



## FAQ

### What is the Tasmanian Wilderness World Heritage Area Deer Control Project about?

The Tasmanian Wilderness World Heritage Area (TWWHA) Deer Control Project aims to remove wild fallow deer from within the Walls of Jerusalem National Park (WoJNP) and reduce numbers of wild fallow deer within the nearby Central Plateau Conservation Area (CPCA) to reduce the chance of deer moving back into the WoJNP. The project will run over three years with all preparation and planning expected to be completed by April 2023.

### Why do you need to cull the deer?

Wild fallow deer are a threat to the natural environment of the TWWHA. Deer erode and damage soils and waterways, trample sensitive plant communities, browse vegetation at a level above native animals, as well as eating different plants. In large numbers, deer can substantially change the environment. Fallow deer can also be spread animal and plant diseases. If deer are allowed to increase in number and spread in Tasmania's parks and reserves significant environmental damage is likely to occur.

Deer were first released in Tasmania in 1836. Numbers remained relatively low until the 1970's. Since the 1970's, fallow deer have increased at a compounding rate of 11% per year. In 2019 an aerial survey which encompassed most of the traditional range of deer in Tasmania estimated the wild fallow deer numbers to be around 54,000. The deer have also spread, and in 2021 now occupy 27% of the State including parts of the TWWHA. Even if the control program is successful it will most likely need to be repeated in the future.

### How will the culling be done?

The deer will be mostly shot from a helicopter using thermal cameras to assist finding the animals. This method is used in a number of mainland jurisdictions with great success. Thermal Assisted Aerial Culling (TAAC)

differs from conventional aerial shooting methods in that operations are guided by a manual operator using a high-quality thermal imager and daylight visible laser. Shooting only occurs at times of no solar warming (first light / last light), usually 3-4 hours per day although it can operate all day on heavily clouded days.

### How does using thermal technology help the project?

The benefits of TAAC are:

- More hidden target animals can be located under canopy by their heat signature
- Animals can be tracked through cover reducing the risk of injured animals escaping
- Scattered herds can easily be reacquired, and
- Non target species can easily be identified
- All relevant data is recorded including video, allowing for independent review
- Animals are detected and targeted from a greater distance allowing for better animal welfare outcomes (they are not flushed out and forced to run by aircraft which is the conventional method)

### How will you ensure animals do not suffer?

Animal culling operations are always planned to avoid animals suffering. To ensure this goal is achieved, only highly trained and experienced Department of Natural Resources and Environment (NRE Tas) staff will undertake aerial shooting operations. All shooters are required to undertake training and demonstrate that they can meet accuracy requirements. Shooters are required to adhere to detailed operational procedures that guide the activity to ensure animal welfare is prioritised. These procedures have been developed from national procedures for the aerial and ground control of deer with input from other jurisdictions that have successfully undertaken the same activities.

The operations will be guided by a qualified veterinarian to independently oversee the operations.

## How many deer do you expect to shoot?

Current estimates indicate that there may be between 100 and 300 deer within the project area. Advice from other mainland jurisdictions undertaking the same activity is that they had significantly underestimated their deer populations with actual numbers being much greater than estimated.

## What will happen to the deer carcasses?

All deer shot will be left in situ unless they pose a social, health or environmental risk. Carcasses will be removed from watercourses, near reserve and hydro infrastructure (walking tracks, huts, campgrounds) and close to roads and vehicle tracks, all other carcasses will be left to decompose.

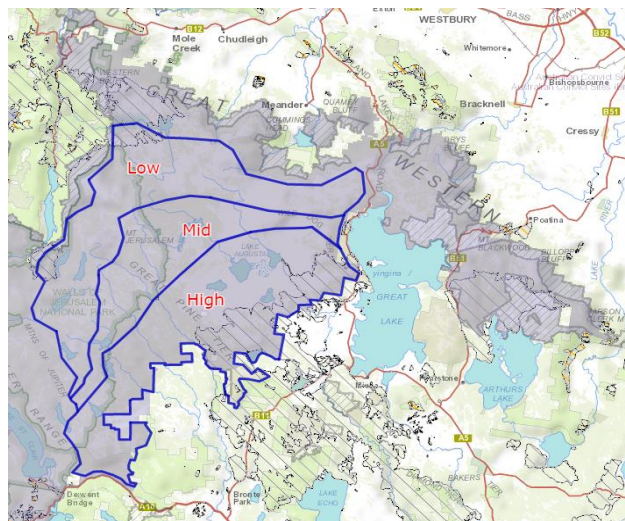
## How will you make sure that you do not shoot non target animals accidentally?

When undertaking aerial shooting operations each target animal must be verified as a deer by at least 2 persons on the aircraft. In addition, when using thermal technology there is a dedicated thermal camera operator using a high quality thermal and visual camera which can clearly show and record the animal being targeted. Any accidental shooting of non-target animals will be recorded and investigated to ensure it does not reoccur.

## Where is the project going to occur?

The TWWHA deer control project area sits within the WoJNP and the western edge of the CPCA, west of Highland Lakes Rd and north of Marlborough Rd. Over the past two decades wild fallow deer have progressively spread westward from the traditional deer range and are now in relatively high densities in the north-eastern TWWHA. Consistent reports from recreational users (bushwalkers and recreational fishers) now indicate that wild fallow deer are frequent visitors and residents in parts of the WoJNP.

The project boundaries have been determined using data from the University of Tasmania (UTAS), NRE Tas camera deployments, spotlight surveys, citizen science data from Deerscan, in combination with suitable habitat mapping and local knowledge.



Deer Control Project Area

## When will the deer culling occur?

Operational deployments are scheduled for May 2023 and May 2024. May has been selected as the best month for undertaking the operation due to the following factors:

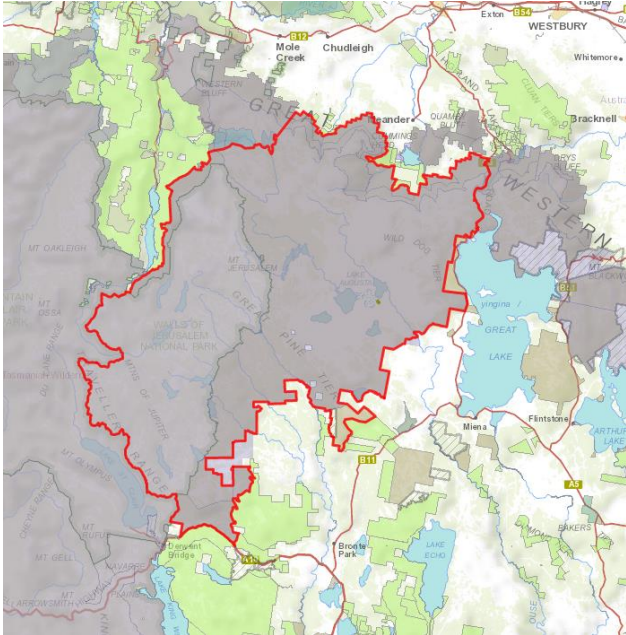
- The brown trout recreational fishing season within the project area closes on April 30
- Recreational use is reduced after Easter
- May is the end of the rut with deer still in groups and/or trying to fatten prior to winter
- Autumn weather is generally more stable for aerial operations
- May's weather is cool particularly at altitude which assists in thermal detection of deer
- There is a need to undertake the deployment prior to the onset of wetter winter weather, and
- Wedgetail Eagle breeding commences in June

## Will the area be closed to the public?

The WoJNP and the adjoining western section CPCA west of Highland Lakes Road and north of Marlborough Rd as well as the Meander Conservation Area (MCA) and Great Western Tiers Conservation Area (GWTCA) west of Highland Lakes Road will be closed to all users from Monday 1<sup>st</sup> May to Sunday 4<sup>th</sup> June 2023 and Monday 29<sup>th</sup> April to Friday 2<sup>nd</sup> June 2024 (see Deer Control Closure Area). Reserve closures will be advertised in the local newspapers, on the NRE Tas and PWS web and social media sites as well as signage at reserve and track entrances.

Clarence Lagoon Vehicle Track, Lake Augusta Road and Pillan's and Talinah Tracks will be closed roads.

Devils Gullet State Reserve and the CPCA north of Lake Mackenzie will remain open. All other areas of CPCA and GWTCA will remain open.



Deer Control Closure Area

## What walking tracks will be closed?

All walking tracks that access the WoJNP and CPCA either by commencing within the reserves or by accessing through adjacent private land and other reserves will be closed walking tracks. Tracks that commence in the GWTC, Cradle Mountain / Lake St Clair National Park or Meander Conservation Area or on private land such as Gowan Brae where the possible destination is the closure area will also be closed walking tracks. The closed tracks will include but are not limited to:

- All tracks in the Walls of Jerusalem
- The Never Never Track
- Blue Peaks Track
- Explorer Creek Track
- Higgs Track
- Ritters Track
- Western Creek Track
- Syds Track
- Mother Cummings Track
- Johnson's Track
- All Meander Falls Precinct Tracks
- Warners Track
- Projection Bluff Track
- Double Lagoon Track
- Lake Kay Track
- Lake Flora and Odell Track
- Little Blue Lake and Tin Hut Track
- Lake Fanny Track
- Lake Antimony Track
- Olive Lagoon Track
- Lake Naomi Track
- Clarence Lagoon Track

Devils Gullet Track, Arm River Track, Lees Paddocks Track, Westmorland Falls Track, Parsons Track, Yeats Track, Western Bluff Track and Pine Lake Nature Trail will remain open.

## How will you ensure public safety?

The reserves will be closed in accordance with the *National Parks and Reserve Management Regulations 2019, Regulation 18* ensuring that officers have appropriate authority to lawfully manage access into the reserves. Daily checks will be undertaken as part of the project to ensure compliance with closure is achieved and immediate notification and investigation will be undertaken of any breach of compliance. Government entities that have a legitimate need to enter the project area will be permitted to do so under strict guidelines.

The project area has been divided into daily task units to ensure that the entire project area is thoroughly examined for deer. Each daily task unit is a discreet area that considers reserve and private boundaries, infrastructure, buffer zones, special features and no shoot areas. Live mapping within the aircraft will ensure that any buffers and no shoot areas are adhered to. Should a risk be detected or suspected in the proposed daily task unit, the operation will shift to a different unit a safe distance away and continue while the identified risk is assessed.

## How will you know if you are successful?

At the conclusion of each deployment the University of Tasmania and NRE Tas Conservation Science Section will review the success of the project in relation to the project goals and by the end of the second-year deployment develop a monitoring program to assist in detecting remigration of wild fallow deer back into the WoJNP.

## Can I be involved in the culling of deer?

In addition to aerial shooting, there are plans to undertake limited ground shooting around the Western Lakes roads and vehicle tracks where it is safe to do so. This shooting will be undertaken by highly experienced volunteers provided by the Tasmanian branches of the Australian Deer Association and the Sporting Shooters Association of Australia, who have offered their assistance to achieve the project objectives. Recreational hunting is not permitted in National Parks and hunting is not an effective method to reduce animal populations at a landscape scale. The volunteer shooters will be undertaking culling activities under PWS supervision and in accordance with the project plan. Ground shooting will only occur during the same period as the aerial shooting.

