



OIAD-3750

22 February 2024



Tēnā koe [redacted]

Thank you for your request to the Department of Conservation, received on 28 January 2024, in which you asked for:

Please supply the following information under the Official Information Act (OIA) / Local Government Official Information and Meetings Act (LGOIMA):

Please provide the records of all nitrate test results monitoring the LII River catchment ecological management carried out jointly by DOC and Fonterra that has been completed as advised on the livingwater.net.nz website.

I have been conducting monthly NO₃-N levels for surface waters across the lower Selwyn Water Zone since July 2020.

My results suggest that the catchment management project has not reduced the nitrate levels in this catchment, (despite riparian planting, mapping, signage, and other activities which I have observed).

A measurable reduction in nitrate pollution is a fundamental measure of successful catchment management, and a validation of Farm Environment Management Plans, especially in Central Canterbury where nitrate pollution of freshwater is such a problem.

If you need any more information from me please let me know as soon as possible. I understand that a decision on a request for information under the [OIA/LGOIMA] should be made within 20 working days of receiving that request.

We have considered your request under the Official Information Act 1982.

Your request suggests that an aim of the Living Water partnership was to reduce nitrate levels however we wish to clarify that the project never set out to reduce nitrate levels across the catchment.

The high nitrate levels in the catchment come from groundwater, and management activities such as riparian planting cannot address nitrate already in the waterway.

The overall outcomes/impacts the project was working towards can be found here: <https://www.livingwater.net.nz/assets/sm/upload/s8/ci/9w/g8/Ararira-LII%20River%20Canterbury%20July%202020.pdf?k=aa6a73f1b4>

In response to your request, records of all nitrate test results are in the attached files. The below table provides a short description of the attached documents.

Item	Date	Document description	Decision
1	2018-2020	Raw data_CAREX_Ararira Catchment Monitoring Data	Released in part
2	2018-2020	Raw data_CAREX samples & Bioreactor_Tool-Scoping Data	Released in part. The original file contains further additional data that is not in scope of the request. This was removed due to the very large file size (3000+ pages).
3	December 2019	Raw Data_CAREX_Powells Road Restoration Sampling	Released in part
4	17 November 2017	Memo_Instream_raw data and commentary water quality from the Ararira/LII catchment	Released in part

In addition to the above listed documents, the following documents relevant to your request can be found on the Living Water website:

- **Living Water UOC CAREX Report 2021**
<https://www.livingwater.net.nz/assets/sm/upload/vs/cf/2f/8o/UC%20CAREX%20Report%20to%20Living%20Water%202021.pdf?k=ca93f7502b>
- **Bioreactor sampling results graphed here:**
<https://www.livingwater.net.nz/catchment/ararira-lii-river-te-awa-o-araiara/bioreactor-trial-reducing-nitrates/>
- **Baseline data Golder report**
<https://www.livingwater.net.nz/assets/sm/upload/ci/qx/bv/rq/Golder%20Associates%20LII%20Ararira%20Hydrology%2C%20Ecology%2C%20Water%20quality%20Main%20report%20-%20DOC-2551184.pdf?k=0df85e11e3>
- **Baseline data Golder report appendices**
<https://www.livingwater.net.nz/assets/Golder%20Associates%20-%20Ararira%20ecology%2C%20hydrology%20and%20water%20quality%20report%20-%20appendices%20-%20DOC-2964409.pdf?k=700c694013>

I have decided to release the relevant parts of the documents listed in the table above, subject to information being withheld under section 9(2)(a) – to protect the privacy of natural persons, including deceased people. In making my decision, I have considered the public interest considerations in section 9(1) of the Official Information Act and determined there are no public interests that outweigh the grounds for withholding.

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 attached documents may be published on the Department's website.

Nāku noa, nā



Jo Macpherson

Director Operations, Eastern South Island
Department of Conservation *Te Papa Atawhai*

Encls.