RECREATION, CULTURE AND FOOD

National’s plan for Hunting and Fishing
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National supports the right of New Zealanders to hunt and fish.

Tens of thousands of Kiwis grow up fishing in our lakes and rivers or in the sea. Many learn to hunt with their friends and family. Hunters control animal numbers, protect biodiversity by eradicating pests, and provide food for their families. Hunting and fishing also foster tourism and are pillars of New Zealand’s culture and heritage.

National believes conservation and recreation can work in harmony.

National will:

1. Establish a Minister for Hunting and Fishing
2. Strengthen the Game Animal Council and designate ‘herds of special interest’
3. Change the law so game animals are not pests
4. Guarantee access to public land for hunting and fishing
5. Establish the ‘Huts of Recreational Importance’ Partnership
6. Support Fish & Game New Zealand and protect trout and salmon fishing
7. Not introduce recreational licences for game animal hunting or sea fishing
1. Establish a Minister for Hunting and Fishing

Under National, there will be a Minister for Hunting and Fishing for the first time representing the 1.2 million people and their families who hunt and fish.

The Minister will have Ministerial and statutory responsibility for:

- Game Animal Council
- Fish & Game NZ
- Access to public land for hunting or fishing
- Herds of Special Interest
- Game birds
- Freshwater sportfish
- Be consulted on other issues that affect recreational hunting, freshwater and ocean fishing.

2. Strengthen the Game Animal Council and designate ‘herds of special interest’

National passed the Game Animal Council Act (the Act) into law. Since then the Game Animal Council (GAC) has grown in stature and demonstrated they can play a constructive role in the management of hunting and game animals.

Under the Act, the Government can designate ‘herds of special interest.’ HOSI allows intensive management of game animals in specific locations for the benefit of hunters and conservation. The Government has not designated any HOSI and hunters have taken on the responsibility for herd management themselves. For example, the Fiordland Wapiti Foundation is managing wapiti in their area for better conservation, environmental and recreational outcomes. This is a win-win for all involved.

National will:

- Designate wapiti, sika and tahr as herds of special interest.
- Give greater autonomy to the GAC in respect game animal hunting.
- Allow the GAC to make decisions regarding game animal management.
- Allow the GAC to promote New Zealand as a world-class hunting destination.

3. Game Animals, trout and salmon are not pests

The Game Animal Council Act defines all deer, tahr, chamois and wild pigs as game animals. However, the Biodiversity Act and many Regional Pest Management Plans treat these species as pests. There is a conflict as legislation requires the species are both managed as game animals and eradicated as pests.

Labour has also weakened the statutory recognition of trout and salmon in legislation, which have recreational importance.
National will:

- Introduce a ‘Valued Introduced Species’ designation for game animals, trout and salmon into existing legislation and remove references to those species as pests to harmonise their treatment in legislation.

- Establish national management plans in cooperation with the Game Animal Council to cover all game animals.

4. Access to public land for hunting and fishing

Historically New Zealanders have enjoyed access to public land and with this access has come rights and responsibilities. The Conservation Act 1987 ensures the public has access to the DOC estate and there are also rights to access LINZ land for recreation. However, many hunters and fishers feel that over time these rights have been eroded.

National will:

- Ensure managed access to public land for hunters and fishers is protected.

5. Establish the Huts of Recreational Importance Partnership

New Zealand has more than 900 backcountry huts that support hunting, fishing, and hiking. Many of these huts have fallen into disrepair to the point some are no longer fit for purpose.

National believes Kiwis should have access to well-maintained huts particularly for hunting and fishing. To take some of the burden off DOC staff and budgets, volunteers from the Backcountry Trust, Federated Mountain Clubs, NZDA branches, and fishing and alpine clubs should be able to help with hut maintenance.

In return these clubs should have a say in the use of these huts.

National will:

- Create the Huts of Recreational Importance Partnership between the Department of Conservation and volunteer clubs to maintain and manage New Zealand’s backcountry huts. Funding will be from existing resources.

6. Support Fish & Game

Fish & Game New Zealand and its 12 Regional Councils were established in 1990 to represent the interests of anglers and bird hunters. It coordinates management, maintenance and enhancement of sports fish and gamebird shooting under the Conservation Act 1987. Fish & Game is funded through freshwater fishing and bird shooting licences and is valued by anglers and shooters alike.

National will:

- Support the efforts of Fish & Game and work with them to promote the interests of anglers and bird hunters including enhanced monitoring and science.

- Amend legislation and repeal the Natural and Built Environment Act to better protect trout and salmon as ‘Valued Introduced Species’ for the enjoyment of sports fishers.
7. No to recreational hunting or ocean fishing licences

New Zealanders have a right to gather food for their families and enjoy recreation on public land and in the sea at an affordable cost.

Currently, recreational hunting and ocean fishing is permitted without a licence. The system has served the recreational hunting and sea fishing communities well.

National will:

- Protect the right of Kiwis to gather food and enjoy recreation on public land and seas (excluding protected biodiversity areas or sea reserves) by ruling out any licence for recreational game animal hunting or sea fishing.

Further changes

National will also strengthen game management in New Zealand by:

- Giving hunters and fishers a voice through permanent seats for hunting and fishing on the Conservation Authority and Conservation Boards.
- Reviewing Wild Animal Recovery Operations (WARO) and Aerially-Assisted Trophy Hunting (AATH) systems.
- Supporting mahinga kai and Māori food-gathering.
- Developing true and equal partnerships between DOC and hunters, fishers and food gatherers.

National will have more to say about recreational sea fishing before the election.