

Public positive on Urewera access

TWO months have passed since access resumed for hunters in Te Urewera and feedback on the new permit process has been overwhelmingly positive.

Te Urewera Board, a Crown-Tuhoe partnership created after the Te Urewera Act 2014 came into force, now administers the area. The board announced in October last year that all current permits would go on hold while it conducted a two-month review. No new permits were issued until the review was completed.

As promised, the process was completed prior to Christmas and almost eight weeks on, the board is pleased with progress.

"Everything looks very encouraging and the board is happy with the results," said board chairman Tamati Kruger.

"We have worked closely with the Deerstalkers' Association and the Game Animal Council in fine-tuning the permits. But this was always going to be a starting point and we are encouraging local hunters to share information with us from what they experience out in the grounds."

While permits can currently be

requested through the Department of Conservation and Tuhoe websites, it is hoped with time that a more personal experience can be offered to hunters.

"In the future we want to have permits available at tribal offices throughout Te Urewera where people can visit and have that face-to-face contact," said Mr Kruger.

"Hunters can get updates on weather and track conditions and also how many hunters are currently in the area. In return, we hope hunters can share info with us after their visit so we can keep a detailed log on what is happening in that area."

Mr Kruger is confident the way the board dealt with the recent review has helped to silence any critics.

"Predictably, it was controversial when we put a hold on permits and there were commentators who had doubts about the integrity of the board," he said.

"Some thought it was a conspiracy to ultimately charge the public for being in Te Urewera or hunting there. But the public response so far is that the new system is clean and easy to follow and they acknowledge the change of tone that

represents Tuhoe's connection with Te Urewera."

A total of 1134 people have applied for permits since access resumed and just over 1000 of these have been issued. Mr Kruger said it was encouraging to see how many people had also accessed the Te Urewera map.

"We have had over 7400 people access the map which shows the areas that the public are welcome to visit and those that are private Tuhoe areas," he said.

"This has always been one of the hardest things to monitor, so that is encouraging."

Tuhoe are pleased with the public response.

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