



ANNUAL  
REPORT  
2023

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## 2023 Chairperson's Report

*Last year our previous Chair Kaylyn Pinney stood down and took up her new role as Policy Advisor for the Game Animal Council. Following on I took up the role of Chair. I would very much like to thank Kaylyn for her incredible dedication to the NZTF.*

**K**aylyn put a level of energy and expertise that has been difficult to match or follow. The GAC is very fortunate to have her and it is great to know that the GAC can benefit from her knowledge on tahr, it's also been really beneficial for the NZTF to have good relations with Kaylyn and the team in the GAC.

Our AGM in Christchurch was a huge success, it was a beautiful day and we all enjoyed having a tasty tahr burger outside in the sun. This was the first time we have had an AGM on our own, thanks very much to the North Canterbury NZDA branch for the use of your clubrooms, great venue, and I'm sure we will use again for future events

if possible. The AGM was also our first opportunity to trial the Duke of Bedford measuring system so it was good to get the ball rolling there. It was a proud moment to see Snow Hewetson rewarded for his time and effort with the great tahr artwork by Canterbury artist Jared Towler.

Our Targeted Harvest work continued again this year, adding in work in the Mahitahi Valley as well. Once again, we removed a good number of adult females leaving the yearlings and juveniles to mature, as half of these animals will be our future bulls. We do need to be better with our public messaging to the ballot parties going into these valleys so that hunters can be aware of this new form of management -



there's no point leaving them if they are going to be canon fodder for uninformed ballot holders.

It has been great to see more and more hunters talking about the age of the bulls they are taking, ten years ago this was seldom heard. The NZTF needs to continue our education work as with the reduced herd we are all going to have to be more selective with the animals we choose to take. It will be a balancing act the next few years, balancing a reduced recreational take along with the commercial sector having to do the same, no one wants to see a race to the bottom of the barrel.

The NZTF has continued to attend numerous meetings including tahr liaison, WARO, AATH, the illegal hunting workshop to name a few. Advocating for better use of that

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our resource and decisions going forward. As everyone knows this volunteer work takes considerable time and effort. I would like to thank all the team who have helped with these meetings and preparing to get the right message across for the best outcomes for the hunting sector.

The thunderbox trial is now underway, following the design of the first prototype - a kitset, collapsible, open-air, long drop box. I am happy to say it's now in place, a positive collaboration between NZTF and DOC.

It's good to see us cleaning up our act. We have the second thunderbox going in very soon. Recent discussions with the department are continuing around possibly trialling the thunderboxes at the tahr ballot sites.

During the 2023 hunting season we have seen a huge increase in pressure from the commercial sector following COVID on both Public Conservation Land (PCL) and private land. While for now we are still seeing some really good trophy tahr coming through



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this is not necessarily going to last. In order to make the right management decisions we need to have reliable data on herd structure and number of females rather than just population estimates.

Up until now in New Zealand our attempts at game animal management have been basic at best. With our newly elected Government's focus on hunting and fishing we look to see some real progress in this area. It is so awesome to see their willingness to create a Herd of Special Interest (HOSI) for tahr.

As far as game animal herds go it is undoubtedly the tahr herd that has the ability to generate the most significant income. This income is essential for better management and outcomes for tahr and their environment.

NZTF sees this HOSI being a massive step to New Zealand realising the true value of game animals to our country, culture and economy. It is my opinion now

that the Himalayan Tahr Control Plan 1993 has reached it's use by date. The plan has effectively never been followed - this has been to our benefit as it has allowed us to have a tahr herd we can enjoy, prosper from and a herd that has largely been in harmony with the environment.

There were very likely more than 10,000 tahr in Management Unit 3 alone at the start of the plan in 1993. The densities set in the plan of 1.5 - 2.5 tahr per square kilometre are far too low to allow for a huntable resource and the National Park allowances make no sense and cannot (and shouldn't) be achieved.

The carrying capacity of the land was grossly underestimated, I look forward to the NZTF working with the new Government, Game Animal Council and interested parties to develop the new plan perhaps called "The Himalayan Tahr Management Plan 2023 HOSI". It might not happen till next year but thought 2023 had a good ring to it...

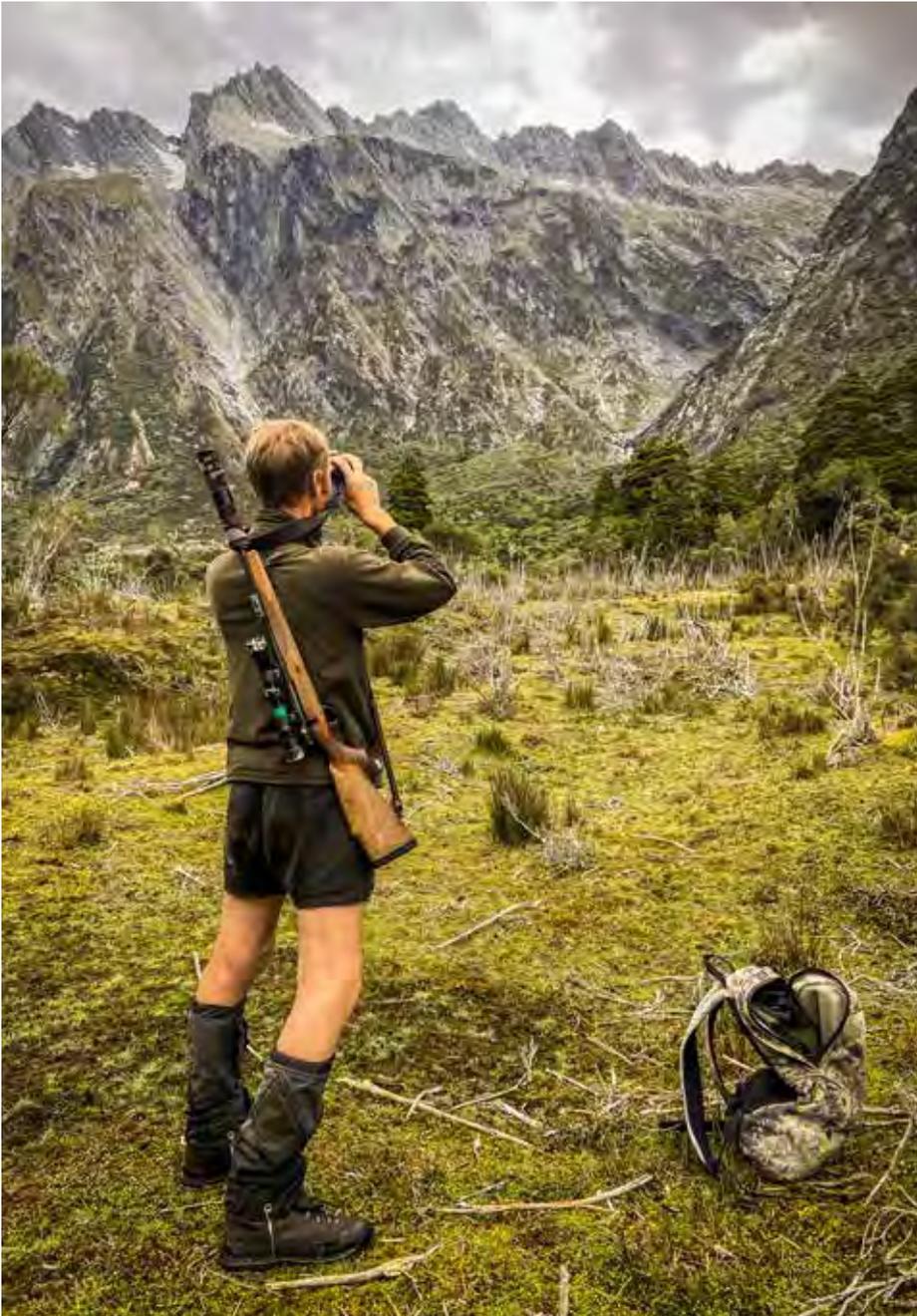
30 years on!

I would really like to thank everyone on the NZTF committee for all their help and support during the past year.

Because of my own lifelong obsession with tahr, hunting tahr and their management I would have preferred to be in this role for a number of years. Unfortunately I have had an unforeseen health problem develop so reluctantly I have had to pass the torch on to Luke Care.

It is disappointing to have to do this especially at such an exciting time, however as Immediate Past Chair I am still able to be part of the process, I wish Luke every success in his role and I look forward to seeing a very positive future for tahr in New Zealand and for hunters and visitors from across the world.

**David Keen**



## Recreational Hunters Update

*Recreational hunting has been in a strange space this year. On one hand, there seem to have been a great amount of exceptional bull tahr harvested. On the other, with the resumption of international tourism, there has been greater than ever pressure on the herd.*

Both of these can be blamed on covid. With three years of very little AATH pressure there are hundreds more bulls available for rec hunters to look over (outside of the National Parks). Conversely, now that the pandemic is over and borders are open international hunting has resumed with a vengeance.

This year will mark a particularly high bull harvest I would think as outfitters pack hunts in to try and financially recover from a very lean few years. Early indications suggest 3-400 from AATH alone, let alone public land foot hunts.

What we must remember, constantly, is that the number bulls we have now are a finite resource. With heavy culling for the last few years reducing the nanny population, as well as juvenile bulls, there will be much fewer coming on to replace what we harvest now.

The onus is on recreational hunters more than ever to target mature bulls and show restraint in how many you shoot. If you look around the Tahr Foundation committee, a gathering of some of the most experienced tahr hunters we have, there is way less than one bull shot per year for each member. Some haven't shot a bull for many years.

As recreational hunters our role in tahr management is quite simple. Target the mature bull you want, and shoot nannies wherever you see

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them in herd groups over five - and use the app! The tahr app is the only means of recording recreational hunter input and we know we're only capturing a fraction of what is shot. Encourage your mates to use it, and they can even back-fill the data after a trip so remind them over beers the next weekend.

The data doesn't go to DOC, the location information is just so that we can prove that we can verify the data if needed. This is crucial information that we need - without it there are thousands of tahr being shot that aren't taken in to account.

Our social licence as tahr hunters is no joke, we need other recreational users to accept our use of the tahr range as legitimate and beneficial.

We know that it is, but we have to convince them of it. So, remember that even deep in the mountains where no one else goes, you're representing tahr hunters. Keep

your campsites tidy, bury your number twos, take out your rubbish, and leave our special backcountry just how you found it.

Beyond that, be a tahr hunting ambassador and spread the good word about tahr management. Positively encourage other hunters to only target mature bulls, and not to be greedy buggers with multiple bulls each. If you haven't found a mature bull bigger than you have already shot, why would you shoot it?! And keep on top of the nannies in your area - and use the app!

The foundation has been busy liaising with DOC this year. As ever, things move slowly, but the dialogue in the Tahr Plan Implementation Liaison Group meetings has been very practical and progressive. We all look forward to some sensible

legislation changes following the Wildlife Act review, and who knows, we might make progress on the TCOP - or even enact a Herd of Special Interest with this new Government!

Despite all of the struggles in the tahr space it was heartening to see some outstanding bulls at the Sika Show, the calibre was truly amazing. The top three bulls scored over 45 DS, all over 14" long, and the winner was 86 1/8 DOB (47.5 DS) taken by Robert Prince.

There were 13 entries for the Duke of Bedford award the spot prize was won by Beaudine Hay from Te Kuiti with a bull that score 74 7/8ths. Congratulations to all of the hunters who entered.

*Luke Care*



# Commercial Sector Update

*From my perspective 2023 was a quiet year compared to 2021 and 2022, my client base is mostly kiwi with some Australians. We had a few Australian clients still to come through from the previous year due to the covid restrictions but like many of our kiwi clients who had booked for 2023 some of them opted to postpone hunts for a year.*

I can only put this down to the economic climate of the time with many clients starting to feel the pinch from inflation and rising interest rates.

I didn't really see this coming, after having enjoyed two full on years it was a bit of a surprise to find myself looking at a reduced season and suspect I may have to increase marketing to make this up. We worked our way through the bookings we did have and were again 100% successful with our tahr hunts.

The most noticeable difference in 2023 was the big increase in demand for tahr hunting opportunities on private land, it seems many guides who had previously been doing AATH on Doc estate were now looking for the option to do their hunts on private property.

Although this had some negative impact in that it made for added competition among guides the property, I operate on seemed to

cope with the extra demand and I am guessing that the two to three years of reduced pressure on the tahr herd during the covid years meant there were more big old bulls than previous years.

The number of exceptional bulls taken over the 2023 season across all land tenures would seem to bear this out. I have seen many posts on social media from guides and outfitters who have taken old bulls of exceptional trophy quality over this past year, there is something we could learn from this.

Going forward I have reservations about next season, if we have the same demand from overseas clients for tahr again in 2024 I am not sure the tahr herd can sustain that kind of pressure indefinitely.

It would be good to know what the total number of tahr taken over the 2023 season was, I am pretty sure it would have been the biggest and most successful year ever for guided tahr hunting.

*"The number of exceptional bulls taken over the 2023 season across all land tenures would seem to bear this out. I have seen many posts on social media from guides and outfitters who have taken old bulls of exceptional trophy quality over this past year, there is something we could learn from this."*

With our now much reduced tahr herd especially on DoC land and a huge increase in interest in private land tahr the big question for all of us going forward must be is this sustainable? If not, how do we manage it?

One positive is the change in government and the creation of the new minister of Hunting and Fishing, we will need to work with the new minister and the Game Animal Council to make some positive steps toward a lasting management regime for a sustainable tahr resource into the future.

*Snow Hewetson*



# Targeted Harvest Report 2023

## **PURPOSE: THIS REPORT WAS COMMISSIONED BY THE NZTF MANAGEMENT COMMITTEE 2023 TO OUTLINE THE OPERATIONAL RESULTS OF THE GROUND-BASED TARGETED HARVEST OF FEMALE TAHR POPULATIONS IN THE MAKAWHIO AND MAHITAHU VALLEYS. BACKGROUND**

The New Zealand Tahr Foundation (NZTF) is a not-for-profit organisation established in 2016 with the purposes: education, co-ordination among stakeholders, to manage Himalayan Tahr and acquire “*Herd of Special Interest*” (HOSI) status for the Tahr herd via the Game Animal Council Act 2013.

A “HOSI” designation enables the management of game animal populations, subject to adequate environmental protection, for the purposes of hunting.

However, the NZTF’s key undertaking since 2018 has been to minimise the adverse impacts on the hunting sector of DOC’s Tahr population reduction efforts, by advocating for effort to be directed and coordinated so that cultural and recreational values are maintained as far as possible.

To achieve this goal and to reduce pressures on biodiversity, as outlined by the Te Mana o te Taiao Aotearoa Biodiversity Strategy 2020, effective tahr population management tools must be applied based on landscape attributes, animal behaviors and resource values at place.

A significant number of tahr have been removed from the feral range and exclusion zones over the past 2-3 years following the directive of the Minister of Conservation to reduce tahr numbers closer to the intervention densities outlined in the “*Himalayan Tahr Control Plan 1993*” (HTCP).

However, this has largely been undertaken by aerial search & destroy control operations which are not effective in scrub and bush areas, a significant component of tahr habitat in South Westland.

Furthermore, sustained long term helicopter pressure from aerial control may increase tahr occupation of bush & scrub habitat, increasing the tahr impacts on biodiversity in these areas. It is apparent that management of tahr populations to reduce impacts on bush, scrub & fringe alpine vegetation requires ground-based hunting effort.

In January 2021, the NZTF identified pockets within the HTCP Management Unit 6 - Landsborough, specifically the Makawhio / Jacobs Valley, West Coast, where tahr browse impacts to thick vegetation and high female tahr densities were observable.

The NZTF undertook a successful female tahr population management

operation, “targeted harvest trial,” during March 2022.

## MANAGEMENT PLAN

The New Zealand Tahr Foundation (NZTF) and the Department of Conservation (DOC) entered into a 3-year Community Agreement in February 2022 (DOCCM-6920217).

As a requirement of the Community Agreement the NZTF will consult with DOC South Westland District staff and provide the Director General an annual Tahr Management Plan (TMP).

NZTF and DOC representatives met in Haast on September 7, 2022, to discuss the results of a successful NZTF-led tahr population management trial in the Makawhio / Jacobs valley in March 2022 and to discuss a plan for the year ahead.

A plan for 2023 was proposed with the purpose of targeting areas where tahr population management is further required in the Makawhio / Jacobs Valley, and to extend NZTF-led tahr population management to a single site at the lower Mahitahi ballot camp site and the Troyte catchment of the Karangarua, in Westland National Park.

The 2023 management plan aimed to build on the successful “targeted harvest trial” establishing sustained hunter-led tahr population management in the Makawhio / Jacobs Valley and other recreationally important valleys

within the South Westland district to pursue both biodiversity and hunter interest objectives.

## OPERATIONAL PLANNING

Ground-based hunts of 3-5 days were to be undertaken at each of the sites listed below. Nanny group sizes and distribution recorded, and vegetation status subjectively assessed at each site.

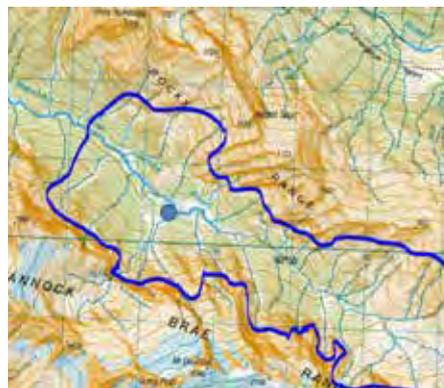
Tahr populations observed were to determine if further population management is required in the year following at sites.

### MAKAWHIO / JACOBS

One operation at each site (upper and lower landing sites). The lower site is a challenging place to hunt, minimizing scent dispersal is important for success.

The upper site is less challenging to hunt but covers a much larger area, suitable for more hunters.

**Timing:** Late October/early November when tahr are out actively feeding down low (pre-kid).



Makawhio / Jacobs - Upper site.



Makawhio / Jacobs - Lower site.

March as an alternative, subject to volunteer availability and weather.

- Upper site - 3 hunters (1 helicopter load).
- Lower site - 2 hunters (1 helicopter load).

### MAHITAHU

One operation initially as an exploration. If numbers warrant a second visit this may be undertaken as a follow up.

**Timing:** Late October/early November simultaneous with the Jacobs. March as an alternative, subject to volunteer availability and weather or for a follow up if required.

- Lower site - 3 hunters (1 helicopter load).



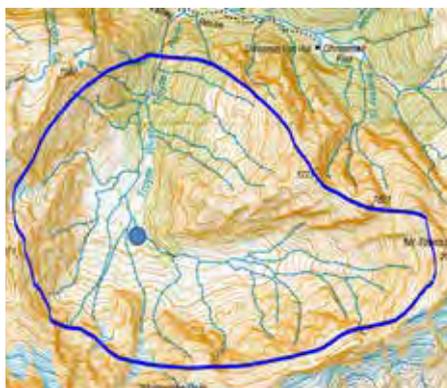
Mahitahi - Upper site.

### TROYTE

One operation initially as an exploration. The valley was previously identified as a bull stronghold and an important recreational hunting area, but nanny populations have increased displacing bulls.

**Timing:** March to provide enough time for planning and permissions.

- Single site - 3 hunters (1 helicopter load).



Troyte - Single site.

### MANAGEMENT TARGETS

As per the NZTF Standard Operating Procedures only identifiable nannies were to be shot. To achieve the management targets hunting parties were to include at minimum 2/3 experienced hunters. Two person parties will be experienced hunters only.

### SEASONAL MILESTONES:

- Reduce adult female tahr populations in the Makawhio valley (lower site only) and Mahitahi valley as far as possible due to the bush clad environment and difficulty

### Results:

Operation	No. of Hunters	No. of Hours	No. of Hunter Days	Harvest	
				Harvest Total	Av. Per Hour
Makawhio Lower	2	45	5	82	1.8
Makawhio Upper	2	64	7.1	167	2.6
Mahitahi	3	86	9.1	163	1.9
<b>Total</b>	<b>7</b>	<b>195</b>	<b>21.2</b>	<b>412</b>	<b>2.1</b>

- hunting these areas.
- Reduce adult female tahr populations in the Troyte valley as far as possible due to the National Park land status.
- Reduce adult female tahr group sizes to five in the Makawhio valley (upper site only) to reduce impacts from large groups and to maintain recreational values.

Note: the window for spring management in November is short due to oncoming kid drop by nannies, because it is inhumane to shoot nannies once kids have dropped as the kids would starve.

November can also be subject to wet spring weather, though the seasons are unpredictable. Seasonal milestones are to be met by the end of March leaving April free for hunters and tahr time to settle before the rut ballots begin and commercial activities are permitted.

### GROUND-BASED MANAGEMENT CRITERIA

- Mature nannies only to be shot.
- Good shot placement.
- Non-toxic (lead free)

ammunition to be used.

- Track logs to be recorded during hunting or drawn on map after each hunt should equipment failure occur.
- Record locations and numbers of tahr harvested onto the NZTF App or GPS.
- Photograph kills able to be accessed without risk or significant time wasting
- Record numbers and approx. age /sex of observed of non-target animals.
- Vegetation assessments to be conducted using the NZTF App or Camera.
- Volunteers are encouraged to salvage meat where possible and sensible and where it does not impact significantly on hunting efficiency.

### TAHR / VEGETATION MONITORING ACTIVITIES

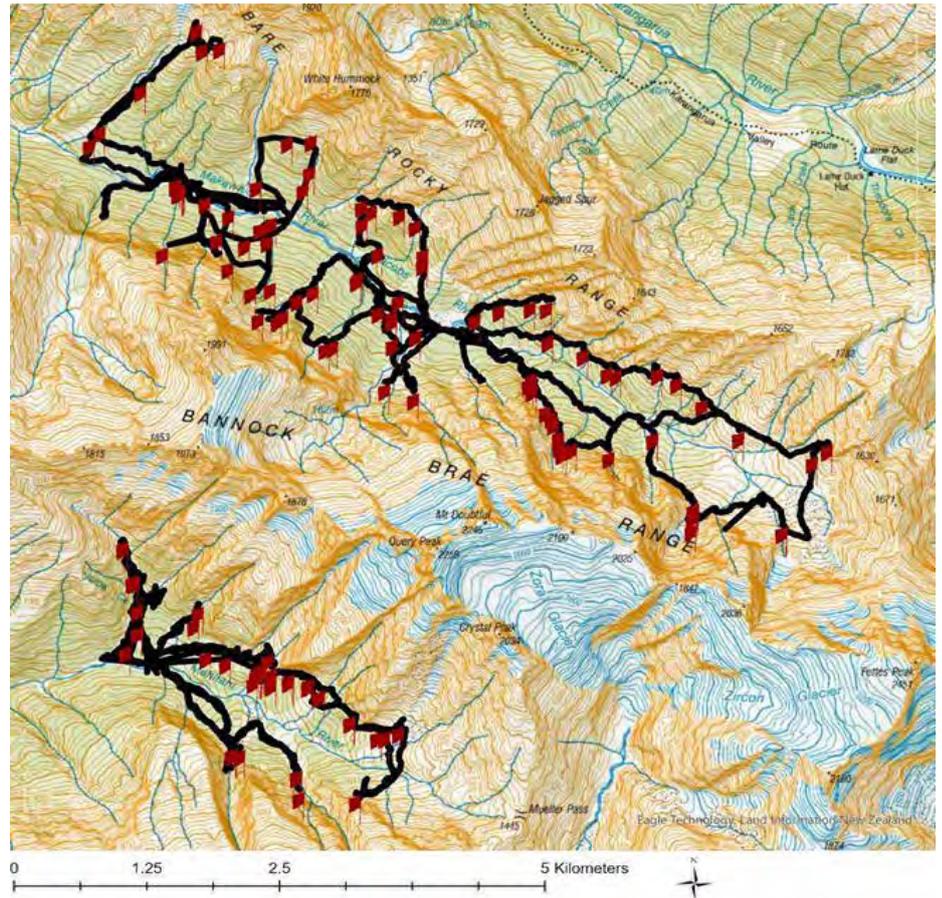
Vegetation monitoring in both alpine and forest habitats is the responsibility of DOC. However, the NZTF hunters on site for management operations take notes and photographs of vegetation status. Further collaboration between NZTF and DOC

for improved environmental monitoring is anticipated.

## HEALTH & SAFETY

All volunteers were given a health and safety briefing before departure as per the Community Agreement DOC approved Health & Safety plan. Once on site the team had discussion to identify and discuss any on site issues identified. In addition, hunters were to abide by the following:

- Each hunter was required to carry a first aid kit and each party hold a more comprehensive first aid kit at the tent base camp.
- Each morning the teams were to confirm where they are going to hunt and expected routes of travel and return.
- Each hunter was required to carry either a Personal Locator Beacon or an In-Reach device.
- Each party was to have at least 1 in-Reach device so they can communicate with the NZTF Operational Lead as required, or pilot directly if necessary.
- Each hunter was required to wear at least one hi-vis piece of clothing when hunting and away from camp.
- Immediately after returning from each trip volunteers were required to report to the NZTF Operational Lead, confirm their safe return and report any incidents.
- The Operational Lead was then to advise DOC that everyone has safely returned or of any incidents.



Valley coverage.

## OPERATIONAL OUTCOMES

The Makawhio upper and lower operation was undertaken 4th - 7th March by two experienced hunters per site. The Mahitahi operation was conducted 25th-28th February by three experienced hunters.

The opportunity arose to utilise WARO in the Troyte during the planned targeted harvest operational period. Consequently, the Troyte targeted harvest operation was not undertaken in 2023, to be reassessed for 2024.

The NZTF supports coordinated and collective hunting efforts for sustainable tahr population management and the usage of

harvested tahr meat as far as is possible. Accordingly, WARO is a more favorable operational tool than culling when it can be applied.

## DATA ANALYSIS

Track logs and waypoints where tahr were shot were loaded onto ArcGIS Pro. Hunter-day was calculated from the total hours hunting for the operation divided by nine (the average hours spent hunting on full days). Average tahr per hour and day were calculated for comparative reporting.

## HUNTER REPORTING

The average tahr per hour shot (2.1) was higher on average than that of 2022 (1.6). The average taken per



*Photographic confirmation examples.*

hour was higher in the Makawhio than 2022, indicating improved efficacy. There were more hunter days undertaken 21.2 versus 16.5 in 2022. Combined, this resulted in a higher overall number of tahr removed 412, versus 182 in 2022.

Hunters reported significant populations of tahr in the Mahitahi and expressed urgent need to reduce the population in this area quickly.

They suggested that the targeting of females and juveniles would be appropriate in this catchment until a reduction was achieved and then moving to an identifiable female policy after this time. Of note, hunters reported a reasonably high proportion of adult nannies shot in and around bush & scrub areas

to be in the 7 - 13 year age bracket, which would indicate these animals have been avoiding other control methods / efforts.

It will be interesting in following years to see if this age class reduces significantly and older animals become less frequently shot.

Approximately 40-60% of tahr observed were shot. The remaining tahr not shot included identifiable bulls. Weather in Makawhio was reported to foggy and drizzly at times but overall was OK. In the Mahitahi the weather was clear.

### VALLEY COVERAGE

The Makawhio Lower covered a larger area than during the 2022 operation (See above).

*"The NZTF would like to acknowledge the Department of Conservation for its approval to undertake this trial, specifically Tom Brookman and Wayne Costello for their effort to develop the community agreement, also for providing the non-toxic ammunition."*

### PHOTOGRAPHIC CONFIRMATION

Kills were confirmed by visual observation of death or confident shot placement. As was reported in 2022, photographing tahr shot was challenging and in many cases doing so was reported to reduce the total number that could be shot.

Hunters opted to take photographs only when it was safe to do so and when the effort taking a photograph would not result in disturbance or time wastage that would reduce efficiencies, e.g., shooting opportunities.

Small juveniles were shot to prevent young ones being left to starve; larger juveniles were left.

There was difficulty discerning females from young bulls when groups were running, so there were a few juvenile bulls accidentally shot. These are depicted in the collage above left.



*Vegetation examples.*

## COSTS

The total cost of the operation was NZ\$3425. This does not include the cost of ammunition, provided by DOC at no charge. This is equivalent to \$8.30 per tahr and 13.7 helicopter hours of culling. On average helicopter culling removes 30 tahr per hour (per comms DOC, 2022), though in this bush laden landscape helicopter culling is less successful.

Volunteer hours setting up the operation were 20 hours, including communication, procedure development, health and safety development, and hunter inductions. Volunteer hunter commitment during the operations totalled 21.5 days across all three operations.

## KEA OBSERVATIONS

Makawhio Upper kea were observed, total number individuals unknown. Makawhio Lower six individual kea were observed, also one falcon and one whio. Mahitahi heard kea up high but did not observe any in the lower areas.

## VEGETATION

Significant tahr impacts were observed by hunters in the Mahitahi where ground-based tahr population management has not been undertaken and aerial control has had limited application. Tahr impacts on vegetation in the Makaawhio were reported to have not observably increased since the 2022 targeted harvest operation. Similarly, improvement

to vegetation was also not observed over the one-year period between operations.

## RECOMMENDATIONS

- Repeat the operations in 2024.
- Spend one day longer: 4-5 days per operation may be more effective.
- Consider if targeting only identifiable females is appropriate when the population is high.
- Documentation
- Community agreement (Doc - 6920217).
- Health and Safety agreement (Doc - HS0001).
- Standard operating procedure (Doc - SOP00001).

## ACKNOWLEDGEMENTS

The NZTF would like to acknowledge the Department of Conservation for its approval to undertake this trial, specifically Tom Brookman and Wayne Costello for their effort to develop the community agreement, also for providing the non-toxic ammunition.

Thank you to the hunters who gave up their time to participate in this trial and provided their experience and skill at targeting identifiable females. Finally a big thanks to those who donated to the givealittle page monies received by the Tahr Trust, and the Tahr Trust for approving the use of these funds for this trial.

*Kaylyn Pinney*



## Tahr Season 2023

*The 2023 tahr hunting season had all sorts of potential, and potential can be something to be very wary of. With little or no guiding activity since late March 2020, no AATH, and limited recreational access due to Covid there was potential for some big bulls and bulls that had not seen much hunting pressure.*

**W**ith DOC cull numbers on females and juveniles passing 35,000 there was potential (that word again) to find more than one bull working any nannies - the trick was to find the nannies. Find the nanny groups and the bulls had to be present.

### **WHAT ARE THE NUMBERS AND WHY SHOULD THEY BE IMPORTANT?**

To be brutally honest, no one really knows the numbers. No one knew how many tahr there were when the culls began and no one knows how many there are now. Counting tahr

to a meaningful degree of accuracy has proven to be too expensive, yet DOC still try.

We did know there were considerably more than the 10,000 allowed for in the Himalayan Tahr Control Plan 1993 (HTCP). The unanswered and impossible to know was - how many did we start with. Best estimates in 2019 had numbers within the feral range at 35-50,000. That was an estimate drawn from aerial counts, a method with questionable accuracy at the best of times.

At best the numbers are a distraction, do numbers really mean anything to begin with? Too many

*"At best the numbers are a distraction, do numbers really mean anything to begin with? Too many tahr - we understand, not enough tahr - we understand. Habitat deprivation - we understand. It is much better to focus on environmental outcomes.*



tahr - we understand, not enough tahr - we understand. Habitat deprivation - we understand. It is much better to focus on environmental outcomes.

## HISTORY

Step back to the 1970s, tahr numbers were heavily reduced by WARO operations. By 1976-77 helicopter operators had lost interest in tahr as it was no longer economical to hunt what few tahr remained after 10 years of aerial hunting. 1983 saw a moratorium placed on the commercial hunting (WARO) of tahr as the numbers got so low.

A number too low to be of interest to the recreational hunter. Well maybe, maybe not. I'm proof of the maybe not. I first hunted tahr in 1979, continued to hunt them through my uni years at Lincoln and finally after several fruitless East Coast trips, shot my first tahr on the West Coast in 1984 (it had milk on its lips but it was my first tahr).

Tahr hunting was like looking for rocking horse poop. I vividly remember our excitement of getting a 'wall hanger' tahr on the East Coast in 1987, a beauty at 10 ¾ inches! By the time the HTCP 1993 came around our small group of three were "veteran" tahr hunters. I still have my submission to the proposed review of '93 plan from 1996!

From the late 1990s onwards tahr hunting got a lot easier. The HTCP was gathering dust on DOC bookshelves and a new generation of hunters and a handful of "veterans" were finding better numbers and trophies aplenty around the 12 inch mark. A 12 inch bull in the 90's and on into the new millennium was the benchmark and wasn't hard to find. 13-14 inch bulls were the stuff of dreams.

By 2010 I had been guiding for 15 years and was taking 10-12 bulls a year on wilderness hunts

throughout the East Coast on 4-5 day hunts. All the time the numbers of tahr were increasing, as were the number of hunters. By 2015 the "standard" 4-5 day wilderness hunt was now an overnight 36 hour hunt, and moved "down" valley onto private pastoral lease country. To see a 100 tahr a day and 10-40 bulls was the norm.

## THE WHEELS WERE ABOUT TO FALL OFF.

Off they came in 2017 when a change in Government and a new Conservation minister wasted no time in blowing the dust off the HTCP and knocking the wind out of the recreational and guiding interests all at once. Tahrageddon had arrived. Time frame from too few to too many (1977-2017) - 40 years!

## LEGISLATION

To understand DOC's determination to revisit the tahr plan it's important to understand the Himalayan

Tahr Control Plan (HTCP) and its unique role and the place it holds in NZ with regards to animal (management) control.

The HTCP is still the only wild animal management plan in NZ that is a statutory document. Good, bad or otherwise its presence is of profound importance. It has become DOC's rulebook over the past six years, a position it has theoretically held since its drafting in 1991 though the implementation has been much less consistent.

The question has often been asked recently within hunter groups to have the HTCP reviewed and making it relevant to the present day situation. This is more feasible now that we have a change in Government, and not only a new Minister of Conservation waiting in the halls of Wellington but potentially a Minister for Hunting and Fishing.

There is now, wait for it "*potential*" to look at legislation and begin the slow process of law reviews.

Let's step back just a little to 2020 when Conservation Minister Kiri Allan set the wheels in motion for Conservation Law Reform. Come 2022 the Conservation Management and Processes Amendment Bill began. Stay with me here, I know everyone just wants the Tahr Foundation to make certain there are 14 inch bulls around every mountain creek corner BUT



for that to become reality there are 30, 40, 50 and 70 year old pieces of legislation needing review and updating.

Legislation is the first and necessary step for hunters and DOC. Once the read of the HTCP is finished there is the Wildlife Act 1953, Wild Animal Control Act 1977, 1987 Conservation Act, National Parks Act - in all 9 pieces of legislation and 14 Acts. 24 in total. A marathon of millimetres!

### 2023

Back to boots on the ground stuff for 2023, here are a handful of numbers to think about.

### WHAT DON'T WE KNOW?

It's not published how many permits are issued to rec hunters, and there's no way to know how many are tahr hunters. All we know are the rec hunter numbers for the tahr ballot blocks.

How many bulls are taken by the unknown number of permitted hunters within the tahr range over any given year? No idea! How many tahr are harvested by recreational

hunters throughout the tahr range? No idea! Total number of unguided overseas hunters? Unknown! Tahr killed by this group? Unknown.

### WHAT DO WE KNOW?

Number of trophies exported? Best guestimate after conversations with guides, taxidermists and shippers, 1200-1500. AATH, to date 593 bulls taken on Public Conservation Land (PCL). One heli company spoken to said that 50% of their AATH bulls came from leasehold or private land, so on the strength of that the 593 could double to 1200, put in foot guides 300 and a wild guess at 1000 for recreational hunters and "others" we have 2500 trophy bulls harvested in the 2023 season.

Fitting 2500 bulls into a tahr population model it could be assumed there is a herd of 45,000+ tahr required to produce this number of trophy age bulls. NO WAY! Maybe, maybe not, its only numbers. Which with 35000+ already killed through control operations could suggest there many more tahr than anyone thought. OR, the more likely case is that with a hugely reduced nanny herd,

*"We need a system that works for our alpine habitat, our style of hunting, and that has a sustainable population of tahr that provides for all types of hunting - especially that which puts organic meat on our tables and demonstrates the benefits that hunting provides to the participants and the wider community."*

therefore less breeding females, high attrition on young males (all young tahr), hunters are about to run out of trophy class bulls. We've had the boom, here comes the bust (welcome back 1980).

Back to the population model, and this is science - add Ken Tustin's Mountain Monarchs to the reading list, specifically p206. More specifically from a paper Tustin and Parkes compiled for NZ Journal of Ecology 1989.

The HTCP calls for a base population of 10,000 animals, for the sake of simplicity let's split it 5000 females / 5000 males. According to Ken's work of the 5000 males, 1150 could make it to 4 years old, by 8 years old we only have 160 trophy class animals. Keeping in mind to maintain the population at 10,000, 25% need to be removed annually.

Currently 2500 bulls are being harvest, even with 250 trophy bulls from the above equation there are over 10x too many bulls being taken if we wish to maintain our resource according to the HTCP.

By the back end of the 2023 season (July/August) AATH operators, guides and taxidermists were noticing the average age and size of the bulls taken were dropping quickly. Before the finger is pointed at AATH, understand that they operate with a concession from DOC to undertake commercial business on conservation land.

The conditions for those permits were set out to attempt to avoid conflict with other recreational users of the resource. AATH also have an industry code of practice that places further compliance on operators. There is a systems analysis of these concessions underway at present and the Tahr Foundation are heavily involved.

Finding solutions to the fast approaching scarcity of trophy bulls is the challenge. We've seen it coming for the last few years and what we presently have is not working. Is there a need to develop a bespoke management system for NZ?

Yes, and the Herd Of Special Interest is the vehicle that needs to be enabled to make this happen. This will give us the elbow room within the current legislation to actively manage the

tahr population for the benefit of all users. Who will fund this? To have a fair and equitable system that can cater to the ever-growing number hunters chasing our magnificent tahr, all users will need to contribute.

This may be through ballots, it may be through membership, it may be through permits for international hunters. But the long and short of it is that to have a functional tahr herd with a realistic number of mature bulls we will need to reach into our pockets to some degree. Looking internationally there are tried and tested systems built on the principles of wildlife management - good habitat equates to good animals in a healthy environment.

We need a system that works for our alpine habitat, our style of hunting, and that has a sustainable population of tahr that provides for all types of hunting - especially that which puts organic meat on our tables and demonstrates the benefits that hunting provides to the participants and the wider community.

Support the Tahr Foundation, be understanding of the difficult legal environment in which they have to operate and remember we are all volunteers focused on tahr hunting for tahr hunters and building working relationships with all stakeholders. Tahr management is the single imperative.

*Gerald Telford*



## *Tahr Rut Ballot Tips*

*Congratulations to those who have secured a landing site for the 2024 Tahr ballot. The Tahr ballot was introduced to allow recreational hunters access to the Landsborough/Hooker and Adams Wilderness. Access to the Wilderness areas is provided specifically to help manage the Tahr population toward the Tahr densities set out in the 1993 Himalayan Tahr Control Plan.*

**A**ccess relies on hunters contributing to the management of the herd. Gathering harvest data is crucial to maintaining this access.

Although many view the Tahr ballot as a trophy hunting opportunity, it is important to remember that to manage the population shooting nannies is crucial. We ask all you guys lucky enough to have won a

tahr ballot this year to please try and shoot a few nannies while you're on the lookout for a bull. It would be really useful if someone in your party carried a suppressed 223 that will cause minimal disturbance to the area just for this purpose.

Then you should be happy to do some nanny population control while you're looking for your trophy. With significant pressure on the

herd now please do be sensible and only take one mature bull per person.

Unlike the Roar blocks there are no boundaries in the Tahr ballot, what is being offered is the exclusive right to fly to a specific landing site for a particular period. Anyone is free to walk in and hunt in these areas if they have an open area Hunting Permit for the region. However, it



*"For hunters to enjoy continued trophy success it is also necessary to allow bulls to fully mature and to be selective. Spend your time assessing the available bulls and only pull the trigger on the one you want. The herd can't support hunter's taking multiple bulls each."*

is courtesy to only hunt the area around your landing site bounded by its natural boundaries.

For hunters to enjoy continued trophy success it is also necessary to allow bulls to fully mature and to be selective. Spend your time assessing the available bulls and only pull the trigger on the one you want. The herd can't support hunter's taking multiple bulls each.

The ballot blocks allow this in part due to the limited hunting pressure outside the ballot. However, that limited hunting pressure also means hunters need to take the opportunity the ballots provide to manage the herd by controlling the breeding population (nannies) as

well - throw a suppressed .223 in and take a chilly bin full of tender nanny meat out with you!

When aging and judging bulls it is a good idea to use a number of indicators, both physical and behavioral.

### JUVENILE 6-18 MONTHS

These bulls can be difficult to separate from nannies and will be light in the body (narrow), the older juveniles might have a wee scruffy neck but show no real indicators of being a bull. The bulls will be smaller/same size as nannies. These animals are best ignored, shooting juvenile nannies is certainly the better option for the meat hunter.

### IMMATURE 2.5-4.5 YEARS

These bulls will have a large variation across the age group, but all will be relatively 'narrow' in the body and light in colour. Immature bulls will have manes varying from

a scruffy neck through to a smaller light-coloured mane. Of note is the colour of these bulls which is generally uniform across the body, with no real defined dorsal stripes.

These bulls will usually be with the nanny groups and are often seen harassing nannies. These bulls will not get a chance to breed (in a natural herd structure), and will be slightly larger than nannies, but lack the real bulk of a mature bull.

Horns on these bulls are 9-12+ inches with light bases and annuli will be noticeably spaced far apart. Ridging will be defined, and horns will look like they come straight back off the skull, with no 'stacking' to the bases.

### MATURE 5.5-8.5 YEARS

These are your typical herd bulls and bulls most often shot by hunters. Mature bulls will have full manes, and dark hind quarters. Manes can vary from bright blonde/golden through to grey/black.

The colour of manes is more of an individual thing, rather than an indicator of age. Hindquarters and the face of mature bulls will be black/almost black. Kidney/dorsal stripes will be noticeable on mature bulls, these are light coloured lines on either side of the spine, which extend from the back of the mane to the rear quarters. A mature bull will be 1.5-2 times the size of a nanny and should look 'heavy' on his feet. During the rut these bulls

will usually be seen in the nanny groups, showing classic signs of rutting (posturing, flehming/lip curling). Horns will be anywhere from 10-14+ inches, ridging and tips are normally in good order, and will be starting to show some 'stacking' of annuli at the bases.

### OLD BULLS 8.5 YEARS +

There is very little that separates a 'mature' bull from one who is truly old, the bodies are similar, with only slight changes in body and horn shape/style. You will need a good eye, patience, and practice to distinguish the two. These bulls generally carry more bulk in the body, especially if viewed from behind, he should be wide across the back.

During the rut these bulls will often isolate themselves with one nanny. If you see a lone bull with one nanny, get close and have a good look. Horns are often the best way to identify old bulls, a large percentage of these bulls will have broken or broomed tips and worn chipped ridging.

Old bulls will have distinct 'stacking' to the bases of their horns, this is true regardless of the size of their horns. The animal in the photo above is an old bull, 10 years of age plus.

### CAMPSITES

Landing sites are in areas within walking distance of Tahr herds and often have reasonably sheltered campsites nearby. At most of these



sites, poor weather could prevent aircraft access. Careful planning and weather forecasting is essential.

Ensure you have sufficient supplies to cope with delayed pickups. Although the designated landing areas are the only places where parties may land (some sites have two options). Hunters can also walk from these landing sites to their own chosen campsite if they wish.

If you are leaving the campsite ensure you have enough food and a suitable shelter as conditions can change and you may be out longer than expected. Hunters should be aware of natural hazards such as dead overhanging trees when selecting their campsite.

There will be kea at some sites; do not feed kea, and ensure campsites are kept as tidy as possible so as not to attract their attention. The best way to stop kea making a mess of your campsite is to firstly keep it

*"There is very little that separates a 'mature' bull from one who is truly old, the bodies are similar, with only slight changes in body and horn shape/style. You will need a good eye, patience, and practice to distinguish the two."*

tidy, but also to not interact with them at all as it quickly becomes a game for them. And throwing things at them will only make it worse!

Be aware that campsite locations may change due to flood or avalanche damage, changes to water channels or other issues.

Ensure that all rubbish is flown out with you and remember to keep the campsites tidy and free from animal and human waste. Human



*"Tahr inhabit a formidable environment and hunters must be physically and mentally prepared for this. They are usually found on or near steep rocky bluffs. Tahr usually set out to feed in the late afternoon, returning to cover the following morning."*

waste should be buried at least 15-20cm deep and 50m away from any streams or campsites

### **BEST PRACTICE**

Tahr inhabit a formidable environment and hunters must be physically and mentally prepared for this. They are usually found on or near steep rocky bluffs. Tahr usually set out to feed in the late afternoon, returning to cover the following morning.

The terrain in most of these areas can be unstable and the area surrounding the sites is usually steep, broken, rocky and mountainous. There may be heavy snowfalls and disruptive westerly storms during the Tahr hunting period.

Avalanches are a potential hazard. Snow and ice usually become

heavier towards the end of the season. The West Coast is well known for heavy rain and hunters should be well equipped and prepared. River crossings can be difficult and dangerous when water levels are high and or discoloured.

Good communication devices are essential. Satellite phones and personal locator beacons are recommended. It is highly recommended that each hunting party take in a means of communication.

Have everything you need for an unexpected night out with you when setting off for a hunt, as there's very little of the wilderness areas that are able to be safely navigated in the dark. Have an axe AND crampons for those higher elevation

landing sites, and be sure you are comfortable using them. Or quite simply just don't go into the more serious terrain.

### **BALLOT RETURNS**

To inform Tahr management good data is essential, and your ballot returns form a crucial part of this.

Information regarding kea on this ballot will be shared with the Kea Conservation Trust and aggregated ballot data (no individual/personal information) will be publicly reported.

You can also separately log your Tahr observations/kills in the New Zealand Tahr Foundation's app; that data will be used by the Foundation to gather insights into Tahr populations and hunters' contributions to management.

Have a great ballot, best of luck finding that mature bull for the wall.

Remember - age is key.



# *Tahr Management Unit 1 Hunter-Led Management Program Update*

*The Hunter-led Management Program for Management Unit One (HLM) is moving from the engagement phase to the implementation phase.*

**T**o date the proposed HLM framework has been widely circulated amongst the hunting sector organisations. It sets out the objectives, goals and proposed actions for the 2023/2024 operational year. Feedback to date

has been very positive with little request for significant modification. The framework is designed to be adaptive so as we progress and learn the framework can be altered to take advantage of these learnings. Some of the actions in

that framework are now underway as follows:

- Supporting DoC in the establishment of vegetation monitoring plots.
- Liaise with the hunting sector to



identify locations of high nanny tahr density.

- Work with DOC to identify priority areas for allocation of the available hours of aerial control (or equivalent control effort). This has been done for the 2023/2024 operational year but we will also be doing this for the 2024/2025 draft tahr control operational plan.
- Move tahr herd demographics towards a mature male bias.

We are compiling digital media and signage for access points and huts that will ask hunting sector



stakeholders to follow tahr harvest guidelines which will facilitate hunters to:

- Not shoot juveniles (half of these are males).
- Shoot bulls only if they are mature ( $\geq 7$  years).
- Shoot recognisable females from 1st July to 14th November.
- Shoot recognisable females only if they do not have a kid from 15th November to 30th June.
- Investigate options for monitoring recreational tahr harvest.

To date a lack of recreational harvest data has been a significant gap our knowledge. The MU1 program gives as an opportunity to develop a tool for doing this. At the moment the Tahr Foundation App looks to be the most likely tool given the work that has already been done developing it.

*"Up until now in New Zealand our attempts at game animal management have been basic at best. With our newly elected Government's focus on hunting and fishing we look to see some real progress in this area. It is so awesome to see their willingness to create a Herd of Special Interest (HOSI) for tahr."*

Moving forward we see a much greater role for the Tahr Foundation in the implementation phase of HLM and will engage with the executive on this.

*Geoff Kerr and Garry Ottman*



# *Minutes from the Annual General Meeting 2022*

*9.00am, 17th September 2022  
North Canterbury NZDA Rooms,  
599 McLean's Island Road, Christchurch.*

## **1. WELCOME**

Chairperson, Kaylyn Pinney, welcomed all to the meeting and thanked all for their attendance and expressed his thanks to the Management Committee for their individual efforts during the past year.

## **2. ATTENDANCE**

Kaylyn Pinney, Terry Pierson, Shane Hall, Gareth Hall, Gerald Telford, Formisano Francesco, Snow Hewetson, David Keen, Marcus Pinney, Zeff Veronese, Sheene Ottmann, George Bailey, Gwyn Thurlow, Tom Brookman, James Cagney,

Clyde Rogers, Stan Lowe, Tony Pidgeon, Greg Hill, Grace Bailey, Geoff Feasey, Sam Wild, Tim Gale, Simon Boag, Craig Benbow.

## **3. APOLOGIES**

Ben Hodgson & Kara Edwards from Ngai Tahu, Mike Knowles from SCI (NZ Chapter), Ben Reddiex from DOC, Heather Purdie from the Canterbury Conservation Board, Greg Duley, Gary Ottmann and Geoff Kerr from the GAC, James Scott - helicopter operators, John Mitchel - Expeditors, Liam Quinn - AATH,

**Moved:** Snow Hewetson/ Gwyn Thurlow. That Apologies be accepted.

**Carried.**

## **4. PRINTED AR 2022**

The printed New Zealand Tahr Foundation Annual Report was provided to all in attendance. The Annual Report contains the final version of all Reports:

- (a) Chairpersons Annual Report
- (b) Minutes of the 2020 AGM
- (c) Treasurers Report
- (d) Sub Committee Reports.

**Moved:** Snow Hewetson / Dave Keen: That the Annual Report be adopted.

**Carried.**

The Chair, Kaylyn Pinney, commented that hopefully, you have had a chance to read the annual report. Terry Pierson complimented Kaylyn on the quality of the Annual Report.

## 5. CONSTITUTIONAL ALTERATIONS

### Clause 5 Advisory boards

Remove (j) - (m)

Change (n) to (j)

Add in “The Advisory Board will also seek advice from other organisations as appropriate, including:

- (a) Department of Conservation;
- (b) Game Animal Council;
- (c) Aoraki-Canterbury Conservation Board; and;
- (d) West Coast Conservation Board.”

**Moved:** Gerald Telford / Snow Hewetson. That these changes be made to the Constitution.

**Carried.**

**Explanation:** Membership is set out in clause 11 and includes organisation listed in clause 5.

However, organisations (j) - (m) are statutory bodies and cannot be members.

**Note:** The new regulations to support the Incorporated Societies Act 2022 which came into force on 6th April will not be available until the end of the year. So, it would not be sensible to seek changes at this AGM only to have to redo again once the new regulations are issued.

As such, the Constitution will be further amended and presented in the new year. We will probably have to hold a Special General Meeting to adopt any required changes in the new year.

## 6. ELECTION OF OFFICERS

### Nominations Received:

**Chairperson:**  
Kaylyn Pinney

**Vice Chairperson:**  
David Keen

**Secretary:**  
Gerald Telford

**Treasurer:**  
Sheene Ottmann

### Management Committee:

**Representative 1:**  
Shane Hall

**Representative 2:**  
Snow Hewetson

**Moved:** Marcus Pinney / Gwyn Thurlow. That the nominations for the listed positions be accepted.

**Carried.**

Further Nominations may be made by the Management Committee by Co-option.

## 7. SIGNATORIES

### Current Signatories are:

**Chairperson:**  
Kaylyn Pinney

**Secretary:**  
Terry Pierson

**Treasurer:**  
Sheene Ottmann

**Management Committee:**  
Snow Hewetson

**New Signatories:**  
**Chairperson:**  
Kaylyn Pinney

**Secretary:**  
Gerald Telford

**Treasurer:**  
Sheene Ottmann

**Management Committee:**  
Snow Hewetson

**Moved:** Tony Pidgeon / Marcus Pinney. That the new Signatories be approved.

**Carried.**

## 8. GENERAL BUSINESS

### (a) Assistance required

Over the past 9 months we have moved from a purely advocacy role to entering into active management. This year we undertook a very successful targeted harvest operation.

The idea being that we could begin to manage Tahr at place to support a sustainable hunting population, and improved trophy resource and begin to look for what population the environment can actually sustain without unacceptable environmental consequences.

This year we are rolling it out, pursuing 2 more areas - Mahitahi, and Troyte. The goal is to establish community-based management at place and then roll it out.

This requires a drastic increase in input from our wider hunting community. We are at a crossroads and there are two main paths that we might progress down.

One is pursuing sustainable management, growing, expanding and getting excited about what the



future of Tahr management might provide the sector, the other is a repeat of history, an endless cycle of boom and bust, conflict and complaints. We get to choose. I champion the first, pursuing sustainable and improved management of Tahr for hunting and the environment.

This being said, I have come up with teams that need to be established to start us down this path, including a fundraising, Operations team and a projects team.

These teams will need to be championed by passionate people who believe in the foundations vision. These people won't be on their own, they will be supported by the committee to build these teams, from where I sit,

they get to drive the fun stuff. I encourage you all to consider coming forward to help in these areas. Please see me following these formalities.

Discussion followed and fundraising was discussed. Believed that first we should look to our Membership organisations for financial support. Possible ability for the Recreational Hunters to also support. Management Committee to seek and suitable budget for forthcoming expenditure.

### (b) Tahr resource reduction

We are entering a space with a reducing resource, this will in turn lead to increased conflicts between the portions of our wider sector. Behind the scenes work is ongoing to minimise these conflicts

and push for a change to the direction taken by the Department. In the meantime, we have to maintain our strength, and this comes with working together.

The Upcoming AATH season will be significant and with the borders being closed over the last few years rec hunters have somewhat forgotten what this conflict looks and feels like. So, I open it to the floor to enter into a discussion about how we might manage this upcoming conflict and our reducing resource.

We are looking for ideas, not accusations. We are looking for possible solutions not reiterations of the problem. Some areas addressed were the areas currently allowed by DoC for each respective area of interest. Currently, 1100 bulls were harvested by the commercial sector and possible similar for the recreational area.

Need for separation in both time or space for all concerned. Further clarity required as to where Tahr may be held in enclosed hunting areas. Discussions in respect to

actual numbers included in AATH operations that only DoC can provide.

Great need to actually understand the numbers involved in recreational hunting. Real need to publish the preferred Code of Practice where only mature bulls are the preferred target.

#### (c) **Creating financial stability**

The Chair commented that role she had been undertaking over these past few months cannot be continued by a volunteer indefinitely and this has been seen across the hunting sector NGO's.

We need to create financial stability to allow for a professional to fill the parts of the role that go above and beyond chair to secure the Foundations future and encourage succession.

I call to the floor for some ideas to be put forward. There is a definite area where we need to employ persons to assist but to obtain the goal we need financial stability. As discussed under the previous area, we need to establish the levels of support required and



look towards receiving external support based on acceptable budgets.

Tim Gale, on behalf of the GAC complimented the Foundation on its efforts in the past year and trusted that the continuing support would continue.

## 9. **ACKNOWLEDGEMENT**

Kaylyn commented that Terry Pierson had stepped down from the Secretary's position and thanked him for his assistance of the past years. She also drew attention to the continuing work of Snow Hewetson over the past years and also for his efforts as previous Chairperson that was not addressed at the last AGM. In this area she presented Snow with a Tahr picture as thanks for his efforts.

## 10. **CLOSURE**

Meeting closed at 2.46pm.

Chairperson

Secretary

*The New Zealand Tahr  
Foundation Incorporated  
Financial Statements  
For the Year Ended  
31st July 2023*

**The New Zealand Tahr Foundation Incorporated**  
**DIRECTORY**  
**AS AT 31ST JULY 2023**

**Elected Committee**

Kaylyn Pinney	Chair (resigned)
Marcus Pinney	
David Keen	Vice Chair (acting Chair, resigned)
Gerald Telford	Secretary
Sheene Ottmann	Treasurer
Shane Hall	
Snow Hewetson	Immediate Past Chair

**Co-Opted subsequent to AGM**

Luke Care	Acting Chair (from September 2023)
Greg Duley	
Andrew Macleod	Acting Vice Chair (from September 2023)
Kaylyn Pinney	

Incorporation Number	2655152
Date of Incorporation	3 November 2016
Bankers	Westpac
IRD Number	123 960 801

**The New Zealand Tahr Foundation Incorporated**  
**STATEMENT OF FINANCIAL PERFORMANCE**  
**FOR THE YEAR ENDED 31ST JULY 2023**

	Note	2023	2022
		\$	\$
<b>REVENUE</b>			
Donations Received		2,544	1,005
Grants Received	6	5,774	17,565
Interest Received		513	46
Merchandise Sales		464	-
<b>Total Income</b>		<b>9,295</b>	<b>18,616</b>
<b>Less Expenses</b>			
Duke of Bedford Award Expenses		1,245	-
General Expenses		74	-
Meeting Expenses - AGM		307	435
Meeting Expenses - TPLIG		213	-
Printing, Stamps & Stationery		2,594	3,055
Research and Monitoring	6	2,990	6,886
Sika Show		2,321	-
Travel		423	1,134
Website		735	-
<b>Total Expenses</b>		<b>10,902</b>	<b>11,510</b>
<b>SURPLUS/(DEFICIT) BEFORE TAX</b>		<b>(1,607)</b>	<b>7,106</b>
Transfer Grant Income Surplus to future period		2,784	9,179
<b>NET SURPLUS/(DEFICIT)</b>		<b>(4,391)</b>	<b>(2,073)</b>

*The accompanying notes form part of these financial statements.  
 These financial statements have not been subject to audit or review.*

**The New Zealand Tahr Foundation Incorporated**  
**STATEMENT OF MOVEMENTS IN EQUITY**  
**FOR THE YEAR ENDED 31ST JULY 2023**

	Note	2023	2022
		\$	\$
EQUITY AT START OF YEAR		58,285	60,358
<b>SURPLUS &amp; REVALUATIONS</b>			
Net Surplus/(Deficit) for the Period		(4,391)	(2,073)
Total Recognised Revenues & Expenses		(4,391)	(2,073)
<b>EQUITY AT END OF YEAR</b>		<b>\$53,894</b>	<b>\$58,285</b>

*The accompanying notes form part of these financial statements.  
 These financial statements have not been subject to audit or review.*

**The New Zealand Tahr Foundation Incorporated**  
**STATEMENT OF FINANCIAL POSITION**  
**AS AT 31ST JULY 2023**

	Note	2023	2022
		\$	\$
<b>CURRENT ASSETS</b>			
Bank - Cheque Account		25,501	27,497
Bank - Savings account		27,541	27,400
Accounts Receivable		6,640	-
Prepayments		435	1,738
GST refund due		-	416
Taxation refund due	5	144	13
<b>Total Current Assets</b>		<b>60,261</b>	<b>57,064</b>
<b>NON-CURRENT ASSETS</b>			
Other Assets	4	10,400	10,400
<b>TOTAL ASSETS</b>		<b>70,661</b>	<b>67,464</b>
<b>CURRENT LIABILITIES</b>			
Accounts Payable		4,528	-
GST Payable		276	-
Surplus Grant Funds	6	11,963	9,179
<b>TOTAL LIABILITIES</b>		<b>16,767</b>	<b>9,179</b>
<b>NET ASSETS</b>		<b>\$53,894</b>	<b>\$58,285</b>
Represented by; <b>EQUITY</b>		<b>\$53,894</b>	<b>\$58,285</b>

*The accompanying notes form part of these financial statements.  
These financial statements have not been subject to audit or review.*

**The New Zealand Tahr Foundation Incorporated**  
**STATEMENT OF CASH MOVEMENTS**  
**FOR THE YEAR ENDED 31ST JULY 2023**

	Note	2023	2022
		\$	\$
<b>Opening Balances</b>			
Bank Accounts		54,897	49,697
<b>Cash From Operating Activities</b>			
Funds from (applied to) Operating Activities		1,855	5,200
		1,855	5,200
<b>Net Cash From (Applied to) Operating Activities</b>		1,855	5,200
<b>Cash Applied to Investing Activities</b>			
Cash Payments		-	-
<b>Net Cash Applied to Investing Activities</b>		-	-
<b>CLOSING CASH BALANCES</b>		<b>\$53,042</b>	<b>\$54,897</b>

*The accompanying notes form part of these financial statements.  
 These financial statements have not been subject to audit or review.*

**The New Zealand Tahr Foundation Incorporated**  
**NOTES TO THE FINANCIAL STATEMENTS (CONTINUED)**  
**FOR THE YEAR ENDED 31ST JULY 2023**

**1. STATEMENT OF ACCOUNT POLICIES**

The financial statements presented here are for The New Zealand Tahr Foundation Incorporated, an incorporated society. The financial statements of The New Zealand Tahr Foundation Incorporated have been prepared in accordance with Special Purpose Framework for use by For-Profit Entities (SPFR for FPEs) published by Chartered Accountants of Australia and New Zealand, and are for members use and income tax compilation only.

The accounting principles recognised as appropriate for the measurement and reporting of earnings and financial position on an historical cost basis have been used, with the exception of certain items for which specific accounting policies have been identified.

**Specific Accounting Policies**

In the preparation of these financial statements, the specific accounting policies are as follows:

**(a) Goods & Services Tax**

These financial statements have been prepared on a GST exclusive basis with the exception of accounts receivable and accounts payable which are shown inclusive of GST.

**(b) Donations and Grants**

Donations and Grants received are included in operating revenue. If particular conditions are attached to a donation or a grant that would require it to be repaid if these conditions are not met, then the donation is recorded as a liability until the conditions are satisfied.

Donated goods or services (other than donated assets) are not recognised.

**3. AUDIT**

These financial statements have not been audited.

**4. CONTINGENT LIABILITIES**

At balance date there are no known contingent liabilities (2022:\$0). The New Zealand Tahr Foundation Incorporated has not granted any securities in respect of liabilities payable by any other party whatsoever.

*The accompanying notes form part of these financial statements.*  
*These financial statements have not been subject to audit or review.*

**The New Zealand Tahr Foundation Incorporated**  
**NOTES TO THE FINANCIAL STATEMENTS (CONTINUED)**  
**FOR THE YEAR ENDED 31ST JULY 2023**

**5. OTHER ASSETS**

	Note	2023	2022
		\$	\$
Bronze Trophy Tahr Sculpture 350mm High with Rimu Base			
At cost		10,400	10,400
<b>Total Other Assets</b>		<b>\$10,400</b>	<b>\$10,400</b>

**6. TAXATION**

	2023	2022
	\$	\$
Tax Payable		
Interest Income	513	46
Less tax exemption	1,000	1,000
<b>Taxable Income</b>	<b>-</b>	<b>-</b>
<b>The Taxation Charge is Represented by</b>		
Current year tax	-	-
	-	-
<b>Tax Payable</b>		
RWT credits	144	13
<b>Total Tax to be Refunded</b>	<b>\$144</b>	<b>\$13</b>

*The accompanying notes form part of these financial statements.  
 These financial statements have not been subject to audit or review.*

**The New Zealand Tahr Foundation Incorporated**  
**NOTES TO THE FINANCIAL STATEMENTS (CONTINUED)**  
**FOR THE YEAR ENDED 31ST JULY 2023**

**7. GRANTS**

	\$	\$
	Tahr App	Ground Harvest
<b>Project:</b>		
Grant received	12,174	11,165
Less Costs incurred	2,995	8,381
Less Surplus Grant carried forward	9,179	2,784
<b>Net Surplus (Deficit) on Research &amp; Monitoring Projects</b>	-	-
<b>Research and Monitoring - Surplus Funds carried forward</b>		
	<b>2023</b>	<b>2022</b>
	\$	\$
Grants received	5,774	17,565
Less Costs incurred	2,990	6,886
	2,784	10,679
Less Surplus Grant carried forward	2,784	9,179
<b>Net Research and Development</b>	-	\$1,500

*The accompanying notes form part of these financial statements.  
 These financial statements have not been subject to audit or review.*



# TAHR APP

## INTRODUCING THE NEW TAHR APP

**Important - Your personal information will be held in confidence and information you provide will only be used to support improved management of tahr by the Foundation**

Harvest and observation information will only be shared in generalised formats, e.g. in reports to:

- keep hunters up to date on management and overall hunter contributions to management
- advocate for improved access or more appropriate management objectives
- support the revision of the Himalayan Tahr Control Plan (HTCP)
- achieve Herd Of Special Interest (HOSI) status for tahr
- assist hunter education
- assist stakeholder coordination

Links to reports which your submissions contribute to will be shared with you by email. Photos may be used by the Foundation to describe problems or successes in reports or in the media. Photos with identifiable people will not be shared without permission from the submitter.

Logged bulls harvested 8 years and older are eligible for entry into the **Duke of Bedford Award**, details coming soon.

Logged nannies harvested for meat (pic must display taking of meat from nanny) go into draw to win a **meat processing prize**.

All photos submitted are automatically included in an **annual prize draw**, details coming soon.



I-PH-O-N-E



A-N-D-R-O-I-D

## BACKGROUND

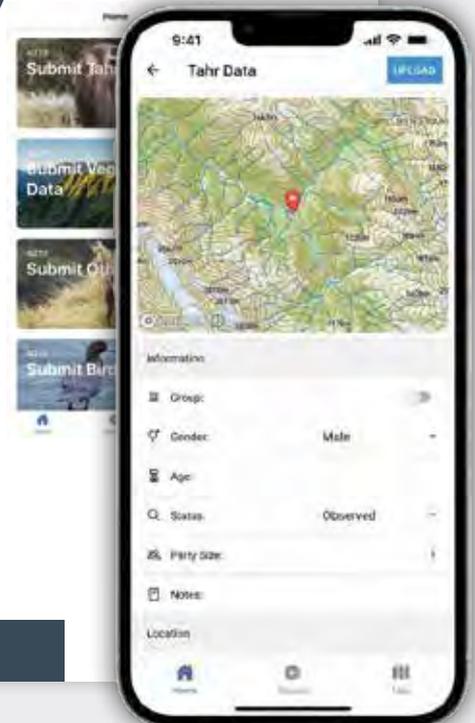
For too long recreational hunters' contribution to tahr management has been a glossed-over add on to the Departments Tahr Control Operational Plan (TCOP).

Providing observations of tahr, tahr harvest and the state of the vegetation gives the Foundation the information it needs to manage the tahr population to support hunting. We can work towards improving access, trophy potential and apply management to minimise official control and wastage. Observations of vegetation through time can show where we need to focus hunter management efforts and where hunter efforts are making a difference. We can tell a story of hunter management and success in the years to come.

The Himalayan Tahr Control Plan 1993 specifies populations far below what the Foundation considers a huntable population of tahr, but we need your help to prove it. If we know what hunters take now, we can run models to show what we need to support a huntable population, even down to a regional scale. We can't change the HTCP until we have a process that is better than what is currently in place.

If all hunters use this tool to report in the tahr range, we will collectively eclipse all other forms of monitoring. It's hard to argue against hunting if it is the biggest contributor to conservation in the area. It's hard to argue about having a huntable resource if you need hunters to support conservation initiatives and sustainable tahr management.

But we need a facility to make hunter harvest and hunter observations valuable and count, enter the Tahr App.



**KEEP UP TO DATE WITH THE TAHR FOUNDATION ON FACEBOOK**

# *NZCA Tahr Programme Annual Report 2022-2023*

## Report on the Himalayan Tahr Control Programme 2022/2023



*Department of Conservation staff monitoring tussock grasslands as part of a long-term study of tahr browse impact, Te Kahui Kaupeka Conservation Park Canterbury.*

### Context

The management of Himalayan tahr (tahr) on Public Conservation Land (PCL) is guided by the Himalayan Tahr Management Policy (the Policy) 1991 and Himalayan Tahr Control Plan (HTCP) 1993. The Policy sets a maximum population of 10,000 tahr across lands of all tenure throughout the feral range, and the HTCP stipulates individual maximum tahr population densities for each of seven designated Management Units (MU), based on factors including location, vegetation, and recreational use. It also outlines expectations for monitoring tahr populations and vegetation condition to inform future tahr management.

The HTCP 1993 is implemented through annual operational plans that identify management actions for each MU. As the Department's (DOC) Himalayan tahr management work is led as a national programme, one annual operational plan is prepared for the entirety of the programme, and a single annual report provided to the New Zealand Conservation Authority (the Authority).

**2022/2023 Operational Delivery**

*Delivery of the Tahr Control Operational Plan (TCOP) 2022/23*

The TCOP 2022/23 was developed by the tahr programme in partnership with Te Rūnanga o Ngāi Tahu and through engagement with the Tahr Plan Implementation Liaison Group (TPILG) and DOC’s Regional Operations Group. Table 1 below outlines the number of tahr controlled over the full 2022/23 year within the management units and across each control type. This excludes some aspects of recreational hunting where no data is available.

**Table 1: Number of tahr controlled (on PCL) within Management Units**

Year 1 July – 30 June	DOC	AATH trophies	AATH 'environmental offsets'	Ballot hunters	Tahr Carcass Recovery	Organised recreational hunters	Other	Total
2018/19	168	264	0	619	400	63	244 <sup>1</sup>	1758
2019/20	7238 <sup>1</sup>	8	2936 <sup>2</sup>	726	421	0	60 <sup>3</sup>	11389
2020/21	7481 <sup>1</sup>	17	0	889	0	0	60 <sup>3</sup>	8447
2021/22	5750 <sup>1</sup>	43	0	843	0	182	144 <sup>3</sup>	6962
2022/23	5256 <sup>1</sup>	62 <sup>4</sup>	415 <sup>5</sup>	913	0	412	158	7216

<sup>1</sup>Includes contracted control; <sup>2</sup> Includes control not undertaken in 2018/19; <sup>3</sup> Zero Invasive Predators programme; <sup>4</sup> at the time of writing, not all 2022/23 returns were complete – data from completed returns are reported here and the final total will be updated in the 2023/24 report to the NZCA; <sup>5</sup> includes some offsets conducted inside the feral range but outside management units, but reported here for consistency.

Under the 2022/23 TCOP, the equivalent of 312 hours of official aerial tahr control were delivered. Control was delivered through a variety of methods, including DOC staff and contracted aerial control and DOC staff and contracted ground-based control. The undertaking of Aerial Assisted Trophy Hunting (AATH) offset control was also directed (led) by the Department; under the conditions of their permits, AATH operators are required to control 5 female/juvenile tahr for each wild animal trophy they take on public conservation land. The resulting number of tahr removed in each Management Unit, inside the feral range but outside the management units, and outside the feral range are detailed in the 2022/23 row of Table 2 below. Maps outlining the locations of DOC’s official control operations in 2022/23 are available on DOC’s [“Himalayan tahr sightings and control maps”](#)<sup>1</sup> page.

**Table 2 - Tahr removed by Department-led Control**

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

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

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

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

*Comparison with prior years*

The operational effort delivered in 2022/23 (312 hours) was greater than planned under the TCOP (290 hours), this was largely due to coordinated multi-species control operations (e.g. goats and tahr) in areas outside the feral range. The 312 hours was an increase from 283 hours of control delivered in 2021/22 and similar to the 309 hours in 2020/21.

The total number of tahr removed by DOC-led control in 2022/23 was similar to 2021/22 (Tables 1 and 2). While official control numbers were lower, additional effort in directing AATH offsets and facilitating coordinated recreational hunting opportunities, led to a very similar DOC-led total and slightly higher overall control total from known sources. The control total was still lower than 2020/21 and 2019/20. The reduction compared to those earlier seasons can be attributed to a number of factors:

- The relatively small number of AATH environmental offsets available in 2022/23, compared with 2019/20, in which 2936 offsets contributed 27% of the 2019/20 control total.
- Changes in operational focus between years:
  - In 2022/23, a higher proportion of official control effort (45%, compared with 33% in 2021/22 and 23% in 2020/21) was dedicated to control outside the feral range, where tahr densities (and therefore control numbers) are low.
  - Correspondingly, as the level of control investment within National Parks was maintained in 2022/23, fewer hours of control were conducted in Management Units that had previously yielded higher numbers of tahr per hour of control (e.g. MU1 and MU3).
- A reduction in the number of tahr encountered and controlled in some areas:
  - 2022/23 showed the first substantial decline in catch per unit effort within Management Unit 4a (Westland Tai Poutini National Park). Across 66.1 hours of aerial control, an average of 24.2 tahr were controlled per hour. In comparison, 31.9 and 31.0 tahr were controlled per hour in 2021/22 (69.2 hours) and 2020/21 (70.7 hours) respectively. These data, alongside observations from DOC staff and TPILG members suggest a substantial decrease in the density of tahr in parts of MU4a.

*Implementation of ground-based control*

In response to observations of tahr utilising forest and sub-alpine scrub habitats on the West Coast, which reduced the effectiveness of traditional aerial control, the Department conducted a ground-based control trial in MU6 (Landsborough) in March 2022. With funding equivalent to approximately 6.8 hours of aerial hunting time, a total of 284 female and juvenile tahr were removed at a comparable cost per animal to traditional aerial control, with the additional benefits of:

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

Based on that operation, the level of ground-based effort on the West Coast was increased to the equivalent of approximately 15 hours of aerial hunting time, within the 2022/23 TCOP. In March 2023 a return operation in the Hooker-Landsborough wilderness area (MU6 - Landsborough) was expanded, and this time removed 436 female and juvenile tahr. A new operation within the Adams Wilderness Area (MU2 - South Whitcombe/Whataroa) controlled 486 female and juvenile tahr.

The 2023 ground-based operations streamlined their operational approach based on the 2022 trial and also operated in new areas where dense tahr populations were encountered. Due to inclement weather shortening one operation, some areas of lower density and/or harder hunting were not covered. This combination of environmental and operational factors led to the operations being substantially more efficient than most aerial control (in terms of \$'s per tahr), and it was considered that the observed benefits of ground based control from 2022 (see above) were maintained.

In an operational environment where helicopter costs have substantially increased in recent years, and may continue to do so, the implementation of ground-based control in West Coast environments appears to be an effective supplement to aerial hunting.

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

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

During 139 hours of aerial control effort, a total of 390 tahr were controlled outside the feral range over the period 1 July 2022 to 30 June 2023. This contrasts with 449 tahr controlled outside the feral range in 2021/22, from 86 hours of control, despite the operational areas and relative effort in those areas across the two years being broadly similar. The substantial increase in effort required to control tahr in these areas is considered a positive development; changes in 'catch per unit effort' (i.e. the amount of effort required to control each tahr) are widely used as a simple measure of changes in wildlife abundance. A change from approximately 5.2 tahr per hour in 2021/22 to 2.8 tahr per hour in 2022/23 suggests a substantial decrease in tahr abundance in the areas targeted outside the feral range.

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

Table 3: Summary of aerial control effort and number of tahr controlled in the Northern Exclusion Zone from 2020/21 to 2022/23.

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

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

In 2021/22 the TCOP included the tahr programme's first allocation of aerial control to specifically target tahr inside the feral range but outside the management units. These operations were aimed at reducing the potential for movement of tahr to outside the feral range. 196 tahr were removed from inside the feral range, outside the management units, with a focus on the southern and north-western areas inside the feral range.

In 2023/23 this approach was again taken, targeting similar areas but moving further to the south-eastern portion of the feral range in response to reports of increased tahr presence toward the Lindis Pass. 322 tahr were controlled in 20 hours of aerial hunting within the feral range, outside the management units.

Appendix 2 provides a map with details on the number of tahr controlled in specific areas inside the feral range but outside the management units during 2022/23 operations.

### *Game Animal Council control mid-point meeting*

Continuing the operating and consultation rhythm established in 2020, the Department met with representatives of the Game Animal Council on 5 August 2022 to discuss operational details of the first half of official tahr control for 2022/23. DOC considered the Council's advice in determining the operational detail of work for the remaining control effort.

### **COVID-19**

The COVID-19 pandemic had a less pronounced effect on delivery of official control in 2022/23 compared to 2020/21 and 2021/22, as no lockdowns were experienced. However, staff and contractor operational availability was, at various times throughout the season, impacted by isolation requirements. Ultimately, through flexible scheduling and contingency planning, control was completed. However, in some areas this was later in the season than ideal (e.g. snow conditions were no longer optimal for control).

### **Relationships and Engagement**

#### *Relationship with Te Rūnanga o Ngāi Tahu*

During 2022/23, DOC and Ngāi Tahu continued their commitment to developing the Treaty partnership in relation to tahr management. This included continued work together to facilitate the further development of a proposal for hunter-led management of Management Unit 1 (South Rakaia/Upper Rangitata, see below) between the Game Animal Council and the local papatipu Rūnanga (Te Rūnanga o Arowhenua).

#### *Tahr Plan Implementation Liaison Group (TPILG)*

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

A total of four TPILG meetings were held during 2022/23. The first was an update on early progress under TCOP 2022/23, as well as wrapping up TCOP 2021/22, on the 25<sup>th</sup> of July (MS Teams). In September (16<sup>th</sup>) a meeting was held in Christchurch to provide further updates and also to develop an approach for the Group to potentially explore various requests from members for a longer-term/more strategic conversation around the tahr programme (cf. focusing purely on the TCOP).

The December 2022 (9<sup>th</sup>) and March (10<sup>th</sup>) TPILG meetings were centred around the development and review of the 2023/24 TCOP; that engagement also included two rounds of written submissions in January and late-March of 2023. At the December 2022 meeting (MS Teams), members were provided with contextual material to consider and a timeline for TCOP development and feedback, to inform any written submissions they wished to make to the Department prior to drafting of the TCOP; those submissions were due by 27 January 2023 (4 submissions were received). The draft plan was then circulated to the TPILG on the 21 February to facilitate feedback on the draft at the March 2022 meeting. Members had until 31 March to provide additional written feedback on the draft after the meeting (4 submissions were received). Feedback from these meetings and written submissions helped to refine the 2023/24 plan, with the final TCOP 2023/24 being released on 12 June 2023.

In association with the March 10 meeting, TPILG members and a number of external subject matter experts, took part in a facilitated workshop to map the tahr system, with a view to understanding where

it was functioning well and where improvements could be made. The action from the workshop was to hold a follow up workshop at which the system map was used as the basis for a more details policy-level discussion of tahr management/control.

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

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

A project team comprised of members from the Game Animal Council (GAC) Te Rūnanga o Ngāi Tahu and the local papatipu Rūnanga (Te Rūnanga o Arowhenua), assisted by DOC staff, have developed a Te Whakatakanga (mission statement) for this work in 2021/22. Development continued during 2022/23 with more detailed engagement of relevant hunting-sector groups and local landholders. The intention is for the project team to develop a proposal that could be incorporated within a Community Agreement with the Department. Any proposal approved for implementation must contribute to working towards the goals of the HTCP 1993.

#### *Recreational Hunters*

DOC seeks to encourage hunters to shoot tahr. In 2022/23 DOC continued to work with the recreational hunting sector to improve the availability of information on both control activity and observations of tahr. This included [posting maps of control effort and the locations of observed identifiable males to DOC's website](#)<sup>2</sup> and by providing email updates to current hunting permit holders (see below).

The West Coast tahr ballots are a valuable recreational contribution to tahr control, focused in the Hooker/Landsborough and Adams wilderness areas. Since 2021, over 800 tahr per year have been controlled during the ballots, with the number exceeding 900 (913) for the first time in 2023.

In 2022/23 the Department again worked with the New Zealand Tahr Foundation to facilitate the Foundation's delivery of organised recreational hunts in MU6 (Landsborough). In addition to a return to the Jacobs/Makaawhio River Valley, hunters were also positioned in the Mahitahi River in March 2023. The operations removed 249 and 163 mainly mature females from those areas respectively; control focused on forest and scrub habitat where aerial control is less effective than in the alpine environment. In total 594 tahr have been controlled through this initiative since March 2022 (see Table 1, 'Organised recreational hunters').

#### *Information Management*

##### *Electronic verification tool and Tablet Data System*

In the 2022/23 year the tahr programme continued utilising its electronic verification tool for remote monitoring of control operations, with digital cameras fitted to the rear step of helicopters used for aerial control to take a series of high speed still photographs with geo-referencing each time a firearm is discharged. The programme's tablet-based data recording system also continued in 2022/23, allowing control effort data to be electronically recorded as it occurs.

<sup>2</sup> <http://www.doc.govt.nz/parks-and-recreation/things-to-do/hunting/what-to-hunt/tahr/tahr-control-operations/tahr-sightings-maps/>

### *Updates to Hunting Stakeholders*

In 2022/23 DOC continued providing tahr programme updates regularly through its website to encourage and enable recreational hunters to contribute to tahr control. This includes [providing information on where identifiable male tahr have been seen](#) during official control operations to assist hunters to plan, locate and shoot identifiable male tahr. Updates are also provided during the season when official control work in each area is complete to give hunters certainty on areas they can hunt tahr knowing Departmental control for the year is complete.

Email updates to current hunting permit holders also continued in 2022/23 (having commenced in 2020/21). These emails connect hunting stakeholders with new tahr programme information as it becomes available, including provision of direct links to the website content outlined above. In the 2022/23 year, email updates to current hunting permit holders were provided on:

- 14 September 2022
- 16 January 2023

### **Research Updates**

#### *Research and Monitoring Strategy*

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

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

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

#### *Estate condition trend*

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

In the 2022/23 year, the final third of the historic grassland plots, which represent the longest running vegetation survey in the tahr feral range, were re-measured. The data have been prepared for analysis, which is expected to be undertaken during 2023/24.

#### *Tahr browse - rapid impact assessment method*

In 2021/22, drawing on a number of the themes identified in the research and monitoring strategy (outlined above), work began to develop and trial a rapid impact assessment method for tahr browse. The over-arching aim was to provide information regarding tahr impacts on a time-scale that could inform annual or inter-annual management actions (as opposed to the more comprehensive but less responsive longer term estate condition trend monitoring provided by Tier 1 and historic grassland plots).

During 2022/23, building on the workshops, the formation of a technical advisory group and three small-scale field pilots, a substantial field pilot-trial was undertaken. Across MUs 1 and 2, 60 sites were established, with 3-5 transects per site; data was collected for a total of 223 transects (see Figure 1). The draft methodology was tested and refined. The resulting data are currently being jointly analysed by DOC and Manaaki Whenua Landcare Research and recommendations regarding the method are expected in late 2023.

Figure 1 – tahr browse impact monitoring sites/transects from the 2022/23 field pilot



### *Understanding tahr populations*

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

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

From February to May of 2023, flights were conducted within the Management Units to provide survey data with which to update the estimate of the overall tahr population within the Management Units. 42 sites from the 2016-2019 work were surveyed twice during the time period. The data from those surveys have been analysed and will be published in a technical report in 2023 (at the time of writing that report is under peer review).

## **Outlook and Plans for Next Year**

### *TPILG discussions*

In 2022/23 two workshops were held with the TPILG, focusing on strategic thinking for future tahr management/control. That series of facilitated workshops is continuing in 2023/24.

In December 2023 engagement on the 2024/25 TCOP will commence and is expected to again span 4-5 months, including 2 meetings (December 2023 and March 2024) and two opportunities for written submissions.

### *Population estimates and vegetation monitoring*

As referenced above, an updated overall estimate of the tahr population is expected in 2023. This will form an important component of planning future tahr control operations, within the remaining 2023/24 TCOP period and beyond. Similarly, analysis of two lines of vegetation monitoring data (variable area tussock plots, and the tahr browse impact method pilot) may provide important context regarding vegetation condition.

### *AATH offsets*

2023 is the first fully operational AATH season since 2019, due to COVID-19 impacts on tourism. Indications from the guiding industry are that demand in 2023 and 2024 is very high due to a back-log of clients from 2020 onwards. The April 2023 activity returns from AATH concessionaires reflected this increased activity: 209 wild animal trophies were taken from PCL, requiring 1,045 environmental offsets. Substantially more trophies have been taken in the second half of the season (to August 2023) and final reporting is expected soon. This represents a substantial contribution to tahr control to be managed in the 2023/24 and 2024/25 TCOPs. The 2023/24 TCOP included AATH offsets into its operational model, based forecast trophy/offset numbers provided by the New Zealand Professional Hunting Guides Association after a survey of their members.

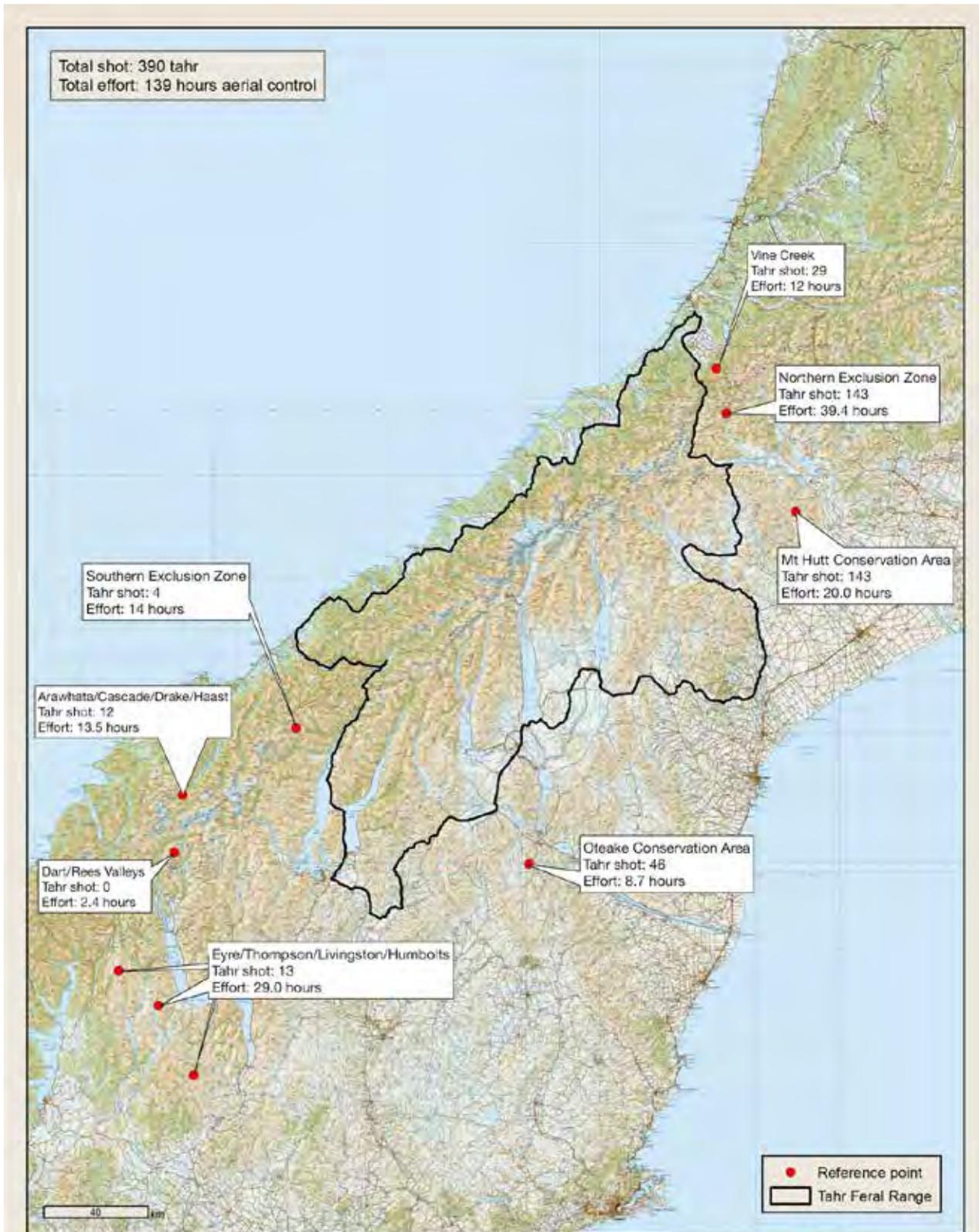
### *Recreational Hunters*

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

## **Financial Summary (1 July 2022 to 30 June 2023)**

Operational delivery costs for the 2022/23 financial year were approximately \$720,000.

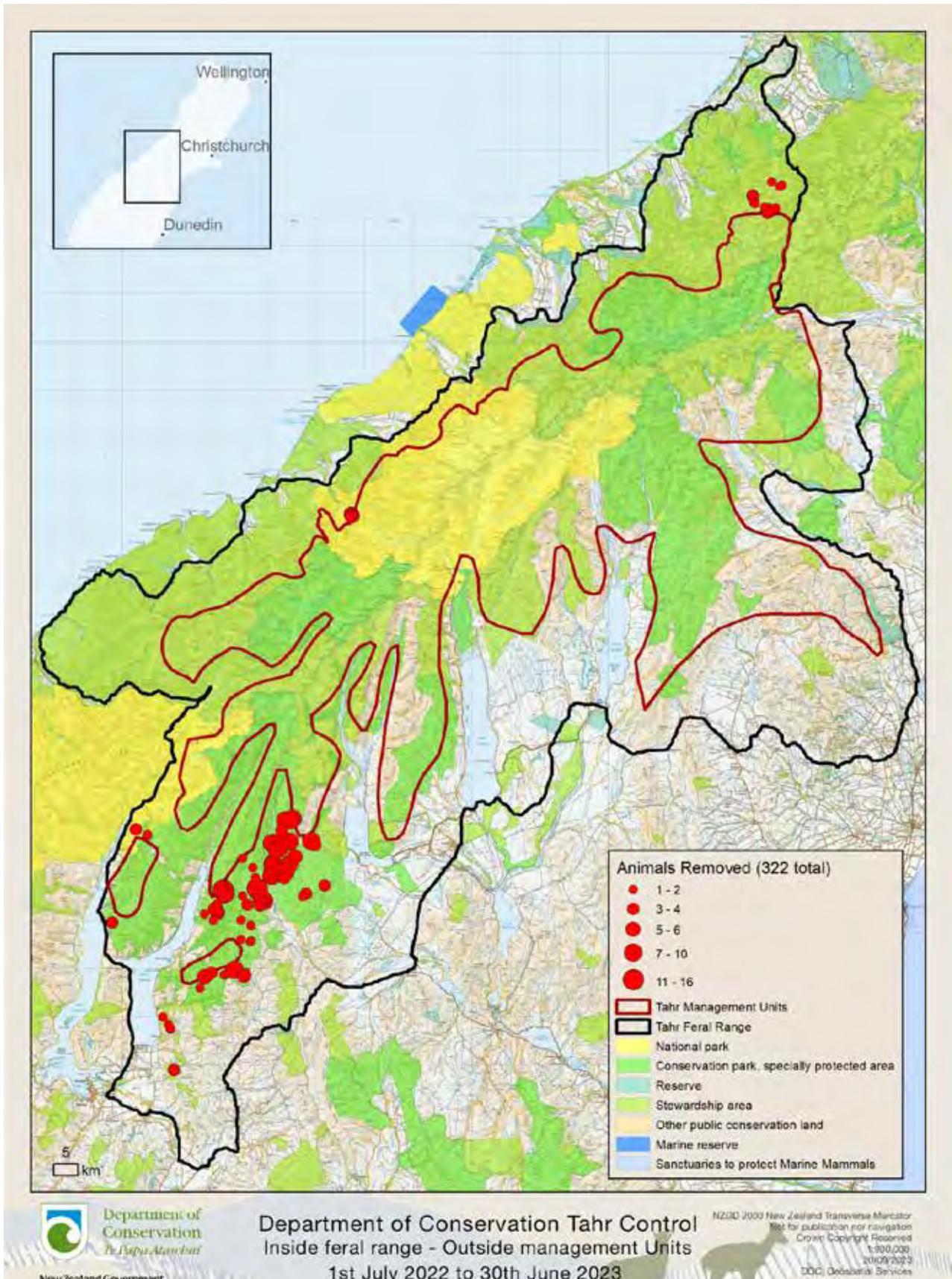
Appendix 1. Department of Conservation tahr control outside the feral range 2022/23



Department of Conservation Tahr Control  
 Outside Tahr Feral Range  
 (1st July 2022 to 30th June 2023)



Appendix 2. Department of Conservation tahr control inside the feral range but outside the MUs 2022/23





***MANAGING TAHR TO PROVIDE  
SUSTAINABLE HUNTING WHILST CONSERVING  
ALPINE VEGETATION.***

Address: 1925 Whataroa Highway, RD1, Whataroa, 7886

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For inquiries or to make a contribution:

Email: [admin@nztf.org.nz](mailto:admin@nztf.org.nz)