Noting that kill rates for aerial hunting will reduce as the density of animals declines, actual zero densities are impossible. The proposed 110 hours of aerial operation might reduce the Aoraki/Mt Cook population below the intervention density ( $<1/\text{km}^2$ ) in the 2020/21 year, but hunter opinion is that aerial hunting in Westland will miss a large number of tahr in areas of scrub and bush. These latter areas may be suitable for a pilot programme of expert professional ground hunting.

39. The total land area across the seven management units is c. 706,000 ha, of which c. 573,000 ha is public conservation land (the remaining 136,000 ha is crown pastoral lease or private land). The two national parks comprise only c. 26% of 573,000ha of public conservation land.
40. **Therefore, it is recommended that the 110 aerial control hours put forward in the proposed TCOP for national parks should stand.**


Other public conservation land

41. The HTCP provides a ranking of the importance of management units for control of tahr. These are reflected in the proposed TCOP.
42. In deciding on the effort to be applied to each management unit the relative priority of the unit, recreational opportunities, and current knowledge of the state of tahr populations need to be considered. Some priority areas such as the Landsborough are reported to have high populations. The preferred approach is, therefore, to distribute effort over all management units so that intelligence is gathered while high density areas and sensitive areas both receive a reduction in population.
43. The hours in the TCOP for each management unit should therefore be treated as indicative only. Once flying commences a clearer picture of tahr distribution will emerge. Flying conditions and ground conditions may also dictate adaptation of the programme as more is known through the season.
44. **Therefore, it is recommended that the effort for each management unit suggested in the proposed TCOP is clearly stated as estimates, and that actual hours may vary depending on a range of factors, including the number and density of tahr observed. The proposed TCOP has been amended accordingly while the hours allocated to each unit have been left the same.**

## Recommendations

It is recommended that you:

- |  | Decision            |
|--|---------------------|
| 1. <b>Note</b> that Forest and Bird has sought a declaration that the 2019/2020 TCOP was <i>ultra vires</i>  | Yes / <del>No</del> |
| 2. <b>Note</b> that the New Zealand Tahr Foundation filed judicial review proceedings against the Minister of Conservation and Director-General of Conservation in respect of a draft Tahr Control Operational Plan for 2020/2021. | Yes / <del>No</del> |
| 3. <b>Note</b> that it is many years since the targets and intervention densities required by the HTCP have been met because of a lack of resources;   | Yes / <del>No</del> |
| 4. <b>Note</b> that operational risks may emerge if some parties pursue punitive actions against the Department as they have signalled in social media;  | Yes / <del>No</del> |
| 5. <b>Approve</b> the proposed TCOP for tahr as appended for implementation from 1 July 2020 (Annex 4).  | Yes / <del>No</del> |

  
 Deputy Director General Operations  
 30/6/2020





# Tahr Control Operational Plan: 1 July 2020 – 30 June 2021

## Purpose

The purpose of this operational plan is to describe the programme of work over the period 1 July 2020 – 30 June 2021 to implement the Himalayan Tahr Control Plan 1993 (HTCP).

## Context & Priorities

This has been a unique period in New Zealand's history. The COVID-19 pandemic halted tahr hunting in the period of March to early May 2020. COVID-19 also prevented planned aerial surveys of tahr on Crown pastoral lease land. Access for international visitors is currently restricted, so fewer trophy animals will be taken in 2020. We understand that many commercial guides have had bookings deferred rather than cancelled, meaning that trophy hunting could rebound when borders open. A reduced amount of wild animal recovery operations can be expected over the coming year. The Department and Ngāi Tahu continue to implement the Treaty partnership in relation to tahr management.

### Priorities for this year are to:

- ▶ Control spread from the feral range.
- ▶ Take the Aoraki/Mount Cook and Westland Tai Poutini National Parks towards zero density.
- ▶ Maximise the efficacy of population reduction through recreational hunting, guided hunting, and commercial recovery.
- ▶ Bring the population towards levels in the HTCP by focusing on localised areas of high density of tahr and on areas where tahr have mobbed up, thus protecting natural values at places.
- ▶ Establish the status of tahr populations off public conservation land.
- ▶ The Department will work with Ngāi Tahu to further implement the Treaty partnership in relation to tahr management at a governance level.

## Scope

**Included:** This document covers management of tahr from 1 July 2020 to 30 June 2021 including:

Consideration of:

- ▶ Contributions from recreational and concession hunting including guiding and wild animal recovery.
- ▶ Tahr on land of other tenures including surveys on Crown Pastoral Lease land.
- ▶ Research and monitoring relating to tahr.

Projections for:

- ▶ Official tahr control on public conservation land within and outside the feral range.

**Excluded:** This document does not deal with:

- ▶ Management of tahr control beyond 30 June 2021.
- ▶ Tahr farming.

## Contributions to control

A suite of contributors will deliver measures to control populations of tahr on public conservation land within the management units and beyond the feral range. Due to the COVID-19 pandemic, tourism based hunting and associated offsets are likely to be severely reduced. Domestic recreational and guided hunting, and WARO will be encouraged, and official control will occur as required to move towards HTCP targets. Where practical, a trial utilising professional ground hunters will be included in official control.

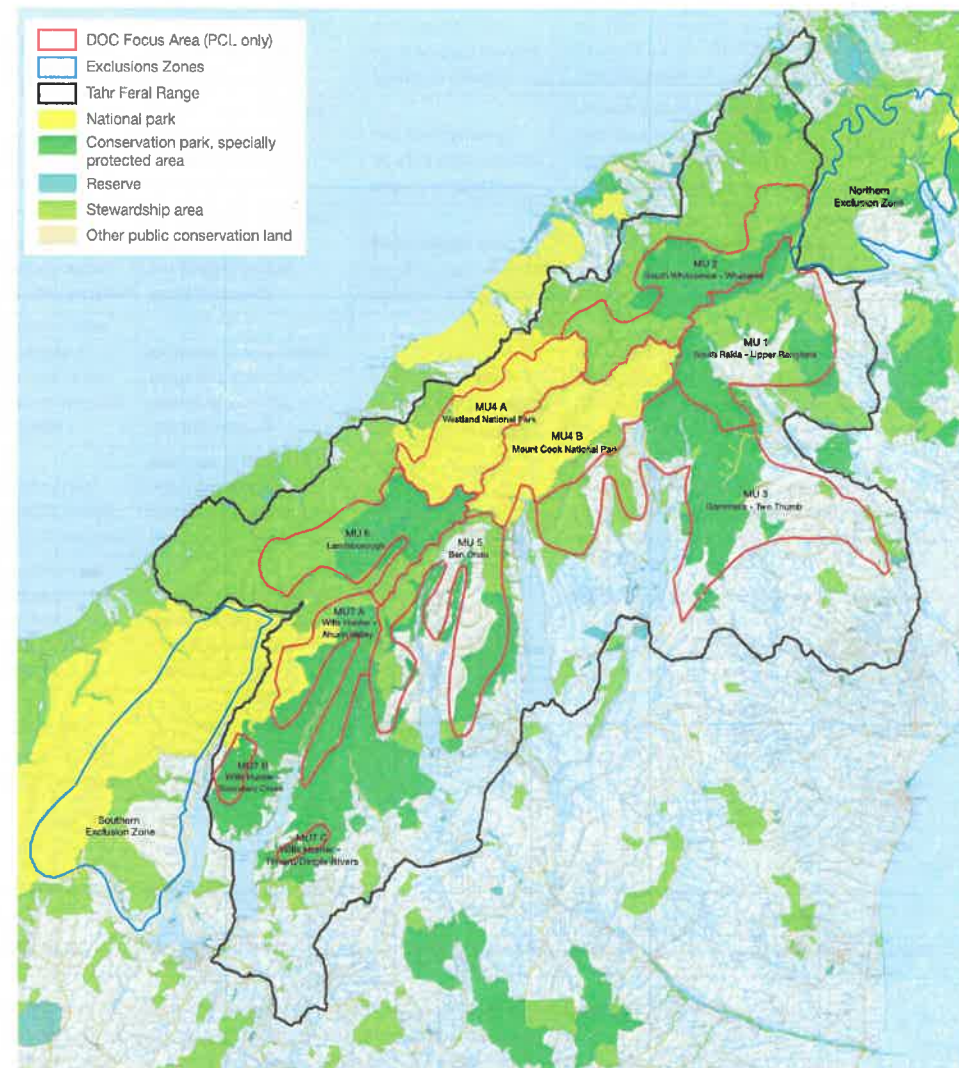
- ▶ Recreational hunting will contribute everywhere in the feral range encouraged by ballots and the provision of information on the location of bulls.
- ▶ Guided hunting will contribute in areas permitted by concessions.
- ▶ Aerially Assisted Trophy Hunting offset control will contribute as directed by DOC in areas of high tahr density (we anticipate this may not occur in 2020/2021).
- ▶ Commercial Wild Animal Recovery Operators may contribute throughout the tahr range over the year except in May and June (requires appropriate concessions to be issued for PCL).
- ▶ Official control funded by the Department of Conservation will contribute in national parks, where required throughout the management units, and extending beyond the feral range as required.

## Research and monitoring



The Department of Conservation will work with the Ngāi Tahu, tahr researchers, and stakeholders to develop an integrated research and monitoring programme. The programme will also support longer term planning and management by the Department of Conservation in partnership with Ngāi Tahu. The first step will be designing research and monitoring programmes across the following subject areas:

- ▶ Mātauranga Māori.
- ▶ Measuring tahr populations across the whole feral range including tahr off public conservation land.
- ▶ Tahr impacts on the alpine environment.
- ▶ Tahr harvest by hunters.
- ▶ Economic value (positive and negative) of tahr.
- ▶ Relative impacts of tahr and sympatric introduced herbivores.

## Map of Tahr Management Units



# Tahr Control Operational Plan: 1 July 2020 – 30 June 2021

<p>Priority order of management Unit in Himalayan Thar Control Plan 1993.</p>  <p>NZ Tahr. Photo: Meena Explores</p>	<p>Intervention levels of tahr/km<sup>2</sup> and population size in Himalayan Thar Control Plan 1993.</p>	<p>Control parameters in Himalayan Thar Control Plan 1993.</p>	<p>Control priority in meeting Himalayan Thar Control Plan 1993 targets.</p>  <p>Zora, Landsborough 1999 compared to 2012. Photo: DOC</p>	<p>Approach:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>▶ Recreational hunting will contribute throughout the management units.</li> <li>▶ WARO likely to be focused on national parks and areas with highest density.</li> <li>▶ Official control gives priority to outside the feral range, preventing spread, reducing towards zero density in national parks (management unit 4), and targeting localised high density areas and large group sizes.</li> <li>▶ Contract ground-based control will be considered in appropriate areas.</li> <li>▶ Tahr densities should not exceed 5/km<sup>2</sup> in localised areas or female-kid groups exceed 10 individuals.</li> </ul>			
				<p>Recreational hunting.</p>	<p>Guided hunting.</p>	<p>Wild Animal Recovery Operators.</p>	<p>Official control on public conservation land including contract aerial control.</p>
<p>Outside feral range.</p>	<p>Eliminate spread.</p>	<p>Control all tahr.</p>	<p>Official control incorporating ground surveillance in critical areas.</p>	<p>Encourage reporting of sightings and tahr controlled.</p>			<p>Reduce tahr populations to as close to zero density as practicable. Approximately 145 hours of search and aerial control supplemented by ground-based hunting<sup>1</sup>.</p>
<p>1. Wills/Makarora Hunter (Management Unit #7).</p>	<p>&lt;1/km<sup>2</sup> and population of &lt;100.</p>	<p>Tahr densities not to exceed 5/km<sup>2</sup> for any localised area</p> <p>Female-kid groups to be restricted, especially in close proximity to unit boundaries, to 10 or fewer per group</p> <p>Recreational and commercial hunting encouraged, official control where not within set levels.</p>	<p>Recreational hunting and commercial hunting; periodic official control as required.</p>	<p>Encourage hunters to look for, shoot, and report tahr.</p>	<p>Ground hunting throughout period. AATH per dates and locations in concession.</p>	<p>WARO 1 July 2020 – 30 April 2021 nannies and juveniles only.</p>	<p>Approximately 20 hours of search and control focusing on high density and female-kid groups (see above) and adjacent to the feral range boundary. Identifiable males will not be targeted.</p>
<p>2. Landsborough (Management Unit #6).</p>	<p>1.5/km<sup>2</sup> and population of 900.</p>		<p>Recreational hunting, guided hunting, and commercial hunting; official control as required.</p>	<p>Encourage hunters to look for, shoot, and report tahr. Ballots in Wilderness Area.</p>	<p>Ground hunting throughout period. AATH per dates and locations in concession.</p>	<p>WARO 1 July 2020 – 30 April 2021 nannies and juveniles only.</p>	<p>Approximately 40 hours of search and control focusing on high density and female-kid groups (see above). Identifiable males will not be targeted. Ground-based hunting considered<sup>1</sup>.</p>
<p>3. Aoraki/Mt Cook and Westland/ Tai Poutini National Parks (Management Unit #4).</p>	<p>&lt;1/km<sup>2</sup> and population of &lt;500.</p>		<p>Recreational hunting, guided hunting, and commercial hunting; official control as required (to reduce to zero density targeting all tahr).</p>	<p>Encourage hunters to look for, shoot, and report tahr.</p>	<p>Ground hunting throughout period. AATH per dates and locations in concession.</p>	<p>WARO 1 July 2020 – 30 April 2021.</p>	<p>Approximately 110 hours of search and control focusing on reducing tahr populations to as close to zero density as practicable. Control targets all tahr.</p>
<p>4. South Whitcombe/ Wanganui/Whataroa (Management Unit #2).</p>	<p>2.0/km<sup>2</sup> and population of 1,500.</p>		<p>Recreational hunting and guided hunting, commercial hunting, official control adjacent to park boundaries as required.</p>	<p>Encourage hunters to look for, shoot, and report tahr. Ballots in Wilderness Area.</p>	<p>Ground hunting throughout period. AATH per dates and locations in concession.</p>	<p>WARO 1 July 2020 – 30 April 2021 nannies and juveniles only.</p>	<p>Approximately 25 hours of search and control focusing on high density and female-kid groups (see above) and adjacent to the feral range boundary. Identifiable males will not be targeted.</p>
<p>5. Ben Ohau (Management Unit #5).</p>	<p>2.5/km<sup>2</sup> and population of 1,800.</p>		<p>Landowner control (on leasehold and private land); recreational hunting and guided hunting; commercial hunting; official control as required.</p>	<p>Encourage hunters to look for, shoot, and report tahr.</p>	<p>Ground hunting throughout period. AATH per dates and locations in concession.</p>	<p>WARO 1 July 2020 – 30 April 2021 nannies and juveniles only.</p>	<p>Approximately 10 hours of search and control focusing on high density and female-kid groups (see above) and adjacent to national park boundary. Identifiable males will not be targeted.</p>
<p>6. South Rakaia/Rangitata (Management Unit #1).</p>	<p>2.5/km<sup>2</sup> and population of 2,000.</p>		<p>Recreational hunting; guided hunting; commercial recovery; Official control as required.</p>	<p>Encourage hunters to look for, shoot, and report tahr.</p>	<p>Ground hunting throughout period. AATH per dates and locations in concession.</p>	<p>WARO 1 July 2020 – 30 April 2021 nannies and juveniles only.</p>	<p>Approximately 25 hours of search and control focusing on high density and female-kid groups (see above) and on areas inaccessible to ground hunters. Identifiable males will not be targeted.</p>
<p>7. Gammack/Two Thumb (Management Unit #3).</p>	<p>2.0/km<sup>2</sup> and population of 3,000.</p>		<p>Landowner control (on lease or private land); recreational hunting and guided hunting; commercial hunting; official control as required adjacent to park boundary.</p>	<p>Encourage hunters to look for, shoot, and report tahr.</p>	<p>Ground hunting throughout period. AATH as per dates and locations in concession.</p>	<p>WARO 1 July 2020 – 30 April 2021 nannies and juveniles only.</p>	<p>Approximately 20 hours of search and control focusing on high density and female-kid groups (see above) and adjacent to the national park boundary. Identifiable males will not be targeted. Ground-based hunting considered<sup>1</sup>.</p>

<sup>1</sup> If ground-based contract hunting is implemented, hours of aerial search and control will be reduced.





# Himalayan Tahr Control Operational Plan Engagement 2019 and 2020

Peter Lawless  
Phoenix Facilitation  
26 June 2020

## 1. Purpose

To summarise stakeholder and other engagement in the preparation of operational control plans for 2019 and 2020.

## 2. Context

The Department of Conservation is required to complete annual operational plans for the management of Himalayan tahr. In preparing those plans the Department engages with stakeholders, its Treaty partner Ngāi Tahu, and relevant statutory bodies to fully understand the context before finalising the plan for the coming year. Over 2019 the relevant planning year changed from a September start date to a July start date to come into line with the Department's budgetary cycle. In 2020 engagement processes were interrupted by the global covid-19 pandemic.

The Department engaged through:

1. The Tahr Plan Implementation Liaison Group established in 1994;
2. Formal communications and ongoing verbal discussion by staff with a wide range of parties including formal briefings for statutory boards and authorities;
3. Responding to queries and comments from organisations and individuals.

The current document captures only the engagement through more formal processes as informal engagement is not captured in any central repository.

## 3. Engagement 2019

In July 2019 the Department and Ngāi Tahu conducted 21 interviews with stakeholders in the tahr management system. The Department also had direct discussions with Ngāi Tahu.

The purpose of the work was to provide DOC officials with a better understanding of interests associated with tahr management to enable more effective planning for tahr operations.

Interviews were semi-structured in a consistent format. Where possible they were face to face, but where logistics required were using telecommunications.

The sample pool for the interviews was made up of all entities known by DOC to be associated with tahr. All were extended an invitation to all entities to participate and only a few of the less active operators did not respond. Where there was an overarching body we engaged with that and where that was lacking for concessionaires we reached out to them individually. The sample was biased towards those active in tahr hunting as there were many operators. Conversely, environmental, and recreational interests were represented by just a couple of organisations although they have a large membership. The numbers expressing views should therefore not be taken to say anything about the balance of opinion in the wider New Zealand population. While we use the term "stakeholders" here it includes bodies with statutory responsibilities such as appointed boards and Crown agencies.

In these cases informants were providing a perspective and information rather than official views of their bodies that would have to be developed through appropriate processes.

The interviews were analysed and presented to the 6 August 2019 meeting of the Thar Plan Implementation Liaison Group (Attachment 1). All those present affirmed that it was an accurate record. At that meeting a draft Operational Plan for 1 September 2019 to 30 June 2020 was also discussed. Drafting of that Plan had taken into account all of the information received from stakeholders and others to date.

Comments were received and documented at the TPILG meeting. The Plan was then reviewed in light of those comments before it was signed off within the Department. Forest and Bird subsequently (in 2020) filed for a judicial review of the vires of that Plan and hearing have yet to be held.

#### 4. Engagement 2020

Building on engagement from 2019 and ongoing engagement by staff the Department scheduled a meeting of the TPILG for 24 March 2019. Documents were circulated on 20 March 2020 including a framework for the 2019/2020 Operational Plan. New Zealand was in a level 3 covid-19 response on 23 March with level 4 announced for midnight on the 25<sup>th</sup>. The meeting was therefore deferred.

Once it became clear that the Department would be able to conduct operations in 2020 (once COVID-19 alert levels had lowered), a limited round of engagement commenced on 26 May 2020. This engagement sought to:

1. Understand what had changed for stakeholders, particularly in relation to the pandemic;
2. Inform stakeholders of progress with the 2019/2020 Plan;
3. Test reactions to proposals that the 2020/2021 Plan involve targeting:
  - a. all tahr in National Parks to achieve an effective zero density as required by the 1993 Himalayan Thar Control Plan;
  - b. areas outside the feral range to control spread; and
  - c. areas of high density in the management units within the feral range.

#### **The timeline was:**

18 May Online meeting with Kara Edwards of Ngāi Tahu

19 May Emails Edwards/Reddiex confirming Ngāi Tahu support for engagement process

20 May Email Holborow/Edwards draft communication to stakeholders

21 May Email from Ben Reddiex to stakeholders (as below)

21 May Email from Reddiex to DOC Directors with an update

22 May Email James Scott/Reddiex suggesting Darren Clifford, Premium Meats join TPILG

25 May Email from Charmayne King inviting engagement

25 May Email from Holborow confirming phone call with Premium Meats that they are being added into the process.

26 May Emails Reddiex/Game Animal Council regarding need to clarify purpose of engagement.

26 May Email from James Holborow clarifying the nature of the engagement. Signals national parks and high-density areas. (As below)

26 May Emails King/NZDA confirming engagement

28 May Emails Reddiex/Holborow/Lawless instructing follow up phone calls to ensure engagement with those that had not responded

### **Interviews**

26 May 2020 Jan Finlayson FMC (James Holborow, Ben Reddiex, Peter Lawless)

29 May 2020 Garry Herbert AATH (James Holborow, Ben Reddiex, Peter Lawless)

31 May 2020 Simon Williamson HCFE (James Holborow, Ben Reddiex, Peter Lawless)

3 June 2020 Peter Anderson and Nicky Snoyink Forest and Bird (James Holborow, Ben Reddiex, Peter Lawless, Kara Edwards)

3 June 2020 Marcus and Kaylyn Pinney (James Holborow, Ben Reddiex, Peter Lawless, Kara Edwards)

3 June 2020 Gwyn Thurlow and David Keen NZDSA (James Holborow, Ben Reddiex, Peter Lawless, Kara Edwards)

3 June 2020 Toby Wallis (James Holborow, Ben Reddiex, Peter Lawless)

4 June 2020 James Cagney Hunting Guides (James Holborow, Ben Reddiex, Peter Lawless)

4 June 2020 Gus and Polly Gordon WARO (James Holborow, Ben Reddiex, Peter Lawless, Kara Edwards)

8 June 2020 Snow Hewetson Tahr Foundation (James Holborow, Ben Reddiex, Peter Lawless, Kara Edwards)

9 June 2020? James Scott (James Holborow, Kara Edwards)

8 June 2020 Tim Gale, Geoff Kerr, and Garry Ottmann Game Animal Council (James Holborow, Ben Reddiex, Peter Lawless, Kara Edwards)

### **After interviews**

10 June 2020 Nicky Snoyink/Reddiex request to serve papers at TPILG (denied 14 June)

11 June 2020 Kevin Gallagher, April Hussey, Tom Burns LINZ (James Holborow, Peter Lawless)

12 June 2020 Email Gwyn Thurlow/Reddiex formal statement of NZDSA position (as below)

12 June 2020 Email Tim Gale formal statement of Game Animal Council position (as below)

15 June 2020 Reddiex/Snoyink advises addresses to serve papers

16 June 2020 Reddiex email to TPILG with supporting papers

19 June 2020 TPILG meeting

A summary of the results were circulated to members of the TPILG for its meeting on 19 June 2020 reproduced below on page 5 *Tahr 2020 – Interviews*). None present suggested that the summary was inaccurate.

Both before and after that meeting written communications were received from the parties below seeking to ensure their positions were clearly articulated. Apart from *Geoff Kerr MU4 tahr population dynamic modelling* (Attachment 2) these are included below in section 7 of this report.

## 5. What was said and heard before and at engagement meetings

For each engagement online meeting (or face to face where that was possible) James Holborow ensured the following was covered:

*To bring you up to date on where we're up to:*

- *Co-governance arrangements were formalised between DOC and Ngāi Tahu with Kara Edwards appointed as the lead for the iwi*
- *In 2019/2020 almost all of the objectives of the annual Tahr Control Operational Plan were achieved thanks to the efforts of hunters, concessionaires, WARO operators, and hunting commissioned by the Department. This control saw 1950 tahr removed from within the feral range and tahr control outside the feral range is continuing now.*
- *John Parkes was commissioned to review current information and develop proposals for ongoing research and monitoring with engagement starting shortly.*
- *DOC and LINZ have been working together on the approach to tahr on pastoral lease and occupation licence land, aerial survey, spring.*
- *As discussed in December we are looking at developing a longer-term tahr control operational plan (c. 4-5 years).*
- *Following feedback in December we decided to focus on a further 1 year tahr control operational plan, with the intent of also building a longer-term plan over the coming months.*
- *Covid-19 has changed things and our focus was how to sustain communities, employment and industry;*
- *COVID settings allow us to do fieldwork, modified tahr ballot*
- *Good at moment, hope keep at same alert level*
- *Govt has a driver around employment opportunities, would want to leverage (with economics and efficiency)*
- *Having the tahr programme operating has some economic activity*
- *We couldn't engage with you as we wanted to.*
- *But still critical that we have plan in place towards goals HTCP*
- *Like to understand what's happening from your perspective before we get into the detail...*
- *This plan is about tahr control in MUs on PCL, built on simplicity. Want to cover off*
- *All tahr in parks*
- *HT control in other area.*
- *Understand WARO*
- *Potential employment*
- *Other topics like rec hunting, monitoring*
- *Control in National Parks;*
  - *Key issue we flagged last year to work on this year*
  - *Last year TCOP didn't target id males but put effort into parks*

- Not sure exact number there, last estimate, XXX shot
- Target density on NP plan zero, HTCP says zero, **at this point our plan is to target all tahr in National Parks**
- High tahr density areas outside National Parks;
  - Where are they?
  - Areas of significant potential conflict with hunters
  - Carcasses - leave or remove
- WARO
  - The previous principle is if animals can be removed by WARO that's good and plan says that (ecology unclear)
  - Who's doing WARO?
  - These are the data.
  - Stakeholders – what do you think.
  - Operators - What are blockers, enablers
- Monitoring
  - John Parkes working on it
- AATH
  - People owed us, give option for those that want to.
  - We'll get them into high density areas if want to.
- Recreational hunting opportunities – we'll ensure there are areas left.
- What are your thoughts on tahr off PCL?
- What are your thoughts on tahr outside the feral range?

In a document circulated to the TPLIG the following summary was provided:

*Tahr 2020 – Interviews*

*16 June 2020*

*Introduction*

*DOC is preparing the operational plan for tahr control for the 2020/2021 year.*

*Engagement on the plan was delayed by the COVID pandemic. We had expected to begin in March but paused due to the COVID response uncertainty on what the COVID settings in July 2020 could be.*

*Stakeholders were interviewed to understand the changes to their situation post-COVID and test ideas for the coming year. Their contributions will help inform the draft operational plan for discussion with the Tahr Plan Implementation Liaison Group on 19 June 2020.*

*Summary comments are provided below from discussions with stakeholders held by Kara Edwards (Ngāi Tahu tahr lead), Ben Reddiex, James Holborow and Peter Lawless. A draft tahr control operational plan will be prepared for the TPILG.*

*Key points emerging were:*

- 1. The proposition of shooting all tahr found in National Parks and in high density areas on other public conservation land was a focus for most stakeholders.*
- 2. If official control in national parks does not include bulls it is likely to be in contravention of legally binding Plans and Policies.*



3. *If bulls are targeted in national parks there will be an impact on the business prospects for a few tahr-based tourism operators.*
4. *This has been an unprecedented year with the lack of overseas hunters having significant impact on the hunting sector.*
5. *The numbers of tahr and their environmental impacts are not known with any certainty (across the Management Units) making it difficult to know what level of population reduction will lead to achieving the metrics in the 1993 Himalayan Tahr Control Plan.*
6. *Some parties oppose the use of effort measures (i.e. hours of control in a place versus a target number of tahr to be shot) in the operational plan while others support the concept.*
7. *WARO should be enabled though there is a relatively small contribution expected this year under current conditions. This could change if proposed processing facilities are opened, noting this is unlikely before the end of 2020.*
8. *Work has begun with LINZ on tahr management on Crown pastoral lease lands with a focus on leaseholders adjacent to Aoraki Mount Cook National Park.*
9. *Uniform support for establishing research and monitoring programme to aid future tahr management (noting John Parkes is leading this process now).*

*Opinion was polarised between those wanting the 1993 Plan to be implemented rapidly, and diverse hunting interests that want control to slow. The Game Animal Council advocated a management regime based on effects of tahr, rather than one focused on numbers of tahr. Most parties recognised that the Department has a job to do, even if operational decisions do not find favour with all parties.*

*We engaged with the following via online and phone meetings:*

- *Jan Finlayson – Federated Mountain Clubs*
- *Garry Herbert – Aerially Assisted Trophy Hunting*
- *Kaylyn and Marcus Pinney – Safari Club International*
- *James Cagney – New Zealand Professional Hunting Guides Association*
- *Simon Williamson – Federated Farmers High Country Industry Group*
- *Peter Anderson and Nicky Snoyink – Forest and Bird*
- *Gwyn Thurlow and David Keen – New Zealand Deerstalkers' Association Inc*
- *Toby Wallis – AATH, Alpine Helicopters*
- *Gus and Polly Gordon – Southern Alps Meats, Glacier Country Helicopters*
- *Snow Hewetson – New Zealand Tahr Foundation*
- *James Scott – Fox & Franz Heliservices, WARO*
- *Tim Gale, Geoff Kerr, and Garry Ottmann – Game Animal Council*
- *Kevin Gallagher, April Hussey, and Tom Burns – LINZ*

Draft notes from each meeting were provided to DOC but there has not yet been time to review those and they remain draft.

## 6. At the TPILG meeting 19 June 2020

**Summary of what Ben Reddiex said in relation to the Ops Plan at start of meeting:**

- *We really appreciate your time and energy discussing tahr management with us today and in all the interactions we have had to date.*
- *I want to acknowledge our Treaty Partner (thanks Kara for joining us remotely today) – and as previously mentioned to this forum DOC is committed to exploring co-governance with Ngāi Tahu.*
- *Agenda today.... walk through the items*
- *Mentioned Jobs for Nature opportunity – research and monitoring potentially*
- *Tahr population monitoring report (delay as sought a cover document to help explain sequencing etc. – will be on website Monday)*
- *Whatever decisions are made some parties will be unhappy. DOC and Ngāi Tahu can listen and understand but cannot step away from the responsibility for the decisions.*
- *Our purpose in working with you is twofold.*
- *First, we need to understand the current situation as well as possible to enable us to make the best decisions (we have circulated a lot of the material – and will provide some more today – our focus is listening). It's about enabling people to understand what's happening.*
- *Second purpose – you are well informed about those decisions so that you can do the things you need to do.*
- *There will also be areas where agreement will not happen. Differences will remain, and we will have to make decisions based on the information in front of us.*
- *As chair, I will be listening for agreement and fundamental differences and weighing these against what law and policy require of us. Once these are clear I will move the discussion along to ensure that we cover everything that needs to be said.*
- *I will ensure the 'next steps' after today are outlined at the end.*

**[We will after the meeting]**

*Take stock of today's information*

*Engage with our Treaty Partner*

*Make decisions and inform people by 30 June.*

The following discussion occurred on proposed operations plan 2020/2021:

Damien Bromwich provided updates on Tahr outside the feral range with a PowerPoint presentation. He said: *Priorities are how to best utilise the departments resources outside the feral range. Focusing on using different method of control other than aerial. Work being done on trail-cameras and surveillance systems. Time frame for this work is long term- 5 years.*

Comments from TPILG members were:

- Should Mount Hutt range be added to the feral range due the natural barrier?
- Sites listed on PowerPoint had control post Covid due to conservation values.
- Asked for a copy of data on the conservational values and how they are measured as being higher in some places.
- Agree that we do not want to increase the feral range, but maybe borders outside that are easier to defend against tahr in some places.

James Holborow said that the best way to contribute to the work outside the feral range regarding research and monitoring is via John Parks engagement process. He agreed to prepare and distribute summary/fact sheet of the work being done outside the feral range (after operations complete and of June).

James Holborow presented the Proposed Tahr Control Operational plan with a PowerPoint presentation. He agreed to send out the estimate of tahr numbers updated with the 2019 survey data.

Comments received from TPILG members were:

- Research regarding numbers is lacking.
- To take average out of a trend is misleading- need experts engaged with TPILG to answer questions around tahr numbers.
- National park concerns- affects AATH trophies, understanding how important on impact for guided hunters/rec hunters and international hunting.
- Department to think about the population estimates after the cull.
- Ground control is controlled by same rules and restricted as in the plan to ensure they are targeting what they are meant to be.
- Process- last opportunity for engagement, difficult to receive presentations on the day.
- Better understanding of the ecological impact on low density of small bull tahr, research required. Ngāi Tahu will work directly with DOC.
- Impact of targeting non-identifiable males long term.
- Improving access into Westland National Park.
- This plan could achieve zero densities in some areas that may not have ecological priorities.
- Benefits to leaving some tahr for kea.
- NZDA cannot support the proposed Plan. Reason is cull is excessive. Will diminish recreational value of tahr herd. Expect a massive backlash. NZDSA asks that DOC put the Plan on hold. Needs more analysis of the proposed hours of control. Support operation outside feral range. Want a changed plan that reflects COVID-19. Recreational users will not support this plan and it is not acceptable to guides or the meat sector.
- Hunting sector wants sustainable trophy hunting herds. We have a real fear that degree of control proposed will decimate herds and wipe us off the map. This would represent no balance and fail to avoid a boom bust scenario.
- Hunters opposed shooting bulls in national parks. Asking the department to reconsider.

### **Some concluding comments by Ben Reddiex:**

- *Thanks for full, free and frank exchange*
- *My strong intent is to continue engaging with the TPILG like this (COVID has provided some real challenges to doing this optimally),*
- *Our preference is to not see a repeat of 2018.... there were damaging social media posts, misinformation etc. which has impacted our staff and continues to impact our staff now.*
- *If people attempt to act inappropriately in social media as mentioned above (damaging posts and misinformation) it will make it very hard to work in this way in the future – a consequence is that we would have to work differently with those stakeholders into the future.*
- *I want to make it clear that I need to look after our staff – if there is misinformation we will need to respond assertively*
- *We have already seen comments in social media relating to “not being surprised if someone shoots a chopper down, others like Tarrant will have a license”*

## 7. Record of key correspondence referred to above

Thu, 21 May, 10:58

Ben Reddiex

TO:

- Kara Edwards and Sarah Wilson (Ngāi Tahu)
- Tim Gale, Geoff Kerr, Garry Ottmann, and Don Hammond (Game Animal Council)
- Trevor Chappell and Dave Keen (NZDA)
- Marcus Pinney and Kaylyn Pinney (Safari Club International)
- Gerald Telford and James Cagney (NZ Professional Hunting Guides Association)
- James Scott and Doug Maxwell (WARO)
- Peter Anderson and Nicky Snoyink (Forest & Bird)
- Jan Finlayson (Federated Mountain Clubs)
- Simon Williamson (High Country Federated Farmers)
- Mark Brough (NZ Conservation Authority)
- Helen Ivy (Canterbury/Aoraki Conservation Board)
- Snow Hewetson (NZ Tahr Foundation)
- Gary Herbert (AATH concessionaire)
- Gus Gordon (Meat processor)
- Jennifer Williamson (Tahr Farmers)
- Kevin Gallagher and Dave Mole (LINZ)
- Simon Guild (NZ Game Estates Association)

*Kia ora koutou*

*I hope you are all keeping well and have got through COVID Alert Levels 4 & 3 okay. It is certainly a challenging situation ahead for us all.*

**Purpose of email:** *We want to engage with you and your sector as we plan for tahr management from 1 July 2020 to 30 June 2021.*

*Much has happened since the Tahr Plan Implementation Liaison Group last met (noting that the March meeting was cancelled). We want to report progress on tahr management and set up opportunities for you to provide input into the priorities for 2020/2021.*

*In 2019/2020 almost all of the objectives of the annual Tahr Control Operational Plan were achieved thanks to the efforts of hunters, concessionaires, WARO operators, and hunting commissioned by the Department. This control saw 1950 tahr removed from within the feral range and tahr control outside the feral range is continuing now. The app for recording the results of recreational hunting was made operational. Dr John Parkes was commissioned to review current information and*

*develop proposals for ongoing research and monitoring with engagement starting shortly. Co-governance arrangements were formalised between DOC and Ngāi Tahu with Kara Edwards appointed as the lead for the iwi. DOC and LINZ have been working together on the approach to tahr on pastoral lease and occupation licence land. As discussed in December we are looking at developing a longer-term tahr control operational plan (c. 4-5 years). Following feedback in December we decided to focus on a further 1 year tahr control operational plan, with the intent of also building a longer-term plan over the coming months.*

*In the middle of all this the COVID-19 pandemic has substantially altered the working environment. We moved quickly and were able to open up hunting opportunities when Level 3 finished and the last five periods of the tahr ballot are able to happen. Opportunities for tourism-based aspects of tahr related industry have been severely curtailed and we need to understand how to support the sector while meeting targets for tahr management. Tahr control outside the feral range is continuing now. We want to understand what options exist for the under-utilised capacity in the industry to assist in official control under contract.*

*To encourage engagement in the constrained situation we can offer engagement through:*

- a. Email;*
- b. Phone calls or online meeting with individuals, organisations, and companies;*
- c. Conference calls or larger online meetings with sectors;*
- d. A full meeting of the TPILG will be in June, most likely online.*

*Our approach will be to set up times as soon as possible (certainly in the next 10 days) with all those that want to engage for a discussion so we can understand how things are shaping up for you in 2020/2021 and gauge how we might approach operations for the year. We will then document this in a proposed Tahr Control Operational Plan for the year and review that at the TPILG meeting. After we review the draft and your contributions the plan will be approved.*

*We know this is a difficult time for many and my hope is that by working together we can find the best way forward for the coming year.*

*If we don't hear back from you in the next few days, our admin staff will still follow up to see if you would like a chat on the phone.*

*Ngā mihi*

Kara Edwards & Ben Reddiex

**Ben Reddiex (PhD)**

Director Operations – Issues & Programmes  
Wellington Office – Department of Conservation

M: +64 27 556 1857

Conservation for prosperity - *Tiakina te taiao, kia puawai*

[www.doc.govt.nz](http://www.doc.govt.nz)

**From:** James Holborow <[jholborow@doc.govt.nz](mailto:jholborow@doc.govt.nz)>  
**Sent:** Tuesday, 26 May 2020 8:31 p.m.  
**To** same list as Ben Reddiex above  
**Subject:** Update - TPILG call for engagement

*Hi all*

*Thanks to those of you who responded to the initial email from Ben and Kara. There were a couple of requests for clarification regards the engagement.*

*I will be on each call for the department and Peter Lawless will be there as the plan writer. We will be joined by Ben Reddiex and Kara Edwards when they are able to attend.*

*Peter Lawless will complete a summary of each interview and, in discussion with other team members on the call summarise insights*

*The interviews will be a balance giving and receiving information. The important things are:*

- *For us to understand if/how things have changed for you over the last year;*
- *For everyone to understand what DOC foresees in the next Tahr Control Operational Plan at this point; and*
- *For us to understand your perspectives on the approach to tahr control from 1 July 2020 – 30 June 2021.*

*Specific discussion points include control in the national parks and identification of opportunities for control in other areas of high density. We are also keen to share ideas and perspectives on other matters including recreational hunting, WARO, research and monitoring, and AATH.*

*Charmayne King, who works with Peter, will have emailed you with a poll of times for the engagement. Please respond to Charmayne regards timing.*

*Kind regards*

*James*



**From:** Gwyn Thurlow <[Gwyn.Thurlow@deerstalkers.org.nz](mailto:Gwyn.Thurlow@deerstalkers.org.nz)>  
**Sent:** Friday, 12 June 2020 12:25 PM  
**To:** James Holborow <[jholborow@doc.govt.nz](mailto:jholborow@doc.govt.nz)>  
**Cc:** Ben Reddiex <[breddiex@doc.govt.nz](mailto:breddiex@doc.govt.nz)>; NZDA National President <[nat.pres@deerstalkers.org.nz](mailto:nat.pres@deerstalkers.org.nz)>; smokingtahr@xtra.co.nz (<[smokingtahr@xtra.co.nz](mailto:smokingtahr@xtra.co.nz)> <[smokingtahr@xtra.co.nz](mailto:smokingtahr@xtra.co.nz)>)  
**Subject:** NZDA: DOC Tahr Plan meeting - NZDA position summary

*Dear James,*

*Ahead of next week's TPILG meeting, we wanted to provide you with NZDA's key points regarding the proposed tahr management plan for the next 12 month period:*

*Overriding principles:*

*1) Prior to any substantive tahr culls, DOC must carry out research and survey the impact of the current HTC plan's outcome and impact on both (a) tahr herd numbers and herd structure, and (2) vegetation, in order to provide quantitative support for future operations and the scale/level of Official intervention. DOC's anecdotal evidence is not sufficient.*

*2) It is concerning that DOC do not know the number of tahr – that needs to be determined for each management unit. We need information to make informed decisions.*

*3) DOC must not refer to only certain parts of the HTCP, it must be read (and implemented) in whole and in the spirit of the plan. Maintaining tahr as a managed hunting resource is at the heart of the HTCP.*

*4) COVID-19 has profoundly changed everyone's working assumptions. We need to ensure we reflect the overriding Government objective of 'recovery', jobs and the economy, especially in light of tourism to both Westland and Mt Cook NP areas and adjacent towns. There is absolutely no doubt of both the recreational and economic value of the tahr herd for New Zealanders (commercial operators and recreational users alike). The economic value of the tahr herd, especially bull tahr, is now an acute issue for people and families involved in hunting tahr.*

- *We would strongly encourage DOC to follow/implement GAC's advice.*
- *DOC should focus solely on the exclusion zone and buffer zone this year. Presently the absolute focus should be to limit tahr to their feral range.*
- *Again, the future plan must state no bulls should be targeted, including in National Parks given the above overriding principles. The reasons for this are well documented and many.*
- *In the National Parks, hunters must be given the first opportunity to hunt areas that DOC want to carry out Official control – i.e. tell hunters so they can go in first, i.e. 2 months' notice.*
- *Where Official control is to be carried out, DOC should aim to reduce conflict with hunters and control un-accessible areas, e.g. Copland Valley is accessible, but Cook River is not accessible.*
- *Research and review of the outcome of last year's cull is essential before any plan can be verified as effective and meeting the needs of all stakeholders.*

- *Commercial hunting and recreational hunting will now control tahr numbers of many areas – anecdotal evidence is that the cull last year went too far in some areas.*
- *Official control around areas popular by hunters (recreational and commercial) should be expressly avoided in all Official culls.*
- *NZDA would like to be closely involved with identifying areas where tahr are seen by DOC to be overpopulated.*
- *DOC should aim to give recreational hunters additional heli permit access/landing sites, including seeking to do so in National Parks, especially given the lack of commercial flights from tourism (there is reduced impact on quiet enjoyment and so providing such access would not negatively impact conservation values) in the coming years.*

*I look forward to the meeting on Friday, 19<sup>th</sup> and coming up with an inclusive and innovative plan for the trying and uncertain year ahead.*

*Kind regards,*

*Gwyn*

*Kind Regards,*

**Gwyn Thurlow**

*Chief Executive and General Counsel*

tim.gale@nzgac.org.nz 12 Jun 2020, 10:18

to Kara, Ben, James, me, Rod

Dear all,

Please find attached the summary of feedback from our ZOOM meeting 9<sup>th</sup> June 2020 regarding the development of the draft Tahr Control Operational Plan 2020-21.

Any questions please get in touch.

Kind Regards

**Tim Gale**  
General Manager  
New Zealand Game Animal Council

*June 12th, 2020*

*Himalayan Tahr Control Plan Draft Operational Plan 2020-2021*

*Dear Kara, Ben, James and Peter,*

*Cc Rod Treder*

*Thank you all for the opportunity to meet on Monday to provide input into development of the draft Himalayan Tahr Control Operational Plan 2020-2021.*

*Following is a summary of the key points we conveyed during our meeting, plus some additional thoughts. We are available at any time to discuss them or elaborate further.*

*Context*

*Ngāi Tahu and the Department of Conservation co-govern the administration of the Himalayan Tahr Control Plan 1993. The Game Animal Council is a statutory body created under the Game Animal Council Act 2013. We make the following points pursuant to the functions conferred on the Council under that Act, and the Minister of Conservation's letter of expectation 2019-2020. The Council's views are, in part, derived from information from the hunting sector. COVID-19 has changed the way New Zealand operates, and will continue to do so for some time. Measures imposed to control the virus have severely impacted the hunting sector. The tourist hunting industry has been effectively shut down, costing many jobs and threatening businesses and livelihoods. Recreational hunting has been impossible or restricted over its peak period.*

*Summary of our advice and recommendations*

*Tahr control operations 1st July 2020 to 30th June 2021*

*Tahr outside the feral range: Prioritise the control of tahr populations outside the feral range. This is a significant threat to conservation through range expansion. Once established, the future cost of removing them will be exponentially greater and adverse environmental effects will be more pronounced. We made particular reference to animals known to be close to Fiordland National Park*

— keeping them out of the park must be a top priority. The hunting sector supports tahr control outside the feral range at any time of year, with the proviso of animal welfare considerations when dependent kids are at foot.

*Tahr inside the feral range but outside of National Parks: Undertake an assessment of priority areas for Departmental tahr control. These are areas where there are high tahr numbers in places of high ecological significance, and where the hunting sector cannot be effective in reducing them. Use information from 2019-2020 operations together with information from the hunting sector to identify those locations. The Game Animal Council offers its assistance to the Department to identify locations fitting these criteria. Identifiable males are not to be controlled. Undertake control between 1st July and 31st August to minimize impacts on the hunting sector.*

*Tahr inside National Parks: Undertake control operations to reduce tahr numbers to less than 1 per sq km in MU4, the intervention density specified in the HTCP. Identifiable males are not to be controlled. The commitment to not culling identifiable males was a critical factor in getting general agreement on the last plan and is likely to be the same for this year's plan. The GAC's population modelling shows that focusing effort on controlling females and juveniles is the best economic and conservation strategy, and also moves the tahr population to the target density most quickly.*

*The 2019/20 operational plan left bulls, in recognition of their extremely high recreational and commercial values, with the expectation that hunters would make a significant bull harvest in April-June 2020, at the end of the planning period. COVID-19 removed that opportunity. The guided hunting sector has been decimated and requires significant assistance to sustain jobs and family incomes. The industry expects the full return of international hunters. It has rebooked most hunters who could not come to New Zealand for the 2020 season and has additional confirmed bookings for 2021 and beyond. Removing males from national parks would not only remove those employment and income opportunities but would create conflict within the hunting sector by eliminating a third of the huntable tahr habitat on public land. The modelling shows there are only a few hundred bulls in national parks and leaving them will not pose a conservation risk. Mature males have a high mortality rate, so many will die of natural causes if not killed by the Department. Control of female and juvenile tahr should be undertaken between 1st July and 14th November.*

*Contribution of WARO to tahr control: Where tahr control is required, and there is a market for those animals, WARO operators should have the opportunity to make use of the most economical areas for carcass recovery. Timing of WARO operations will depend on market requirements.*

*Ground Control of tahr: The GAC supports the use of professional ground hunters to undertake ground control of tahr, thus creating much needed work for the sector. Professional hunters are highly capable in these environments, meet health and safety requirements, have helicopter-assisted operation experience, and are likely to be particularly effective in some areas that are not amenable to aerial control. The GAC offers to work with the professional hunting sector and DOC to design and administer such programs.*

*Non-Toxic projectiles: To manage an avoidable risk to kea, the GAC recommends the use of non-toxic projectiles for all operations.*

*Yours sincerely,  
Tim Gale  
General Manager  
NZ Game Animal Council*

## Email of 23 June from Gwyn Thurlow

### **Background**

The meeting was held from 1.30pm to 5.00pm hosted by DOC at the Racecourse, Christchurch. From NZDA - Gwyn Thurlow (travelled from Wellington) and David Keen attended.

### **Introductions**

**Ben Reddix** [sic] started the meeting **noting that:**

- DOC is exploring co-governance of tahr with Ngāi Tahu.
- DOC notes there are key knowledge gaps.
- The Government has told DOC to invest in jobs.
- Counts of tahr were undertaken prior to last year's cull – a copy of the report was tabled. We had no idea it had been done. GAC noted it was done in September 2019 and was upset it was not shared with them until today. It provided a population assessment.
- It was noted we were here to make a decision.
- DOC and Ngāi Tahu can 'listen' with the purpose of:
  - o Understanding current situation to make the best decisions.
  - o Today is about listening.
  - o Ben wants to bring "us" into the decision-making process and get an "understanding".
- DOC are looking for "common ground".
- Ben noted that "judgement calls will be made and that he does not need us to agree to make decisions.
- He noted he will explain the next steps at the end of the day's meeting.

Ben then asked the room if they wanted to say how Covid-19 has affected them.

**Gwyn Thurlow spoke for the NZDA, stating:**

1. NZDA has been impacted. Our members and branches have been materially negatively impacted.
2. Membership and renewal processes were impacted for the worse.
3. DOC ballots were lost
4. Income from branches (lodges and club nights) were lost due to the lockdown.
5. Members were experiencing hardship. NZDA may see a lack of renewals due to hardship.

**Gwyn noted** there was one positive, the FWF/GAC meat the needs programme. Noting that should apply to tahr and could be a template for the future. Ben acknowledged this.

### Liaison Group – terms of reference

#### **Ben Reddix then noted:**

- The terms of reference need to be reviewed and updated. Ben wanted to get it back in 3 weeks, Gwyn asked for longer and 2 months was agreed. **Action Point: Give feedback.**

#### General discussion followed

- **Marcus P / Kaylyn P (SCI NZ) noted:** “Should the tahr herd be a herd of special interest” and noted we seem to be heading that way and they should be managed by GAC. John Parkes said “you need Ministerial direction to make that happen by way of a formal statement”.

#### Control outside Feral Range - presentation

**Damien (DOC), project manager, working for James H (DOC) made a presentation.** Focus on exclusion zones. Going forward DOC will have a greater emphasis on this and want to halt the spread of tahr.

Tahr killed – 2019: 382; 2020, 424 and ongoing. 511 were killed at Mt Hutt alone.

**Gwyn asked** “what time period are you looking at to get tahr culled outside the official range?”  
Response, “20-30 years currently” at the current rate, but “ideally 5 years”.

It was noted that wallabies are a problem too. **Ben Reddix noted** it was being addressed and they have \$27m over 5 years for wallaby control of DOC land alone.

#### 2020/21 draft plan - presentation

**James H (DOC) presented.** He had a summary of the 2019/20 control by PowerPoint presentation. He noted DOC only did ‘official’ control from December 2019.

Key points:

- 2019/20 outcome: 1,950 tahr killed, plus 10,000 by DOC. Total killed ~12,000 plus what recreational hunters killed and not reported.
- John Parkes will develop a research and monitoring programme.
- DOC and LINZ will undertake an aerial survey of private land and leasehold land to establish total tahr numbers.
- We will need to develop a long term plan (about December 2019).
- He said we only “know a little” and don’t have a good picture of what is on private and pastoral lands. Need to complete the picture.
- He wants to figure out what the presence of tahr means of all lands.
- Noted DOC sees “numbers an issue”.
- Noted that this year will be the first full year of the “plan”.
- He noted it is hard to make a plan – DOC acknowledge no data and numbers are currently known by them.

- 2019/20 plan period – 12,000 tahr were killed plus the tahr killed by recreational hunters.
- A slide of the National Park kills by AATH per year was displayed:

<b>Year</b>	<b>AATH total kills</b>	<b>AAHT trophies killed</b>
2015	262	36
2016	302	66
2017	331	72
2018	216	57
2019	264	96
“Average”	275	67

GAC thought the table and statements were misleading. It actually shows the importance of NPs to trophy hunters.

- Data: DOC’s heli effort – tahr per hour - last year in tahr official management:

<b>Year</b>	<b>Total kills</b>	<b>Kill per hour</b>
2018	3,730	21/hr to 36/hr
2019	1,575	5/hr to 37/hr
2020	No figure	21/hr to 37/hr

**Jan Finlayson, FMC said:** “This is like building and flying a plane at the same time. It will crash and burn”. [sic]

**Greg Duley said:** “Has DOC decided already?” He felt DOC had decided to go with this plan already.

**Gwyn asked the following questions of Ben Reddix:**

1. Who makes the decision and at what stage of the process are DOC at?
2. Any plans to change the draft plan?
3. What is the process for approval?
4. Under the HTCP cannot DOC only intervene once it known densities are exceeded?

**Ben responded:** The Department will decide. It will engage with Ngāi Tahu. Then “I will” [Ben Reddix] made a decision at the end of June.

Ben then said he was closing the conversation and this was the “last opportunity to comment” on James’ presentation.

**Garry O (GAC) noted:**



- *He was concerned about the timing.*
- *There is not enough notice and time to look at the detailed plan and documentation just given two days' prior.*
- *GAC has concerns about not being able to engage full with DOC and its own stakeholders to get their views.*
- *Garry then quoted a passage from the Conservation Minister's official directive to GAC.*

**Ben then said** *The Department is 'decision maker' – using data and judgement.*

**Gwyn then asked Ben:**

*What sensitivity analysis have you done in terms of economic effects of your cull and the tahr herd? Ben said "have not done actual numbers".*

*Do you think you have met all the objectives of the HTCP, especially the intervention levels. Ben said "yes".*

*Gwyn said, are you sure you have? Ben said, "yes", again.*

**Greg D (rec hunter) stated to Ben:** *"Your plan will decimate tahr numbers"; "it will decimate the resource".*

**Marcus P (SCI) stated to Ben:** *"This [the plan] will not be taken well [by hunters]".*

**Gwyn then stated cleared NZDA's position:** *"NZDA cannot support this draft plan, but we can support, this year, official control outside the tahr feral range." This year we should delay agreeing the plan. We should consult fully. We should assess the impact of the 2019 cull. We need to consider the impact of Covid-19. This year is totally different.*

*Many others then stated in support that the plan is not supported as drafted: Tahr Foundation, SCI, Greg Duley, Game Estates, Hunter Guides Assoc.*

*DOC firmly got a message that the hunting stakeholders were not agreeable with the draft plan.*

**GAC finished by saying:** *It wants more consultation and we should be following a better process.*

**Ben Reddix then closed discussion about the draft plan at 4:20pm.**

**John Parkes – contracted by DOC to draft a report on tahr and vegetation research - presentation**

*John noted that the new decision makers are DOC and Ngāi Tahu. He then spoke to slides:*

Slide one:

- *Themes – relating to management of tahr:*
  - o *Maori and tahr*
  - o *Tahr population dynamics*
  - o *Impacts of tahr (on snow tussocks)*
  - o *Hunting and culling – what's being shot?*

- o *Economic value/costs of tahr*
- o *Tahr and other herbivores – site based management*
- o *Other research – no management implications*

Slide two:

- *Within a theme:*
- o *Short overview*
- o *Key management issues*
- o *Issues already addressed*

*John stated:*

- *Research and monitoring of tahr and vegetation is needed and missing.*
- *He will draft a first draft ASAP.*
- *He will undertake stakeholder engagement:*
- o *Key issues – which can be addressed by research*
- o *Do any issues need further research?*
- o *New research / new monitoring needed*
- *A first draft will be sent to DOC and Ngāi Tahu*
- *DOC will discuss further as part of the full tahr plan is developed.*

*Parkes wants to have face-to-face or Zoom meeting with stakeholders – he wants to understand all the issues. **Action Point – engage with Parkes.***

*Parkes asks “what are the “management” issues. ‘There’s a lot we cannot solve”.*

*What it isn’t – it is not going to design or recommend projects. That is for DOC. He will not actually undertake any field work.*

**Summary by Ben Reddix (DOC)**

*Ben then closed the meeting by stating “thanks for your contributions” and repeated key themes/questions he had recorded, being (in full):*

*“I have heard you say”:*

1. *Who decides this plan? Who decides this process?*
2. *Ground control is a concern.*
3. *What is the process and timeframes – is this too short?*
4. *DOC needs a value assessment*
5. *Modelling – male/female*
6. *We wanted to know the existing “ecological knowledge” held by DOC in the range*

7. *Ngāi Tahu– people want to understand that new relationship/partnership*
8. *We [DOC] had some unanswered questions:*
  - a. *Noted value of bulls*
  - b. *Numbers of bulls to be shot a concern*
  - c. *Impact of official control of WARO and meat works*
9. *Is the plan consistent with the 1993 plan?*
10. *Recreational users care for the environment too*
11. *Access to Westland National Park is an issue*
12. *Noted NZDA’s position, noted others that supported this.*
13. *He noted we thought it seemed this plan was a bit “desperate”.*
14. *Noted the concern around not enough consultation.*
15. *Accepted that GAC offered its help and wants to help DOC develop a plan.*
16. *Ben noted that he will make the decision on the plan – he will use his judgement.*
17. *He will engage with his Treaty “partner”, Ngāi Tahu.*

*[Note: Key omission - I note the economy was raised as an issue (meat processing and concession holders/AATH, including jobs, and DOC should expressly acknowledge the economy and loss of jobs from the draft cull plan].*

***Ben then closed out the meeting saying:***

- *He does not want to see an impact via social media and attacks/threats on DOC staff like what happened in 2019.*
- *He said if it happens he will not engage with the group.*
- *He didn’t want to see social media used.*
- *DOC staff were stressed after what happened in 2019.*
- *He did not want to see “mis-information”.*

*The meeting closed at approximately 5.00pm.*

Kind Regards,

**Gwyn Thurlow**

Chief Executive and General Counsel

# Analysis of tahr stakeholder meetings for development of a Tahr Control Operational Plan for 1 September 2019 to 30 June 2020

Final

Peter Lawless  
Phoenix Facilitation Ltd

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## Summary of findings

### Tahr control plan 2019 -2020

Information limitations are seen as a key constraining factor in tahr management. Of particular concern are uncertainties over the numbers of tahr, their impacts, and what is happening off public conservation land.

Everybody agreed that there are currently too many tahr for the environment and a reduction in total numbers is required. Hunting interests are concerned that meeting targets in the Himalayan Tahr Control Plan 1993 could mean that recreational and commercial hunting might be severely compromised. One mitigating factor for all hunters would be to avoid shooting bulls in official control and wild animal meat recovery across the feral range. One party believes that this approach would not be legal in national parks. Many would like to see tahr killed in control operations utilised rather than left to waste. All agree that there are a large number of tahr off public conservation land, but no one know how many, and there seems to be no effective management regime in place for these populations. There is widespread concern that some hunting techniques may be affecting tahr behaviour making them harder to hunt and moving their impact from the tops into the bush.

### Wider issues in tahr management

Protection of the natural environment was the paramount value for all interviewed. Tahr were highly valued for their contribution to hunting culture and the economy. A wide range of social

values influence how people view the tahr management system; however most value a culture of collaboration.

Good communication is valued by all with a desire for a free flow of information.

Informants identified a range of opportunities to improve the tahr management system and make better use of the tahr resource. Hunters from all sectors would like to see their efforts optimised and conflicts avoided. Partitioning in space and time across the year were seen as effective tools requiring refinement rather than replacement. Hunters would like to see a focus on game management to improve the state of the tahr resource as part of the overall approach.

Most of those interviewed welcomed the emerging partnership between Ngai Tahu and DOC in the management of tahr.

Connections within the hunting sector are reported have been consolidated by the Game Animal Council and Tahr Foundation. The Tahr Plan Implementation Liaison Group is seen by most to be a useful forum and some would like to see it playing a stronger role.

Few new information sources were identified through the interviews, though there were ideas for new systems to gather useful data.

There was a lot of comment about systems and processes involved in tahr management, with most seeing current arrangements as not broken but sub-optimal.

Few want to see review of the Himalayan Tahr Control Plan 1993 at this time and most support its effective implementation. Those that want a more effects based approach and a move away from numeric targets for tahr populations believe this can be done within the parameters of the current plan if sufficient information becomes available.

Better integration and refinement of the DOC concessions regime is seen as essential in improving the overall management. This is integral to creating spatial and temporal integration to optimise hunting and avoid conflict between hunting sectors.

All agree that tahr population reduction through official control, wild animal recovery and shooting AATH offsets is best done from July to October each year. This period has the best snow conditions for control shooting and meat recovery and is a low season for trophy and recreational hunting.

While meat recovery is a valued part of the tahr management system the industry says it needs continuity of supply that equates.

The key part of the management system that is seen to be broken is the management of tahr off public conservation land including pastoral lease lands.

## Introduction

This report details the results of 21 interviews with stakeholders in the tahr management system and two with Ngai Tahu.

The purpose of the work was to provide DOC officials with a better understanding of interests associated with tahr management to enable more effective planning for tahr operations. The team for the project comprised Ben Reddiex the DOC director accountable for tahr management, James Holborough the conservation officer that leads tahr management, Joe Taurima interim Ngai Tahu lead for thar management and Peter Lawless of Phoenix Facilitation Ltd. This work was not a piece

of social science, but a tool to structure and formalise DOC engagement with stakeholders in the tahr management system.

Interviews were semi-structured in a consistent format. Where possible they were face to face, but where logistics required were using telecommunications. All interviews were done over a period of 4 weeks in July 2019.

Immediately after the interviews the project team drew out key messages under the headings:

- 1 Values
- 2 Issues
- 3 Opportunities
- 4 Tahr populations
- 5 Connections
- 6 New information sources
- 7 Systems and processes

These categories were further differentiated with two levels of subcategories as the interviews progressed. Every key message was classified under these headings and the results from different interviews grouped into themes. This base text was refined into a coherent narrative to compile this report.

The sample pool for the interviews was made up of all entities known by DOC to be associated with tahr. All were extended an invitation to all entities to participate and only a few of the less active operators did not respond. Where there was an overarching body we engaged with that and where that was lacking for concessionaires we reached out to them individually. The sample was biased towards those active in tahr hunting as there were many operators. Conversely, environmental and recreational interests were represented by just a couple of organisations although they have a large membership. The numbers expressing views should therefore not be taken to say anything about the balance of opinion in the wider New Zealand population. While we use the term “stakeholders” here it includes bodies with statutory responsibilities such as appointed boards and Crown agencies. In these cases informants were providing a perspective and information rather than official views of their bodies that would have to be developed through appropriate processes.

Note that recording here makes no assessment of the veracity of the view expressed.

## 1 Values

A wide range of values were expressed in the interviews. Overall, everyone agreed that sustaining natural values was paramount. However, interviewees saw social values such as collaboration as underpinning the way things should be done. Tahr are also strongly associated with cultural and economic values for some of those interviewed.

### a Natural values

Some interviewees valued the natural environment for its intrinsic values while others gave value to it as habitat for game as well. Biodiversity was seen as a key driver by many and commercial entities spoke of their commitment by the company to conservation. Recreationalists spoke strongly of biodiversity, the ecosystem, and the rare and cryptic species, and their intrinsic right to exist. Many were after a pragmatic approach to tahr more driven by the values than by legal classification of land. Natural quiet was highly valued by many and there was said to be a conflict between helicopter noise and recreational experiences. It was noted that scouting for bulls can result in



increased helicopter traffic. Natural quiet was connected to the value of wilderness for some. Landscape value was referenced by many in association with recreational experiences.

#### b Recreational values

A wide range of recreational experiences were identified, including the value of just viewing tahr. It was said, however, that people have to accept management actions to control tahr even if this affects their recreational experience. Recreational hunting was highly referenced including the international value of the free range tahr hunting opportunity that was seen by some to be unique in the world. It was said by some that it was important to retain tahr as an opportunity for recreational hunters.

#### c Legal values

The value of the legal system was highly referenced in one interview. This party said that it was very important to uphold principles embedded in the law. For them holding the moral high ground meant not negotiating outside the Himalayan Tahr Control Plan requirements. They said that bulls must be shot in National Parks to comply with the National Parks Act and that operations must achieve numbers as prescribed in the Himalayan Tahr Control Plan 1993.

#### d Economic values

Economic values of the tahr resource were highly referenced by a range of interviewees. In particular bulls were cited as a financial resource.

Economic values were in part about private gain and in part about the importance of wealth generation and efficient use of resources to the community. This included delivering value for taxpayers while minimising costs to the Crown. The importance of tahr industries to local communities was cited by many. AATH was said to add seasonal business for the industry and community. One interviewee was involved in developing a high end pet food export market.

Trophy hunting was seen as a part of the quality tourism products of New Zealand. Operators said that it was required to capitalise on the additional tourism opportunities associated with hunters including bringing their families here for the scenery etc rather than for hunting per se. Some said though that tahr are under-priced as trophies in NZ with operators undercutting each other. One interviewee said that the value was in the mane and for this a bull needs to be 6 to 7 years old. This interviewee said that tahr is a drawcard to get hunters to New Zealand. They said that having allowed a tahr industry to develop the Crown has responsibilities to the people involved.

#### e Social values

A wide range of social values were associated with tahr.

Tahr were seen as important to hunting culture in New Zealand with a distinct Kiwi macho chopper hunting culture being cited. This was seen to be a positive thing as tahr hunting *gets New Zealanders active and sustains their culture*.

Humane treatment of tahr was cited by just two interviewees, both involved in tahr farming.

A culture of collaboration in tahr management was highly valued by many interviewees from diverse backgrounds. It was said to be tricky trying to please everyone, but partnership and open communication were identified as important.

People had differing concepts of what collaboration meant. One interviewee thought collaboration would mean that everyone needs to be involved in decision making and went as far as saying that

we need quite a different system for tahr management where a lot of decision making is devolved to statutory bodies and stakeholders.

Conversely members of a Conservation Board felt that that such stakeholders had too much influence already and they saw their role as defending the 1993 Plan and the public interest. They said that the NZ public interest was under-represented in the public conversation which has been *too dominated by polarised interest groups*.

Safe operations across the tahr system were valued and some had concern that unlicensed guides (some foreign) would not be operating safely.

The importance of iwi values was cited by non-iwi interviewees while iwi interviewees spoke of the traditional ways of doing things and how tahr management could support that.

The value of demonstrated integrity was cited both in relation to those that benefit and to Crown agents. It was said that *with responsibility comes with benefit*. One interviewee appreciated DOC keeping its word on commitments made.

Tahr was valued by many as food and there were strong views that tahr that were shot should be utilised rather than left as waste. This value was strongly stated by iwi as part of their culture and was strongly held across the range of other interviewees.

Iwi members spoke of their connection to the land and how connection with the whenua has been lost because utilisation of native species is prevented in protected areas. Access to tahr was seen as an opportunity to exercise mahinga kai lifestyle in the new context.

Value was seen in opportunities for education associated with tahr management. This included: education, learning about the environment and work experience opportunities.

## 2 Issues

### a Information limitations

Information limitations were seen by many to create critical issues in tahr management. This included information on tahr populations, effects on natural values, hunter activity, and about tahr off public conservation land.

Interviewees generally agreed on the importance of good information to underpin management. They identified a range of data sources not included in current analyses such as the number of tahr killed by recreational hunters, information on tahr outside the feral range that might be held by helicopter operators, and the capacity of hunters to assess vegetation quality based on experience.

One interviewee pointed to other types of information that could prove useful such as the effect of population control operations on the structure, reproductive capacity and population dynamics. This interviewee said that we should gather data on: animals seen and killed, their age sex, location and reproductive status and catch per unit effort for both culling, AATH Offsets and meat recovery. They also proposed re-measuring vegetation plots every five years to check on the condition of vegetation.

Interviewees spoke of the need for accurate data on tahr numbers across all land tenures and to accurately monitor numbers of tahr removed. There was some doubt by some interviewees about current population estimates and a desire to use data from this year's operations before setting targets for next year. One said *"Since the population estimates have very wide confidence limits, it is prudent to ensure that population control operations take account of the actual number being at the*

*lower or upper end of the population band. Concentrate on animals removed as this is a known quantity not an estimate with huge variation. A small increase in nanny harvest can have a significant effect.”*

Another spoke of the value of new technologies such as thermal imagery to improve density estimates.

There was doubt amongst some that a target of 10,000 tahr left in the feral range was valid given changes that have happened since 1993. One said that tenure review had moved a lot of land into DoC management and removed a lot of sheep from the landscape. Another questioned whether a population of 10,000 tahr would meet all sector needs including that of industry.

Many interviewed showed a basic lack of understanding of numbers and statistics.

Interviewees noted issues arising because of a lack of information about tahr and their effects off land administered by DOC. Neither the total numbers, nor their distribution and effects appears to be documented by any party. One talked of potential ripple effects of controlling tahr on PCL displacing activity to private land meaning AATH could move onto private land outbidding ground hunting guides.

It was noted that there is undocumented wild animal recovery for meat on private land and pastoral lease land.

LINZ has no data on tahr numbers or impacts on lands it manages. Game industry interest in land managed by LINZ is unknown to LINZ and they have limited resources available to change this (14 Pastoral leases in the feral range). LINZ would like to understand the PCL/pastoral lease tahr interaction and coordinate responses with DOC. The LINZ pastoral team needs a system to identify and deal with issues of non-compliance with the lease conditions where these apply to tahr. LINZ noted that it could have a system that captures tahr trophy data from land it manages. OSPRI has tahr counts that could be accessed. Runholders have 5-yearly land inspections by LINZ. Boffa Miskell manages biosecurity issues for LINZ but probably has little information on tahr.

Some said that monitoring the environmental response is critical.

One said that a tahr population that is reduced in stages will not cause any catastrophic effects to the vegetation in the near future, nor risk a population blow out.

One suggested monitoring the cost and effectiveness of different control methods.

## b Communications

Some interviewees said that timely and appropriate communications were important. They wanted communications to mitigate adverse effects wherever possible - provide advanced warning of operations where possible. Another suggested improved communication with recreation hunters so that they know how they fit in and what their opportunities will be in the future. Several said that that DOC should avoid using “culling” as a term in communications and use “control” instead.

## 3 Opportunities

Many of those interviewed cited opportunities associated with tahr and ways that tahr management might be improved or had already been improved. For example, one said that there had been better early planning and coordination this year.

## a Optimising hunter effort

There were a lot of ideas about optimising effort by all hunting sectors to decrease the need for and cost of official control. People were interested in both the efficiency and effectiveness of operations. They suggested the use of low cost/no cost options wherever possible.

Factors suggested to reduce efficiency included:

- *WARO operations do not take kids at foot as they are too small to be economic*
- *Ballot hunting in the Spring is a wasted effort as the weather compromises operations and hunter effectiveness results*
- *Multiple sorts of hunting happening in the same place at the same time*
- *Five year roll over of AATH concessions prevents optimisation in the system*
- *Spikes in WARO are not useful – should be based on population available*
- *Lack of coordination of hunting (set up to fail on some trips), need right type of hunters for place (incl. contract ground hunters)*

They suggested the following improvements:

- *AATH offset shooting could also occur on private land*
- *Could put incentives in to encourage more hunters e.g. incentivising recreational hunting of tahr through ballots and rebates on concession levies*
- *To shoot other tahr than the premium nannies and young bulls when doing WARO if there was an incentive noting issues of verification for kills*
- *Refining management within management units*
- *Maximise environmental benefits - focus on high priority areas (science is critical)*
- *Efficient control - don't cover ground twice, or in close temporal proximity. Spatial allocation*
- *Use expert ground guides to control in wilderness areas*
- *Training people to do ground control*
- *Could have a 20 day stand down as applied to wapiti*
- *Could have a day's delay in hunting after drop off as done in other countries to reduce helicopter scouting*
- *Block concept – rotation phased for different groups with recreation first then AATH and WARO and then DOC control*
- *Ensuring the offsets are being taken where the environment requires*
- *Spring ballot as a short term population reduction mechanism but not long term*
- *If there are too many bulls in an area, task AATH to deal with them*
- *Organised recreational hunts are a lot of work but have a lot of value in giving access to more remote areas and teaching new hunters how to be effective with tahr*
- *Enhance effectiveness of recreational hunting by providing better information*
- *Recognise and value recreational hunter's contribution to tahr control outside of the feral range*
- *Better management of ballot blocks (utilisation of unclaimed blocks)*
- *Get local hunters to shoot nannies in their local places*
- *Subsidise helicopters for recreational hunters*
- *Education of hunters to take nannies as well as bulls, leave smaller bulls*
- *Quota of tahr for different groups*
- *Ngai Tahu hunting club*

#### b Partitioning areas

It was noted that spatial partitioning has positive effects and these could be further enhanced.

One said that partitioning areas for management gives certainty and a sense of ownership to manage your own area responsibly.

An operator suggested that blocks could have refined spatial separation between AATH and ground hunters that would open up more areas for AATH without adversely affecting anyone.

Concessionaires want to shoot offsets in areas of high density to reduce cost per tahr while guides focus on tahr off PCL

#### c Game management

Some interviewees were focused on game management for tahr and that quality of the hunting opportunity. They said there could be a culture change in the hunting sector to improve quality of the tahr hunting experience. Others suggested herd management to improve herd quality using formal and informal mechanisms. Associated with this would be appropriate modelling for long term management (i.e. effect of not shooting bulls, take out too many nannies so overshoot). One said that improved management might provide opportunity for a Herd Of Special Interest (HOSI) in the future. They noted the need to work with private and Crown Pastoral Lease lands in this respect.

#### d Farming tahr

Some interviewees were involved in researching the farming of tahr. They suggested that farming would allow continuity of supply for overseas demand.

## 4 Tahr Populations

Interviewees involved many with an intimate knowledge of the alpine environment and tahr populations. There was concern about there being too many tahr, concern that official control would lead to too few tahr, and concern about the quality of the tahr population remaining, especially on the proportion of bull tahr.

It was noted that the increase in tahr numbers varies with the intensity of winter. It was observed that more detailed data on herd structure and reproductive status could be important.

#### a Too many tahr

Everyone interviewed agreed that there were currently too many tahr out there. It was said that *taking 10,000 this year is good and keep moving in the next year*. One experienced operator said that there were the *highest tahr population in 30 years and they need to be controlled*. Another interviewee said that a removal of 10,000 *just takes this year's breeding crop*. There were observations that the tahr population is building up round Mt Aspiring. A high volume of tahr on private land was noted by several.

All agreed that there needs some control in coming year, but views differed on the level of control that would be appropriate.

Most felt that it was technically possible to reach a 10,000 target for total New Zealand tahr population as required by the Himalayan Tahr Control Plan 1993 in a short while and one suggested that costs could decrease as the herd size decreases.

Historically some said that control in earlier years (c. 2012) held numbers down longer term on the West Coast and that the West Coast is not overpopulated with tahr but east of the ranges are overpopulated.



Some hunters said there should be lower populations in National Parks, but limits should be based on the cost effectiveness of control and effects on the natural environment.

One noted that previous control that led to low population densities allowed the Mt Cook lily to recover in places. Others said that anecdotally the vegetation looks to be in good condition indicating there are not too many tahr for the environment while others said the opposite.

One noted that the proportion of good trophy animals may be higher at lower population densities.

Views differed on the efficacy of different sectors to aid in reducing numbers. One said that deer stalkers cannot control tahr populations and we will always need aerial control as recreational hunters won't be able to keep numbers down. Others said that AATH is getting different animals to ground hunters.

It was noted that there are tahr outside the feral range. One said that there are tahr throughout the South Island and that people are moving tahr beyond their feral range.

All agreed that to maximise environmental benefits we must prevent range expansion.

#### b Too few tahr

Others were concerned about a future where there were too few tahr to meet their needs. One said simply "*Do not eradicate tahr*". Others said that a staged approach would allow commercial hunting markets and recreational hunting to adapt to a lower supply.

Some had views about the numbers to be killed.

One said that for recreational hunting experiences *10k controlled next year would be too many*.

Others said that population numbers after control may not be sufficient to support industry. They said that an industry has grown up that could not continue if tahr numbers were reduced to 10,000 and there would be loss of jobs. One said that a desirable number of tahr to maintain the WARO industry would be 3,000 taken each year split across the current recovery operators. They said that ten thousand tahr left in the feral range would not be enough to sustain the industry.

Trophy hunting guides said that a potential for severe restriction on numbers for AATH would make their business not viable.

#### c Bulls

All hunters interviewed wanted official control to leave the bulls alone and favoured male biased herds.

All others, but one group, said that avoiding shooting bulls would be acceptable if this was necessary to getting the job done to implement the 1993 Plan.

Other factors associated with bulls were:

- *Low numbers of nannies in an area will lead to bulls leaving that area*
- *Change hunters' behaviour to bias the herd towards bulls. This will decrease long-term control costs and maximise trophy-hunting opportunities*
- *Viability of meat recovery limited if bulls are avoided as they are heavier and therefore have a higher net return*
- *Fewer bulls actually meaning more profit for some helicopter companies as they charge by the hour rather than the trophy even though they are the concession holder*
- *To sustain current bull harvest, need population far higher than HTCP 93*

- *Aware of other people's views around no tahr in national parks but historical values of tahr in NP so shoot females and leave bulls*
- *WARO should not shoot bulls*
- *Bulls have zero reproductive capacity. Killing nannies in preference to bulls maximises environmental benefits and is more effective for population management*
- *The guided hunting sector has contractual commitments to clients for 2 or 3 years out. Recreational hunters have invested in planning tahr hunting trips for trophy hunts. These sectors need time to adapt to a lower population of tahr/bulls and areas culled. Approximately 2000 bulls are required for commercial and recreational hunters during a season. Need to recognise that will not be achievable with a smaller herd, but it is desirable to have a transition process since guides/AATH have long term commitments. Not culling bulls will help. Half of all juvenile tahr culled are males and males have a much shorter life expectancy than females. Males may be culled outside the feral range and in exclusion zones.*
- *To mitigate the effects on recreational hunting, guided hunting and AATH of a lower tahr population it is desirable to increase the proportion of males in the population. Each of these activities makes a significant contribution to nanny harvests, which will be lost if the incentives provided by the presence of trophy bulls disappears*
- *Lowest densities in Parks but have them as places where largest bulls are*
- *Send a clear signal that we are maximising bulls to trophy size*
- *Leave white tahr*
- *The nanny/bull ratio is changing at higher densities*
- *Leave the bulls alone and tell people where they are, and they will target them*

#### d Tahr behaviour

Many interviewees felt that hunting was affecting tahr behaviour potentially shifting them into the bush and making them harder to kill. Some picked out WARO operations in this regard.

One suggested education of hunters around how hunter behaviour might influence the tahr herd (shooting small males).

Another said that it was essential to use really good operators or changes to tahr behaviour will make it really hard for the person that finally does effective control. One feared that operations that drive tahr into the bush could lead to less desirable methods such as poisoning.

Others aid that old bulls have survived as they have got wise to helicopters and noted that as herds become more educated there will be more roles for ground hunters.

## 5 Connections

The system surrounding tahr involves complex connections between entities and this can affect what happens. While connections were noted whenever they were mentioned the list below picks out those of particular relevance to DOC as the body responsible for tahr management:

It was said that Game Animal Council has connections with stakeholders and can reduce conflict. It was stated that *"The GAC is a statutory body so is quite different to NGOs. We have considerable expertise within the Council and contractors on tahr management. We currently have the trust of the hunting sector. To date the GAC has played a pivotal role in reducing conflict and helping DOC achieve a workable control plan"*.

- *Ngai Tahu and DOC are developing partnership as required under S4 of the Conservation Act*

- *Guided hunting is nested within the wider tourism industry*
- *The Tahr Foundation was reported to have created much stronger internal connections within the broader hunting sector*
- *A lack of connection amongst AATH operators was noted by some who suggested that AATH operators are conflicted rather than connected while noting that they felt that AATH is a valuable part of the system*
- *A lack of current engagement of tahr management with landowners and high country farmers off PCL was noted*
- *People in geographic areas such as the West Coast tend to be highly connected*
- *Some relationships were suggested to be conflicted such as between deer stalkers and runholders*
- *Meat processors are connected to potential suppliers and in some cases there is vertical integration*
- *Some helicopter companies operate only for one trophy hunting operation*
- *Some operators across the sector are strongly connected to international markets*

## 6 New information sources

We listened for new information sources that might support more effective management of tahr, and the following suggestions were made:

- *Put passport numbers on licenses as a method of tracking where the effort is coming from*
- *Every person who shoots a tahr could return a map of the location*
- *Taxidermists*
- *Modelling done by Geoff Kerr to show pathways for management to optimise the numbers of older male tahr as overall numbers are reduced and his social science that 60% of bulls aren't actually trophies*
- *Matauranga held by the old cullers*

## 7 Systems and processes

Interviews were analysed to see what the said about systems and processes including operational management.

Ngai Tahu interviewees took a particularly holistic view and advocated managers working at the level of the big picture of how everything fits together. They related this to understanding the whole system and the value of matauranga based on *ahi ka roa*. They said that lines on maps for human purposes do not make sense in nature or to tangata whenua and encouraged thinking outside of jurisdictional boundaries.

### a Concessions

Concession arrangements and processes were said to be pivotal in the tahr management system. These included aerially assisted trophy hunting, ground based guiding, helicopter operations and wild animal meat recovery. It was not always clear which concession was operative when multiple parties combined on a single operation.

Some operators saw their offsets as a major benefit to the Crown though they said they were happy to have AATH kills verified. One said that *AATH contributes a lot through offsets, but the operators involved get little back from DOC.*

Some were concerned that concessions processes were not well connected to tahr control processes. WARO was concerned about a lack of regularity in availability of supply over the whole year. Others noted AATH occurring in ballot blocks when recreational hunters were still present as undesirable. One was concerned about impacts from the way decisions were made this year about which areas the concessionaires would shoot and said that WARO was being *unnecessarily and illegally constrained to allow for undisturbed DOC control operations*. They said AATH is favoured by DOC over WARO and they could not get a WARO permit when it was needed this year.

Operators sought a wide range of changes in the system and the conditions for their concessions:

- *Wants open permit across the whole year and whole range with exclusions for times and places where there is conflict with others*
- *Wants to be able to recover tahr incidental to deer recovery year round with large numbers of tahr when the snow makes recovery hunting most practical*
- *Clarification on offsets around chamois trophies under AATH*
- *WARO wants to operate over the whole geographic range of tahr*
- *WARO needs to be able to shoot and recover tahr at the same time as searching for and recovering deer*
- *Wants to be able to WARO on back doorstep rather than being relegated to remote locations*
- *Wants consultation of the re-issue of AATH permits*
- *AATH concession conditions create only a small time to operate*
- *Uncertainty exists around concession processes for tahr*
- *Aligning tahr and deer AATH and WARO permits*
- *Five year roll over of concessions prevents optimisation in the system*
- *Perception that it is hard to get WARO for tahr carcass recovery*
- *Improving aerial access to Westland NP*
- *5:1 offsets will not work when tahr densities are lower*
- *Doing recovery from offsets*
- *Taking offsets off PCL*
- *Give AATH a wider geographic area to allow operators to reduce conflicts with others*
- *Flight logs from AATH to give effort and spatial allocation data over time*
- *Need to be fairer for WARO but operating in areas w/o rec hunting (e.g. all year round on West Coast)*

Non-concessionaires also had concern:

- *WARO concessions allow for shooting to happen at any time creating opportunity for conflict with other users*
- *DOC could get a substantial return on each tahr shot on PCL as with private land and thereby fund management*
- *Conflict with rec hunters from year round WARO even if it is the only a few here and there*
- *Overlap of AATH hunting round the eastern side to July with ballot periods*
- *AATH should do offsets from July onward*
- *Do not allow AATH to overlap spatially and temporally with recreational hunters*

## b [Himalayan Thar Control Plan 1993](#)

Views were expressed about the Himalayan Thar Control Plan 1993. One group stated strongly that DOC must comply with the law and this means implementing the Himalayan Thar Control Plan 1993

as written and within a year. This group said that numbers must be achieved in management units as prescribed in the Plan and DOC must work absolutely within the numeric requirements of the Plan.

Most others that commented expressed a commitment to the 1993 Plan but not all to its target of 10,000 tahr. It was said that there were risks associated with a review of the 1993 Plan for hunting stakeholders. Those advocating a more effects based approach to management were of the view that there was no need to have a review of the 1993 Plan to have good outcomes.

Others wanted the Crown to revisit the 1993 Plan. They said that the 1993 Plan and its target of 10,000 was written when there were not a lot of tahr off public conservation land and questioned whether this is still the correct target to meet the Plan goals.

## c DOC operational management

There was a lot of comment about DOC's approach to management and control. This included timing and spatial distribution of activities of all types, the methods used and what should be in the annual operational plan. Overall ideas included:

### 1 Overall approach

- *A suggested lack of continuity in DOC leadership for tahr management*
- *Suggestion that a strong hunting lobby is stopping DOC doing its job*
- *That it would be better to use incentives and take the emphasis off DOC as the culling mechanism*
- *Rather than pest control there should be effective game management for a range of stakeholders and the environment*
- *Governments come and go, DOC staff come and go, budgets focus on tahr gets hot and cold. The only things that remain are the tahr and those that want to use them. Unless eradication is the plan managing tahr is a forever. The hunting sector is the only constant manager and has the most invested in tahr management. If we are not seeking eradication then we are in this game forever*
- *Want clarity for next 10 years to allow business planning*
- *Not boom and bust*

### 2 Methods

- *Cameras will not work to track hunting effort in DOC control ops*
- *Its hard work in the exclusion zones and you need to apply effort tactically*
- *Winter control is more effective and efficient as the snow slows the tahr and they can be more easily tracked*
- *Pick on areas with target densities and be clear on the priorities*
- *Efficient control - DOC control in low density and high cost areas (exclusion zones, outside feral range etc)*
- *You will always loose at least one third of operating time due to the weather*
- *Need DOC to verify their control*
- *Get away from tahr numbers and focus on conservation values*
- *July to October is a good time for control operations*
- *Need a good pilot and/or a good hunter on each operation*
- *DOC should be contracting out and have the overview*
- *Contracting control on a per animal basis could lead to cost cutting with consequent safety issues*



- *The plan has provision for the management of areas to be contracted out. We could look at this more holistically. DOC contract out to organisations such as OSPRI to do aerial pest control operations. We should look at the benefits of DOC contracting out the operational management of tahr to the hunting sector. This could be an opportunity to do it better and cheaper*
- *New technologies such as thermal imaging*

### 3 Timing

Temporal separation of activities was seen as a key way to minimise conflict between sectors. There was also comment about staging aspects of control over years.

While the details differed everyone agreed that official control was best done from July to the end of October each year. This was when control and WARO was most effective and when there was least conflict with recreational and trophy hunting. In particular there was desire for official control to avoid periods most valued for recreational hunting, particularly the rut and when ballot hunting was being used to encourage recreational hunters to remove tahr. There were other factors that also had to be considered such as:

- *Humane control occurs before kidding noting a suggestion that the potential gestation and weaning period in the wild may be longer than current estimates based on experience with farmed tahr*
- *Avoiding red deer ballot times and places*
- *Helicopter availability is affected by other industries such as heliskiing*
- *Shooting tahr in Feb might leave dead tahr which is not a good look around the time that there is an increase in international clients*
- *If shoot nannies too early (Feb – Apr) male kids won't develop length*
- *Do control activities in as short a time as possible to avoid impacts on users*
- *There should be no culling from mid-November until the end of March. This will reduce growth blocks in young males when they are orphaned at an early age. It is important for trophy quality that males get good horn growth in the first year of age. This results in longer horn tips and better trophy scores once mature*
- *Managing wildlife cannot be governed by arbitrary dates or financial years. The management cycle needs to take account of the needs of those using the resource. This needs to be better coordinated on the basis of what the hunting sector needs and at what time of the year*

### 4 Spatial

More refinement of spatial distribution of hunting effort was also advocated:

- *Control areas where there are too many tahr rather than an across the board control of numbers*
- *Buffers and exclusion zones are really important*
- *Could reduce conflict with AATH if had tahr on game estates*

### 5 Operations Plan

Interviewees expressed views about the operational plan and process by which it was formed:

- *Need an effects based approach rather than working to numbers of tahr*
- *Long term plans preferred - 4-year planning from DOC is needed to allow business planning by operators*

- *The operational plan must signal a meaningful reduction while recognising the values of stakeholders*
- *Taking an extra intermediate step early in the tahr consultation process to discuss detail with the people actually doing the hunting*
- *Mitigating adverse impacts on hunting experiences as tahr numbers transition down to 10,000*
- *Maximise environmental benefits - focus on high priority areas (science is critical)*
- *Achievable targets - target numbers removed rather than numbers on the ground, base this on population biology models (science is very valuable), it is possible to reach the 10,000 target in a short while, with decreasing costs*
- *Currently planned densities may no longer be applicable with changes to land management within the feral range – less sheep, increased fertility*
- *The role of the TPILG was once to coordinate control efforts in a more practical way and it could play that role again*
- *This year the DOC approach controls tahr across the board, next year should focus on interventions in places to achieve particular outcomes*
- *Hunting opportunities are sold some years in advance and there needs to be enough bulls to meet the committed demand*
- *The HTCP was designed as an effects based adaptive plan but it has not been operated as one. We need to get back to this approach. We have done an overall cull now we need to learn from that, and target future efforts at locations that will benefit the most from tahr reductions. Refocus the plan as the effects based, adaptive plan as it was originally intended. We suggested the reduction takes place over three seasons as this would address both the environmental, and hunting requirements plus the precautionary principle. We will have completed year 1 at the end of August and we need to take those learnings into year 2. Year 2 should concentrate on identifying if there are problem areas and dealing with these at place. We can do this by stratifying the habitat within the MUs as some areas can support more tahr than others. There needs to be a light overall background control but target the real problems*
- *Long term planning showing how recreational hunters fit*

#### d Compliance and enforcement

Some suggested that there is insufficient compliance and enforcement activity by DOC particularly in relation to unlicensed guides, some operating from overseas.

#### e Hunting on private land

A considerable but unknown amount of tahr hunting is done on private land and Crown pastoral lease land. Such hunting gives exclusive access and some guides operate only there rather than on public land for this reason. Private owners want a rental for use of their land and there are market mechanisms reflecting the relative returns from guiding and meat recovery. Some are concerned that LINZ is not active in managing this on land it administers.

#### f Science

Many wanted management to be based on good science. Ideas about this were across a broad front:

- *Knowledge value to be gained by farming tahr that can be applied to wild populations*
- *Value of research based management including assessment of financial viability*

- *Want a science-based model to get balance between tahr and environment*
- *Research priority - population model for composition and reproductive capacity as this will inform the needs for control and what to focus control on (best bang for buck)*
- *Potential to focus on research and catchments areas with too many tahr, before setting targets (c.f. skim across MUs)*

## g Industry

When referring to “industry” people generally meant the wild animal meat recovery industry but also at times included commercial trophy hunting. The larger part of meat recovery was said to be for the New Zealand domestic market for human consumption with some export while the pet food industry was mostly export. Comments made by stakeholders included:

- *Continuity of supply for business, not boom and bust*
- *Need two to three thousand for WARO*
- *Nature of the industry pre-selling the meat before the tahr are shot*
- *Premium meat products come from nannies and young bulls*
- *Varied perspectives on which meat processors are taking tahr*
- *Farming can improve viability of industry based on wild caught tahr both for meat and for trophies*
- *Pet food cannot get whole tahr and therefore cannot invest in marketing due to the lack of continuity*
- *Overseas market access regs vary for each country*
- *How does WARO use private land at times?*
- *Need to allow for growth in the industry*
- *WARO should get first crack and if its economic it will succeed in supressing numbers particularly if it can be done along with deer as tahr is a frozen product that can be stockpiled*

## h Tahr farming

At present tahr farming is only allowed within the feral range and advocates of farming believe this needs to change for an industry to become viable. They particularly want to be able to farm in the lowlands. They say that all tahr farmers experience escapes, but these are easily recovered in the lowlands. They also said that DOC need to *deal with permitting issues of tahr outside the feral range*.

## i Strategy

Some noted a wider strategic and planning context and need for integration. It was suggested that an alpine management Strategy developed by Ngai Tahu and DOC would provide a good basis for partnership in governance. They said that climate change was already a factor even in just tahr management.

The absence of tahr from any regional pest management plans was noted and these were said to be a key driver for LINZ in its biosecurity work.

## j Crown/Iwi Partnership

Ngai Tahu emphasised that its core interest was a good partnership relationship between the Crown and Ngai Tahu. They saw potential futures roles including commercial opportunities including Ngai Tahu pest control. They also suggested that Ngai Tahu might have exclusive access to take tahr and

control their numbers from particular areas, perhaps on pastoral lease. The potential for Ngai Tahu business in the future was within an overall lens of net gain for conservation.

#### k Pastoral leases

Pastoral leases and pastoral occupation licences are administered by LINZ on behalf of the Crown. There are quite separate parts of LINZ dealing with leases and with biosecurity and until the last 12 months neither had any focus on tahr. Roles of agencies in relation to tahr were not well understood by LINZ staff interviewed. LINZ has limited resources and capacity to manage tahr or monitor impacts.

# MU4 tahr population dynamic modelling

Geoff Kerr

June 2020

# Starting point

**Ramsey** population estimate for MU4

- 7,666 tahr
- Credible limits 4,043 ~ 14,535 tahr

Apply **Caughley** demographic profile information (published, peer reviewed) to estimate initial populations of

- Nannies & juveniles
- Breeding nannies
- Recognisable bulls



# Add hunting mortality data

	DOC bulls	DOC nannies & juveniles	Hunting sector bulls	Hunting sector nannies & juveniles
2018/2019	0	1560	200	200
2019/2020	0	2551	200	200
Total	0	4111	400	400

Total hunting mortality in MU4  $\approx$  4900 tahr

## Hunting sector numbers are conservative estimates

For comparison, average annual totals across all tahr range are:

- 264 AATH trophies
- 900 AATH offsets
- 470 Balloted tahr hunts
- ??? Recreational, WARO & commercial ground

1600 known – what proportion in MU4?

# Herd dynamics

Year	Total Population estimate at start of year	Recognisable bulls	Nannies & Juveniles	DOC cull (N&J only)	Hunters' bull kills	Hunters' Nanny & Juv kills	Remaining Nannies & Juvs	Breeding females	Female births	Male births	Bull recruits
2018	7,666	1,282	6,384	1,560	200	200	4,624	1,459	729	729	334
2019	5,998	991	5,006	2,551	200	200	2,255	711	356	356	163
2020	3,181	668	2,513				2,513	793			

**61% reduction in the nanny & juvenile populations**

# Sensitivity to Ramsey population estimate

Initial population	Total now	% change	Bulls at start	Bulls now	% change	N&J at start	N&J now	% change
4000	-771	-119%	669	97	-86%	3331	-868	-126%
5500	846	-85%	920	331	-64%	4580	516	-89%
6500	1924	-70%	1087	486	-55%	5413	1438	-73%
7666	3181	-59%	1282	668	-48%	6384	2513	-61%
8500	4080	-52%	1421	798	-44%	7079	3283	-54%
10000	5698	-43%	1672	1032	-38%	8328	4666	-44%
14000	10010	-29%	2341	1655	-29%	11659	8355	-28%

Ramsey population estimate: Most likely = 7,666 tahr (total of bulls, nannies & juveniles). Credible limits 4,043 ~ 14,535

The total tahr population, particularly nannies is far less now than when the cull commenced. Clearly, the population was not at the lower end of Ramsey's estimate or there would be no breeding female tahr left and bulls would be at very low numbers. Neither of these is true. [Red circles]

The total tahr population can't have been at the top end either because the total number of tahr has reduced substantially, as has the number of breeding females. [Green circles]

# Scenario comparisons

Scenario	2020 kills				Early 2021 populations			Relative to Scenario 1		Relative to Scenario 2		Relative to now	
	DOC		Hunters		Total Population	Recognisable bulls	Nannies & Juveniles	Total as % of S1	N&J as % of S1	Total as % of S2	N&J as % of S2	Total as % of now	N&J as % of now
	DOC Bulls	Nannies & Juvs	Hunters Bulls	Nannies & Juvs									
1: No tahr killed in 2020	0	0	0	0	3,240	680	2,560	100%	100%			102%	102%
2: No DOC cull in 2020	0	0	200	200	3,019	468	2,551	93%	100%	100%	100%	95%	102%
3: Mixture of DOC and hunting sector	200	600	100	100	2,468	339	2,128	76%	83%	82%	83%	78%	85%
4: DOC displaces hunting sector	400	1200	0	0	1,916	210	1,706	59%	67%	63%	67%	60%	68%
5: DOC targets bulls	600	800	0	0	2,357	34	2,343	73%	92%	78%	92%	74%	93%
6: DOC targets nannies	0	1500	200	0	1,585	393	<b>1,192</b>	49%	47%	52%	47%	50%	47%
Early 2020 populations for comparison					3,181	668	2,513						
2019 kills	0	2551	Unknown	Unknown									

1. Not culling tahr in MU4 in 2020 will not cause a catastrophe!
  2. If DOC is serious about controlling tahr, kill nannies
- Scenario 6 is better than 3, 4 or 5 for everyone**

# Appendix 1: DOC bull tahr sighting data

<b>Bull tahr sightings</b>	MU4B: Aoraki Mt Cook NP																			
Source: (21 March 2020)	<a href="https://www.doc.govt.nz/parks-and-recreation/things-to-do/hunting/what-to-hunt/tahr/tahr-control-operations/tahr-sightings-maps/">https://www.doc.govt.nz/parks-and-recreation/things-to-do/hunting/what-to-hunt/tahr/tahr-control-operations/tahr-sightings-maps/</a>																			
<b>Flight dates</b>	<b>Hooker</b>	<b>Tasman</b>	<b>Murchison</b>	<b>Godley</b>	<b>Macaulay</b>															
16-21/6/2018	82																			<a href="https://www.doc.govt.nz/contentassets/8d63ce5ded064ca98ff5f44ce9da72af/tahr-survey-mt-cook-table-for-map-4-hooker-river.pdf">https://www.doc.govt.nz/contentassets/8d63ce5ded064ca98ff5f44ce9da72af/tahr-survey-mt-cook-table-for-map-4-hooker-river.pdf</a>
16-21/6/2018			170																	<a href="https://www.doc.govt.nz/contentassets/8d63ce5ded064ca98ff5f44ce9da72af/tahr-survey-mt-cook-table-for-map-6-murchison-river.pdf">https://www.doc.govt.nz/contentassets/8d63ce5ded064ca98ff5f44ce9da72af/tahr-survey-mt-cook-table-for-map-6-murchison-river.pdf</a>
16-21/6/2018					107															<a href="https://www.doc.govt.nz/contentassets/8d63ce5ded064ca98ff5f44ce9da72af/tahr-survey-mt-cook-table-for-map-7-godley-river.pdf">https://www.doc.govt.nz/contentassets/8d63ce5ded064ca98ff5f44ce9da72af/tahr-survey-mt-cook-table-for-map-7-godley-river.pdf</a>
25-26/7/2019			281																	<a href="https://www.doc.govt.nz/contentassets/8d63ce5ded064ca98ff5f44ce9da72af/tahr-bulls-seen-mu4b-26-july-2019.pdf">https://www.doc.govt.nz/contentassets/8d63ce5ded064ca98ff5f44ce9da72af/tahr-bulls-seen-mu4b-26-july-2019.pdf</a>
1/08/2019				117																<a href="https://www.doc.govt.nz/contentassets/8d63ce5ded064ca98ff5f44ce9da72af/tahr-bulls-seen-mu4b-1aug2019.pdf">https://www.doc.govt.nz/contentassets/8d63ce5ded064ca98ff5f44ce9da72af/tahr-bulls-seen-mu4b-1aug2019.pdf</a>
6/08/2019			86																	<a href="https://www.doc.govt.nz/contentassets/8d63ce5ded064ca98ff5f44ce9da72af/tahr-bulls-seen-mu4b-6aug2019.pdf">https://www.doc.govt.nz/contentassets/8d63ce5ded064ca98ff5f44ce9da72af/tahr-bulls-seen-mu4b-6aug2019.pdf</a>
18-19/8/2019					169															<a href="https://www.doc.govt.nz/contentassets/8d63ce5ded064ca98ff5f44ce9da72af/tahr-bulls-seen-mu4b-18-19aug-2019.pdf">https://www.doc.govt.nz/contentassets/8d63ce5ded064ca98ff5f44ce9da72af/tahr-bulls-seen-mu4b-18-19aug-2019.pdf</a>
3-6/10/2019		299 #																		<a href="https://www.doc.govt.nz/contentassets/f7906e0a899f4e398557a5f769e0defe/2019-mu4b-tahr-bulls-seen-3-6-oct.pdf">https://www.doc.govt.nz/contentassets/f7906e0a899f4e398557a5f769e0defe/2019-mu4b-tahr-bulls-seen-3-6-oct.pdf</a>
# includes a small number in MU5																				
Adding maxima over all areas comes to <b>fewer than 500 bull tahr detected</b> . But, need to account for detection rate and coverage																				
Detection rate for the "Ramsey estimate" tahr surveys was 43%, but there was very high variability																				
Detection rates are higher in open, alpine environments																				
A survey of WNP on 19-26/9/2019 saw 83 bulls																				

# Appendix 2: DOC tahr cull data

Date	MU4A WNP	MU4B MCNP	MU4 Total	
18/06/2018		436		<a href="https://www.doc.govt.nz/parks-and-recreation/things-to-do/hunting/what-to-hunt/tahr/tahr-control-operations/tahr-sightings-maps/">https://www.doc.govt.nz/parks-and-recreation/things-to-do/hunting/what-to-hunt/tahr/tahr-control-operations/tahr-sightings-maps/</a>
20/06/2018		689		<a href="https://www.doc.govt.nz/contentassets/8d63ce5ded064ca98ff5f44ce9da72af/tahr-shot-mt-cook-hooker-river-table.pdf">https://www.doc.govt.nz/contentassets/8d63ce5ded064ca98ff5f44ce9da72af/tahr-shot-mt-cook-hooker-river-table.pdf</a>
21/06/2018		435		<a href="https://www.doc.govt.nz/contentassets/8d63ce5ded064ca98ff5f44ce9da72af/tahr-shot-mt-cook-murchison-river-table.pdf">https://www.doc.govt.nz/contentassets/8d63ce5ded064ca98ff5f44ce9da72af/tahr-shot-mt-cook-murchison-river-table.pdf</a>
<b>2018</b>		<b>1560</b>	<b>1560</b>	Culled in National Parks (MU4)
18/07/2019	96			<a href="https://www.doc.govt.nz/contentassets/8d63ce5ded064ca98ff5f44ce9da72af/tahr-control-mu4a-18july2019.pdf">https://www.doc.govt.nz/contentassets/8d63ce5ded064ca98ff5f44ce9da72af/tahr-control-mu4a-18july2019.pdf</a>
22/07/2019	182			<a href="https://www.doc.govt.nz/contentassets/8d63ce5ded064ca98ff5f44ce9da72af/tahr-control-mu4a-22july2019.pdf">https://www.doc.govt.nz/contentassets/8d63ce5ded064ca98ff5f44ce9da72af/tahr-control-mu4a-22july2019.pdf</a>
25-26/7/2019		418		<a href="https://www.doc.govt.nz/contentassets/8d63ce5ded064ca98ff5f44ce9da72af/tahr-control-mu4b-26-july-2019.pdf">https://www.doc.govt.nz/contentassets/8d63ce5ded064ca98ff5f44ce9da72af/tahr-control-mu4b-26-july-2019.pdf</a>
26/07/2019	143			<a href="https://www.doc.govt.nz/contentassets/8d63ce5ded064ca98ff5f44ce9da72af/tahr-control-mu4a-26july2019.pdf">https://www.doc.govt.nz/contentassets/8d63ce5ded064ca98ff5f44ce9da72af/tahr-control-mu4a-26july2019.pdf</a>
1/08/2019	211			<a href="https://www.doc.govt.nz/contentassets/8d63ce5ded064ca98ff5f44ce9da72af/tahr-control-mu4a-1aug2019.pdf">https://www.doc.govt.nz/contentassets/8d63ce5ded064ca98ff5f44ce9da72af/tahr-control-mu4a-1aug2019.pdf</a>
1/08/2019		240		<a href="https://www.doc.govt.nz/contentassets/8d63ce5ded064ca98ff5f44ce9da72af/tahr-control-mu4b-1aug2019.pdf">https://www.doc.govt.nz/contentassets/8d63ce5ded064ca98ff5f44ce9da72af/tahr-control-mu4b-1aug2019.pdf</a>
6/08/2019		129		<a href="https://www.doc.govt.nz/contentassets/8d63ce5ded064ca98ff5f44ce9da72af/tahr-control-mu4b-6aug2019.pdf">https://www.doc.govt.nz/contentassets/8d63ce5ded064ca98ff5f44ce9da72af/tahr-control-mu4b-6aug2019.pdf</a>
12-14/8/2019	377			<a href="https://www.doc.govt.nz/contentassets/8d63ce5ded064ca98ff5f44ce9da72af/tahr-control-mu4a-12-14aug2019.pdf">https://www.doc.govt.nz/contentassets/8d63ce5ded064ca98ff5f44ce9da72af/tahr-control-mu4a-12-14aug2019.pdf</a>
18-19/8/2019		40	410 shot in total in (4B,1&3). Say 40 in 4B	<a href="https://www.doc.govt.nz/contentassets/8d63ce5ded064ca98ff5f44ce9da72af/tahr-control-mu4b-18-19aug-2019.pdf">https://www.doc.govt.nz/contentassets/8d63ce5ded064ca98ff5f44ce9da72af/tahr-control-mu4b-18-19aug-2019.pdf</a>
3-6/10/2019		267	307 shot. About 40 in MU5	<a href="https://www.doc.govt.nz/contentassets/f7906e0a899f4e398557a5f769e0defe/2019-mu4b-tahr-removed-3-6-oct.pdf">https://www.doc.govt.nz/contentassets/f7906e0a899f4e398557a5f769e0defe/2019-mu4b-tahr-removed-3-6-oct.pdf</a>
15-23/10/2019	448			<a href="https://www.doc.govt.nz/contentassets/f7906e0a899f4e398557a5f769e0defe/2019-mu4a-tahr-removed-15-23-october.pdf">https://www.doc.govt.nz/contentassets/f7906e0a899f4e398557a5f769e0defe/2019-mu4a-tahr-removed-15-23-october.pdf</a>
<b>2019</b>	<b>1457</b>	<b>1094</b>	<b>2551</b>	Culled in National Parks (MU4)



## **Annex 3**

# Game Animal Trophies Dashboard – 2014

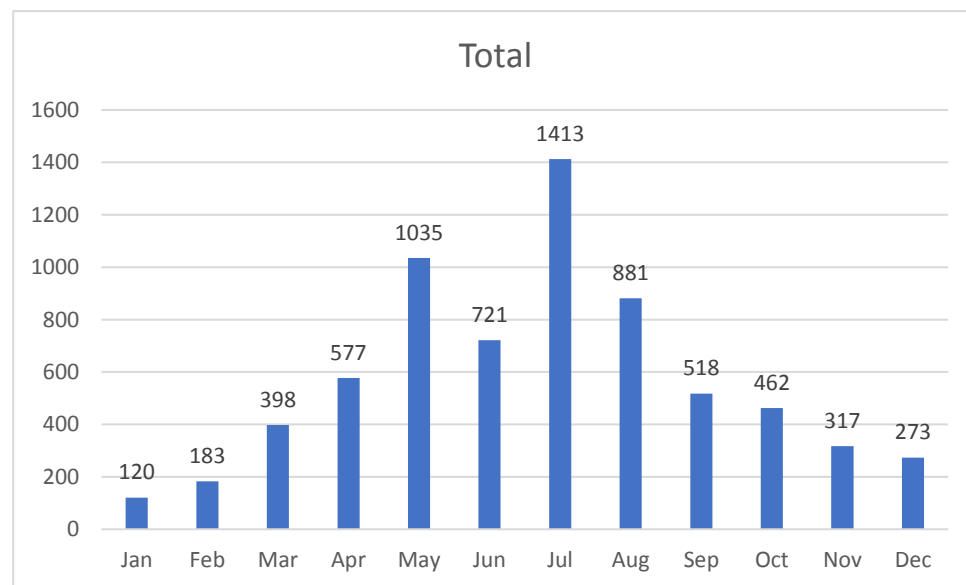
Total Certificates      2,538      Trophy Certificates      1,317      Total Trophies  
6,898

Percentage of total certificates      51.89%  
Self Exported Certificates      23

Trophies by species	Amount
<b>GAC</b>	
Boar	32
Chamois	542
Fallow Deer	1085
Himalayan Tahr	1034
Red Deer	2243
Rusa Deer	43
Sambar Deer	15
Sika Deer	198
Wapiti	116
White Tailed Deer	12
<b>GAC Total</b>	<b>5320</b>

Trophies self exported	Amount
Self Export	193
Non Self Export	6705
<b>Grand Total</b>	<b>6898</b>

<b>Non GAC</b>	
Bison	6
Black Swan	20
Brown Trout	9
Californian Quail	4
Canadian Goose	4
Duck	6
Feral Cat	1
Ferret	3
Goat	247
Grey Duck	4
Hare	3
Magpie	7
Mallard Duck	6
Paradise Duck	183
Peacock	4
Pheasant	2
Possum	174
Pukeko	28
Pukeko	2
Quail	2
Rabbit	6
Rainbow Trout	4
Ram	604
Short Horn Bull	7
Shoveler	2
Shoveller Duck	5
Stoat	1
Swan	12
Turkey	39
Wallaby	180
Water Buffalo	3
<b>Non GAC Total</b>	<b>1578</b>
<b>Grand Total</b>	<b>6898</b>



# Game Animal Trophies Dashboard - 2015

## Total

Certificates 2,645

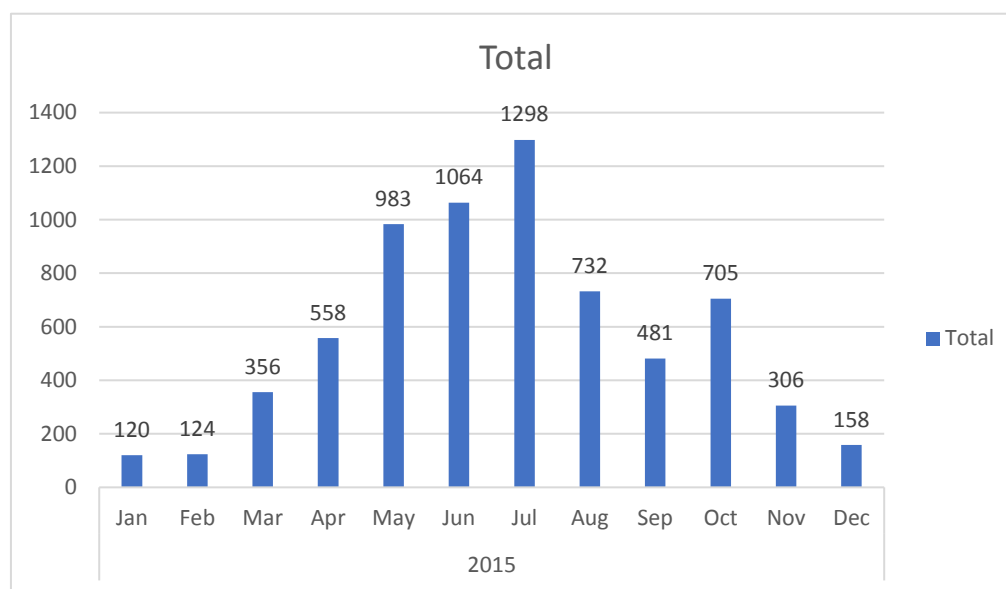
Trophy Certificates 1,380

Total Trophies 6,885

Percentage of total certificates 52.17%  
Self Exported Certificates 26

Trophies by species	Amount
<b>GAC</b>	
Boar	32
Chamois	573
Fallow Deer	1106
Himalayan Tahr	1117
Red Deer	2344
Rusa Deer	51
Sambar Deer	26
Sika Deer	247
Wapiti	118
White Tailed Deer	6
<b>GAC Total</b>	<b>5620</b>
<b>Non GAC</b>	
Bison	5
Brown Trout	1
Buffalo	10
Canada Goose	1
Ferret	1
Goat	235
Goose	1
Hare	4
Hedgehog	1
Kangaroo	5
Magpie	1
Partridge	1
Possum	187
Rabbit	16
Rainbow Trout	3
Ram	566
Salmon	1
Short Horn Bull	13
Spur winger plover	1
Swan	1
Turkey	25
Wallaby	179
Water Buffalo	7
<b>Non GAC Total</b>	<b>1265</b>
<b>Grand Total</b>	<b>6885</b>

Trophies self exported	Amount
Self Export	133
Non Self Export	6752
<b>Grand Total</b>	<b>6885</b>



# Game Animal Trophies Dashboard – 2016 (10 months of the year)

Total Certificates 2,055

Trophy Certificates 1,216

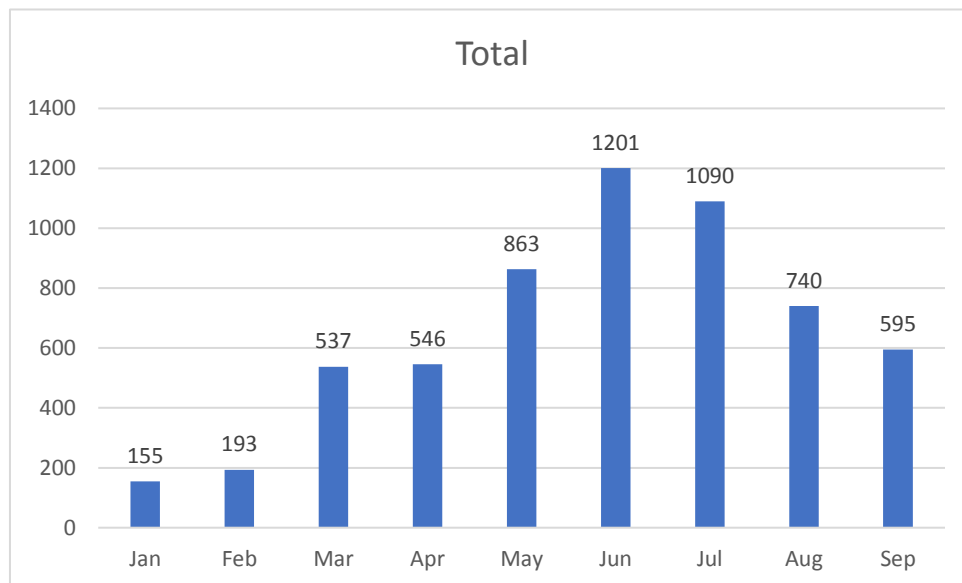
Total Trophies 5,920

Percentage of total certificates 59.17%  
Self Export Certificates 31

Trophies by species	Amount
<b>GAC</b>	
Boar	30
Chamois	494
Fallow Deer	939
Himalayan Tahr	963
Hog Deer	1
Red Deer	2110
Rusa Deer	37
Sambar Deer	17
Sika Deer	166
Wapiti	105
White Tailed Deer	10
<b>GAC Total</b>	<b>4872</b>

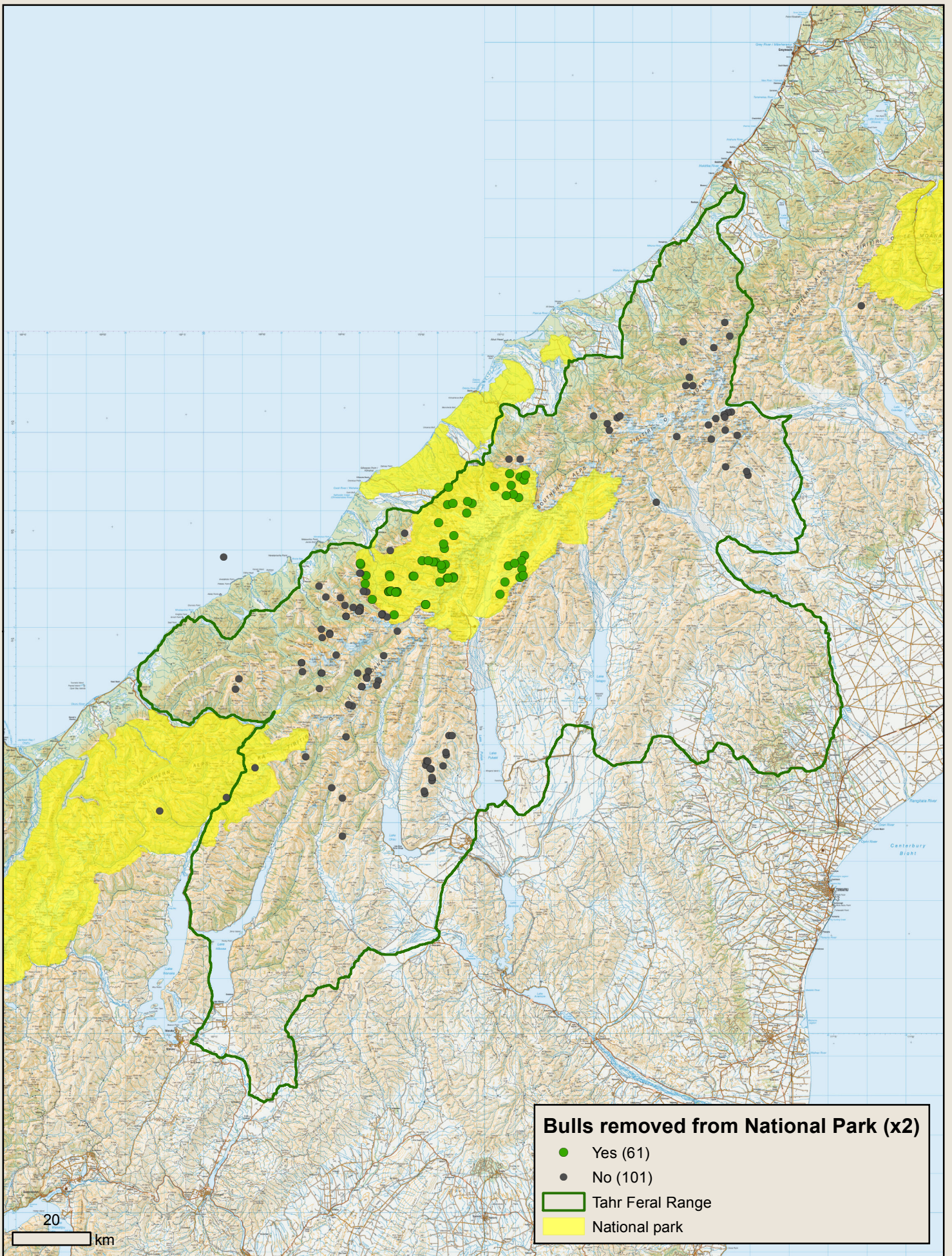
<b>Non GAC</b>	
Bison	3
Black Swan	2
Brown Trout	3
Goat	247
Hare	3
Magpie	3
Peacock	1
Possum	98
Rabbit	7
Rainbow Trout	4
Ram	488
Short horn bull	1
Tammar (dama) wallaby	2
Turkey	20
Wallaby	162
Water Buffalo	4
<b>Non GAC Total</b>	<b>1048</b>
<b>Grand Total</b>	<b>5920</b>

Trophies self exported	Amount
Self Export	111
Non Self Export	5809
<b>Grand Total</b>	<b>5920</b>



## **Annex 4**

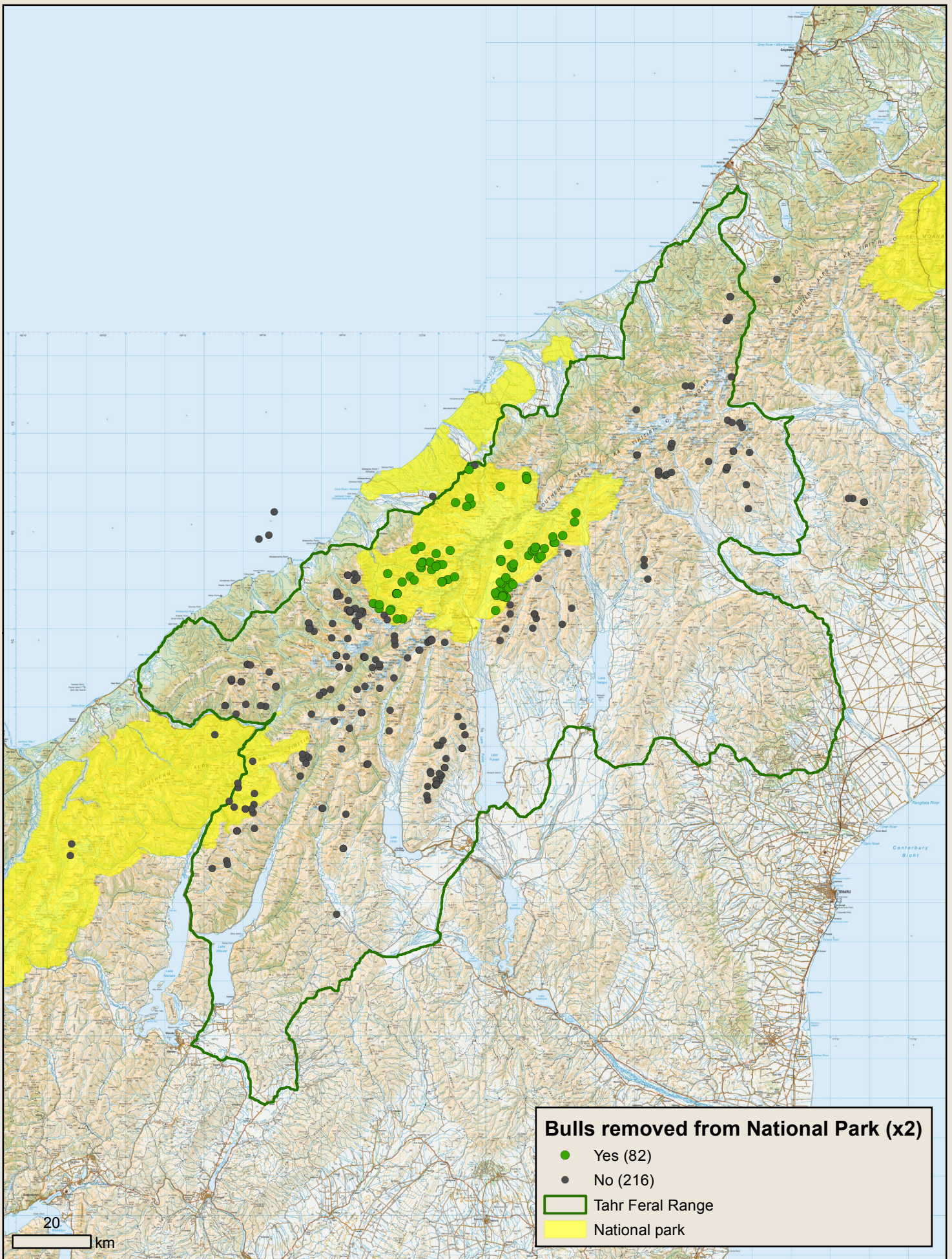




# AATH Tahr Trophy Concession Returns (2015 Calendar)



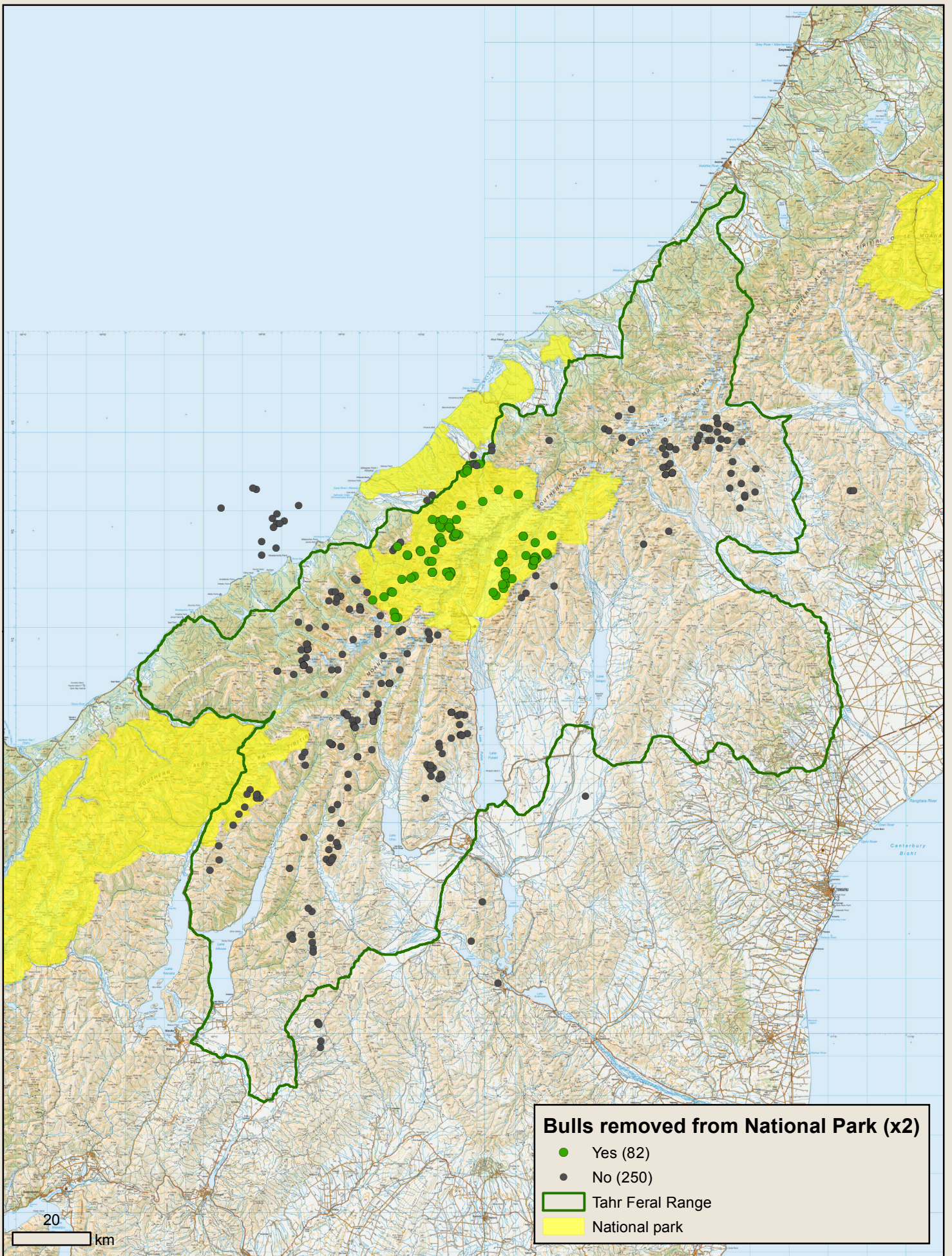




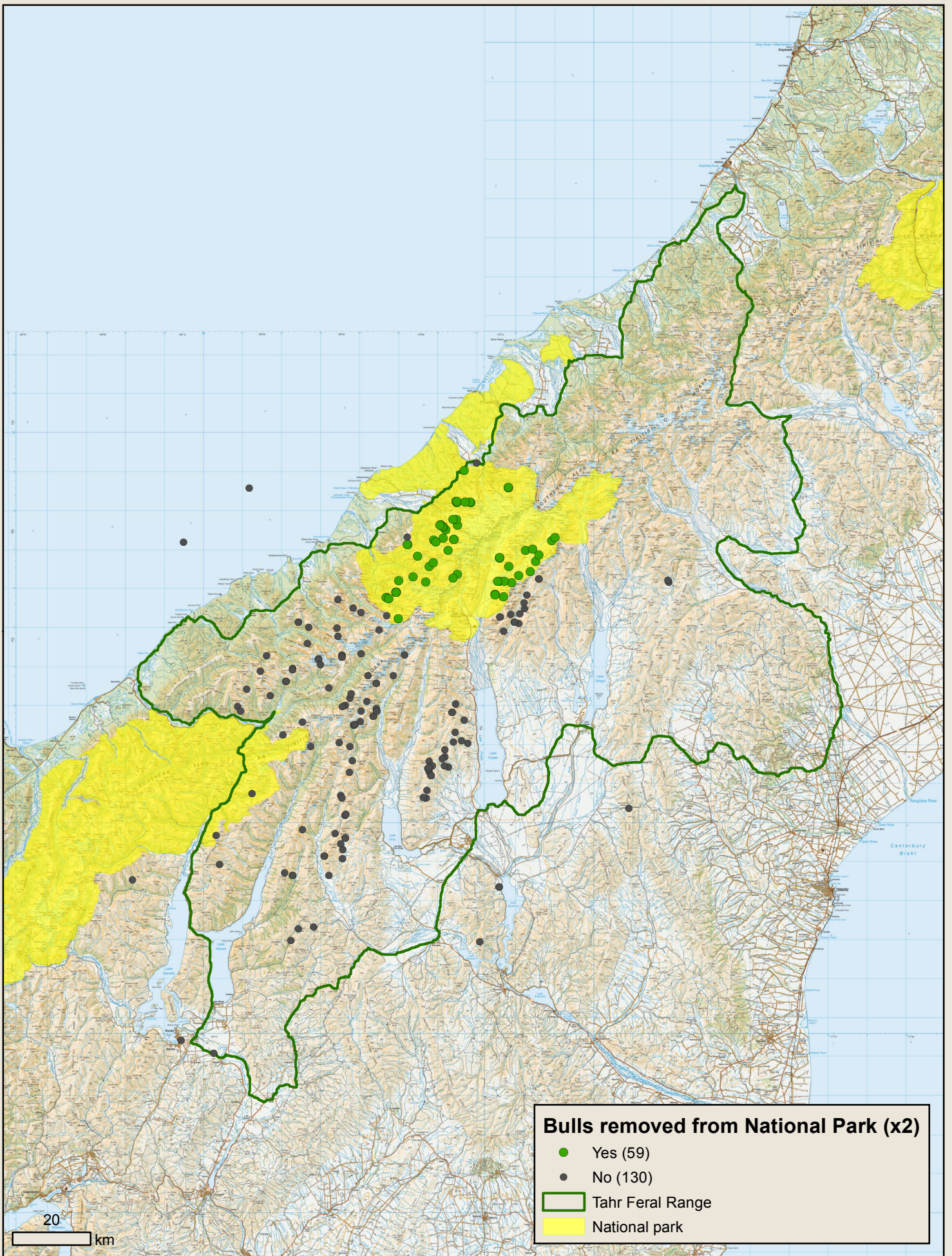
# AATH Tahr Trophy Concession Returns (2016 Calendar)



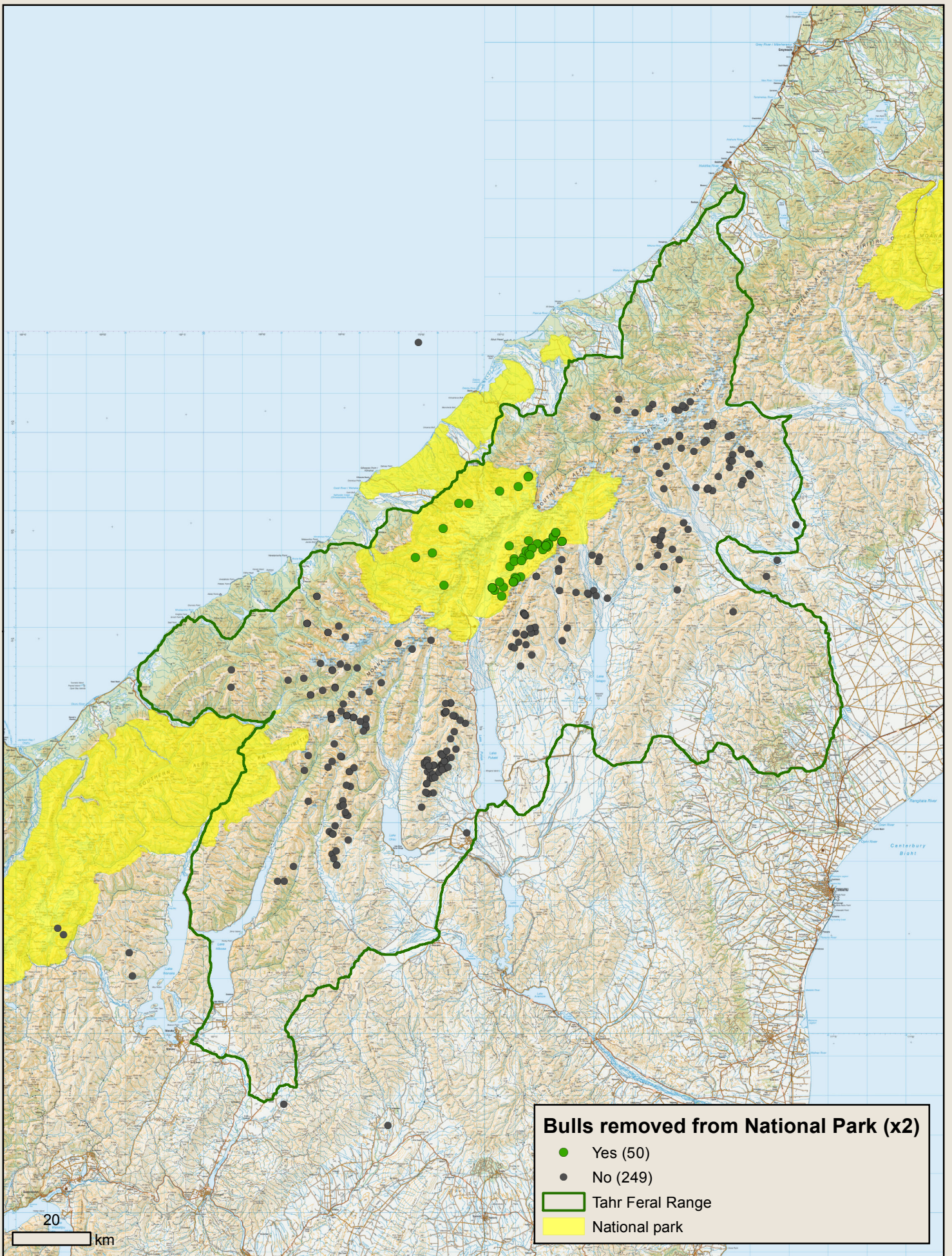




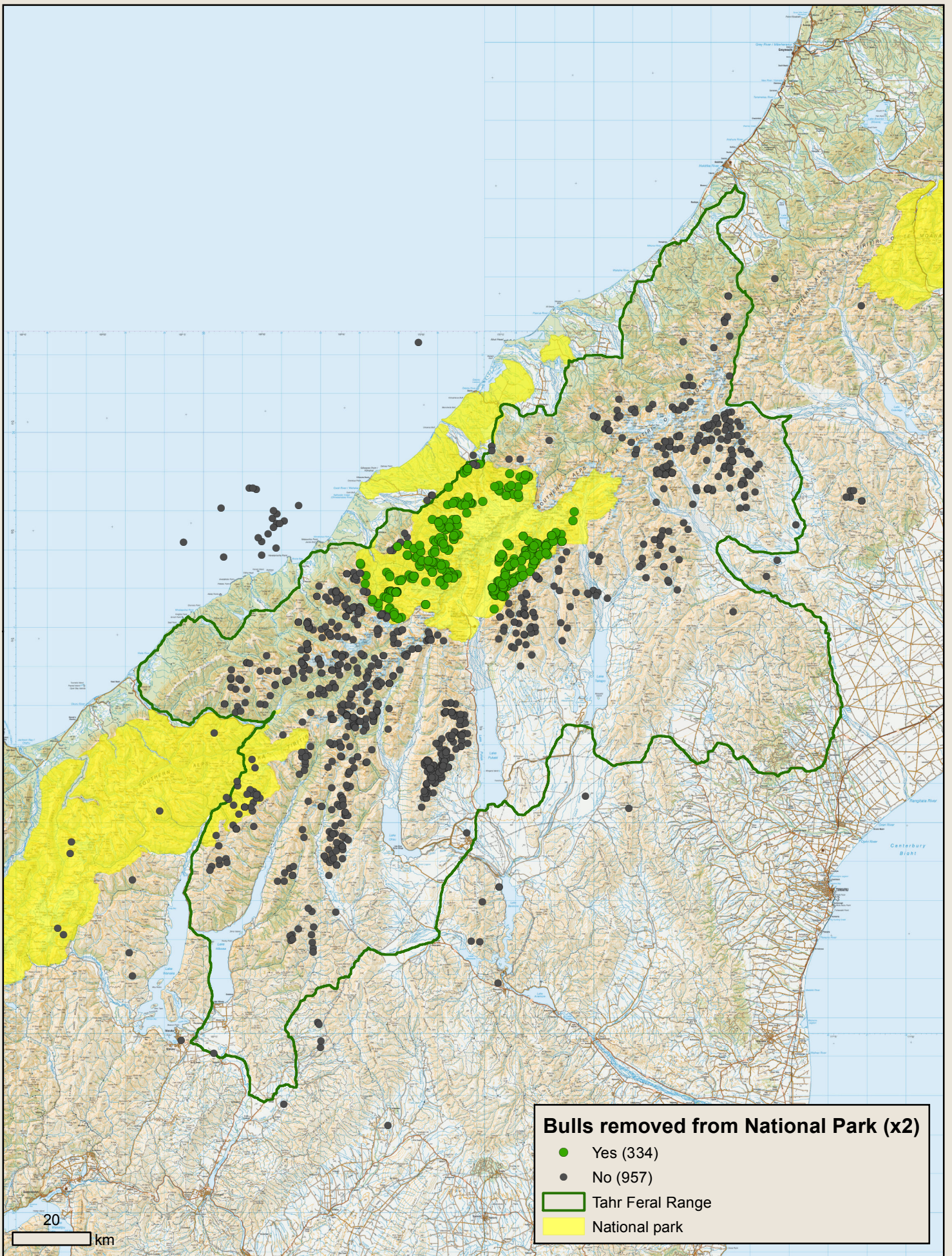














## **Annex 5**



# Tahr Plan Implementation Liaison Group

Meeting Notes for Friday 12.30 - 5.05pm - 19th June 2020

Riccarton Racecourse, 165 Racecourse Road, Christchurch

## Meeting attendees:

Kara Edwards, Matthew Dale, Geoff Kerr, Marcus Pinney, Kaylyn Pinney, Peter Lawless, Tim Gale, Garry Ottmann, Dave Keen, Gwyn Thurlow, Jan Finlayson, Snow Hewetson, Greg Duley, Darren Clifford, Helen Ivy, Simon Guild, Kevin Gallagher, James Cagney, Jennifer Williams, Nicky Snoyink, Mark Brough (part), Heather Purdie, John Parkes, Karina Morrow, Nicole Kunzmann, James Holborow, Damien Bromwich, Marcus Gibbs, Wayne Costello, Duncan Toogood, Mike Tubbs and Eilish Haggerty.

*Note – a number of attendees were remote via Zoom.*

**Apologies:** Sarah Wilson, Peter Anderson, Doug Maxwell, Gus Gordon, Simon Williamson, James Scott, Gerald Telford, and Gary Herbert.

**Meeting Chair:** Ben Reddiex

Ben Reddiex opened the meeting with a karakia.

## Context setting – Ben Reddiex

- Ben said that DOC really appreciated the time and energy of participants discussing tahr management today and all the interactions we have had to date.
- He acknowledged DOC's Treaty Partner Ngāi Tahu and said that as previously mentioned to this forum DOC is committed to exploring co-governance with Ngāi Tahu.
- He mentioned Jobs for Nature opportunities (a part of the governments COVID-19 economic stimulus package) particularly in relation to potential opportunities around research and monitoring associated with tahr – and referenced a later agenda item by John Parkes.
- He explained that the tahr population monitoring report was delayed being released as he had sought a supplementary fact sheet to help explain aspects of the work (which was delivered in February 2020). Both documents will be on the DOC website Monday.
- In relation to the Tahr Control Operational Plan (TCOP) he said that whatever decisions are made some parties will be unhappy. DOC and Ngāi Tahu can listen and understand but cannot step away from responsibility for the decisions that need to be made. He said that his purpose in working with participants was twofold:
  - First, he said that DOC and Ngāi Tahu need to understand the current situation as well as possible to enable them to make the best decisions and to enable people to understand what's happening.
  - Second he said that he wanted to make sure that participants are well informed about those decisions so that they can do the things they need to do.
- He noted that there would also be areas where agreement would not happen. Differences would remain, and DOC and Ngāi Tahu will have to make decisions based on the information in front of them.
- He said that as chair, he would be listening for agreement and fundamental differences and weighing these against what law and policy required of DOC. Once these were clear he would move the discussion along to ensure that the meeting covered everything that needed to be

said. He said that he would ensure the 'next steps' after today are outlined at the end. He said that after the meeting DOC would:

- Take stock of today's information
- Engage with our Treaty Partner
- Make decisions and inform people by 30 June 2020.

## COVID-19

The chair invited comments from participants about how COVID-19 had affected them in relation to the management of tahr. The following includes many of the themes:

- Hunters are rebooking not cancelling, hunting will increase once borders are open again.
- 
- Impact on recreational hunters (tahr ballot/rut)
- Observed increase of Kiwi's hunting post COVID-19 'lockdown'
- Crippled Aerially Assisted Trophy Hunting (AATH) at the most crucial time of year.
- Requests to delay payments/memberships this year for hunting associations.
- Retail industry sponsors and advertises highly affected and are reliant on tahr hunting to bring back some revenue.
- Survey's around guided hunting show (approx. numbers) \$60 million of revenue that international commercial hunting brings in yearly.
- Lost 90% of operational season this year.
- Industry is hoping for a trans-Tasman bubble to increase revenue.

## Refresh of the TPILG

- Peter Lawless presented a draft new terms of reference document and an explanation document (these had been distributed to TPILG members in March 2020 as part of the postponed March 2020 TPILG meeting papers).
- All members agreed that the term of reference document needs to be updated with clarity on the purpose of the group. Comments made included:
  - Terms of reference needs to be set by the statutory landscape (LINZ to be an appropriate member).
  - State clearly this is an advisory group.
  - The group does not vote as it is advisory.
  - Use the group to create a new plan with modern needs rather than implement the 1993 plan.
  - A review of the 1993 plan is a Ministerial decision.
  - Conflict within hunting sectors, hunting community is united for the benefit of the environment
  - Review: Propose is to resolve issues that arise in implementation of the Plan.
  - Keep in the TOR the role of rapidly sharing new information amongst interested parties.
- Further contributions were invited post the meeting on the draft terms of reference document. Suggestion was that the period for comments should be approximately 2 months (date needs to be made clear) and then the TOR will be revised and further feedback sought.

## Tahr Control Operational Plan 2020/21

The following discussion occurred on proposed operations plan 2020/2021:

### *Outside the Feral Range*

- Damien Bromwich provided updates on Tahr outside the feral range with a PowerPoint presentation (*Note – the presentation was emailed to TPILG members on 22 June 2020*). Damien said: Priorities are how to best utilise the departments resources outside the feral range. Focusing on using different method of control other than just aerial control. There is work being done on trail-cameras and surveillance systems. The time frame for this work is long term- 5 years.
- Comments included:
  - Should Mount Hutt range be added to the feral range due to the natural barrier?
  - Sites listed on PowerPoint had control post COVID-19 due to conservation values.
  - Copy of data on the conservational values requested - how they are measured as being higher in some places.
  - Agree that we do not want to increase the feral range, but maybe borders outside that are easier to defend against tahr in some places.
- James Holborow said that the best way to contribute to the work outside the feral range regarding research and monitoring is via John Parkes piece of work (see later in the meeting).
- Damien agreed to prepare and distribute summary/fact sheet of the work being done outside the feral range (after operations were complete at end of June).

### *Proposed TCOP 2020/21*

- James Holborow presented the Proposed Tahr Control Operational Plan 2020/21 with a PowerPoint presentation (*Note – the presentation was emailed to TPILG members on 22 June 2020*). He agreed to send out the estimate of tahr numbers updated with *the 2019 survey data* (*Note – this was included in the email to TPILG members on 22 June 2020 and loaded on the DOC website*).
- There was a long discussion on the TCOP from those attending. Comments included:
  - Research regarding numbers is lacking.
  - To take average out of a trend is misleading (AATH trophies). Need experts engaged with TPILG to answer questions around tahr numbers (related to commercial trophy data over the last 5 years).
  - National Parks concerns - affects AATH trophies, understanding how important on impact for guided hunters/recreational hunters and international hunting.
  - Department needs to think about the population estimates after the cull.
  - Any ground control needs to be controlled by same rules and restricted as in the plan to ensure they are targeting what they are meant to be.
  - Process concerns - last opportunity for engagement, difficult to receive presentations on the day.
  - Better understanding of the ecological impact on low density of bull tahr, research required.
  - Impact of targeting non-identifiable males long-term.
  - Improving access into Westland National Park.
  - This plan could achieve zero densities in some areas that may not have ecological priorities.
  - Benefits to leaving some tahr for kea.
  - NZDA cannot support the proposed Plan. Reason is cull is excessive. Will diminish recreational value of tahr herd. Expect a massive backlash. NZDA asks that DOC put the plan on hold. Needs more analysis of the proposed hours of control. Support operation outside

feral range. Want a changed plan that reflects COVID-19. Recreational users will not support this plan and it is not acceptable to guides or the meat sector.

- Hunting sector wants sustainable trophy hunting herds. They have a real fear that the degree of control proposed will decimate herds and wipe them off the map. This would represent no balance and fail to avoid a boom bust scenario.
- Hunters opposed shooting bulls in national parks. Asking the department to reconsider.

### Items sought from TPILG attendees

#### *Radio collared tahr in Perth*

- Geoff Kerr said that the GAC had supported research around 1080 looking at the survival for tahr in Perth River catchment. The was high survival and the conclusion was that aerial 1080 poses a low mortality risk to nanny and juvenile tahr.

#### *Declaratory proceedings regarding TCOP 2019/20*

- Nicki Snoyink described the declaratory proceedings regarding TCOP 2019/20 lodged by Forest and Bird. The key Issues were:
  - Leaving bull tahr in the national parks.
  - Having no confidence that the Control Plan numbers would ever be achieved.

#### *Tahr surveys on crown pastoral leases*

- Kevin Gallagher said that LINZ had worked with leaseholders around tahr population surveys on Crown Pastoral Lease land. Conversations with lessees so far had been around access and perceived current densities. Surveys were postponed due to COVID-19 and would be rescheduled.

### Contributions on developing a comprehensive research and monitoring potential programme

- John Parkes described the key themes of the research and monitoring review he was undertaking for DOC and sought contributions from participants. He used a PowerPoint presentation (*Note – the presentation was emailed to TPILG members on 22 June 2020*).
- Members agreed that DOC could share its email list with John and to contribute to his work.

### Concluding comments

- Ben Reddiex thanked participants for a full, free and frank exchange of information. He said that his strong intent was to continue engaging with the TPILG like this noting that COVID-19 had provided some real challenges to doing this optimally.
- He said that DOC's preference was to not see a repeat of 2018 when there were damaging social media posts, misinformation etc. which impacted DOC staff then and continued to impact staff now.
- He said that if people attempted to act inappropriately in social media with damaging posts and misinformation it would make it very hard to work in this way in the future. He said that he needed to look after DOC staff and that if there were misinformation they would need to respond assertively.
- He said that he had already seen comments in social media relating to "not being surprised if someone shoots a chopper down, others like Tarrant will have a license". Members said that they could not control what was said on social media.

The meeting concluded with a karakia from Peter Lawless.