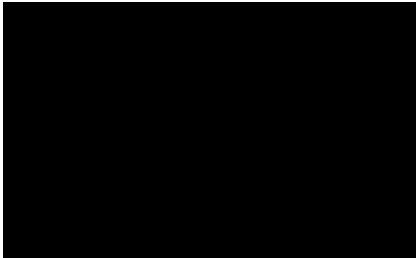


19 July 2021



Thank you for your Official Information Act request to the Department of Conservation (DOC), received on 21 June 2021 in which you asked for:

*Records of any assaults and/or verbal or written threats made against Department of Conservation staff or the Department of Conservation in the 2019 and 2020 calendar years, and 2021 YTD*

*Specifically, I'd like breakdowns showing when and where these threats or assaults were recorded (by conservancy); the nature of the threat or assault (what was involved and what motivated the threat) if this information is available.*

*If not captured by the above, I'd like to know how many threats and assaults made to DoC have specifically pertained to the use of 1080. These include everything from physical assaults toward staff and their equipment, to threats and abuse made directly to DoC's head office.*

*I'd also like DOC to clarify: is the Department anticipating a, or preparing for, a higher risk in relation to the likelihood of another mast seeding year, and required operations?*

*Further: can DOC clarify how it has improved safety and security protocols and resources to better protect staff?*

DOC has a zero-tolerance approach to threats, abuse and harassment directed towards staff and others undertaking conservation work.

DOC takes each threat, act of abuse and/or act of harassment very seriously. DOC staff experience threats (including assaults), abuse and harassment as a result of the work they undertake. These threats also extend to other organisations and individuals involved in conservation work that support DOC, including DOC suppliers, iwi, contractors, and volunteers.

While it is not the sole cause, opposition to DOC's landscape scale pest control programme (of which the 1080 programme forms a part) contributes to a significant proportion of such

incidents. Other matters that DOC staff manage include tahr control, concession compliance and whitebait regulation.

The threats, abuse or harassment made to DOC staff have occurred in the field, in DOC buildings and facilities, on the telephone, in emails and letters and online through social media. While not all the incidents are direct threats, the nature and duration of the harassment has a cumulative effect on staff wellbeing.

DOC encourages every New Zealander to be actively engaged in conservation. DOC respects the right of individuals and groups to discuss issues that are important to them, and the right to exercise freedom of speech and peaceful protest.

Your questions are answered in turn below. All the information from which these tables are drawn is provided to you in Appendix 1.

1. *Records of any assaults and/or verbal or written threats made against Department of Conservation staff or the Department of Conservation in the 2019 and 2020 calendar years, and 2021 YTD*

*Specifically, I'd like breakdowns showing when and where these threats or assaults were recorded (by conservancy); the nature of the threat or assault (what was involved and what motivated the threat) if this information is available.*

*If not captured by the above, I'd like to know how many threats and assaults made to DoC have specifically pertained to the use of 1080. These include everything from physical assaults toward staff and their equipment, to threats and abuse made directly to DoC's head office.*

The total number of threats and assaults recorded by DOC staff and contractors from January 2019 until 7 July 2021 is 264; 78 incidents in 2019, 164 incidents in 2020 and 22 incidents in 2021 (as at 9/7/2021). A breakdown of the number of threats and assaults that occurred in each year, 2019, 2020 and 2021 (calendar year to date) is captured below in table 1.

The Security Team at DOC uses the following descriptions to support categorising assaults and threats.

- Assault: Intentional application or attempt to apply force to another person
- Threat: Direct expression of intent to cause harm delivered verbally, by letter, text, email, or other written material. This may also include intimidating or inciting behaviour or commentary.

**Table 1: Total number of threats and assaults towards DOC staff and DOC contractors from January 2019 until 7 July 2021.**

	2019	2020	2021	
<b>Threat</b>	73	162	21	256
<b>Assault</b>	5	2	1	8
	78	164	22	264

A breakdown of what motivated threats or assaults is provided in tables 2 and 3 below. The motivation behind a security-related incident such as a threat or assault is not always known. These incidents have been categorised as 'non-specific'. Similarly, threats made on social

media are often unable to be linked to a specific location, these threats have been categorised with an 'unknown' region.

The way incidents are recorded changed at the end of 2018, allowing for greater detail to be captured. Further refinement of the incident classification process occurred in 2020. Some incidents previously categorised as 'threats' would no longer be recorded this way, because they do not meet the threshold under the definitions provided above. These incidents have been highlighted in Appendix 1 in grey and continue to be included in overall incident data for the purpose of consistency and transparency.

**Table 2: Threats and assaults made towards DOC staff and DOC contractors categorised by nature or motivation.**

	2019		2020		2021	
	Threat	Assault	Threat	Assault	Threat	Assault
<b>1080</b>	61		113		14	
<b>Cats</b>					1	
<b>Enforcing rules</b>		1	1	1	2	
<b>Hunting</b>	1					
<b>Land access</b>				1		
<b>Land ownership</b>		1				
<b>Non-specific</b>	10	3	13		3	1
<b>Re-planting</b>						
<b>Tahr</b>			33			
<b>Treaty negotiations</b>					1	
<b>Whitebait</b>	1		2			
	73	5	162	2	21	1

**Table 3: Threats and assaults made towards DOC staff and DOC contractors categorised by DOC region.**

	2019		2020		2021	
	Threat	Assault	Threat	Assault	Threat	Assault
<b>Northern North Island</b>	3		1		1	
<b>Auckland</b>		1	4			
<b>Hauraki Waikato Taranaki</b>	6	2	11		2	
<b>Central North Island</b>	10		8	1	3	1
<b>Lower North Island</b>	1	1	5		2	
<b>Northern South Island</b>	3		2		1	
<b>Western South Island</b>	15	1	2		1	
<b>Eastern South Island</b>	1		1	1	3	



<b>Southern South Island</b>	4		2			
<b>Unknown</b>	30		126		8	
	73	5	162	2	21	1

Note for Table 3:

- Regions have been categorised as unknown when threatening social media comments are unable to be linked to a location.

2. *I'd also like DOC to clarify: is the Department anticipating a, or preparing for, a higher risk in relation to the likelihood of another mast seeding year, and required operations?*

*Further: can DOC clarify how it has improved safety and security protocols and resources to better protect staff?*

A permanent DOC Security Team was established in 2020 in response to the increasing number of physical and online threats directed towards DOC staff, contractors, assets and operations. The Security Team has commenced a review of protective security across the DOC estate to ensure DOC meets its obligations to the Protective Security Requirements (PSR) as a mandated government agency. DOC sites (including offices, visitor centres, workshops, field bases and associated storage facilities) have been prioritised for physical security upgrades according to the level of risk to staff, information, and assets. The Security Team is currently working through the prioritised list to implement security upgrades and protocols that will improve the security and safety of staff, contractors, assets and information at each site.

The landscape scale pest control programme continues to draw attention from groups, some of which threaten the safety and security of staff and contractors working in the field. The Security Team works closely with operational teams to ensure appropriate security measures and processes are considered throughout operational planning and delivery.

DOC works in partnership with the New Zealand Police to share information related to DOC-specific events in order to identify and mitigate physical threats to DOC staff, contractors, suppliers and partners.

Finally, the DOC Security Team is working to promote the value of timely and accurate reporting of security-related events to ensure appropriate actions and mitigation strategies can be implemented.

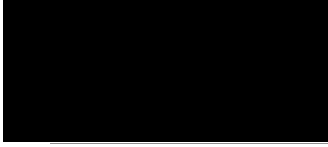
You are entitled to seek an investigation and review of my decision by writing to an Ombudsman as provided by section 28(3) of the Official Information Act.

Please note that this letter (with your personal details removed) and enclosed documents may be published on the Department's website.

Nāku noa, nā



Department of Conservation  
*Te Papa Atawhai*



Michael McCarthy  
Chief Security Officer  
Department of Conservation  
*Te Papa Atawhai*