



19 February 2024



Tēnā koe 

Thank you for your Official Information Act request to the Department of Conservation, received on 19 January 2024 in which you asked for:

Can you please advise what DOC (in particular but not limited to the local DOC staff/offices) is doing to protect the surviving publicly owned huts including historic huts (Te Waiotukapiti, Te Totara and Rogers hut/Te Wairoa).

Please note our formal opposition and provide clarification on DOC's position on [Rogers hut/Te Wairoa hut being moved into a city for use as a museum].

Please advise what DOC work programmes have been terminated by TUT (in Te Urewera including but not limited to TUMI). We note the obligations of TUT under the Te Urewera Act 2014 regarding conservation values and public access.

Before answering your questions, I thought it would be useful to provide more context on the nature of DOC's relationship with both the Te Urewera Board (**TUB**) and Te Uru Taumatua (**TUT**).

As you may know, the Te Urewera Act 2014 (**the Act**) established TUB whose purposes are to act on behalf of, and in the name of, Te Urewera, and to provide governance for Te Urewera in accordance with the Act. In accordance with the Annual Operational Plan, TUT and DOC have joint responsibility for the operational management of Te Urewera under the Act. However, TUT has been leading this operational management since 2018. DOC supports TUT to build the capability and capacity to manage Te Urewera in a way that adheres to the principles of Te Kawa o Te Urewera.

I note that TUB and TUT have filed a notice of appeal to the Court of Appeal and so we are unable to comment on matters relating to *Tuna v Te Urewera Board* [2023] NZHC 3680 (**the Huts case**) at this time.

Regarding the illegal burning of huts following the High Court's injunction, I want to make it clear that DOC alerted NZ Police to this and cooperated with all inquiries.

Your questions and our responses are listed below:

1. *Can you please advise what DOC (in particular but not limited to the local DOC staff/offices) is doing to protect the surviving publicly owned huts including historic huts (Te Waiootukapiti, Te Totara and Rogers hut/Te Wairoa).*

TUT leads operational management in Te Urewera, including responsibility for huts. Prior to the Huts case, DOC's Heritage Team provided advice to TUT on three heritage huts. No further discussions have been had since an injunction on the removal of huts was ordered by the Court. We have not received any indication from TUT that these particular huts will be removed in the near future. DOC will consider the retention or removal of huts if they are part of any future Annual Operational Plans.

2. *Please note our formal opposition and provide clarification on DOC's position on [Rogers hut/Te Wairoa hut being moved into a city for use as a museum].*

Your opposition to this proposal is noted. Based on the outcome of the Huts case, DOC will consider this as part of any future Annual Operational Plan.

3. *Please advise what DOC work programmes have been terminated by TUT (in Te Urewera including but not limited to TUMI). We note the obligations of TUT under the Te Urewera Act 2014 regarding conservation values and public access.*

Prior to settlement and the Act coming into force in 2014, DOC was responsible for managing Te Urewera as a national park. From 2014 onwards TUT has led the operational management of Te Urewera, with support from DOC. Since that time, former DOC work programmes, including Te Urewera Mainland Island Project, have ceased.

Over the past decade DOC has continued to support TUT to provide specialist support for maintenance of assets, at TUT's request.

Lake Waikaremoana was not covered by the settlement in 2014. Instead, the Crown leases Waikaremoana lakebed from its joint owners, Tūhoe - Te Uru Taumatua and Wairoa Waikaremoana Maori Trust Board. DOC was asked by TUT to cease eradication of *lagarosiphon* in Lake Waikaremoana in 2019. DOC has not undertaken further work on eradication since.

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

Nāku noa, nā



Stephanie Rowe
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Department of Conservation
Te Papa Atawhai