

Reviewing the management of wild animal recovery operations (WARO) on public conservation land and the issuing of wild animal recovery permits.

In 2014 the Department of Conservation embarked on a non-notified process for issuing new WARO permits. The existing permits expired on 30th November 2014. DOC decided that it would only consult existing permit holders and processors and not consult the Game Animal Council or any recreational hunting groups or individuals.

In response to concerns raised at the time, the Department of Conservation decided to take a wider perspective and review future WARO management. "The Department will now initiate a wider conversation with WARO operators, processors, the guided hunting sector, the Game Animal Council and the recreational hunting sector to look at a more long-term sustainable future for the management of wild animal recovery on public conservation land in New Zealand. This will inform the next WARO permit review when the 2015 national WARO permit offer expires in 2018. The Department will commence this separate process in due course."

To allow time for the review, in 2015 the Department of Conservation issued new 3-year wild animal recovery permits.

The GAC, having been informed both by WARO operators and recreational hunters about their concerns with the existing process, supported that decision and has sought to work with DoC to implement a suitable review process.

DOC is now embarking on a process for issuing new WARO permits in spite of not having carried out the agreed review. The Game Animal Council does not agree with this approach and has informed DOC that it is pointless to have a process for issuing new permits when the review of the fitness of the current management regime has not occurred. This is essentially putting the cart before the horse and, at best, delays potential changes until expiry of any new permits issued in 2018.

The GAC believes WARO operators, processors, the guided hunting sector, the Game Animal Council, the recreational hunting sector and DOC need to get together to identify the issues surrounding the sustainable commercial harvest of game animals on public conservation land, and to evaluate options for managing that harvest going forward. The issuing of the appropriate permits would follow that review.