

16 September 2022



Tēnā koe 

Thank you for your Official Information Act request to the Department of Conservation, received on 10 August 2022 in which you asked for:

*What was the (i) budgeted and (ii) actual spending by the Department on monitoring of **terrestrial** biodiversity outcomes for each of Tiers One and Two of DOC's Biodiversity Monitoring and Reporting System as described on your webpage [here](#)?*

Could you please provide this information for the full time period from the adoption of the Biodiversity Monitoring System to the current financial year, with information describing budgeted and actual spending separated for Tiers 1 and 2, i.e., not amalgamated.

On 7 September 2022 you were provided with a decision letter informing you that we would grant your request to the extent possible with a response provided no later than 16 September 2022. Our response is now outlined below.

The Biodiversity Monitoring and Reporting System (BMRS) was launched in 2011. The Tier One terrestrial monitoring programme (Tier one) was fully implemented in 2013.

Budget 2018 funding enabled the Tier two terrestrial ecosystem monitoring systems to integrate with existing monitoring programmes such as Tiakina Ngā Manu (Battle for our Birds). This has further enabled us to focus on priority sites identified by integrated ranking.

Table 1 below outlines our budgeted and actual spending for Tier One and Tier Two ecosystem monitoring (funded by Budget 2018). Table 2 outlines budgeted spending for existing monitoring programmes.

Budget figures for Tier One and Tier Two ecosystem monitoring funded by Budget 18 reflect anticipated spending requirements to implement such programmes. This was presented in the 2010 National monitoring system business case and ecosystems as part of cabinets 2018 budget bid. Note the level of investment in Tier 2 ecosystem monitoring was estimated to be 15% of the budget allocated for priority sites based on integrated ranking.

Budget figures for existing Tier Two monitoring programmes are planned budget amounts from our Business Planning and Reporting system. We are only able to provide planned budgets for these programmes as tracking of actual spending is not succinctly captured or accessible via the current financial reporting system. Due to these system limitations, the Department assumes that the actual spend is equivalent to planned budget. Your request for actual spending on existing Tier Two monitoring of **terrestrial** biodiversity outcomes is refused under section 18(f) of the Official Information Act as the information requested cannot be made available without substantial collation.

BMRS Tier One Monitoring Programme actual spending does not match budgets required to deliver the full programme. Until 2020, the full network of sites was able to be measured, despite increased costs for the work, by dropping elements that did not impact field data collection (e.g., quality assurance and audit). Since 2020, budget constraints and different structural and employment practices (e.g., increased ratio of permanent to fixed term field staff) have impacted the field programme and the Department has scaled back the national status and trend programme. Vegetation monitoring of Tier 1 forest plots each year has been halved. This means that all forested vegetation plots are now being measured on a 10-yearly rather than 5-yearly (recommended practice due to turnover) cycle.

The Department has paused development and implementation of the new components of the Tier Two programme. This will be reassessed as part of the next annual business planning process.

Table 1. BMRS Tier One and Tier Two (Budget 2018) terrestrial monitoring - budget and actual spending summary 2013/14 – 2021/22.

Year	Tier One		Tier Two (Budget 18)	
	Budget (Anticipated) Proposed \$M	Actual spend \$M	Budget (Anticipated) Proposed \$M	Actual spend \$M
2013/14	\$5.2	\$4.4	NA	NA
2014/15	\$5.7	\$4.4	NA	NA
2015/16	\$5.9	\$3.3	NA	NA
2016/17	\$6.1	\$4.3	NA	NA
2017/18	\$6.1	\$4.3	NA	NA
2018/19	\$6.1	\$4.2	\$0.2	\$0.1
2019/20	\$6.1	\$4.2	\$0.3	\$0.4
2020/21	\$6.1	\$3.7	\$0.4	\$0.4
2021/22	\$6.1	\$4.3	\$0.7	\$0.0

Table 2. BMRS Existing Tier Two terrestrial monitoring - budget summary 2013/14 – 2021/22.

Year	Existing Monitoring
	Budget \$M
2013/14	\$8.4
2014/15	\$8.4



2015/16	\$8.4
2016/17	\$8.4
2017/18	\$8.4
2018/19	\$7.7
2019/20	\$8.8
2020/21	\$8.6
2021/22	\$8.4

I regret that I am not able to provide you with the current financial year data (2022-2023). These could be supplied at a later stage when confirmed. The Department's investment in monitoring will be reassessed as part of wider organisational change. This is likely to occur later this financial year.

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) may be published on our website.

Nāku noa, nā

Sharon Alderson
Director Planning & Support
Department of Conservation
Te Papa Atawhai