

Building the Future: Our Plan for Hunting and Fishing

Hunting and fishing are part of the Kiwi way of life. They put food on the table, bring families and communities together, support regional jobs and tourism, and connect New Zealanders with the outdoors.

Over this term, National has given hunters and fishers a stronger voice in government and delivered practical progress to improve access and game management.

A re-elected National Government will build on this by:

- recognising valued introduced species in law;
- establishing a clearer framework for wild animal management;
- strengthening the Game Animal Council and modernise Fish & Game;
- expanding hunter-led conservation and protect recreational access; and
- growing hunting-related jobs and exports.

Recognising valued introduced species

New Zealand's wild animals are managed through a fragmented collection of laws, agencies and plans. Responsibilities are often unclear, while species valued by hunters, anglers and local communities can be treated simply as pests.

A re-elected National Government will establish a coordinated wild animal management framework and formally recognise valued introduced species in law.

This will include introduced species that provide recreational, economic, environmental or cultural value to New Zealanders. They will not be treated as pests by default simply because they were introduced.

Management will remain practical and evidence based. Action will still be taken where populations cause unacceptable environmental damage, but species will be managed according to local conditions.

Strengthen the Game Animal Council and Fish & Game

National will strengthen the Game Animal Council as the statutory manager of valued game animals.

The Council will have a clearer role in managing herds of special interest, developing national and regional game animal management plans, and supporting practical hunter-led conservation. It will also help coordinate recreational, guided and commercial hunting on public conservation land, improving monitoring and reducing conflict between different users.

National will also pass legislation to modernise Fish & Game New Zealand. The reforms will simplify administration, strengthen accountability to licence holders and ensure resources are directed to the regions, habitats and fisheries where they are most needed.

Expand hunter-led conservation

This term, National delivered two herds of special interest. This reflects that National believes that hunters should play a greater role in managing animal populations and protecting the places in which they hunt.

A re-elected National Government will seek proposals for additional herds of special interest, building on the wapiti and sika models. The final selections will be evidence-based and require strong local and hunter support.

National will also replace the outdated Tahr Control Plan 1993 with a modern management plan developed alongside the tahr hunting community.

Protect recreational access

Access to public land, rivers, lakes and the coast is fundamental to hunting and fishing. National recognises this, this is why National launched an Access Charter to ensure better access for recreational hunting and fishing on public conservation land across New Zealand.

A re-elected National will strengthen the Charter by adding the Game Animal Council, Land Information New Zealand and the Overseas Investment Office as signatories.

We will change the current policy that generally prevents recreational hunting on Crown land managed by Land Information New Zealand.

Suitable Crown land that would ordinarily be accessible to the public will be opened for hunting and fishing under rules similar to those applying on public conservation land. Existing arrangements for Crown pastoral leases and other land that is not ordinarily publicly accessible will remain unchanged.

National will also ensure existing recreational access is protected when sensitive land is purchased by overseas investors and improved where practical.

Growing hunting-related jobs and exports

Hunting supports the economy. guides, outfitters, taxidermists, accommodation providers, tourism operators and rural businesses throughout regional New Zealand.

National will promote New Zealand's premium guided-hunting offer in key overseas markets and simplify trophy-export permits, veterinary certification, taxidermy requirements and customs processes.

National will also develop clearer rules for recreational hunting, guided hunting, aerial hunting and commercial wild animal recovery. These activities serve different purposes and should be managed in ways that reduce conflict and protect conservation, recreational and economic outcomes.

Other initiatives to ensure as many New Zealanders can go hunting and fishing as possible

Investigate options for sustainable funding of national hunter training programmes, alongside the Firearms Safety Authority, to help deliver the training and education of the next generation of hunters.

Direct Fish and Game regions to review their existing regional boundaries to better align with the Government's Resource Management Act and local government reorganisation reforms, as well as to resolve existing issues in cross-boundary catchment management.

Partner with DOC and community organisations to maintain and enhance access to public conservation huts and facilities.

Give hunters and fishers a voice by replacing an existing Conservation Authority and Conservation Board seat with a permanent representative from the hunting and fishing sector.

Ensure that the Outdoor Access Commission's public access maps are considered as part of the Government's investment into a new planning and environmental online management system.

Simplify the consenting system for shooting ranges to more accurately reflect a risk-based approach and implement a pre-existing right to operate where there is no ability to complain if someone moves to the nuisance.

Pilot a Government-backed biodiversity credit to recognise the environmental benefits of hunter-led conservation.